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AVICHAI GOLAN. AMIT PRINCIPAL AND ROLE MODEL
VENTURE CAPITALISTS MAKING ALIYAH
AMIT HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS
AMIT 2011 ANNUAL DINNER

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THE THEME OF THIS WINTER’S ISSUE OF AMIT Magazine is entrepreneurship, and I can’t think of a more fitting description of the ethos that pervades our AMIT Network and that has guided our movement from its very beginning.

Our founders were entrepreneurs (though they might not have described themselves as such) and risk-takers. How else to describe the actions taken more than 85 years ago of a group of remarkable women who started their own organization, founded their own schools, and managed the finances and administration. While our founders may not have had “paying” jobs in the traditional sense, they were entrepreneurs of the first order.

Today AMIT is a vibrant enterprise, widely respected throughout Israel and well known for its cutting-edge approach to education.

The entrepreneurial spirit is instilled in many of the dynamic AMIT principals, as exemplified by Avichai Golan (profiled in this issue) who have made their careers at AMIT and, in the process, have brought overwhelming change for the better to the schools under their care. Principal Golan is but one of many AMIT administrators from an unconventional background who have proven a great success within the challenging and vibrant AMIT environment.

How else to describe the unique achievements of Midreshet AMIT (see article, page 27). When AMIT decided to establish a program for post high school women who wished to spend a year studying in Israel before beginning college, we placed the program on the grounds of Beit Hayeled in Jerusalem. The idea was for the students to interact with Beit Hayeled’s children in foster care, serving as “big sisters,” in addition to pursuing a program of intensive Judaic studies. We hoped that in this way students would learn to give of themselves, as well as develop leadership skills – and the results have been overwhelming. Not only has each class of Midreshet AMIT bonded with the children of Beit Hayeled, but participants have returned to the United States with a fierce loyalty and devotion to AMIT and to our mission that will last a lifetime.

Finally, how else to describe the seemingly quixotic Project 80 – a program which aims to achieve the goal of ensuring that 80% of all AMIT students graduate high school with a full Bagrut diploma. With 70% of our students living in development towns and other peripheral areas of the country facing serious economic and social problems, this may have seemed an impossible goal. But by a combination of focused training for our teachers, one-on-one tutoring of the students, study retreats away from home and other direct services, today more than 70% of all AMIT students are leaving high school with a full bagrut diploma in hand. I have no doubt that in the near future we will reach the 80% mark.

Chanukah is the season of miracles. As supporters of AMIT we can take great pride in our participation in the modern miracle that is the State of Israel and particular satisfaction in the special contribution made by AMIT, every day.

Happy Chanukah!
AMIT BUILDING ISRAEL. ONE CHILD AT A TIME.

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AMIT NATIONAL COUNCIL OFFICES

National Office
877 Broadway
New York, NY 10003
1-800-989-AMIT (2648)
212-477-4720
Fax: 212-353-2312
email: info@amitchildren.org

Baltimore/Washington, D.C.
2800 Stone Cliff Drive, Unit #112
Baltimore, MD 21209
410-484-2223
410-370-9411
Call for Fax: 410-484-2223
email: robbiep@amitchildren.org

Boston
7 Brady Road
Westborough, MA 01581
Phone & Fax: (call for Fax) 508-870-1571
email: amitboston@charter.net

Chicago
3856 W West Oakton
Skokie, IL 60076
847-677-3802
847-982-0057
email: amitchicago@amitchildren.org

Cleveland
2195 South Green Road
University Heights, OH 44121
216-382-4441
email: amitcleveland@amitchildren.org

Southeast Region
2700 N 29 Ave, Suite 203
Hollywood, FL 33020
954-922-5193
Fax: 954-922-5193
email: robin@amitchildren.org

Los Angeles
1122 S Robertson Blvd, #9
Los Angeles, CA 90035
310-859-4885
Fax: 310-859-4875
email: harrietp@amitchildren.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 342
Wynnewood, PA 19096
Phone & Fax: (call for Fax) 410-484-2223
Cell: 410-370-9411
email: robbiep@amitchildren.org
AMIT enables Israel’s youth to realize their potential and strengthens Israeli society by educating and nurturing children from diverse backgrounds within a framework of academic excellence, religious values and Zionist ideals. Some 70 percent of AMIT students live in development towns or other “peripheral” areas of the country. AMIT approaches each child as an individual, maximizing his or her potential, and enabling our students to become vital, productive members of Israeli society. The AMIT schools promote religious tolerance, service to the state and the recognition that every child is blessed with unique talents and abilities. Founded in 1925, AMIT operates 98 schools, youth villages, surrogate family residences and other programs, constituting Israel’s only government-recognized network of religious Jewish education incorporating academic and technological studies.
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PLEASE CONSIDER AMIT AS YOU DO YOUR ESTATE PLANNING
finding the path to greatness

By David Moss, Executive Vice President

OUR STATISTICS ARE IMPRESSIVE AND CONVEY THE breadth and importance of our work: 25,000 students, 98 schools, youth villages and programs in 26 cities and towns throughout the State of Israel. But sharing vignettes about our students and their achievements is also a compelling way to tell AMIT’s story.

At a recent event in Chicago, I spoke about two AMIT students I met when I visited their schools in July. One, a 16-year old boy who wants to be a doctor, had arrived at Kfar Blatt in Petach Tikvah just months before. He left his family in Iran, crossed the border into Turkey and made his way to Israel. A cousin made a similar journey years earlier and found a home, and tools for becoming a successful member of Israeli society, at Kfar Blatt. So this young man left his home and family in Iran with AMIT Kfar Blatt as his destination!

The second story I told was of a 19 year-old from a large charedi family in Beersheva. He had failed out of the charedi school system, and from the streets of Beersheva found his way to AMIT Elaine Silver Technological High School where he studied electronics. This young man, brimming with confidence and optimism—and with a bagrut diploma in hand—was awaiting his assignment for service in the Israel Defense Forces.

These are compelling examples of AMIT’s pivotal role in serving the children of Israel’s periphery. But these vignettes do not capture the full AMIT narrative because approximately 30 percent of our schools do not serve the periphery. These schools, in places like Ramat Gan and Ra’anana, serve families and communities where academic achievement is highly valued and strongly encouraged.

So I added a third story to my narrative in Chicago. I spoke about a graduate of our Renanim Science and Technology High School for Girls in Ra’anana who attended Stern College for Women. While at Stern, because of the quality of her AMIT education, she was asked to tutor pre-med students in chemistry. Many of our graduates, beneficiaries of high-quality curricula and instruction, are capable of assisting the most accomplished products of American Jewish high schools.

I told the Renanim graduate that I had shared her story in Chicago. She in turn modestly suggested that I instead tell the story of her brother and his four friends, all proud graduates of AMIT Gwen Straus Science High School for Boys and Yeshiva in Ra’anana. These remarkable young men recently graduated together at the top of an IDF officers training course and will be assuming command of elite combat units. (Days later, I told their story at a dinner in Philadelphia and learned that one of the soldiers is a grandson of an AMIT supporter from that city!) These chayalim and their distinctive achievements, as individuals and as a group, will be featured in the next issue of this magazine.

We have many achievements to celebrate, but our work is far from done. We follow the opinion of Beit Hillel regarding the lighting of the Chanukah candles, not the opinion of Beit Shammai. We are mosef v’holech, each night we add candles to the menorah.

AMIT is blessed with an outstanding group of committed donors and leaders who understand the value of our important work. Two premier honor societies recognize significant gifts to our annual campaign: Chai Society (minimum annual gift of $1,800) and President’s Circle (minimum gift of $5,000). Meyer and Ellen Koplow, passionate leaders and supporters, stepped forward with a major challenge grant to provide the incentive for increased annual donations and to encourage others to join these two societies. (See page 16 for more information about the Koplows’ challenge.)

As this magazine goes to print, dozens of donors have already responded to the Koplows’ generous challenge. If you are able to help meet this exciting challenge, please contact us before the end of December. Together, we will be mosef v’holech; we will add thousands of remarkable stories of success and achievement.

Chag urim sameach. Happy Chanukah to all.

Chag urim sameach. Happy Chanukah to all.

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AVI

By Helga Abraham
On the eve of Yom Kippur, Avichai Golan, principal of AMIT Hatzor Hagliglit High School, is discussing the Jewish precept of inter-responsibility with an eighth grade girls’ class. Dressed casually in jeans, sandals and a short-sleeved shirt bearing the AMIT logo, Golan explains how every single action we take affects others and creates a particular atmosphere. “Just as when you hurt a finger or a toe, your whole body hurts, so it is with Am Yisrael: if one person does wrong, it affects the entire nation negatively and if one person does good, it affects the entire nation positively. Why am I discussing this before Yom Kippur?” he asks. “Because I want you to understand that each and every one of us has the power to weaken or strengthen Am Yisrael.”

AMIT Hatzor Haglilit is a sprawling campus of some 300 students, with the girls’ school on one side, and the boys’ on the other. As Golan makes his way back to his office in the center of the campus, he notices rubbish lying on the lawn, points it out to the girls and proceeds to pick it up himself and put it in a bin. Just as in the IDF, where he commanded a paratroop battalion, Golan is a principal who, through his own behavior, sets the standard he expects from his students. When he was appointed principal in 2007, at the age of 35, one of his first actions was to introduce an AMIT uniform (various t-shirts and polo shirts with the AMIT logo), in order to enhance the students’ sense of belonging to the school, and he proceeded to wear it himself. “From my very first day at the school,” he says, “I wore the AMIT shirt and have done so ever since. When the kids saw I was wearing the AMIT shirt, it was easy for them to follow suit.” Golan points out that the verse from Deuteronomy inscribed on the AMIT logo, And thou shalt do that which is right and good, also imparts an important message: “It means that, first and foremost, we must be good people.”

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Golan did not set out to be an educator. Like many talented religious Zionist young men, he rose fast in the ranks of his paratroop unit and was slated for an eminent career in the IDF. But, his knees were seriously injured. This cut short his army career and he was forced to consider other options. “It was very hard for me to leave the army,” he says. “But since I had no choice, it was clear that I would go into education.”

Golan was born in Ramat Magshimim, the first religious settlement founded on the Golan Heights, soon after the Six Day War. “There was nothing there when the first settlers arrived,” he explains, “just the remnants of a large Syrian encampment.” Like other settlements on the Golan, Ramat Magshimim suffered greatly during the war of attrition (1967 – 1970) and was destroyed by advancing Syrian forces during the Yom Kippur War in 1973. With the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, Ramat Magshimim was evacuated. During the first few days of the war Ramat Magshimim was captured and destroyed by the advancing Syrian forces. Within a week, Israel regained control of the Heights. The settlers immediately returned and began the process of rebuilding. Today, Ramat Magshimim is studded with apple, pear, mango and avocado orchards. “It is in these fields, where I worked every holiday” says Golan, “that I became imbued with love for Eretz Yisrael.”

After his army service, Golan earned a BA and MA in Eretz Yisrael studies and archaeology at Bar Ilan University. His MA thesis was on the Golan Heights. “The Golan,” he says passionately, “is not just the most beautiful place in Israel, it is full of Jewish history. In the Golan, archaeologists found the remains of 36 Jewish settlements from the Second Temple Period, 2,000 year old synagogues, and troves of ancient lamps and coins.” Today, Avichai Golan, his wife, Avital, and their six children live in Katzrin, the capital of the Golan Heights.

While pursuing his academic studies, Golan embarked on his new career, teaching history. He taught at schools in Ariel and Tverya, before finally arriving at AMIT. “I had heard of AMIT,” he says, “but I didn’t know what a wonderful educational network it is.” When offered the post of principal at AMIT Hatzor Haglilit, he jumped at the idea. “I liked the fact that this is a school that accepts everyone and I love the town – it’s a small peripheral community in the Upper Galilee, where nearly everyone is traditional. I also saw students who had not been given the opportunities they deserved.”

The first big challenge faced by Golan, as he took over the reins in 2007, was the school’s low level of academic achievement. “Our grades were so low,” recalls Deganit Eliav, head of the girls’ school, “that we were slated for closure.” If this scenario had indeed taken place, Hatzor Haglilit would have lost its only religious high school. The stakes were high and improving the school’s academic achievements was a major priority for its new principal. By imparting the aspiration for excellence and enhancing the teacher-student relationship Golan succeeded. In two years, the percentage of students who passed the full complement of their Bagrut (matriculation) exams increased from 40% to 60%. Golan says that AMIT’s sponsorship of a complementary educational program has enabled him to employ additional teachers and divide classes into smaller groups. “This makes all the difference,” he says, “between forming average students or very good students.”

The second challenge was how to enhance the students’ identification with the school and with the religious-Zionist ethos. Together with his staff, Golan drew up the school’s vision, based on five principles

Last year AMIT gave the school a grant of NIS 500,000 to renovate its classrooms and playgrounds.

School counselor Chagit Lavi with 7th grade students
of faith: self-improvement, Torah values, personal contact, initiative and excellence. These principles were printed on a leaflet and distributed to the students, staff and parents. As he hands me a copy, he says: “This is our Ani Ma’amin (I believe) and it means that everyone, teachers and students alike, should work on improving themselves at every level – personal, spiritual and academic.”

The third challenge was discipline – an acute problem that plagues Israeli schools in general and one which Golan insists on defining, not as a problem, but as an “educational challenge.” The challenge did not take long in rearing its head. One day - soon after becoming principal- Golan made his way to his car to return home. He noticed that two of his tires had been slashed. “I realized that I was being challenged and that disciplinary rules in the school were not being sufficiently applied.” He then set about enhancing the regulations and, simultaneously, increased the level of personal contact between teachers and students. The two-pronged approach paid off and resulted in a rapid and notable drop in the level of violence and vandalism at the school. “When a kid feels you appreciate and love him,” explains Golan, “he won’t be violent and, if he is, we deal with it head on.”

As Golan interacts with the students, it is clear that he is both approachable and respected. Veteran English teacher Irena Furman notes that “since Golan became principal, the whole atmosphere at the school changed ... he makes everyone feel at home.” Deganit Eliav, at the girls’ school, is even more effusive. “Golan brought about major changes: greater professionalism, greater organization – with everything planned a year in advance, and greater empowerment for teachers.”

As for the students, boys and girls alike admire and respect their young, handsome principal. “He’s like a father to us,” says 9th grader Shai Haim. “He helps us with everything. If we don’t have money for food, he’ll give it to us and we pay him back later.” Tenth grader Eldad Avital concurs. “We feel he is a friend and, to my mind, he is the best principal in the world...a real role model who has influenced me and whom we all want to emulate.” The facts are there to prove it. While, in the past, few boys at the school went on to serve in combat units during their military service, today the majority opt to follow in Golan’s footsteps. And he is a role model for the girls as well. “We all admire him,” says 10th grader Noah Vanunu, “because he himself upholds the values which he teaches.”

For Avichai Golan, AMIT is a source of constant support. “AMIT is home. It does everything it can to help the school.” From the moment Golan took up his position as principal of AMIT Hatzor Hagliglit, the AMIT Reshet (network) provided him with a mentor-advisor to guide him through the process and give him professional support. Golan still meets with his mentor every two weeks and considers his support vital to problem-solving and ensuring a high standard of education. He also greatly values the personal backing imparted by Amnon Eldar, director general of AMIT. “Amnon believes in the school and does everything he can to help us.”

Asked to summarize his educational approach, Golan answers: “Whenever AMIT representatives visit the school, they always ask to see the academic achievement graph. I say to them, let’s look first at the ‘chair’ graph – which charts if and how students place their chairs on the table at the end of the day. This graph is even more important than the academic achievement graph. It shows whether the students show respect and consideration for others. In this case the janitors who come to clean their classrooms. And, I am glad to say that this graph has greatly improved in recent years.”

Helga Abraham is a freelance journalist and translator based in Jerusalem. Before making aliya to Israel, she worked as a radio producer for CBC in London and Toronto.
One is a gritty California-born activist, another an Ivy League-bred lawyer and the third a British scientist who arrived almost by happenstance. Yet all three have had a hand in shaping “Startup Nation,” the high-tech culture that has turned Israel into the centerpiece of innovation.

Consider: Israel has more companies listed on the tech-heavy Nasdaq (61) than any country outside North America—almost twice as many as the United Kingdom (31) and multiples beyond economic powerhouses Germany (10) and Japan (17). Israel also boasts the world’s highest startup rate per capita at one per 1,844 citizens, according to the book “Startup Nation: The Story of Israel’s Economic Miracle” by Dan Senor and Saul Singer.

The high-tech currents have flowed far beyond the borders of tiny Israel. Think of a world where office workers no longer had handy flash drives to share large files and teenagers and Wall Street traders no longer had AIM, Google Chat and Yahoo Messenger to send and receive messages in a nanosecond. Flash drives and instant messaging are just two among scores of Israeli innovations that have become ubiquitous in the digital era.

Today, Israel’s path to technological leadership looks so clear. In 2010 alone initial public offerings and mergers and acquisitions involving Israeli and Israel-connected high-tech companies totaled $2.2 billion, according to the Israel Venture Capital Research Center.

Ed Mlavsky – Patriarch of Israel’s Tech Sector
In 1977, however, Israel was still a backwater in venture capital and information technology. That year, Ed Mlavsky, a London-born chemist, joined the U.S.-Israel Advisory Council on Research and Development and, for the first time, visited Israel. The council was chaired by Jordan Baruch, who oversaw the U.S. Patent Office during the Carter Administration. Two years later, Mlavsky was on the ad hoc committee to select the leader of the Israel-U.S. Bi-National Industrial Research & Development Foundation (BIRD). After watching how several candidates fared in their interviews, Mlavsky made a “facetious” remark that changed his life: “Oh [expletive], even I could do the job better” than that crop of candidates. In short order, Mlavsky became a candidate and was offered the job.

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AEL’S DIVIDEND

ITS MAKING ALIYAH
Mlavsky agreed to a two-year contract. “After two years, I was supposed to go back to a job in Boston in the solar energy business,” Mlavsky recalls. “But things were getting interesting.” He ended up staying at BIRD, whose charge is to pair Israeli and U.S. companies on research and development projects. For 13 years he was the patriarch of Israel's tech sector.

Jonathan Medved – From Berkeley Politics to Techno Zionism

If Mlavsky helped lay the foundations for Israel's high-tech future, Jonathan Medved is a firebrand of the revolution. The San Diego native describes himself as a child of the '60s who joined in protesting the war in Vietnam. “I was a political kid,” he recalls. After his freshman year at the political hotbed that was the University of California at Berkeley, he traveled to Israel where he “fell in love” with the country.

When Medved returned to Berkeley, he translated that ardor into a Zionist political agenda. He made aliyah in 1980.

Medved came to Israel as a garden variety Zionist who founded a connection to the land's history and culture. It wasn’t until his father, David Medved arrived in Israel on a business trip that Jonathan Medved found his calling. On that trip, David Medved, a physicist who went through NASA's astronaut programs, was working on a fiber-optic communications startup. This, his father announced, is “real Zionism” and he challenged his son to follow.

As it turned out, David Medved followed his son in making aliyah and Jonathan Medved followed his father in pursuing Techno-Zionism. In 1995, Jonathan Medved started Israel Seed Partners, an early stage venture capital firm that backed companies such as Shopping.com (acquired by Ebay for $634 million), Answers.com (acquired by Summit Partners for $127 million) and Digital Fuel (acquired by VMWare for a reported $85 million).

Medved, who left Israel Seed Partners in 2006, currently is chief executive of Vringo, a Nasdaq-listed provider of software and video ring tones for mobile phones.

Jack Levy – Israel's Venture Capitalist – via Yeshiva and the Ivy League

In some ways, Jack Levy was destined to come to Israel. His yeshiva education helped him forge cultural ties and gain fluency in Hebrew. Visits to Israel as a teenager helped cement those bonds.

The 41-year-old graduate of Harvard College and Columbia Law School moved to Israel in the summer of 2003, and balances his professional duties with parental chores. His daughter is 7 and sons are 11 and 13. Levy, who lives in R'anna, serves on the parent-teacher association of AMIT Gwen Straus Junior and Senior Science High School.

Levy started his career doing corporate work, but these days he is a partner at Israel Cleantech Ventures, a venture capital firm that specializes in green technology. He sits on the boards of startups Aqwise, which provides wastewater treatment systems to industry and municipalities; Emefcy, whose systems produce electricity from wastewater treatment, and FRX Polymers, a maker of polymers designed to make plastics less flammable.

Israel Cleantech Ventures also is a backer of Shai Agassi's Better Place,
which is seeking to extend the range and utility of electric vehicles by building automated battery-swap stations as an alternative to charging stations. In the stations, electric cars’ depleted batteries are replaced with fresh ones in a fraction of the time it would take to recharge.

News headlines may portend gloom and doom, yet daily life in Israel is far different. In fact, today’s Israel is less a land of sacrifice and more a land of promise for immigrants, Levy says. “There’s been a tremendous amount of American aliyah since we came. Israel has become a more attractive place to live…especially now,” he adds. “You can have a really good quality of life. I know people who lost jobs and moved to Israel and got work immediately.”

The Future and Its Needs

Though he was not a venture capitalist at BIRD, there were many parallels, Ed Mlavsky says. When he left BIRD in 1992, Israeli businessman Dov Tadmor asked Mlavsky if he would like to run a venture capital fund. That fund, the pioneering Gemini Israel Fund, helped vault Israel into the first tier of global innovation centers.

Though Mlavsky no longer takes an active role at Gemini Israel, the firm’s chairman emeritus still keeps an eye on promising portfolio companies like PrimeSense, whose founders have rebuffed a steady parade of potential acquirers in the hope of growing a big-league tech company.

Though Mlvasky never learned to speak Hebrew fluently, he came to appreciate Israel’s business fluently. The reason: it can be difficult to track down reliable and detailed information on would-be CEO candidates. By contrast, Israel’s tight-knit society has the feel of a village. Says Mlavsky, “In Israel, you can even find out how many times a guy’s kids was late to kindergarten.”

Conflict resolution also follows a different path. “If you have a really acrid discussion with some American businessman, he’ll never talk to you for the next 20 years,” Mlavsky says. “If you have an argument here, the next day you’re friends. To Mlavsky, the difference was refreshing. “I found this to be a great way to do business.” he says.”

At 82, Mlavasky continues to live in Herzilyah Pituach.

Assertive Zionism for the 21st Century

Even today, Jonathan Medved shows an activist streak. To supporters of Israel, he has this message: Passive Zionism is not enough. “Some people don’t mind sitting in the bleachers and rooting for the home team,” he says. “I like to be on the field. And to be part of this economic miracle is incredibly lucky.” “My late father used to say: ‘If you’ve got a choice of luck or brains, take the luck.”

But even for those who live in the diaspora and have no connection to technology startups or venture capital, Medved has a vision of populist Techno-Zionism.

Specifically, he is urging that friends of Israel invest in the economy by buying shares in Israeli companies. “Israel bonds and the JNF [Jewish National Fund] are great things,” he says. “[But] you’ve got to seek out your business here in Israel.” The key is engagement.

The “younger generation” needs a greater sense of involvement. Yet how can people living thousands of miles from Jerusalem engage in the Israeli economic miracle?”

“A person sitting in Chicago can find an Israeli stock to buy,” he says. “What I’m talking about here is bringing Israel into your life,” he said. “For most people, life is family and work. Integrate Israel into your life.”

Mlavsky, Medved and Levy each has had a role in Israel’s economic miracle. They came from different directions, but all converged on the vibrant high-tech sector where expansion continues. In the third quarter of 2011, for instance, Israeli high-tech companies raised $522 million from investors, the Israel Venture Capital Research Center reported. That is down 8 percent from the prior quarter, but up 53 percent from one year ago.

While only high-net worth investors qualify to become limited partners in venture capital funds, anyone with a few shekels can invest in Israeli companies through an index fund like iShares MSCI Israel Capped Index Fund (EIS).

Medved suggests that those who take his advice to take an economic stake in Israel should have no fear of coming late to the party…fresh opportunities await!

Says Medved: “Stay tuned for Startup Nation, part 2.”

Ken Schachter teaches journalism at Hofstra University. A graduate of the University of Oregon and Northwestern University, Ken worked as a business reporter and magazine writer at The Jerusalem Post in the mid-1980s. He also has worked at The Miami Herald, Newsday, Red Herring and other publications. He can be reached at kschach@gmail.com.
Are you up to the Challenge?
Thanks to long-time AMIT leaders Ellen and Meyer Koplow, AMIT has been presented with a $150,000 Challenge Grant.

- All new gifts to President’s Circle and Chai Society will be matched $2 for every $1.
- All upgrades within President’s Circle will be matched $1 for every $1 and Chai Society will be matched $2 for every $1.

The Challenge is only in effect until midnight, December 31, 2011 – so the time to act is NOW!

AMIT today enrolls 25,000 students, and our needs have never been greater.
Please join us in meeting this exciting challenge for the sake of our children in Israel.

For more information please call Liz Klibanoff, Associate Director of Development, Major Gifts and Annual Campaign, at 212-477-4737 or lizk@amitchildren.org
What was the significance of your dedication of the Harvey Goodstein Sports Complex at the AMIT Kfar Batya campus a few years ago?

We wanted to keep my father’s memory alive by doing something that would have been important to him. Giving children an opportunity to excel at athletics, learn to be good sports, and practice persistence and determination, especially when those children face difficult situations at home, would have made my father very proud.

You chaired the 2011 AMIT Annual Dinner. Please share your feelings about that experience.

While we wouldn’t have jumped at the opportunity to chair the dinner, we felt that it was important to do whatever we could to make AMIT’s biggest annual event a success. We hope that we helped to encourage people to support the dinner, and we really did enjoy the evening. The AMIT staff and volunteers do a wonderful job every year of putting together a great event with attendees of all ages, lots of good food and socializing, a brief but interesting and informative program, very deserving honorees, and a truly fabulous buffet dessert. No one wanted to go home!

You are at the forefront of the Challenge Grant. Please tell us about that program.

We initiated this challenge grant so that people who are already in the AMIT family with us would focus harder on whether they could do a little more than they are already doing to help Israel’s kids. We have found that significant gift multipliers, as we are offering in this challenge, are an effective way to do that. So donors who can find their way to increases in their Chai Society or President’s Circle giving or donors making first contributions at these levels can see an immediate double or even triple impact from their contribution to AMIT.

What do you see for the future of AMIT?

We see a more vibrant organization that slowly expands to embrace both men and women. When people comprehend the difference that AMIT makes in the lives of Israeli children and understand the clamor by Israel’s municipal leaders for the quality of education that AMIT brings to the communities it serves as well as its inculation of attachment to Am Yisrael, we are confident that the support for AMIT will only grow from strength to strength.

Q&A:

Ellen and Meyer Koplow, Esq., of New Rochelle, New York, have been loyal supporters of AMIT for more than a generation. Ellen has served in many roles in AMIT including Regional Vice President for New York. She now serves as a member of AMIT’s Board of Directors. Meyer is a partner at the firm of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz. At this year’s AMIT Annual Dinner, Ellen and Meyer introduced their Challenge Grant, for which they pledged to double or even triple donations at the Chai Society and President’s Circle levels. They have three children, Michael, Jonathan and Aliza, and three adorable grandchildren.

How did you first get involved with AMIT?

When we first moved to New Rochelle, there was a very active chapter in the neighborhood. It was just a given that you joined the shul and the AMIT chapter. Our first Shabbat lunch invitations came from the women I met at a chapter meeting. This is why, 33 years later, I feel that the chapters still play an important role in introducing young people to AMIT and the very crucial work that we do here to support the AMIT Network in Israel.
AMIT Mitzvah Program

AMIT invites you to extend your generosity into the lives of those less fortunate by participating in the AMIT Mitzvah Program. Our Mitzvah Program gives young people the opportunity to grow in character and spirit through the act of tzedakah (charitable giving).

Your mitzvah today ensures a brighter future for a child tomorrow.

For more information or ways to get involved in the AMIT Mitzvah Program please contact Leora Gurevich at 212.792.5690 or e-mail at LeoraG@amitchildren.org.

AMIT’s Bar/Bat Mitzvah Twinning Program offers your family the opportunity to lead and help others by profoundly impacting the life of a young Israeli student, while at the same time enriching the experience of your own family’s simcha.

ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

To sponsor and to reserve your spot now, email GolfIsrael@AMIT.org.il or contact co-chairmen:

Herman Weiss - hweissmd@yahoo.com - +972 52 724 9300
Joseph Shmidman - jshmidman@gmail.com - +972 54 485 8929
Alan Gelman - goodhumorag@gmail.com - +972 50 481 5950

SAVE THE DATE
Thursday, May 24, 2012
Caesarea Golf Course, Israel

• Shacharit @ Golf Course beginning at 8:30AM
• Shotgun start at 10:00AM
• 18 holes of golf on an award winning course
• Putting Contest- Prizes- Give-aways
• Food and beverage will be served during the day
• Award Ceremony
• Club Members welcome
• Dan Caesarea Spa option for non-golfers
• Transportation available
• Individual hole and other sponsorship options
In recent weeks “price tag” crimes (crimes of vengeance), committed by right-wing extremists, have intensified in Israel. These acts include the torching of mosques in the West Bank, setting private Palestinian vehicles on fire, breaking into an IDF military base and sabotaging army vehicles in the base’s auto-shop and leaving threatening graffiti at a liberal Jewish activist’s residence in Jerusalem.

A red line was crossed as “price tag” acts were committed within the 1967-lines (the “Green Line”). A mosque at the Bedouin village of Tuba Zanghariya near Tsfat was set on fire and spray-painted with graffiti that said, “price tag” and “vengeance.” In the aftermath of the burning, many Israeli officials and public figures expressed their condemnation of the event, and of all “price tag” activities. The following is the AMIT response, written by Dr. Amnon Eldar, director general of the AMIT Network, and reprinted from the October 11, 2011, issue of the Jerusalem Post.

**Price Tag – The War In Classrooms**

Religious Zionist education is about peace and fundamental values of human freedom, not wanton violence against innocent people

By Amnon Eldar

All “price tag” crimes, and the troubling Tuba Zanghariya incident in particular, are deeply troubling for educators. The claim that schools within the Religious Zionist system may contribute to this phenomenon must be countered clearly, so as not to mislead the public.

The AMIT Network is the educational system’s largest religious Zionist network with approximately 25,000 students. Our message about respect for the rule of law and for others is unequivocal. We at AMIT not only believe that it is possible to live full lives in a democratic and Jewish state, but also engage in educational activities with the specific aim of teaching respect for those different from ourselves. We believe and teach that there is no contradiction between being a pious Jew and being a law-abiding citizen of the State of Israel, a citizen faithful to the state’s laws, informed with regards to the duties and rights of citizenship, and respectful of the principles of democracy and individual rights.

Citizens in a democracy have the fundamental right to protest government actions. To protest, by legitimate means, can even be considered a citizen’s duty. However, violence is not legitimate in any form. “price tag” activities are acts of pure violence and harm the State of Israel and the Jewish people, and each and every student in an AMIT school knows this.

Beyond instilling our philosophy in schools, AMIT runs various educational programs focused on addressing these issues. For example, in Jewish studies lessons we highlight the fundamental value of human freedom: “Beloved is all humankind for they were made in the image of God” (Avot, 3:14).

AMIT has also established batei midrash (houses of learning) in schools for teachers to learn how to discuss controversial issues in our society with students, based on AMIT’s philosophy and worldview.

This is such a crucial issue in the AMIT Network that, following the recent “price tag” incidents, homeroom teachers throughout Israel have been discussing the issues of protest boundaries with their students as part of a comprehensive program on human dignity. In addition, citizenship lessons place great emphasis on the importance of human dignity, a democratic state and obeying the law and accepting the rules of democracy.

In conclusion, this is precisely the time of year, time of introspection and cheshbon nefesh (soul searching), when educational leaders cannot remain silent. They must explain loudly and clearly their stance against “price tag” activities, while educating our youth in the ways of Torah values. Those who choose to harm innocent people and houses of prayer deserve to be denounced. If there are weeds in the garden of religious Zionism, it is our duty to isolate them, uproot them and prevent ugliness and violence that is foreign to the values of a religious education.

Dr. Amnon Eldar, Matzav HaRuah’s Person of the Year in Education

The newspaper Matzav HaRuah, distributed in synagogues throughout Israel, has announced its People of the Year. Leaders from all walks of Israeli life — education, security, society, chessed, the economy, music, law, sports, literature and the media — have been selected based on their contributions to Israeli society. Dr. Amnon Eldar, director general of the AMIT Network, was chosen for his accomplishments in education.

“I grew up in a house of educators,” said Dr. Eldar, “and I saw how a devoted teacher can lead a child to the heights of success. However, the AMIT Network’s success would not have occurred if not for its dedicated principals and teachers. I am happy to have been given the opportunity to be involved in the field of education and to impact our young people and the character of the State of Israel.”
Because of your generous donations, over 25,000 students at 98 AMIT schools in 26 cities are being educated and nurtured within a framework of academic excellence, traditional Jewish values and Zionist ideals. Here are a few ways your gifts made a difference. Please use the attached envelope to send in your end-of-the-year donation.

For more information visit www.amitchildren.org or call 212-477-4720.

**HIGHLIGHTS AND SUCCESSES**

**YOUNG INVENTORS AT AMIT GWEN STRAUS JUNIOR AND SENIOR SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL**

Nir Reiter, a ninth grader at AMIT Gwen Straus Junior and Senior Science High School, Kfar Batya, already had an idea when assigned an end-of-the-year science project. The assignment was to solve a *Halachic* issue using technology. Nir knew from experience that he needed to find a digital way to deal with electrical power problems on Shabbat. Nir and fellow classmate Omer Badash wrote a computer program to solve the problem of a circuit breaker that shuts off the electricity on Shabbat.

The invention was tested by an engineer who approved the design and helped the students construct the system. AMIT Gwen Straus principal Rabbi Itamar Haikin was excited by the idea and sought the approval of a distinguished rabbi. The rabbi ruled that the invention complies with *Halacha* and is an excellent solution for Shabbat observers.

**AMIT GWEN STRAUS JUNIOR AND SENIOR SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL RANKS FIRST NATIONALLY IN COMPUTER SCIENCE BAGRUT**

For the second year in a row, AMIT Gwen Straus Science High School in Kfar Batya has ranked first nationally in the computer science *Bagrut* exams. “For us, the added value of excellence in computer science is that our students are able to serve in elite technology units in the IDF and thus serve their country,” said AMIT Gwen Straus Principal, Rabbi Itamar Haikin. The overall *Bagrut* success rate at the school is over 95 percent, and a third of students make it onto the Ministry of Education Director’s List of Excellence.

**AMIT BEERSHEVA JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS HOLD WORKSHOP IN RUSSIA**

This past summer two AMIT Beersheva Junior and Senior High School teachers made AMIT history. Zev Frieman and Dr. Yevgeny Kanell traveled to the Penza region in Russia to hold a computer science teaching workshop for 54 local teachers. The goal of the five-day workshop was to present the principles of computer teaching to the Russian teachers and share with them the Israeli curriculum of foundations in computer science.

The Penza Region minister of education and governor visited the workshop to express their gratitude to the Israeli teachers, and present Frieman and Kanell with the “honored citizen” award.
AMIT TORANI MADA’I NETIVEI AM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED AS GREEN SCHOOL
AMIT Torani Madai Elementary School in Sderot has been officially recognized as a green school by the Ministry of Education. The minister of education and the Southern Region science education supervisor presented the school with a Green School Certificate at a national ceremony held recently in Ramat Gan. AMIT Torani Mada’i, which is the first green school in Sderot, was recognized for its wide range of environmental education and activity: recycling, wise use of resources, sustainability, and leadership. Environmental education at the school is an inseparable part of its overall focus on science, Jewish values and academic studies.

AMIT ATIDIM FILM RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION
Congratulations to AMIT Atidim Or Akiva film students on winning The 2011 International Student Film Festival Award for Best Foreign Language High School Romantic Comedy for their film “Victory” directed by Avi Yehielov. A second AMIT Atidim film, “Start-Up Dream,” directed by Tammy Agronov, was a finalist in the competition.

Over 250 films from 14 countries were submitted to festival judges this year. Films compete in a number of categories, including documentary, foreign language, drama, comedy, science fiction and animation.

Congratulations to the winning film’s director, producer, crew and actors and to AMIT Atidim’s film teachers.

AMIT KFAR BATYA STUDENTS TAKE A PRO-ACTIVE STANCE AGAINST EXTREMISM
Thirty 10th grade high school students from AMIT Kfar Batya demonstrated at the Ra’anana Junction against the arson committed at a mosque in Tuba Zanghariya.

The idea to demonstrate at Ra’anana Junction came out of a discussion the students had with their principal, Rabbi Eliezer Kurtzweil. The students said they wanted to demonstrate because of their deep anger that a right-wing extremist minority is bringing shame on Israel and the religious community.

Rabbi Kurtzweil said, “These extremist activities (“price tag” incidents) outrage every person, every Jew and every citizen in Israel. These actions go against Jewish halacha and democracy. I am happy that the students did not just sit in class and talk about this, but took to the streets to protest.”

Maor Vanzana, a tenth grade student, said, “Lots of cars honked at us and encouraged us. Some gave us the thumbs up sign, and others opened their windows and expressed their support. This kind of behavior goes against our entire AMIT education. The solution will not be reached through violence and vandalism but through dialogue.”

Turn to page 19 of this issue of AMIT Magazine. Dr. Amnon Eldar, director general of the AMIT Network, responds to the “price tag” incidents in an article published this past October in the Jerusalem Post.
When I was in elementary school the story of Yehudah and Tamar (Genesis 38) was often skipped over. When I became a teacher, I chose to include that story when teaching Tanach. While containing sensitive elements, its message is important and contains a valuable lesson.

The story is about the unconventional union that transpired between Yehudah, the son of Jacob, and his daughter-in-law Tamar, who disguised herself as a prostitute.

There are a number of difficulties in the story:

1) How can we legitimize the behavior of Yehudah?

2) Why does Yehudah not recognize Tamar?

3) When Tamar requests that Yehudah leave her three expensive and highly personal items as security, why does he agree so quickly?

4) Why doesn’t Tamar contact Yehudah when she discovers that she is pregnant?

The Midrash Rabbah, rather than condemning the behavior of Yehudah, seems to say he should not be held responsible for his actions. Rabbi Yochanan says, “Yehudah wanted to pass by (Tamar) and G-d sent the angel of desire.” The angel remarked, “Where are you going Yehudah? From where are kings going to come?” Yehudah thus turned to her against his will. According to the midrash, it was the angel who orchestrated the entire episode.
...Second Chances

This explanation supports Tamar’s cooperation in G-d’s plan. At first she came out simply to confront her father-in-law and ask him why there was a delay in her marriage to Shelah. She sees that Yehudah does not recognize her, acting totally out of character, and realizes that he is being controlled by another force. Tamar decides to participate in this heavenly ordained plan. By not even informing Yehudah of the subsequent pregnancy, Tamar seems to be cooperating with G-d who doesn’t want Yehudah to be aware of what he has done. It is only after the trial when she is sentenced to be burned at the stake that she reveals to Yehudah evidence in her defense. Tamar shows the three items that Yehudah had given as security.

Yehudah is faced with a tremendous dilemma. If he admits that he fathered Tamar’s child, he will be publicly disgraced. If he hides evidence to protect his honor, an innocent woman and child will be executed. G-d wanted to create this tension when He sent the angel to ensure that Yehudah not turn away from Tamar’s advances. Yehudah’s destiny was to be the father of the Jewish monarchy. To be a leader, the king must follow his own moral convictions. It was precisely in this area that the first king, Saul, failed. Till now Yehudah suffered from the same weakness. He did not fight to have his brother Yosef returned safely to Yaacov even though he knew that it was the right thing to do. When his brothers subsequently blame him for not expressing his reservations in harming Yosef, he can’t tolerate the criticism and leaves home. Even when his first two sons die as a result of being married to Tamar, Yehudah cannot find the courage to tell her that he won’t risk the life of his remaining son by allowing him to marry her. Being so concerned with public persona - that it clouds moral actions - is not the behavior of the progenitor of kings. While Yehudah seems to have given up on himself, G-d does not give up on him. G-d creates a dilemma that allows Yehudah to finally find the strength to do the right thing.

The story of Yehudah and Tamar is about giving people a second chance and creating the appropriate atmosphere where they will learn to make the correct choices, so that they fulfill their G-d given potential. This is exactly what AMIT does- one child at a time. Many of our programs, including the one I work with at the Frisch Beit Hayeled in Jerusalem, take the unsung, yet brightest of our youth and place them in an environment of excellence so that they can develop their maximum potential. At Midreshet AMIT we offer young women a year of intensive learning along with the opportunity to perform acts of chesed that can help change the lives of children while achieving significant personal growth. This is AMIT, empowering youth to be leaders, taking responsibility for their actions, and being the compass for a better society.

Rav Morrie Wruble is the Rosh Midrasha at Midreshet AMIT, a post high school program for young women located at Frisch Beit Hayeled in Jerusalem. Rav Wruble a graduate of Yeshiva University, R.I.E.T.S., and Bernard Revel Graduate School made Aliyah in 1980 and lives with his wife Dr. Anna Wruble and their five children in Yerushalayim.
THE AMIT NEGEV

Transforming the Negev through Education

By Robert E. Sutton

The Negev...it is the majestic, beige and red hued expanse of desert mountains, parched riverbeds, the acacia and juniper trees, and the lunar-like craters. The Negev is Beersheva, Sderot, Eilat, Kiryat Gat, Dimona, Yerucham. It is the Ramon Crater, the Zin Valley, the sands of Halutza, Sde Boker, Ben-Gurion University. The Negev is where God spoke to Abraham and the place where monotheism began. It was the land of the Tribes of Yehudah and Shimon. The Negev is the bond between our storied past and a glorious future.

The dream of large-scale development and modernization of the Negev is as old as the State of Israel itself. It was first articulated by the founding father and first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, who chose to make the Negev his home.

The Negev region makes up 60 percent of the territory of the State of Israel, but houses only nine percent of the population and has long been just a pretty asterisk in the minds of most Jews in the diaspora. That is until now –

According to a government team currently preparing Israel’s masterplan for the 21st century, Israel, north of Beersheva, will be the most densely populated country in the world within 30 years if present trends continue.

Ambitious new plans are now aimed at changing the situation, and the efforts to jump-start large-scale Negev development are more than rhetoric: they have significant financing and the political clout of the government behind them. And, long-established and highly-reputable organizations such as AMIT and the Jewish National Fund are also strongly invested in the future of the Negev.

With a goal of growing the Negev’s population, increasing economic and educational opportunities, increasing employment, creating quality of life for all residents, and building a stronger Israel, the government’s masterplan includes an investment of over $4 billion, non-profit investment of $600 million, and private investment of $2.5 billion.

continued on page 28
For me the Negev is home. I love this land - its open spaces, its wonderful landscapes and the fascinating past embedded in its earth. I will always return to this place.

– Ariel Sharon, speech in Beersheva, 11/21/2001
The AMIT Negev Initiative

Dynamic pedagogical programs built around the needs of Israel in the 21st Century

Our strategy for the AMIT Negev Initiative
- Continue to expand existing schools
- Launch new educational programs to target the new immigrants and diverse population
- Implement operational improvements

AMIT in the Negev:

BEERSHEVA
AMIT Junior and Senior High School
Dina and Moses Dyckman Ulpanat AMIT

AMIT Daisy Berman Yeshiva

AMIT Silver Technological High School

AMIT Rambam Elementary School

AMIT Afikim B’Negev Elementary School

AMIT Torani Madai Netivei Am Elementary School

AMIT Hazon Ovadia Elementary School
AMIT Or Hammer Elementary School
Neot Avraham Elementary School

SDEROT
AMIT Sderot Religious Junior and Senior High School
AMIT Sderot Yeshiva Junior and Senior High School
AMIT Sderot Ulpana Junior and Senior High School
Ulpanat AMIT Shirat

AMIT Sderot Gutwirth Junior and Senior High School
AMIT HaRoeh Elementary School
AMIT Torani Mada’i Elementary School
AMIT Torani Chadash Elementary School
Yeshivat Hesder of Sderot, AMIT Track

YERUCHAM
Kamah School

AMIT Sderot Gurwirth Jr. and Sr. High School Campus

For AMIT the challenge we face is supplying the Negev with exceptional educational programs, highly-qualified teachers and principals, upgraded school buildings, playgrounds, computers, even notebooks and pencils. To that end, AMIT is proud to launch the AMIT NEGEV INITIATIVE: Transforming the Negev Through Education.

From kindergarten through high school, AMIT is uniquely positioned and singularly qualified to offer the children of the Negev educational continuity, academic excellence and strong Jewish values. AMIT offers a variety of elementary school programs that include religious and secular studies. AMIT’s outstanding educational experiences continue with academic and technical high schools as well as yeshivot and ulpanot for those interested in more intensive Jewish studies.

Chairs, Joyce and Daniel Straus

AMIT needs your help in assuring that the economic, spiritual and educational growth of the Negev never ceases. Dedications are available for schools, libraries, batei midrash, computer and science labs, gymnasiums, auditoriums and classrooms. For more information please contact, Liz Klibanoff, Associate Director of Development, 212-477-4737 or lizk@amitchildren.org.

Rambam Elementary School, Beersheva
We all know that the “send off” at the airport for a year of studying in Israel, is both an overwhelming and emotional experience. It’s the separation that hurts and the idea of saying goodbye to family and friends that no one can ever really be prepared for. But the girls I met just minutes after I finished my last hug welcomed me and let me know that it was all going to be okay. We were all embarking on a new chapter.

The essence of Midreshet AMIT is warmth, unity, and love. Only with the support of our new friends and teachers can we really grow and embrace independence. Through listening to others and understanding different perspectives, each of us can grab a little “handful” of everyone we encounter, and create who we ultimately become.

Before we began working with the children of Beit Hayeled, I already had a warm feeling in my heart about how the experience was going to be. The day our bus arrived we were waved to and smiled at by the children. It seemed as though they were inspired by us just as much as we were by them. The 2012 class of Midreshet AMIT were ready to give of ourselves.

Part of what makes Midreshet AMIT so special is that it helps the students appreciate how fortunate they are. These children are faced with life’s greatest challenges; I, on the other hand, have had every benefit and opportunity that life has to offer. It was a startling revelation for me, one that has set the theme for this year’s journey.

The journey that we began as a group of 23 young women has been nothing short of inspirational. There is a big difference between being told what you have to learn as opposed to being able to choose the courses that interest you. I’m excited to explore and challenge myself through becoming more knowledgeable in Judaism. I’m determined to use what I am learning in the classes to appreciate the blessings of my life and my heritage.

I hope one day to be able to give back to my rabbis, teachers, friends and “family” as much as I am going to get from them. There is one thing that I already know: as a group we perform admirably together, whether in comfortable circumstances or when faced with adversity. This is the kind of love and devotion that will forever seal us as the one and only Midreshet AMIT class of 2011-2012.

The adventure of 23 has only just begun. To be continued...
AMIT 2011 annual dinner
by robin rothbort

The Hilton Hotel in Midtown Manhattan was the venue for the 2011 AMIT Annual Dinner this past November. A large and diverse crowd gathered to pay tribute to a trio of very deserving honorees, and was treated to an inspiring address from the AMIT Network’s Chief of Staff, Aharon Carish. Guests were also privy to a special announcement from Dinner Chairs Ellen and Meyer Koplow.

This year’s honorees were commended for their tireless efforts on behalf of the children of Israel. Adrianne and Avi Shapira are AMIT leaders who emerged from the New Generation Board to National roles; Dr. Russell Hendel is following in the footsteps of his grandmother and mother by his commitment to AMIT, and particularly to the children at Beit Hayeled where he was a founding donor. Gabriella and David Fridman represent the next young generation of leaders. Gabriella’s family history with AMIT is decades of commitment. AMIT is very lucky to have all of these honorees as dedicated donors.

Ellen and Meyer Koplow wowed guests when they announced their Challenge Grant. The new program was introduced to galvanize AMIT donors to raise their levels of giving by the end of the year. The Koplows will match every new gift or increase made at the Chai Society and President’s Circle levels, up to $150,000. Kol HaKavod!

Dinner Co-Chairs Aliza and Steven Major, Samantha Francis, Amy and Ephraim Bassan, Pearl Bassan and Dr. Linda Dubin Garfield, worked tirelessly to ensure that the event was a sensation. The outstanding turnout and support for the evening is a testament to the honorees, chairs and the work of AMIT.
DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Who needs Vegas? This past September, AMIT held its fourth annual Guy’s Night Out – Texas Hold ‘Em Tournament. Also billed “Steaks, Stakes, Stogies and Scotch,” the event has become one of the most anticipated night’s of the year for AMIT supporters. Guests enjoyed a fine array of meats, spirits and hand-rolled cigars before sitting down for the main event, the Texas Hold’ Em tournament. This year, AMIT’s social media was highlighted leading up to and during the event, as trivia questions were available for answering on the AMIT Facebook page, and the goings-on were documented through “live-tweeting,” featured on AMIT’s Twitter page (@TweetatAMIT). Daniel Ottensosser and David Stonehill, the events co-chairs, were asked one question by guests upon the night’s conclusion: What time next year?

guys night out comes up aces
by josh binstock

Pictured (l to r): Adam Kaplan, David Stonehill and Jacob M. Safra

Pictured (l to r): Jonathan Kroll, Dan Shields, Jonathan Tolpin

David Stonehill and Howard Wietschner

Daniel Ottensoser and Steven Jutkowitz

Ari Glass and Michael Nachmani

Stuart Milstein and Daniel Ottensoser

For expanded coverage of this event log onto: www.amitchildren.org
For expanded coverage of this event log onto: www.amitchildren.org
The AMIT Israel Annual Dinner, held in October, was a spectacular and successful event. With over 280 participants at the Ramada Hotel, guests were treated to a lavish reception followed by a delicious four-course meal. But it was not just the great food which made for such a special evening—it was the warmth and ambience of the event, due in no small part to the participation of the honorees, their friends, families and colleagues, and the hard work of the Dinner Committee.

The dinner honorees were Renee Douglen and David and Esti Schwartz. Renee is a life member of AMIT, and has been active in both her chapter in Elizabeth, NJ, as well as in Jerusalem. She has served both in the past and currently on the AMIT Israel Executive Committee. David Schwartz joined the AMIT family in 2003 as the network’s internal auditor, overseeing the auditing of AMIT’s 98 facilities. David’s wife Esti often accompanies him on his visits to AMIT facilities, assisting him with his audits. They serve as an example of a couple who has dedicated their professional lives to chesed.

The Dinner Committee, led by Yaffi Shmidman and Estelle Fink, were especially pleased that the honorees attracted such a wide-range of guests to the annual event. Guests included AMIT Director General, Dr. Amnon Eldar along with many of the Network staff members, Bar Ilan President, Professor Moshe Kaveh, AMIT President Debbie Isaac as well as a number of past presidents, AMIT Israel Executive Committee Chair, Rahel Rogers, and AMIT Israel Director of Development, Judith Schwed-Lion. Joseph Shmidman served as emcee for the evening.

Also at the event were representatives of companies with which the AMIT Network does business in Israel and donors from the United States who were visiting Israel at the time. This annual dinner is the culmination of the AMIT Israel Annual Campaign, which raises an impressive amount each year in support of the AMIT Network. By far the largest contingent of guests was the loyal and committed members of AMIT in Israel from our chugim/chapters all over Israel who give generously to the Annual Campaign. We were also pleased with our largest ever contingent of New Generation members.
rockland cares for **kallahs in israel**

by bill rothchild

A MIT of Rockland County (New York) hosted an event to raise funds for young women who are recent graduates of AMIT schools. The fund provides financial support to graduates who are getting married as they begin to build a bayit ne’eman b’Yisrael.

The headliner for the event was Naomi Nachman, the “Aussie Gourmet,” who moved from Australia several years ago. After graduating college, Naomi started her own personal chef business called, “The Aussie Gourmet” to cater weekly Shabbat and holiday meals for families. In 2004, she started the Kosher Culinary Institute where recreational cooking classes are taught. On the menu for the evening’s festivities were several dishes appropriate for Rosh HaShanah.

The Kallah in Israel program was underwritten by Malki and Gary Gartenberg and their family in memory of and tribute to Malki’s mother, Mrs. Ann Harris, z”l. The program was held in the home of Riki and Robert Rimberg whose daughter, Alyx, is a graduate of Midreshet AMIT. Speaking on behalf of AMIT was Debbie Moed, vice-president of financial development, who grew up in Rockland County.

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building a community of leaders

by susie senders

The inaugural event for this year’s AMIT Future Leaders Initiative (AFLI) was a special lecture by Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein of Yeshivat Har Etzion. The event was held in the Ramaz Middle School on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Rabbi Lichtenstein spoke on the topic of leadership as seen through the example of the prophet Elijah. He highlighted how Elijah believed in an ideal world run by principles of exact justice and fairness. Elijah carried his idealism over into his political interactions as well. He refused to negotiate or compromise with the king, Achav, because he disagreed with Achav’s lenient policy on idol worship. He would rather become alienated and withdrawn, and fundamentally in a position with little ability to impact the nation, than have to surrender to his ideals and his strong dedication to God.

Rabbi Lichtenstein’s message on what can be learned from Elijah was twofold. We learn of the importance of being involved and of engaging with different people and circumstances in our world. Furthermore, we can recognize the need to engage even with compromise as seen with the ultimate fate of Elijah who ascended to Heaven rather than continue to lead the people on earth. It is difficult to lead when one cannot identify with his followers.

For those of us in AFLI, the message learned from Rabbi Lichtenstein’s analysis rings true. We are being groomed to become the future leaders and advocates of the Jewish community. We are learning firsthand how to identify and confront the needs of our fellow Jews all over the world. As a recent graduate of Midreshet AMIT, I have experienced the support that AMIT provides for children and families in Israel. But we are also learning the importance of teamwork and networking, for it is within the framework of a united group that we work most productively and successfully as the newest and freshest branch of AMIT.
The 2011 AMIT Greater Long Island Gala took place this past September at The Sephardic Temple in Cedarhurst, NY. With the theme “New Horizons for Children,” the event, which was attended by close to 400 people, paid tribute to a distinguished group of local residents for their long-time service to AMIT.

The New Horizons for Children Award was presented to Susan and Fred Raven of Great Neck. Sandra Davidoff, a resident of Woodmere, was honored with the Bonim Maasim Tovim Award, and the Dor L’Dor Award was presented to Gail Elsant, who also resides in Woodmere.

Rebbetzin Sondra Gottesman received the Keter Shem Tov Award.

Vivien Lobell received the Hakarat Hatov Award.

Featured speaker was Rebbetzin Abby Lerner of the Young Israel of Great Neck who gave an inspiring d’var Torah.

The Long Island Gala was co-chaired by Debby Gage, Rise and Harvey Kaufmann, Zipporah and Rabbi Arnold Marans, Esther and Donald Press, Betty Atlas Rumelt and Owen Rumelt and Sami Schindelheim.

For more information, please contact Chava Ashkenazi at 011-972-2-673-8360 or via e-mail at chava@amit.org.il

AMIT Purim Gala Concert 5772

Tuesday, February 28, 2012
Gerard Behar Theater, Jerusalem

Featuring the Choir of the Israel Defense Forces

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a special dedication at kfar blatt
by bill rothchild

AMIT Kfar Blatt recently hosted a special dedication by Susan Alter Klaperman, of Lawrence, New York. The dedication was in memory of Susan’s parents Leah and Emanuel Lacher, z”l, and her brother, Dr. Arthur Lacher, z”l.

The program consisted of Mrs. Alter Klaperman and other family members speaking about the people in whose memory the dedication was made, the recitation of tehillim, the unveiling of the plaque, light refreshments and a tour of Kfar Blatt.

Through the generosity of Mrs. Alter Klaperman, who served as a New York City Councilwoman from Brooklyn, a scholarship program has been endowed to assist AMIT students in Israel with priority given to the students at Kfar Blatt.

boston gets a taste of the mediterranean
by rana rapoport

This past September, more than fifty AMIT music lovers and supporters gathered at the home of Reva and Harvey Gertel. The event entitled: “A Tour of the Mediterranean” included music from of Israel, Italy, Spain and North Africa. Performed and organized by the gifted violinist Amos Lawrence the concert was a great way to start the New Year for AMIT New England.

Concert goers gathered in the living room of Reva and Harvey Gertel

Amos Lawrence, violinist and concert director with Rana Rappaport
AMIT network in Israel shares its vision
by Robert E. Sutton

On November 1st, a joint meeting of the AMIT boards convened in New York City. The meeting brought together the Board of Directors, Governors, New Generation Board and AFLI Board. Those who gathered heard from the newly installed AMIT President Debbie Isaac and Executive Vice President David Moss.

The night’s keynote address was delivered by Director General of AMIT Dr. Amnon Eldar. Dr. Eldar spoke eloquently about the current goals of AMIT including maximum academic achievement of all students, safe and orderly environment for all students and employees and efficient and effective support operations for all students, families, teachers and administrators. He also spoke about efficient and equitable distribution of resources to address the needs of all students, to the maximum extent feasible and improved public confidence and strong parent/community engagement. The audience felt galvanized by all the hard work and the vision from the offices of the AMIT Network in Israel.

AMIT chug ayelet takes a mid winter break
by Shoshannah Rick

Away we went! On a bright, warm Friday morning in November, 45 members of Israel’s Chug Ayelet, one of AMIT’s chapters in Israel, traveled to Beersheva for a wonderful Shabbaton.

Our first stop was at Chatzerim, the Israel Air Force Base, where we toured the museum and the display of the historical aircraft used since Israel’s inception. Everyone was excited and impressed by the display which included pictures, sophisticated equipment and uniforms.

Our Shabbaton activities were well coordinated through the efforts of Special Events Chair Marilyn Rubin and the Ayelet Presidium Carole Brenner and Stacee Hess. Many young members also participated.

Adding character to our group were several rabbis: Rabbi Moshe Gorelick and Rabbi Pinny Kahn, who treated us to Divrei Torah, talks and lectures. Rena Quint shared with us her thoughts on the development and history of Jerusalem. Dr. Henry Hashkes lectured on “Health Issues in 2012.” Stacee Hess gave us a brief and informative update on some of AMIT’s latest projects and successes.

We even managed to eke out some of our precious time to play a few group word games. It was quite obvious that everyone enjoyed the special Shabbat and already you heard murmurs of ‘the next time...’
Lido Beach, NY – This past August, a Yom Iyun was held at the Lido Beach Synagogue. The “Day of Learning for Women by Women,” also titled “Multiple Messiahs,” was chaired by Rebbetzin Mimi Mehlman, Lauryn Weiser and Debby Gage. The event was kicked off with the singing of the National Anthem and the prayer for the State of Israel by Sharon Simon, and was highlighted by the keynote speaker Shuli Taubes, MDiv.

Pictured (l to r): Lauryn Weiser, Rebbetzin Mimi Mehlman, Shuli Taubes, Debby Gage and Debbie Isaac

Manhattan, NY - This past July, in honor of Mildred Hellerstein's special birthday, her family and friends celebrated by funding a pilot program, AMIT Top Tech Initiative at the AMIT Modiin High School. This program will create leading edge models that leverage technology to enrich the curriculum and increase student competitiveness in today’s world. Both Mildred and Alvin Hellerstein have been avid AMIT supporters and leaders for many years. This program at the AMIT Modiin school will pay homage to Millie’s love of math and science as well as her passion for learning.

Pictured: Alvin & Mildred Hellerstein (seated), and past AMIT President Dr. Francine Stein

Manhattan, NY – In September, a special event for members of AMIT’s President’s Circle was held at the Peter Max Studio in New York City. Max’s art work was a part of the psychedelic movement in graphic design. His work was much imitated in commercial illustration in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Having fled Nazi Germany before World War II, Max spoke of his connection to Israel and how his art often reflects that bond. Joan and Leon Meyers chaired the event.

Pictured at right: Peter Max
Pictured at left (l to r): Max & Audrey Wagner and Audrey Lookstein

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As a parent and a long time devoted AMIT donor, I know how important a good education is to the development of children. Many of the 25,000 students at AMIT in Israel do not have the advantages that our own children enjoy and which we may easily take for granted.

President’s Circle gifts provide the foundation upon which our network of schools is built. These annual gifts are sustaining funds that we rely on to support our excellent programs. In order to guarantee the continuation of programs which nurture Israel’s children and instill within them strong values and academic excellence, we rely on our members whose annual donation ensure Israel’s future by providing these opportunities.

All successful endeavors require a strong foundation. Please join me. The circle will not be complete without you.

Co-Chairs: Brenda Kalter and Deena Shiff

For further information regarding President’s Circle, please contact Robin Rothbort at 212-477-4725, 1-800-989-AMIT (2647), or email robinr@amitchildren.org.

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