

# Inside AMIT

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## The Vocational Advantage:

IN THIS EDITION:

HOW AMIT IS HELPING BREAK THE POVERTY CYCLE  
FOR AT-RISK YOUTH IN ISRAEL

*On the cover:*  
Vocational student  
at AMIT Elaine Silver  
Technological High  
School, Beersheva

*Inside cover:*  
Auto-tech students  
from AMIT State Tech-  
nological High School,  
Jerusalem

#### **PRESIDENT**

Audrey Axelrod Trachtman

#### **EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**

Andrew Goldsmith

#### **DIRECTOR GENERAL**

Dr. Amnon Eldar

#### **CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER**

Shari Weisenberg

## **AMIT Offices Around the World**

#### **NATIONAL OFFICE**

##### **New York City**

212.477.4720

info@amitchildren.org

www.amitchildren.org

#### **ISRAEL**

##### **Kfar Batya Campus**

1 Jerusalem Street

Ra'anana

#### **MID-ATLANTIC & NEW ENGLAND**

##### **Baltimore/Boston/D.C./Philadelphia**

410.484.2223

robbiep@amitchildren.org

#### **MIDWEST**

##### **Chicago**

847.677.3800

AMITChicago@amitchildren.org

#### **Cleveland**

216.591.1119

AMITCleveland@amitchildren.org

#### **SOUTHEAST**

##### **Florida**

954.922.5100

ronir@amitchildren.org

#### **WEST COAST**

##### **Los Angeles**

818.929.2097

AMITLA@amitchildren.org



# *Table of* **CONTENTS**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>01</b> President's Message                                     | <b>16</b> A Special Occasion to Remember |
| <b>02</b> Running Away Isn't an AMIT Value                        | <b>18</b> A Recipe for Freedom           |
| <b>03</b> The Vocational Advantage                                | <b>19</b> Dvar Torah                     |
| <b>10</b> Incorporating Jewish Values into AMIT's Secular Schools | <b>20</b> Our Donors                     |
| <b>12</b> An Enabler of Dreams: AMIT Educator at Ashkelon         | <b>24</b> Event Highlights               |
| <b>14</b> Tower of David Renovation                               | <b>30</b> In Memoriam                    |

**AMIT** provides an innovative, Jewish values-based education for 40,000 children in Israel each year. AMIT welcomes every child and levels the playing field for the children of Israel through education.

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# President's Message

BY AUDREY AXELROD TRACHTMAN

*“As we approach Pesach, my wish to you is that you are as inspired by the people around you as I have been inspired by the AMIT educators I have met.”*

**B**eyond the requirement to tell the story of the exodus from Egypt, the seder, with its many different components, is a remarkable learning opportunity. Embedded in the “maggid” section is the story of the four sons: wise, evil, simple, and one who doesn’t know how to ask questions at all. There are many interpretations as to who these sons symbolize, but one theme is constant: We, as adults, are being told to treat our children as unique beings and not to tell the story in the way that might be easiest for us. We are to meet each child where they are and teach them in a way that will be most meaningful for them. Although we may not always follow that advice, I think we all recognize that “differentiated learning” makes sense. And every once in a while, we are reminded of the magic that can happen when a teacher does just that.

Moran Cohen Huja is a teacher at the AMIT Jerusalem Vocational School. She has a fear of heights and when she takes her students to an amusement park, she does not go on the roller coaster. Eitan Yosef Mimoni is a 10th grade student in Moran’s homeroom. Following a school leadership program that empowered students to experience flying, Eitan decided he wanted to skydive. But there was a catch — Moran had to go with him. Despite her paralyzing fear, she agreed because this was clearly important to Eitan. She wanted him to know that she was willing to do whatever she could for his success, even if it was way outside her comfort zone. They trained together, got on a plane, and skydived near the Dead Sea. Moran’s commitment to do “whatever it took” was not lost on Eitan. As he explained, “I cannot imagine anyone else in the world skydiving with their homeroom teacher. It’s clear to me that with a teacher like Moran, I will successfully complete my high school bagrut diploma.”

This is my last Passover column as AMIT’s president. Over the past four years, I have been

incredibly privileged to see firsthand the amazing work being done by so many AMIT teachers who choose to work harder and smarter than they need to, for the sake of their students.

Last year, I wrote about Nedavya Naeh, the principal of AMIT’s boys’ high school in Tzfat. A poor student as a child, Nedavya never received a bagrut diploma. To show two students who were considering dropping out both grit and humility, Nedavya studied with them so that all three could earn their diplomas. Never one to rest on his laurels, this past September, Nedavya realized his dream of creating an “achievement” academy for at-risk kids. With AMIT’s support, he opened a special vocational school for 44 students, many of whom had been rejected by their schools and families, some living on the street, one under house arrest. I recently had the opportunity to visit the school and talk to the students. The teachers serve, in large measure as surrogate parents, making sure kids actually get to school and have food in their bellies.

But that’s only the baseline. Nature and the outdoors are a key part of the program. The students are responsible for many school operations not normally handled by kids, all designed to engender responsibility. The goal is to strengthen their resilience so they can overcome any difficulty they have — and will — face. The trust being developed means better academic performance and real goal setting and accountability. Next year, enrollment at Nedavya’s school is projected to double. People recognize a good thing when they see it.

As we approach Pesach, my wish to you is that you are as inspired by the people around you as I have been inspired by the AMIT educators I have met. Many thanks for your continued support of AMIT. None of this would be possible without you.

*Audrey*

**Audrey Axelrod Trachtman**  
AMIT President



Audrey with AMIT Vocational Students

# Running Away Isn't an AMIT Value

BY ANDREW GOLDSMITH



**R**ight now, prior to Purim, the state of Israel and many of her most ardent supporters are in mass hysteria. There is simply no other way to describe it. Normally responsible thinkers, leaders, and media commentators have abandoned civil discourse, hurling the most horrible incendiary language. Once peaceful demonstrations have turned scarily violent, and the usual condemnation of extremes is now a scarcity. Diaspora Jewish leadership subtly threaten to “take their money and go home,” and are told (not wrongly, I think) in less than delicate terms, to “shove it.” There’s a deep and frightening anger surrounding very complex issues that can’t be reduced to a sound bite, slogan, or silver bullet solution.

At AMIT, we stand very much in the middle of this social storm, as tens of thousands of adolescents look to us for critical guidance. The moment demands an educational response equal to the task, all at light speed, before horrible words become even more horrible deeds.

For us at AMIT, the only way out is, well, in. Our educators respond by breaking complex, overwhelming social issues into small, manageable ones built on the foundation of carefully nurtured mentor relationships. By no means homogeneous (many AMIT schools have students from all different backgrounds), every AMIT school is twice removed from the street, once by location and then by atmosphere. It’s a safe place where differences, no matter how deep, don’t have to become divisions. It means we have the institutional bravery to depart from the curriculum, that we possess the hard-earned relationships that foster real communication between teacher and students and among students themselves via an educational platform that views such efforts as a value on par with the importance of academic success. The glorious thing is, our students internalize that lesson and take it home.

AMIT HaOfek Or Akiva is a “last chance” secular vocational school educating some of the toughest students in our network, those who haven’t had success elsewhere. During a recent visit, I met a 12th-grade student who had joined the school a year or so earlier, his fifth school in four years. Nadav arrived as a rare combination: a behavioral nightmare; a burgeoning criminal record; an imposing presence; and a brilliant, off-the-charts IQ. Our educators did their magic and Nadav will graduate with a high bagrut diploma, having only started academics a year ago, an incredible feat.

In conversation, Nadav had only the most negative, and frankly offensive, things to say about the state of Israel and Israeli society, eviscerating most everything and

everyone imaginable in very colorful language. And then I asked what I always ask soon-to-be AMIT graduates:

“What’s next for you?” I fully expected the answer to be a flight to Los Angeles.

Nadav responded, “Tzahal in a fighting unit.” Given my incredulous look, he added, “Of course — it’s my country. I need to fix it.” Lesson learned from a 16-year-old former delinquent, badly in need of a haircut. Sometimes it is simply that simple.

On a personal note, all AMIT officers and some board members will soon complete their term. Since inception and with uncommon wisdom, AMIT’s founding mothers included strict constitutional term limits to eliminate the risk of AMIT becoming an organizational banana republic (“president for life”) or playing leadership musical chairs. Every four years, we infuse new lay blood as past leaders graciously make way and provide the benefit of their hard-earned wisdom to whoever is next.

Audrey Axelrod Trachtman began her presidency in September 2019 with carefully considered plans and goals, all of which were blown up a few months into her term as the pandemic eclipsed all. It wasn’t at all what she bargained for, but Audrey took it in stride as many of the great moments of being AMIT president were stolen away. She approached seemingly intractable challenges in a unique fashion — head-on, with great intelligence, intellectual honesty, and utter dedication to the organizational good. A not-uncommon discussion between us began with Audrey’s, “Andy, this is why you’re wrong,” followed by spirited back-and-forth arguments, all with the rock-solid trust between us that after the debate ended, we were doing this together.

To her great credit and despite unimagined challenges, AMIT raised over \$46 million during her tenure, and our network today serves more students far more effectively than ever before in our nearly 100-year history.

For Audrey, like Nadav and AMIT, running away from a problem simply isn’t an option, no matter how challenging. Kol HaKavod.

Chag Kasher V’Samaech,

**Andrew Goldsmith**  
AMIT Executive Vice President



# THE VOCATIONAL ADVANTAGE:

HOW AMIT IS HELPING BREAK THE POVERTY CYCLE FOR AT-RISK YOUTH IN ISRAEL

BY TOVA COHEN

**T**he first vocational school AMIT founded opened before the modern state of Israel, foreshadowing AMIT's ability to pioneer ways to foster the next generation of bright minds who will contribute to and strengthen Israeli society. AMIT was one of the first, and over time has become, one of the most significant providers of vocational training across Israel.

Now, AMIT counts 10 vocational centers in cities across Israel in a thriving network caring for thousands of students, the majority of whom were born and

raised on the country's social and economic margins. To say these disadvantaged Israeli youths didn't flourish in more traditional academic settings is an understatement.

"Students generally come to us after they've been thrown out of many other schools," explained Motti Arbel, director of AMIT's national vocational program. "Many of them are crushed by the system, they're from poor neighborhoods, and their parents either threw them out of the house or can't help them in the ways they need."

“We feel like supporting AMIT students is a natural extension of the values we hold most near and dear in our hearts.”

Since university degrees and the IDF are often not viable options, many of these children end up on the street, trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty into which they were born.

Arbel continued, “These students could not fit into a regular framework for any number of reasons.” Seeing this pressing need, AMIT made major investments in some of the first vocational centers in Israel, where students could learn a specific skill in tracks like tourism, industrial management, agriculture, system engineering, graphic design, photography, electrical, cosmetology/hair, advanced transportation, information technology (IT), administration, culinary arts, and carpentry.

AMIT’s vocational education centers are not only changing individual lives, but also spearheading a growing national trend. Increasing numbers of young adults cannot find meaningful jobs, while Israeli industries are facing an enormous shortage of specialized workers.

AMIT State Technological High School in Jerusalem’s flagship program is its state-of-the-art Auto-Tech Tools for Success. Its graduates are at the forefront of advanced automotive diagnostic and technological studies. Theoretical and hands-on instruction teaches students to solve mechanical and technological problems in high-tech cars, from hybrid to autonomous. The IDF welcomes graduates, and from there, students go on to earn engineering degrees or are snapped up by high-tech firms.

There’s also the AMIT Elaine Silver Technological School in Beersheva, where many students are Ethiopian immigrants or the children of

immigrants. They can choose to enroll in tracks like IT, carpentry, or graphic design. Students also have the option to earn a full bagrut (regents-style exams) certificate; most complete school with either full matriculation or a technological diploma, opening doors to higher education and service in specialized IDF units.

The AMIT Fred Kahane Technological High School in Ashkelon has an innovative business administration track that begins in the ninth grade; students learn



business management, budgeting, accounting, and other skills, like public speaking, that prepare them to thrive in the workplace.

Other AMIT vocational centers are in Or Akiva, Ra’anana, Ashdod, Ramle, and Petach Tikvah. Their mission is to provide solid career paths for students, and a future that encompasses more than just a profession, but the promise of a meaningful life that lifts them out of poverty.

While AMIT creates tangible opportunities for these



students to provide for themselves and their families as adults, instilling confidence and pride is also a big part of the vocational experience. For the first time, they're good at something in school. For the first time, they're in a setting that's built around them, not demanding they change to fit into something.

It's simple — and yet revolutionary at the same time.

"AMIT's greatness lies in the fact that it's never been scared to try and help these children on Israel's periphery," declared Arbel. "We never considered if it makes us more or less important to be able to provide solid options for these students, or how we would be viewed by Israeli society.

We believe so strongly in this mission, and we do what we do without caring about the optics or politics."

Before he became the director of the vocational network, Arbel was a longtime AMIT educator, first inspired to pursue education from his studies at Yeshivat Or Etzion with Rabbi Chaim Druckman, z"l, a senior spiritual leader of Israel's religious Zionist community.

"Rav Druckman often said education is the most important work one can do," recounted Arbel. "He would say that not everyone is built for it, but if you can do it, then you should. I tried it, and I found I was built for it. I've been at AMIT ever since."

Every school at which Arbel has taught has benefited from his careful touch: At AMIT Kiryat Malachi, where nearly half of the student body is of Ethiopian descent,

Arbel was instrumental in raising the bagrut scores from 32 percent to 80 percent during the 12 years he was there. He achieved a similar feat in Sderot, where he pushed scores in the 47-73 percentile to over 87 percent.

In addition to easily quantifiable measures, like test scores, there are countless stories of students whose lives hinge on the inspiration they found from Arbel.

To understand his unique ability and unwavering determination to reach these students, you'd likely have to go back to Arbel's childhood in Petach Tikvah, where he grew up on the periphery of the city.

**"He would say that not everyone is built for [education work], but if you can do it, then you should. I tried it, and I found I was built for it. I've been at AMIT ever since."**

"I've always felt connected to the story of challenging social circumstances," Arbel explained. "My father stopped learning after eighth grade, and I think that understanding of not getting everything handed to you on a silver platter was always hovering over me and my

siblings. From my father, we learned diligence and motivation to make a better life for ourselves."

Arbel's siblings went on to become a deputy minister in the Israeli government, the director of a large ulpana, a lieutenant colonel in the IDF, and a high-tech professional — a powerful testament to the heights children can soar with the right inspiration.

Before students are accepted into AMIT vocational schools, Arbel explained, they are interviewed by a professional committee from the schools and the city — and sometimes parole officers — who evaluate

AMIT Children

שם התורה	ציון התורה
1	בינומי
2	קרה
3	פיוזן
4	שיפונד
5	זולין
6	בטונט
7	אמנסה
8	וישי
9	השה
10	פרה

כללי בטחון  
הולמון בטחון

כלי חסות

הפעלת מונטז

מטרת החסות

הנחיה

למורה



them, and assess whether they've tried the normal interventions and therapies to succeed in traditional academic settings, before they're admitted into the vocational program.

"If it weren't for these schools, so many of these young people would end up on the street," said Arbel. "We say to them: We are fighting for you, and we will not give up until you succeed."

These schools succeed largely because of the supportive environment students find there. Teachers meet with students in small breakout groups each week to monitor their journeys and form close connections with them that are atypical in more traditional classroom settings.

"We come to students with open arms, from a place of genuine love and peace," said Arbel. "They respond in kind."

Evelyn Silver Kraut, of Fair Lawn, NJ, whose family dedicated the Elaine Silver Technological High School in Beersheva in Evelyn's mother's memory, visits the school regularly and marvels at the staff's ability to connect to students.

"It's unbelievable the lengths that the teachers go to for their students," she said. "It's such an empowering place and it's easy to see that the genuine belief teachers have in their students really contributes to their success." Evelyn and her husband, Larry, dedicated the school with Evelyn's father, Dr. Walter Silver, z"l, and family including Morris and Sharon Silver, Ruth Cohen, Dassie and Marvin Bienenfeld, and Jinny and Jerry (z"l) Pinsky.

**"If it weren't for these schools, so many of these young people would end up on the street."**

Kraut and her family chose to dedicate the Beersheva school because one of the early vocational tracks it offered was fashion, and Elaine Silver z"l helped produce an annual fashion show for AMIT to benefit AMIT's students. When Kraut's niece, Chana Cohen Nussbaum, z"l, died from breast cancer in 2017, the family dedicated an art studio at the school in her memory.

"We feel like supporting AMIT students are a natural extension of the values we hold most near and dear in our hearts," said Kraut, who still hosts an annual *shiu*r in Bergen County on the occasion of her mother's yartzheit on erev Chanukah with proceeds benefitting the Elaine Silver Technological High School.

One of the students who studied at the AMIT Elaine Silver Technological High School was Malka, the eighth in an Ethiopian Israeli family of 12 children who felt lost at home and at school until she was expelled. But the Elaine Silver High School was different: There, she studied graphic design under the careful guidance of the art therapist who runs the track, in a supportive environment that offered her the structure she didn't get at home. There, she decided to design a new life.

Other students who come to AMIT are also ready to change the trajectory of their lives — students like the 18-year-old who made 32,000 shekels a month selling drugs as he dodged bullets in the worst of neighborhoods before he came to Arbel to enroll in one of AMIT's schools, saying, "I am making a good living, but this is not a good life."

"That's what's so magical about an AMIT education," said Arbel. "In the end, the kids want it as much or more than you do."

Take Moshe, who immigrated with his family to Israel from Ethiopia in 2008. His parents separated shortly thereafter. When Moshe's mother died while he was in high school, he went to live with his dad, with whom he had a deeply acrimonious relationship and who ended up kicking Moshe out of his home and onto the streets.

When Moshe started his studies at the AMIT Tiferet Gur Arye Junior College, he thrived in the highly specialized preparatory program specializing in electronics, computers, and information technology, combined with study of Torah and Jewish history. When he graduated, Moshe took his Certificate of Practical Engineering and went to serve in the Israeli Air Force for two years.

Strengthened by his army service, Moshe is now a successful tech executive. This is but one of the many examples of AMIT's ability to shift the narrative.

"We provide these young people with a jumping board to a better life," explained Rabbi Zuri Levi, a director at AMIT's Tiferet Guy Arye. "The program is labor-intensive and requires extensive coordination, but it's a high reward and enables us to change Israeli society for the better and prepare students for lives of meaning."

Students don't have to choose high-tech pursuits: Even in the more creative vocational tracks, like cosmetology, hair styling, and photography, they are learning to master real skills that can help them secure jobs, provide for themselves and their families, and in this way, stay off the streets.

"The important thing is that they graduate with something that will help them break the cycle of poverty," said Arbel.

These schools have helped create a profound paradigm shift in Israel. By widening the once-narrow borders in which more people can thrive, we are creating a more diverse community of success stories that collectively contribute to a stronger and more vibrant Israel.

AMIT's vocational centers are also for the growing number of Israelis who are seeking marketable skills to quickly secure lucrative jobs, as they recognize that a traditional college education is no guarantee for a paying job out of school.

Still, AMIT's vocational network primarily caters to students on the cusp of a last resort. The pandemic only exacerbated the already-dismal rates of poverty and food insecurity that characterize many of the neighborhoods in which the majority of AMIT's students live; if ever there was a time when these vocational schools are essential, it's now.

As the director of the vocational school network, Arbel spends much of his time working with staff and students on weekly visits to the different campuses.

Donors visit, too — like Barbara Nordlicht of Lawrence, NY, a supporter of AMIT since she was in the third grade. Now 84, Nordlicht and her beloved late husband Jules, z"l, made a monumental gift in 2008 to name the AMIT Nordlicht Religious Technological High School in Jerusalem.

"My husband and I could have chosen to support any number of ventures, but we specifically wanted to make a difference for children from less fortunate backgrounds with more uncertain futures," said Nordlicht. "AMIT has done fantastic things, and on



## AMIT Children

every visit to AMIT Nordlicht, Jules and I would hear from students who told us how much the school means to them. We would see the fabulous teachers, who really have all the kids' success in mind." Nordlicht still visits the school on average once a year. When she was sitting shiva for her husband in Israel, a man she didn't recognize came to the door, but was hesitant to enter. She motioned him over and encouraged him to talk.

"This man told me that he came to be makir tov [showing recognition and respect] because he felt Jules and I saved his son's life," recounted Nordlicht. The man had lost his wife some years earlier, and his teen son was spiraling out of control. Then he enrolled at AMIT Nordlicht High School. "He told me that the school completely turned his son's life around."

Debbie Moed's family has been intricately tied to AMIT for generations. "From the time it was Mizrahi Women, AMIT's mission of building a strong state of Israel through educating its children has resonated with my family," said Moed of Englewood, NJ, AMIT's immediate past national president.

school where the signature vocational track is automotive mechanics, since Henry Zeisel, the family's patriarch, was a machine tools dealer. "We felt it really tied into our family's values," said Moed.

Students who live at and attend high school in AMIT's Kfar Blatt Youth Village come from difficult socioeconomic backgrounds; their parents can't support them at this crucial time in their development. Many of these children end up studying at the Zeisel vocational school and junior college to prepare for the next phase of their lives. Armed with the advanced diagnostic tools they learned at the vocational school, they draft into the IDF with sought-after skills; many of them are placed in officer track positions.

Moed points to the arc of Moshe Uziel, the Zeisel school's principal, who grew up in the AMIT system from an early age, and worked hard with AMIT's unwavering support to get to his current position in life. Moshe served as an officer in the IDF, went on to achieve an advanced university degree, and is now a loving husband and father in addition to being a successful professional.



"When parents are unable to nurture their children's dreams, AMIT steps in to fill that critical role," said Moed. "AMIT helps these children actualize goals and give them a future they never knew existed."

Perhaps Nordlicht said it best: "Jules and I felt that supporting AMIT was the best investment we ever made because we were investing in people."

Arbel, too, talks about the investment made in AMIT students.

"AMIT vocational centers are smaller and enable us to see and connect to every child, whereas that's more difficult in larger, traditional schools," he described. "We get to really invest in our students

with counseling, motivation, more teachers, and more activities. We're giving them the feeling that they are really significant."

"My parents instilled in their kids, early on, the importance of education," said Moed. "They were huge proponents of vocational training, believing that it could empower children with the opportunities and confidence needed to strive and achieve more than they ever thought possible."

In 2018, the Gloria and Henry I. Zeisel and Family Junior College was dedicated at Kfar Blatt in Petach Tikvah by Moed's family: Gloria Zeisel, Cheryl and Abe (a"n) Kramer, Elliot and Mary Zeisel, Howard Zeisel, and Debbie and her husband, Sam Moed. The family chose to dedicate this

Many of AMIT's vocational schools have added 13th and 14th grades, to continue to nurture students who need the extra support to thrive. "Eventually, we want to develop a program that will accompany these students until they're 25," said Arbel. "Even Israel's Ministry of Education understands this simple fact: These students need to know that they have the support to succeed in the next stage of their lives. And that's the story of AMIT." ■

# Background of Students Attending AMIT Vocational Centers

- Students who are not able to manage in typical educational environments — including special education classrooms, individualized classrooms, and/or specialized tracks — are referred to the vocational school by way of social services.
- Students that typically come from a low socioeconomic stratum: 7 and above on the socioeconomic scale.
- Students with a host of challenges: personal, educational, and social.
- Among the more prominent issues of this student body: lack of attendance (absentee rate higher than 30%), severe behavioral problems, and criminal records. Most students must work to support themselves and their families.
- The organizational change at the AMIT Network level and focus on vocational training has enabled a focused approach on these specific student needs.

## AMIT Vocational Success Rates



**68%**

GRADUATE

Basic Vocational Certificate



**52%**

GRADUATE

Advanced Vocational Certificate



**82%**

ENLIST

IDF or National Service

## AMIT Vocational Tracks



TOURISM



INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT



AGRICULTURE



SYSTEMS ENGINEERING



GRAPHIC DESIGN



PHOTOGRAPHY



ELECTRICAL



COSMETOLOGY/HAIR



ADVANCED TRANSPORTATION



IT



ADMINISTRATION



CULINARY



CARPENTRY

# Incorporating Jewish Values into AMIT's Secular Schools



The AMIT State Technological High School in Jerusalem provides a model for AMIT's integration of Jewish values into secular schools.

BY LIDAR GRAVÉ-LAZI

“**T**he Jewish worldview teaches openness and multidimensionality while maintaining core values that require personal development and strive for a high moral standard,” said Yochanan Fridman, director of the non-formal programs at the AMIT State Technological High School in Jerusalem.

It is this worldview that guides Fridman in his critical role of instilling Jewish values and Torah lessons within the Jerusalem high school's secular education system.

“My role as the director of the informational education system at the school empowers me to create a connection for students between the formal and the informal education spheres in the school,” he stated.

Fridman, a married father of four who lives in Jerusalem, began his career in the field of education immediately following his army service. He says his interests lie in how Judaism and Jewish values intersect with education — a philosophy AMIT proudly promotes.

AMIT President Audrey Axelrod Trachtman recently wrote about the belief that religious values and inclusivity are often seen as diametrically opposed concepts, but she said AMIT knows they don't have to be.

“By conscientiously partnering with the communities in which we operate and working with sensitive religious leaders who are willing to grapple with people's feelings and beliefs as well as religious ideals,” said Axelrod Trachtman, “we are showing how Torah values and inclusivity can coexist and even more, reinforce each other.”

AMIT's philosophy mirrors that of Israel's, for despite its secular identity, Israel is founded and thrives on Jewish values such as mutual respect, acceptance, and compassion for those in need. And in a country as rife with political and religious diversity as Israel, adhering to these core Jewish values is key to its success.

“The main values of Judaism include striving for self-fulfillment and excellence while at the same time, aspiring to contribute and influence other circles such as community, society, and state,” added Fridman.

As such, he believes Jewish values have a central role in secular schools — even if the students do not observe mitzvot (Jewish commandments) — and they help develop each student's personal identity.

“We need to establish, with the help of Jewish values, a real educational alternative to parts of modern culture, like reality television, that the students sometimes perceive as shallow and superficial,” Fridman said.

Since the connection to Jewish values from the religious angle is less relevant in secular schools, Fridman aims to make these values accessible through what he calls “moral identification,” in which individuals evaluate the degree to which moral concerns like justice, caring, and generosity are central to their identities. To do this, he interweaves Jewish tradition as much as possible, and provides several examples of this view in action.

“For example, we study the leadership qualities of Moses and David in order to learn about taking responsibility and leading,” Fridman described.

Another instance is the incorporation of relevant Talmudic issues while discussing Jewish law in citizenship classes.

With regard to informal education, Fridman cites how the Jerusalem State High School wanted to impart the Jewish value of helping people with disabilities based on this verse: “And before a blind person you will not give an obstacle.”

This valuable lesson was learned through a hackathon, in which entrepreneurial students were challenged to find technological solutions to help those with disabilities. Other students were enlisted to volunteer at an educational institution for the blind.

“This is how a verse took on a practical meaning and the students were able to develop a deep identification with one specific Torah value,” Fridman explained.

He also described taking students on a jeep trip in the Ha-Ella Valley in the footsteps of the David and Goliath battle as part of the national high school Bible curriculum.

“The students learned the story as part of an experiential trip, which helped turn the tale from a distant text into a tangible story that helped students identify and connect to the power of moral strength versus physical strength,” Fridman said.

Just as the AMIT School Network is known for its holistic approach to education, Fridman believes that Judaism extends the educational responsibility to all the circles in a person’s life. “Judaism is not satisfied with the formal

mandate and emphasizes the community environment in shaping identity,” he said. “A student who is seen and who has the opportunity to express himself will want to volunteer and to lead throughout life.”

Fridman says that the Jewish values instilled in high school, whether secular or religious, remain an integral part of students’ identities later in life.

“One of our graduates today runs an association for distributing food to the needy,” he said. “He himself testifies that what motivates him is the commitment to values of mutual respect and sensitivity, which were ingrained in him through the volunteer work we did together.”

“We would talk about the phrase: ‘Whoever saves one soul from Israel, it is as if it is a whole world’ — a verse that accompanies him to this day,” he added.

Fridman also recalls another one of his students, a fighter in an elite paratrooper unit. While this student does not observe mitzvot, he regularly observes Shabbat in his unit out of a connection and identification with Jewish tradition.

“As someone who works with at-risk youth, I discover time and time again how true the Jewish saying is: ‘Beware the needy from whom the Torah will come,” said Fridman. “The educational spirit of the AMIT Network that believes in and pushes for equality allows me to discover that this is a fact of life that happens every day.” ■





# An Enabler of Dreams: AMIT Educator at Ashkelon

## Mali Cohen Attiah

BY LIBI MICHELSON

MEET MALI COHEN ATTIAH, A LAWYER TURNED EDUCATOR WHOSE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING HAS GIVEN NEW MEANING TO THE LIVES OF AT-RISK YOUTH IN ASHKELON.

Everything changed for Mali Cohen Attiah a few years ago when she flipped open the weekend edition of the newspaper. A small ad announced a search for lawyers to teach a class to underprivileged students. It stood out to Mali, who as a family law attorney for almost a decade had been looking for a new way to give back to her community and feed her soul. In short, she wanted to spend more time engaged in more meaningful work.

She submitted her resume and was invited in for an interview. The position? An educator for the legal administration track at the Junior College at AMIT Fred Kahane in Ashkelon. Immediately, Mali wanted the job, and luckily, the feeling was mutual: She was hired and got to work impacting the lives of children in need each day.

"I fell in love, and even that's putting it lightly," described Mali. "I fell in love with the place, the school, the educational world, and the feeling of touching someone's heart and changing their world completely."

The experience was so impactful that it motivated her to return to school to study special education and obtain a master's degree in educational programming.

While she was furthering her own education, Mali was recruited to teach at the AMIT Fred Kahane Technological High School, also in Ashkelon. Here she found her true calling: a chance to make a difference in the lives of at-risk youth who come from broken homes, difficult socioeconomic circumstances, and environments filled with violence. These children had been removed from the Israeli education system and taken in by the AMIT school system as a last resort. AMIT gives them a chance to break through the barriers placed before them and embrace the opportunity to prove to everyone — but most importantly, to themselves — that they can accomplish more than they thought possible.

In 2020, the AMIT educational system wanted to strengthen the connection between the students and the community by teaching students how

*“I fell in love with the place, the school, the educational world, and the feeling of touching someone’s heart and changing their world completely.”*

to interact with society at large so they could successfully integrate into society once they graduated. They created the Chana & Yisrael Malek, z”l, Educational Ecosystems Program, and AMIT’s Fred Kahane Technological High School was chosen as the pilot school for this new initiative — and Mali was asked to lead it. Clearly unafraid to embrace new adventures, she accepted the offer.

“I believe that at the end of their educational journey, having just spent 12 years in this bubble, they go, ‘OK, now what?’” explained Mali, who described the Ecosystems program as a tool kit for life after school. “Students need to know how to manage in the real world.”

The Ashkelon Chana & Yisrael Malek, z”l, Educational Ecosystems Program was built with a four-year plan correlating to the four years of high school, each with its own yearlong curriculum.

Ninth grade focuses on dreams, an important aspect of instilling hope in students for the chance at a successful life. For many of her students, Mali noticed that dreams seemed out of reach, so students didn’t dare to envision their futures with much hope. Much of this year is spent talking about potential and actualizing it. “I ask students, ‘What is your dream? Is a dream something I have to achieve today, or can it be for something in the future?’” she said. “I give students the permission to aspire.”

In 10th grade, students are exposed to new worlds in the community. Each “world” includes a process where the students discover their strengths, improve their skills, create inner motivation, and learn about new subjects they never knew existed but could be interested in.

In 11th grade, students choose from one of the four vocational tracks of the school: business management, automotive engineering, culinary arts, and hair design and cosmetology. Each student is assigned a mentor who shows them what it looks like to work in the field in the real world. This includes practical financial life skills like opening a bank account, paying taxes, and saving money.

Finally, in 12th grade, the students are taught how to make life decisions based on their own free will rather than others’ expectations. Students are empowered with the space to discover how to make the right decision for their future — whether it’s about where they decide to do their army service or Sherut Leumi (national service), what kind of job they want, how to work under a supervisor, or how to develop healthy relationships.

The four years that students spend in the AMIT Ecosystems program enable them to graduate with an overflowing set of life skills that will position them for success. Students feel enlightened by this program and have gained confidence and an ability to express their needs and desires. Students even ask school administrators to provide specific courses so they can acquire new skills, reports Mali. She even sees a difference in herself. “This has changed me personally, and I’ve only fallen more in love with my work,” she declared.

The Ashkelon Ecosystems program has been such a game changer that it has become a model for other AMIT schools, with each one tailoring the program’s framework to meet the needs of their specific population.

As a mother of four and a devoted educator, Mali often lies awake at night worrying about her students. “I don’t believe you can work in a school or youth center like this without dedicating your heart and soul to the students,” she said. “My colleagues and I meet the kids at the front gate in the morning with a smile on our face and give a hug to every child who shows they need it, probably because they don’t often get a hug at home,” she continued. “When I have a student who had a bad day and can’t yet talk about it, I worry constantly until they confide in me.”

Like Mali, many of the teachers make themselves available to the students day and night so they have a reliable adult to turn to, no matter what. In addition to the innovative pedagogy and strategic thinking that informs an AMIT education, AMIT schools are based on this profound sense of caring — of uplifting children who have all but been abandoned by society.

The faculty and administration teach a love of Israel, community, and Torah values, and they see a difference in the choices the students make and the way they give back to the community from which they came. “I really believe in AMIT schools, and I hope I stay within the AMIT school system until my last day in education,” said Mali proudly.

Mali is now taking an administration course so she can one day be a principal in an AMIT school — a dream of her own that will undoubtedly soon be realized. ■



# T Tower of DAVID Renovation

BY ILANA GOODMAN

AN ANCIENT SITE GETS A MODERN MAKEOVER

**T**his spring, a 2,500-year-old Jerusalem fortress will debut a new look for the 21st century: The Tower of David renewal project seeks to reinstate the ancient citadel as the beacon of the Old City of Jerusalem.

The site has been undergoing a \$40-million renovation, which includes a new entrance pavilion and a state-of-the-art permanent exhibition.

The Tower of David, also known as the Citadel, was first named by the Byzantine Christians, who believed it to be the palace of King David dating to the First Temple period. The title is taken from the Song of Songs attributed to Solomon, King David's son, who wrote: "Thy neck is like the Tower of David built with turrets, whereon there hang a thousand shields, all the armor of the mighty men." (Song of Songs 4:4)

The Tower of David was known for thousands of years as the "lighthouse" of the city, serving as Jerusalem's first landmark on the horizon for those approaching

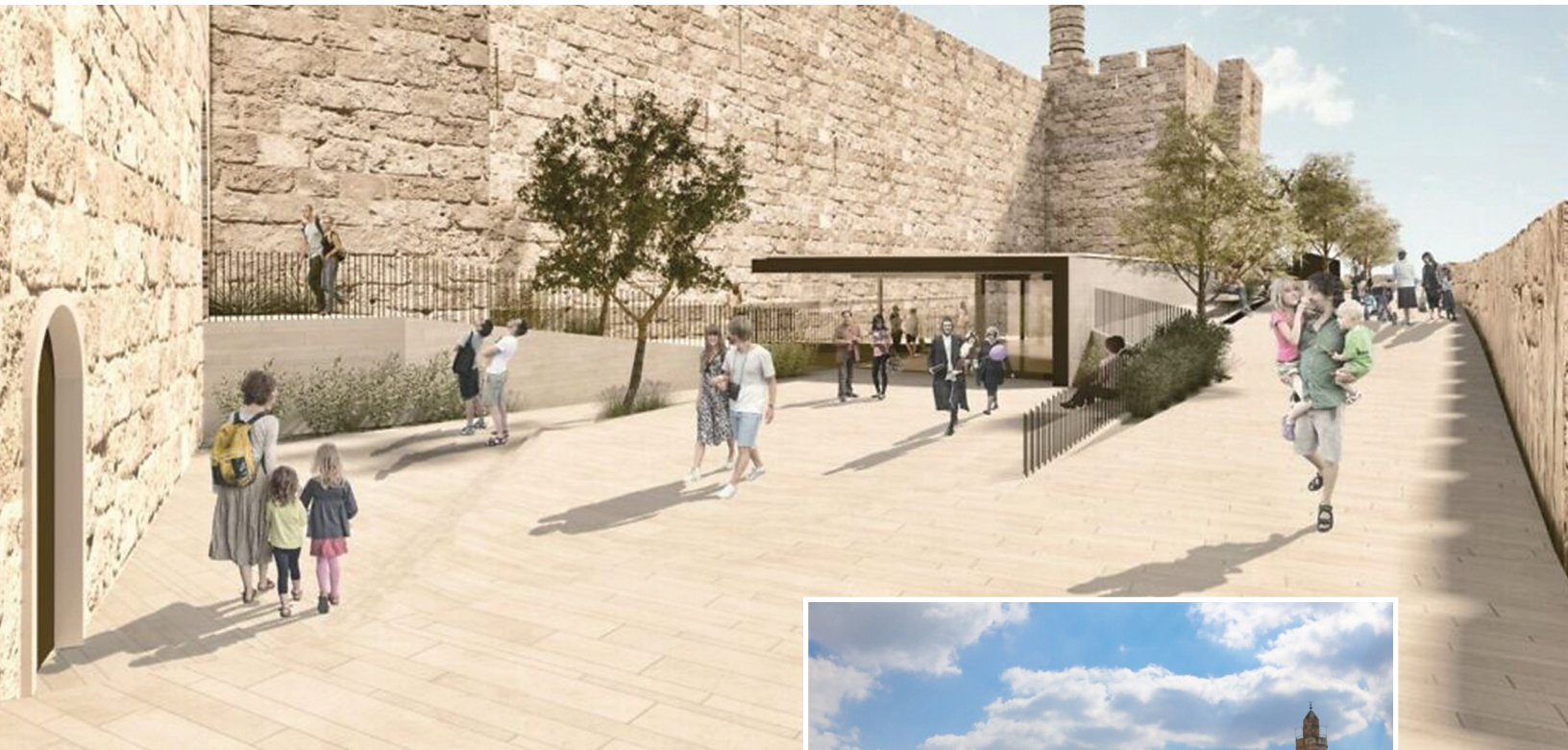
the city and guiding pilgrims coming from the west. The Citadel spans a massive area measuring 12 dunams (three acres), which is larger than the Temple Mount complex, and sits on the edge of the Old City, within its walls. The tower has played an extremely significant role over many generations.

Over the centuries, sections of the compound were regularly renovated and reconstructed by different rulers during various time periods, such as the Hasmonean, Herodian, Byzantine, and early Muslim eras.

It's a surreal feeling, but this is the site where everything happened, so many years ago. And now is the moment we take a big step into present time.

The new entrance pavilion will be called the Patrick and Lina Drahi Entrance Pavilion (funded by the Drahi family, who founded the European media group Altice and are the owners of Sotheby's).

The pavilion, part of the overall plans designed by



Kimmel Eshkolot Architects, will be a 1,000-meter (3,281-foot) sunken steel, stone, and glass building dug 17 meters (56 feet) below ground, between the ancient walls of the Citadel and the Old City. The entrance will allow comfortable access from the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem to the eastern side of the Citadel, beyond the Old City walls, reinstating the status of the Tower of David as the entry point to the Old City.

The entire compound will include a coffee shop, a gift shop, and a shaded seating area open to the public and museum visitors, and it will be easily accessible to parking lots and a planned light-rail stop near Jaffa Gate.

Using sustainable building and construction methods, the project also includes the modernization of the exhibition rooms; a new elevator to access most areas of the museum; wheelchair accessibility; underfloor heating and air-cooling systems; and a new glass facade facing the high walls of the Citadel, offering constant shade to visitors.

The renewal project is being led by funding from the Clore Israel Foundation, as well as from the Municipality of Jerusalem; the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage; the Ministry of Tourism; and the Israel Antiquities Authority, which has been digging for about a year and a half, and has had several major findings, including inscriptions that belonged to ancient rulers of Jerusalem.



While the renovation is expected to draw many first-time and return visitors, many tourists have already been thoroughly enjoying the Tower of David light show, a mesmerizing multimedia and multisensory presentation that takes place in the Citadel courtyard. The popular show incorporates music and virtual reality images telling the stories of King David, the Roman conquest, the Crusaders, and more.

With the renovation set to open imminently, visitors will have even more ways to travel back thousands of years in time to see and experience Jerusalem in an incredible new way. ■

# A Special Occasion to Remember:

## Alumnus Nadir Hovav

BY LIDAR GRAVÉ-LAZI



AMIT Ramle Technological High School knows its students need extra support to thrive, regardless of the background that led them to the vocational school. For AMIT Ramle alumnus Nadir Hovav, that history includes cerebral palsy, which he was born with, and which has presented many challenges in his young life.

Nadir, who gets around exclusively in a wheelchair, spent much of his youth in and out of surgeries and hospitals, forced to transfer to numerous schools because they could not accommodate his special needs.

"I studied in special education and then integrated into the regular school system," he said. "I went through many schools. One year I studied at a technological school but couldn't continue because of a lack of accessibility."

Shortly after he transferred to the AMIT Ramle School in 10th grade, Nadir had to undergo complex surgery on his legs and was unable to attend school for three months.

"Of all the schools I studied at, and I studied at a lot, I received the best treatment at AMIT — warm and caring," said Nadir. "From the principal to the teachers to the guard at the gate and the other students, they all came to visit me in the hospital."

In addition, Nadir says when he first arrived at AMIT Ramle, the school was not wheelchair-accessible — but that soon changed.

"The principal and all the administration ensured that the entire school became disabled-friendly — the entrance, the bathroom, the yard, and all the classrooms," he said. "They ensured that all my classes would be on the first floor so I could access everything."

Nadir expressed his amazement and gratitude for the decision.

"I know that making the entire school accessible costs a lot of money — thousands or maybe even millions of shekels. I went to many schools, and nobody has ever given me this kind of support," he said.

That includes his parents, from whom Nadir is unfortunately estranged.

"I have not been in contact with my parents for many years. You can even say that I am an orphan," he said. "AMIT is like my family."

Now 25, Nadir recently married the love of his life.

Of all the schools I studied at, and I studied at a lot, I received the best treatment at AMIT — warm and caring."

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The two met through the charity organization Haverim LeRefuah, a nonprofit dedicated to helping people who cannot afford life-saving medicine.

"I took part in some of the activities at the organization due to my disability, and she was a volunteer," Nadir said. "We met and the rest is history."

But with little family support, Nadir wasn't sure how he and his fiancée could afford their wedding — an expensive endeavor even in the most ideal circumstances.

"Everyone at AMIT [Ramle] knew that I had proposed and was going to get married," he said. "They knew that a henna is very expensive, and they just said, 'We are throwing one for you.'"

In an incredible show of care and support, the AMIT Ramle High School hosted the pre-wedding traditional henna ceremony for the bride and groom. It was an extremely moving ceremony for everyone in attendance — especially Nadir.

"AMIT Ramle took care of everything, including the DJ, lighting, and presents to start our life together, and everyone pitched in — the teachers and even the students who decorated and set everything up," Nadir recounted. "It was so moving; I never thought I would experience such a joyous occasion. There was so much food, and I couldn't believe that so many people came to celebrate with us."

Today, Nadir considers himself truly blessed.

"Every child needs an adult to believe in him. I think this is very important, and AMIT is doing G-d's work in every aspect, whether physical, financial, and so on," he said. "I will never be able to count how much they provided and gave to me. There are really no words to describe it. They are my family, not just my school."

Nadir also has a message to share with Israeli society: "Integrate people with disabilities and remove the barriers they face in society," he said. "There can be a lot of growth if you provide them with the right tools, like AMIT Ramle did for me." ■

## A RECIPE FOR FREEDOM

# Passover Silan Sage Date Chicken

BY CHEF MEIR GABBAI



### INGREDIENTS:

- Olive oil (or a different oil of choice)
- 8 chicken thighs
- 3 large onions, cut into thin slices
- 3 peeled carrots, sliced
- 1 overflowing tablespoon of silan
- 2-3 leaves of fresh sage
- Thyme
- Chili
- Half a teaspoon of cumin
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 4 1/2 pounds of potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 1 jar of apricot jam
- 3 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 2 full heads of garlic
- 1 overflowing handful of dates (or dried fruit of choice)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cover the bottom of a large, heavy pot with a thin layer of oil. Lightly fry the chicken (with skin on) until it turns golden. Remove from pot.
3. Using the remaining oil and fat from the chicken, sauté the onions and carrots in the pot (it might be necessary to add a bit more oil). When the onions begin to brown, add silan, sage, thyme, chili (be generous!), cumin, and salt. Using a wooden spoon, constantly stir the bottom of the pot to ensure that nothing sticks. When the onions brown, add the potatoes, jam, and soy sauce. Put the chicken above the mixture, covered with full heads of garlic (the tops can be cut off to slightly expose the cloves), and sprinkle the dried fruit over the mixture. Cover with water and bring to a boil, adding spices and salt if needed.
4. Cover the pot and put into the oven for two hours. After an hour and a half, remove the lid. It's best to prepare immediately before serving.

### THE DIVERSITY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

can be seen through the lens of charoset, the traditional seder dish that symbolizes the mortar Jewish slaves used to build pyramids before their exodus from Egypt. Charoset comes in numerous variations passed down by Jewish communities and families across the world; many Sephardic and Moroccan versions of the dish feature dates or apricots.

Both of those elements can be found in this Passover Silan Sage Date Chicken recipe crafted by Meir Gabbai, a teacher at AMIT's Fred Kahane Vocational School in Ashkelon. Nearly 300 students who have not found success in traditional academic settings are enrolled there in tracks like automotive electronics, hair design, business administration, and the culinary arts, which Meir oversees.

This Passover, we encourage you to try this beautiful dish that twists the narrative so that the "mortar" ingredients are not tools of slavery, but conduits of promise and potential — much how we at AMIT see our incredible students. **B'TEYAVON!**

# Dvar Torah

## ON PASSOVER AND FREEDOM



*Rabbanit Rachelle Sprecher Fraenkel is a Torah educator at Nishmat, and the director of Matan's Hilkhata Institute. She serves as a Yoetzet Halacha on the laws of family purity and is a member of AMIT's Spiritual Council.*

BY RABBANIT RACHELLE SPRECHER FRAENKEL

A famous parable from the stories of Sinbad the Sailor tells of a man about to cross a river. An old man approaches him and asks him to load him on his back so he can cross the river safely. The man agrees and carries the old man on his back.

When he reaches the other bank, the old man stays, holds on, and does not let go. From then on, everywhere this person went he had to go with another man on his back. Thus, says the moral of the story, we carry upon ourselves the burden of ancient memories. Instead of walking around the world young, fresh, and vital, we carry an old story with us, bound to it wherever we go.

In comparison to this parable, there is a story by Jorge Luis Borges that tells of a Scottish explorer who, in his research travels, encountered a tribe called Yahoo. This clan has almost no memory at all. In the evening, they can barely remember what happened in the morning. The entire culture does not accumulate any history or memory. Their legal system is not based on proof, argument, or reasoning. Is there any point in proving events that no one remembers anyway? No event from the past casts a shadow over them. But neither does it serve as a tool for interpreting the present, either for enhancing an experience or for determining one's values.

Their form of existence seems light and free, but also flat and one-dimensional.

In the space between these two thought exercises, we find ourselves in the central educational event of the Jewish calendar: Passover and Seder night.

In the image of the Israelites fleeing Egypt with bundles on their shoulders, there is a conscious

effort here to transfer the bundles from generation to generation: from the shoulders and hearts of the generation of grandparents and parents, to the young hearts and minds of future generations. What does this transfer mean? Is it the passing down of trauma? Is it giving testimony? Teaching history?

In the courts this is a well-known problem: Testimony that is repeated over and over will continuously change, decreasing its accuracy. In our case, it seems that this problem is actually the solution: In the words of the educator Avraham Infeld, "Am Yisrael has no history, they have a memory." History may be that book on the shelf, whether we choose to open it or not. Memory is a living thing, dynamic, always relevant. It is the workshop for creating experiences, deepening value judgment, and understanding religious and cultural context. Through the memory, the storytelling and dramatization of the shared memory, one develops empathy for the distressed, a sense of responsibility to improve people's situation, and an appreciation for freedom itself.

As for freedom, the one who carries a very thin layer of consciousness may be lighter and more easygoing, but it is doubtful if he has a real experience of liberty. For that he would need depth, multidimensionality. To be able to choose how to tell his personal story within the collective space. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh interprets the verse in Bamidbar 23 "G-d who brings them out of Egypt" (in the present tense!) as saying: The redemption from Egypt is ongoing and continuous. In every era there are enslavements, negative dependencies, necessary choices on the way to freedom, and a longing for redemption. What does the exodus from Egypt mean to you, now? Listen to the story, pass it on, create your own story, of this year, in this place, now. This is your deep true freedom, and your responsibility. ■

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*\*As of March 6, 2023*

2022-23



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# EVENT *Highlights*

## NATIONAL

### An Evening With Itzhak Perlman



At historic Sony Hall in the heart of New York City, some 400 supporters of AMIT were wowed by the music of Maestro Itzhak Perlman in celebration of AMIT's groundbreaking Kfar Batya campus, the result of a \$70-million investment into the next generation of Israel and Israeli society.

The event recognized the incredible philanthropic commitment of Layla and Evan Green and Ellen and Stanley Wasserman, and included a preview of the AMIT Kfar Batya campus, which will feature The Evan and Layla Green Family Foundation Gogya Building and Program. There, thousands of teachers will be trained in the innovative Gogya method to be implemented throughout the AMIT Network. The facility will focus on academic excellence and be grounded in AMIT's Torah values, with the singular goal of leveling the playing field for all Israeli children, regardless of socioeconomic background, disability, or personal challenges.

The new campus also includes the Educators' Innovation Center; AMIT Headquarters; Community Athletic Complex; The Gwen Straus Junior and Senior High School for Boys; Elementary School; Welcome Center; Memorial Park for Fallen Soldiers;

and Outdoor Amphitheater.

"An Evening with Itzhak Perlman" was a performance for the ages, with Perlman accompanied by Rohan De Silva on piano.

Maestro Perlman captivated the rapt audience with beautiful musical interludes punctuated with personal stories of his parents' immigration from Eastern Europe to pre-state Israel in the 1930s, along with his own modest childhood in Tel Aviv, his bout with polio, and how music shaped the course of his life as he was awarded numerous Grammys, the Genesis Prize, and the adulation of millions of fans across the world.

The evening included a tribute to Marguerite Werrin, z"l, a dedicated AMIT board member who recently passed away, and the unveiling of the AMIT Kfar Batya time capsule, which will be placed at the campus site and is comprised of special items, including a telegram from AMIT founder Bessie Gotsfeld. The memorable night concluded with the announcement that AMIT is dedicating the Toby and Itzhak Perlman Music Studio located at the AMIT State Technological School in Jerusalem.

“Any organization that does anything for education is the best and the greatest mitzvah.”

*Itzhak Perlman*



**Above Left:** Maestro Itzhak Perlman, Rohan De Silva **Above Center:** Audrey Axelrod Trachtman, Joyce Straus  
**Above Right:** Evan & Layla Green, Andy Goldsmith

## AMIT Annual Guys' Night Out

The stakes were high and the steaks were rare at AMIT's 15th Annual Guys' Night Out last September, featuring a poker tournament, high-end meat and bar, and cigar rolling. Men from the tristate area's greater Jewish community came out to the rooftop at Pier 17 against a backdrop of stunning waterfront views. A newly added auction saw attendees placing bids on signed sports jerseys and rare Judaica, including a framed personal letter by Golda Meir. Event chairs Avi Adelsberg and Alex Luxenberg reported \$215,000 in funds raised — the highest amount ever at this annual event — to support AMIT's 40,000 students.



Avi Adelsberg, Poker Chair; Jared Isaac, Poker Committee member; Daniel Miller, Poker Committee member; Isaac Benishai, Poker Committee member; and Zach Weiner, Poker Committee member

# EVENT *Highlights*

## REGIONAL EVENTS

### Boston Tribute Brunch

In November, AMIT New England Council/Ra'anana Chapter hosted the Boston Tribute Brunch at Congregation Shaarei Tefillah in Newton, Massachusetts. Many longtime supporters, friends, and family came out to honor Cherille Berman and Ruth and Nahum Vishniavsky for their philanthropic commitment. President Audrey Axelrod Trachtman presented an overview of AMIT's diverse education programs.



**Boston Tribute Brunch Committee and Honorees:** Naomi Lopkin, Sarah Okon, Laura Eisenberg, Cherille Berman, Beverly Bavly, Ethlynn Brickman, Sarah Aghion, Ruth Vishniavsky, Jone Dalezman

### Chicago Annual Event



#### SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, June 8th  
**Virtual Mother in Israel Event**

Wednesday, June 14th  
**Annual Assembly**

Last November, more than 100 guests gathered to honor Aviva and Justin Gordon and AMIT alumna Noam Goldberg at the Midwest Council's luncheon in Skokie, IL. At the region's first Annual Event in more than two years, donors enjoyed entertainment from Magic by Randy as they reconnected with each other and honored Aviva and Justin for their communal and philanthropic commitment. AMIT Bellows Noga Beit Shemesh alumna Noam Goldberg spoke eloquently about her AMIT education and active citizenship, as she helps shape Israel through the media as a TV anchorwoman.

**Top Image:** Barbara Geller, Fritzie Robinson, AMIT alumna Noam Goldberg, Sally Aaron, Judy Whisler Aaron

**Bottom Image:** Miriam Neuman, Sandy Miretzky, AMIT alumna Noam Goldberg, Honoree Aviva Gordon, Sharon Friedman, Judy Milstein, Midwest Council President Tami Drapkin



## Philadelphia Tribute Dinner

On December 4, at the Citron & Rose Tavern in Bala Cynwyd, PA, more than 100 people attended a heartwarming tribute to Marguerite Werrin, z”l, president of AMIT Philadelphia Council’s Shira Chapter for more than 15 years. Attendees shared memories of Marguerite and her unique leadership, which remained unwavering through years of ill health. Her legacy lives on through the Sifrei Torah donated to AMIT in her memory and the memory of beloved family members, and the other gifts Marguerite endowed to benefit AMIT’s children in her lifetime.

**Top Image:** Yaela Baine & Rene Rubin

**Bottom Image:** From left to right: Linda Garfield, Norman Garfield, Andy Goldsmith, Ron Werrin



## Florida Supporters Visit Ramle

In October 2022, Sara (president of AMIT Southeast Region) and Ronald Gottlieb of Fort Lauderdale, visited the AMIT Ramle Technological High School. Principal Yizhar Afghan led the campus tour, where they were shown the “quiet room” designed for psychologist sessions and students who need space to regulate emotional behavior.

“AMIT Ramle’s teachers are sensitive to the individual needs of their students and focused on doing whatever they can so students complete high school with skills that will help them be productive,” recounted Sara. “We explored the fully equipped beauty salon, where students learn the cosmetology trade, and the beautiful commercial kitchen designed to teach students the culinary arts, where the teacher is a former chief chef of the IDF. It was a very inspiring visit, and it was great to see our ‘AMIT dollars’ at work.”



Sara and Ronald Gottlieb (second and fourth from left, respectively) with AMIT Ramle staff and students.

# EVENT *Highlights*

## REGIONAL EVENTS



## Israel at the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens

**A**MIT Chug Ayelet hosted a special event in February at the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens. Over a delicious lunch at Caffit, AMIT guests heard words of Torah from scholar Rabbi Dr. Abba Engelberg, founder and former director of Machon Tal at the Jerusalem College of Technology. His talk was followed by an exclusive tour of the beautiful flora coming into full bloom — a hint of spring — at the Gardens.

# Experience

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# In Memoriam



## ESTHER PRESS, Z"l

AMIT mourns the passing of Esther Press, z"l, a dedicated AMIT member and leader whose involvement and support of the organization spanned decades. Esther's journey began as a child growing up in Rochester, NY, in a family deeply involved with AMIT, and then to Long Beach, NY, where as a wife, mother, and educator, she helped found a new AMIT chapter called Daroma, to which she remained unwaveringly committed to running.

With the support of her beloved husband Donald, and their beautiful family, Esther attended or managed countless local chapter meetings and functions and served on the national board as treasurer for many years. Esther along with Sami Schindelheim was the driving force behind the successful Mishloach Manot project every year in Long Beach. She was honored for her service with the Marvin Leff, z"l, Leadership Award at AMIT's 2019 Annual Dinner, at which her family announced the dedication of a classroom on AMIT's Elaine Silver Campus in her honor.

AMIT's mission spoke personally to Esther, who was a teacher in public and private schools and recognized the power of education to mold young people, inspire their futures, and help strengthen society.

Esther's daughter, Deena Kahane, was inspired by her mother's example to serve as AMIT chapter president in Teaneck before she made aliyah 14 years ago.

"My mother was deeply devoted to the land of Israel and the potential of education to change lives, and AMIT perfectly combined her two great passions," said Deena. "She was a genuine role model for me, and her children and grandchildren continue to emulate her values of chesed and support of AMIT."

## IRENE MORRIS, Z"l

Not much is known to us about the life of Irene Morris, z"l. The quiet and unassuming Manhattan resident didn't even like to be photographed. But she must have been deeply impressed with the work of AMIT: She left a substantial gift — her first major donation — to AMIT in her will.

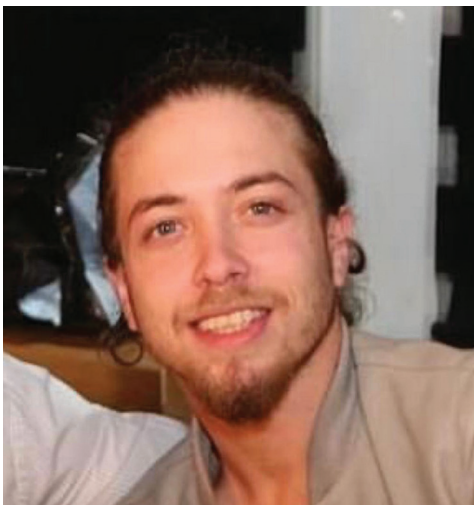
A friend and colleague spoke confidentially to AMIT of Irene's belief in the power of education and her fondness for organizations dedicated to empowering children with opportunities to better their lives.

Though she wished to remain private in her lifetime, he explained, she was always extremely generous, keeping a long list of the birthdays of her friends' children so she could send them gifts each year, and she always liked to treat her friends to meals at elegant Manhattan restaurants.

While we could not thank Irene in person, we honor her legacy through the sacred work we undertake each day to better the lives of the children of AMIT.



## ILYA SOSANSKY, Z"l



AMIT is devastated at the loss of Ilya Sosansky, z"l, a graduate of AMIT Technology High School, who was killed in the Jerusalem terrorist attack on International Holocaust Remembrance Day this past January.

A popular DJ and bartender, Ilya's friends described him as having a good soul, and a genuine joy for life, and as someone who could cheer up anyone. His manager at work mentioned his charm, his love for people, and his modesty and humility.

Ilya was only 26 years old, with his life ahead of him. He is survived by his parents, an older brother, and a younger sister. Hashem Yikom Damo.

## A FINAL LETTER TO MY DEAR FRIEND, **VIVIAN ROSEN, Z”L**

BY ELLEN WASSERMAN

**T**o my dear, dynamic, energetic, strong-minded, loyal, redheaded friend, Vivian Rosen, z”l: I will miss you dearly. Do you remember that you were the one who introduced me to American Mizrahi Women, now known as AMIT? We sat together at Michael Perl’s Bar Mitzvah at the Young Israel of Pelham Parkway 50 years ago. With your natural charisma and persuasive manner, you suggested I come to a meeting of Dahlia Chapter. The rest is history. I went on to become program chairman and then president of our chapter. You encouraged me all along. Your enthusiasm and love for Mizrahi’s work was contagious.

I remember you always held leadership positions in our chapter. Of course, you were president, and then you held other positions. Your dedication to American Mizrahi Women was legendary. There wasn’t an event you didn’t chair or in which you weren’t actively involved. You shared your beautiful singing voice with all of our Dahlia members. You also performed at major national events, singing the national anthem at the start of all our programs. I remember your beautiful rendition of Frank Sinatra’s “I did it my way.”

When you and your dear husband, Solomon D. Rosen, were honored in Deerfield Beach, Florida, Stanley and I flew down to Florida to be part of your simcha and to show hakaras hatov to you both for your friendship. You and Solomon were wonderful friends of ours. When you invited us for a Thanksgiving dinner at your home on Tomlinson Avenue, we came with our four children in tow. I believe that is where our daughter, Rivka, met your granddaughter, Debra Kalb. Whenever Debra and her parents and siblings came to Pelham Parkway to visit you, Debra always came to our house, and she and Rivka spent fun time together.

I remember one Purim when I decided to make hamantaschen. Since baking was not one of my strong points, I ended up with dough all over my hands. I had no idea how to remove the dough from my fingers without ruining the whole batch. With sticky hands, I picked up the phone and called you. “Viv,” I plaintively cried, “I can’t get the dough off my fingers. I don’t know what to do.”

“I’ll be at your house in five minutes,” you responded. And there you were, five minutes later, rescuing me from my baking mishap. Thanks to you, we had homemade hamantaschen. However, I’m not sure that I ever divulged to Stanley that you baked them.

In one of our conversations a few months ago, I mentioned to you that every morning when I say modeh ani, I thank G-d for his beneficence in restoring my soul. It is a gift we cannot take for granted. Your response was immediate and beautiful: “Ellen, yesterday was history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift, which is why we call it the present,” you told me. I have repeated those words to more people than I can remember.

I will miss our phone calls and our interesting conversations. Most of all, I will miss my very dear and longtime friend.

May your memory be for a blessing.

Ellen Wasserman

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