

Inside AMIT

A VISION for the **FUTURE**



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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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HAKARAT HATOV: AMIT HONORS ITS NORTHERN EDUCATORS

AMIT hosted a special evening of appreciation and encouragement for its teaching and administrative staff across northern Israel—including its schools in Haifa, Akko, Karmiel, Hatzor and Tzfat. This event served as a tribute to their unwavering dedication to education throughout the prolonged period of the war. Despite displacement and upheaval, AMIT staff stepped up in countless ways to strengthen their students.

Dr. Amnon Eldar, director general of AMIT, stated: "The educators in northern Israel have been operating under near-impossible conditions for over a year, yet they never gave up on a single student. This event was deeply meaningful and uplifting, centered around a profound educational and moral message of responsibility, hope, leadership and growth."

The cover features the "Pillars of Eternity" memorial at the site of Sderot's former police station, commemorating those who were killed there on October 7. (Credit: Walla)

President's Message

As we sit around our Seder tables this year, we retell the ancient story of our people's journey from slavery to freedom. The story of Passover is not just about liberation; it is about resilience.

The Israelites didn't just leave Egypt—they built a future from the ruins of their past. This year, the story feels different. More immediate. More personal.

Last year, many of us placed photos of hostages at our tables—reminders of those who couldn't celebrate. At my own Seder, I had a poster listing every hostage's name, with a special seat for AMIT alumna Noa Argamani. This year, nothing brings me more joy than knowing Noa is home, celebrating with her family. But that joy is tempered by heartbreak. The return of the Bibas babies in coffins. The devastating loss of their mother, Shiri. We will find a way to mourn these terrible losses, but instead of wallowing in grief and outrage, we will do what Jews have done for thousands of years—we will rebuild and we will look ahead.

For generations, Jews have rebuilt after tragedy—not just restoring, but reimagining. That's exactly what AMIT is doing. Our leadership isn't just helping communities recover; they are building anew. Our director general, Amnon Eldar, now spends one day a week in Sderot, working firsthand to rebuild the shattered education system and community. The Gabel & Straus Family Campus at AMIT Kfar Batya is

rising, a symbol of our enduring future. The Evan and Layla Green Family Foundation Gogya Center will be the heartbeat of cutting-edge education, shaping the next generation of leaders.

Passover is a holiday of questions. "Mah Nishtanah? Why is this night different?" But this year, the deeper question is: "How do we move forward?" The answer is in the final words of the Seder: "*L'Shanah Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim*, Next year in Jerusalem." Next year, may we be whole. Next year, may we be healed. Next year, may we continue to build.



Like our ancestors after Egypt, after exile, after the Shoah—we will not let tragedy define us. We can hold our pain while remaining hopeful, and we can move forward. For me, that hope looks like visiting AMIT's operations in Sderot, seeing the progress on our Kfar Batya construction, and most importantly, connecting with our faculty, staff and students. These relationships and these projects show that the story of our people is not just about survival—it is about renewal.

This Passover, as we dip our maror in charoset, we taste the bitterness—but we also remember the sweetness that follows. The rebuilding has begun, and as always, we will get there, together.

Shari Safra

Shari Safra
AMIT President



Remembering: AMIT students lining the streets for the Bibas family



Renewing: AMIT Sderot students returning to school



Rebuilding: Construction progress at AMIT Kfar Batya

Sderot is a city unlike any other in Israel.

Located a kilometer from the Gaza border and terrorized on October 7, her greatly outnumbered police heroically battled Hamas terrorists in a running three-day battle. Thirty police officers and IDF defenders sacrificed their lives, and a day later Mayor Alon Davidi ordered the evacuation of the city. Thirty-five thousand people relocated, and AMIT's 4,600 students scattered throughout Israel. The story of how we went with them has already been told. Our success in caring for our students on the micro and macro levels is now studied by others as the gold standard in crisis response by an educational network. But as it turns out, that may have been the easy part.

About a year ago, residents started returning to Sderot from all over Israel, and today virtually the entire population is back. There is a quiet yet palpable strength in the city; an unspoken agreement that whatever comes their way, the city will not simply endure but thrive.

Our part in that is not simple. AMIT has been charged with overseeing the educational growth of the city for ages 3 to 23 (approximately 8,000 people including the post-army, post-academia age groups). The goal is to ensure the social mobility of the population of the entire city; to see the next generation enter professions previously unobtainable by the Sderot population while continuing to be devoted Jews and proud citizens of Israel.

On the micro level, our educational staff works with enviable synchronicity with the municipality, planning how every student will not only have a road back, but a way forward regardless of the cost, effort or obstacle. We look at and work with each child holistically, map out their challenges and, in a glorious process of theory meeting practicality, plan the next few years of each student's life to maximize personal growth in all aspects—academic, social, emotional, spiritual—all with students and staff still overcoming the yet unfinished war trauma.

But the macro level is where we show our true innovation toward our vision of becoming "Education Nation." The AMIT approach utilizes reverse engineering, carefully mapping out what

needs to happen at every age, at all levels of society, to remove barriers and encourage ambition and take that information from theory to pragmatic. It's not a new program, a new class or even a new school. Our goal is a paradigm culture shift in the very fabric of the city.

At best it will take years and require a huge investment of our most valued resource—our staff capital and bandwidth. But we are gratefully not alone in this challenge. Long overdue, the Israeli national government now brings previously unimaginable resources to the south, and the usual barrier to implementing great innovation (\$\$\$) is not a factor; it is readily available. And the commitment is not short term. There is a five-year plan and funding to see it through.

Early indications and feedback are encouraging—so much so that we see a steady stream of mayors from the north visiting Sderot to learn more about the process and exploring whether their towns and regions can be candidates for such partnerships as well. If crisis is indeed viewed as opportunity (as I believe is attributed to Churchill), then great crisis brings great opportunity.

Sitting with our staff in Sderot and watching this extraordinary process take place, I often wonder what leadership only a few kilometers away is planning. We invest all we have in our children, betting it all on the chance that we will give them a better life—because to us, each life is a world unto itself.

Those over the border devote their lives to destroying others, gladly offering up their own children on their self-made altar of death. It is certain they will build tunnels while we build bridges.

But this is not a new phenomenon. We were taken out of Egypt for a world-changing mission; taken from slavery by open divine action and chosen by G-d to be His people and to represent to the world values previously unseen and unimagined. Sderot sits barely 200 miles from where that great drama known as the Exodus took place. Thousands of years later, we the Jewish nation are keeping our part of the bargain with G-d as a light unto the nations. And that makes all the difference between them and us.

Impressions

ANDY GOLDSMITH
Executive Vice President



AMIT Partnership STRENGTHENS Sderot

BY LINDA GRADSTEIN



Along with the kibbutzim near the Gaza border, Sderot came under heavy attack on October 7, 2023. Hamas gunmen invaded, managing to commandeer the local police station

before the Israeli army came in and destroyed it, along with the terrorists. Sderot residents were evacuated to hotels in Jerusalem, Eilat and the Dead Sea, and the city effectively became a ghost town.

Amid this upheaval, AMIT jumped into action, quickly setting up remote learning options for the thousands of students who were evacuated when their three area schools shut down. AMIT also offered psychological support, resources and a framework to continue their daily lives during this incredibly harrowing time.

For at-risk young people from the periphery of Israel—the majority of AMIT's students—the trauma of war and displacement is uniquely devastating. These children and teens need the structure and routine of regular schooling to provide them with a sense of stability otherwise absent in their lives. This is a key component of their emotional and educational journeys.

SERVICES FOR THE WHOLE CITY

Now, more than a year and a half after the war broke out, most residents have returned to Sderot and the population has even grown, said Dani Rahat, vice president of strategy for AMIT.

This resurgence has helped foster a new partnership in Sderot between the municipality and AMIT. AMIT already runs three high schools in the city: the Mekif Klali, with 1,200 students from seventh to 12th grade; Kiryat Hemed, a religious school with 550 students; and Beeri, an ulpana (high school) for girls with 340 students. With this new relationship more formally in place, AMIT is providing its unique educational model and teacher training services to the entire city of Sderot.

“From the very first day [after October 7], we coalesced to do whatever we could for the city of Sderot,” Yotam Ruf, head of the *minhelet* (management) in Sderot, said. “After March people

AMIT

began returning to the city, and when the state wanted to support Sderot they turned to AMIT.”

Gil Hadash, head of the education department in the municipality of Sderot, agreed.

“In extreme situations like October 7 and its aftermath, organizations are measured by their ability to react quickly and effectively. AMIT was there from day one. The crisis was monumental but also a historic opportunity to do something that has never been done before,” said Hadash.

“I want to see a student from Sderot in the International Science Olympiad; I want to see a student from Sderot finish the air force training. This is all possible now because of the city’s partnership with AMIT,” he continued.

With AMIT now working with teachers and principals in all the schools in the city, Rahat believes its educational model of striving for academic excellence—as well as an emphasis on “emotional learning”—can help children as they deal with the trauma of October 7, and in some cases with the loss of close family members.



He continued, “Today, the AMIT Network is at the forefront of this transformation, delivering an innovative and holistic framework that spans pedagogical innovation, emotional well-being and personal growth. From first grade to 12th grade, we are equipping teachers and students alike with the tools they need to overcome challenges and achieve excellence. AMIT is proud to lead this pioneering effort and firmly believes that, together with the municipality of Sderot, we are building a model that will not only transform Sderot but serve as an inspiration for cities across Israel.”

ONGOING SUPPORT FOR EVERY STUDENT

AMIT sees each child holistically as their own world with strengths and weaknesses. Its educational model aims to build up these strengths and encourage students to dream, set goals and work toward achieving them—while delivering important emotional support as well.

Rahat is aware that outsiders look at Sderot as an underprivileged area. Towns and cities in Israel are ranked economically. While Ra’anana, with its many English-speaking immigrants, is a 10, Sderot is ranked a 4. Yet the city of 35,000, which has a large proportion of religiously observant Jews, has demonstrated tremendous resilience. Almost all its residents have returned home, and the population has grown, despite the war.

Teachers in AMIT schools have shown tremendous dedication, even though many are evacuees themselves or serve for long stretches in reserve duty—a competing responsibility that demands much of their time and energy. Many of the teachers also have young children, who themselves are dealing with the trauma of October 7. Yet the teachers show up every day to teach, putting aside their own difficulties to educate and nurture AMIT students.

Dr. Amnon Eldar working with the AMIT team post-October 7



Dr. Amnon Eldar, director general of AMIT, highlighted the profound strategic partnership between the AMIT Network and the city of Sderot: “In the wake of one of the most challenging wars in Israel’s history, the children of Sderot have endured immense hardship—being displaced from their homes, facing constant disruptions to their daily lives and experiencing significant setbacks in their education. These children deserve not just to recover, but to thrive. The education system in Sderot must set a new standard and become a model of excellence for the entire nation.”

“In extreme situations like October 7 and its aftermath, organizations are measured by their ability to react quickly and effectively. AMIT was there from day one.”

“Every day, whether in person or by phone, I tried to plant seeds of hope that the world can be a safe and loving place,” Tehila Yifrach, a homeroom and English teacher in Mekif, said. “We went through, and are still going through, a difficult journey. But we are determined to transform this time into a symbol of revival. They won’t break us; they won’t defeat us.” Yifrach said her students did well in their end-of-year matriculation exams, despite all they endured.

And students are deeply grateful to AMIT for supporting them through the ongoing crisis.

“I will never forget October 7; I remember it like it was yesterday,” said Arad Kedoshim, a student at Mekif. “Everything just fell apart: our whole routine, our homes, life itself. I was evacuated to Eilat, and AMIT quickly opened learning centers. That gave us a feeling of home as well.”

Part of AMIT’s model is offering students educational support in small groups and even one-on-one, which is especially important for students with any kind of learning or social-emotional challenges.

Kedoshim said he especially enjoyed the AMIT learning platform that was put on YouTube, enabling students to watch classes they may have missed and stay in

touch with each other and their teachers. AMIT’s swift establishment of alternative learning centers was crucial. Despite being displaced from their homes, students were able to maintain connections with some familiar teachers and classmates. That consistency helped them with both the initial trauma and the months of displacement.

Sderot has many large families, for whom making temporary new homes in hotels was especially challenging, and students found it difficult to find a place to study. Now that they’re back in their own homes, those challenges have eased.

An exciting new development is the citywide implementation of AMIT’s 24/7 initiative. This program promotes positive after-school activities for children, such as sports, learning or volunteering, and encourages students to participate in as many as possible so they have healthy outlets in their free time. Moshe Jacobs, the 24/7 coordinator for Sderot, has introduced the belt model—like in judo—to track the engagement of all the students in the city, interviewing them to get their feedback and logging the info into a central database. Students with the highest level of engagement, black belts, were recently rewarded with a special ceremony and certificate praising their efforts. This public celebration encourages others to increase their participation and expand their horizons.

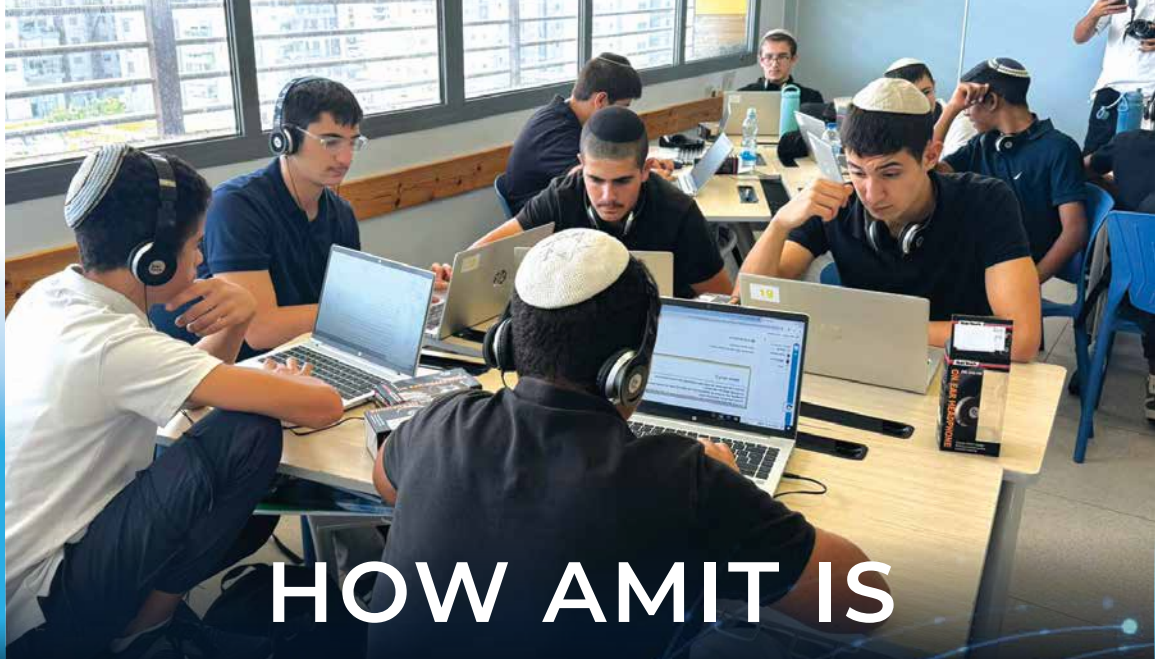
Both Ruf and Rahat observe signs of a stronger and flourishing Sderot, although they caution it will take years to truly see the scope and impact of this new partnership with AMIT. However, they remain confident that Sderot’s students will continue to thrive and, thanks to AMIT, become a beacon of resilience and educational excellence for other cities across Israel.



Black Belt Ceremony: "Excellence as a Way of Life"

פברואר 2025





HOW AMIT IS REVOLUTIONIZING THE CLASSROOM THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

BY ALISA BODNER

A

lesson on the book of Yona opens with a digital map and music, followed by a series of interactive lessons alongside the biblical text. Students are challenged to use independent thinking, outside the box creativity, textual analysis and reflective learning.

An English lesson on artwork offers a virtual tour of a graffiti wall complete with photos, video instruction, a list of difficult words and an easy-to-use dictionary. An artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot on the side of the screen is available to engage in a conversation in English with students who are eager to practice newly acquired language skills. A section on skill building is designed to empower students to set goals, build and manage a calendar, practice time management and set priorities.

Welcome to AMIT's Learning Management System (LMS), one of the recent innovative tools AMIT has developed as part of its commitment to the personalization of learning and excellence in pedagogic development.

The AMIT Network operates across 87 schools in Israel, impacting 40,000 students per year in more than 30 cities throughout the country. About 70% of these schools are in Israel's geographic and socioeconomic periphery, where there is often a shortage of teachers and few resources. The new LMS is currently being used by approximately 6,000 students in grades seven to 10, and dozens of teachers in 20 AMIT schools.

The goal is to incorporate this model in 56 schools in the coming year and, eventually, into every AMIT school. This innovation highlights AMIT's enduring mission to harness both Jewish values and technological tools to empower children on their journeys: educational, social, professional and personal.

Utilizing AI tools, this first-of-its-kind system in scope and scale provides a tailored learning experience for students in the subjects of English, Tanach, history and skill building, integrating rich educational content with goal setting, personal development and learning assessment. Using the module, students set their own goals with teachers and track their progress, choose the subject they wish to learn at the appropriate level of difficulty and pace, and tap into AI-powered support. Teachers monitor students' development and provide real-time feedback and solutions to challenges as they arise, while at the same time adapting content to best support each student's learning journey.



AMIT's vice president of research and development. "AMIT is a body that enables you to dream and to achieve your dreams," said Aflalo, who has been with the organization since 2016. "Everybody speaks, but in AMIT we also do, which means we can see the outcomes that are driven by an entire organization. The sky is the limit."

At the heart of this transformation was the push to enhance six core pillars—connection, belonging, security, capability, internal compass and autonomy—that are critical to young students' growth. Students thereby develop the knowledge, values, skills, internal motivation and self-worth to succeed inside the classroom and far beyond, advancing AMIT's ever-compelling mission to inspire lifelong achievement.

Central to this model are three key aspects:

- **IDENTITY:** Students look inside themselves to discover their values and what is important to them within the Jewish/Zionist framework.
- **STRENGTH OF STUDENTS:** Students hone their interests and strengths, decide what they wish to learn and at what pace and level, and the teacher adapts the lesson accordingly. Teachers shift from being transmitters of knowledge to facilitators of the learning process, empowering students to take control of their personal educational journey and feel more motivated to succeed.
- **PERSONALIZATION OF LEARNING:** Students choose one of three Gates of Learning pathways that best nurtures their unique needs and development. These pathways are Group Study, Independent Study or Discovery, in which students have more freedom to build their educational program.

Throughout this process, mentors work individually with each student to map out goals and progress, to regularly track outcomes for learning and development, and to ensure constant growth. One mentor is assigned per 15 students, ensuring hands-on attention and guidance.



AMIT students embracing the Gates of Learning: Group Study, Independent Study and Self-Discovery

TRANSFORMING THE EDUCATION MODEL

In 2022, AMIT embarked on a revolutionary path to transform the model of education in Israel to be as relevant as possible to today's ever-evolving classroom, a path overseen by Dr. Michal Aflalo,

The LMS tool has the potential to change the face of education in Israel and possibly beyond.

— DR. MICHAL AFLALO
AMIT's vice president of research
and development

Aflalo is responsible for setting the vision for the entire educational model, which includes overseeing a team of 60 developers who are building the cutting-edge technologies and AI capabilities to drive this approach and to facilitate a path unique to each student's needs. AI technology supports the teacher in mapping a unique learning journey for each student and developing the most relevant content according to this assessment. It supports student learning in the LMS module, where each individual can progress according to their own pace and learning style and access chatbots that provide around-the-clock support as well as enrichment questions based on their level. The teacher then reviews the student's work and gathers AI-powered data and metrics on their

strengths and weaknesses. This enables the teacher to properly determine the student's progress and adapt the content and pace of study.

AMIT has also developed tools for teachers to support students with pedagogic skills vital to their personal development, such as motivation to learn and cognitive, emotional and social skills. One of the AI tools currently in development is a chatbot that will help teachers sharpen their mentoring skills. When dealing with challenges in the classroom, the bot will review the teacher's response and provide feedback based on simulation of a conversation with a student.

The team is working on further developing the educational content to incorporate lessons for every subject, as well as additional life skills, and to expand this system to students in 11th and 12th grades.

AMIT IS LEADING THE WAY

Aflalo stressed that this one-of-a-kind AI-powered system does not exist anywhere else in the world. Israel's Ministry of Education has taken great interest in this tool, underscoring its potential to change the face of education in Israel and possibly beyond. According to Aflalo, the Israeli education system has not changed dramatically in many decades, which is why AMIT is so committed to investing in these technologies that will modernize the classroom and engage students in today's climate.

There is endless possibility and potential for the use of AI in the classroom, and AMIT is at the forefront of developing this technology and introducing modern learning tools to empower today's students and tomorrow's future leaders. The impact is already being seen, as teachers report higher grades and increased levels of engagement as a result of the LMS, with more comprehensive assessments to be completed in the future. It comes down to seeing every student as a unique individual and being bold enough to allow the student to proactively lead their own educational journey, with the support of AMIT's talented teachers and mentors.

"We want to have an impact on education, to be meaningful and create a different approach to classroom learning," Aflalo summarized. The results speak for themselves. ■



Group Study



and Heart

AMIT'S BEIT CHAGAI YOUTH VILLAGE

BY ROSALLY SALTSMAN AND SARA WOLF

Visitors to AMIT's Beit Chagai Youth Village are greeted by fresh air and magnificent views as they enter the residential school for at-risk youth. The southern Chevron Hills location, about an hour's drive from Jerusalem, offers many serene and beautiful spots for communing with oneself and with nature, the perfect backdrop for the deep work that takes place here. Horses, sheep and sheepdogs can be spotted roaming the area under the care of the students, grades seven to 12, who take pride and satisfaction in practicing a profession that has belonged to Jews for millennia.



A Farm in the Village



Horseback Riding



W

hen AMIT assumed control of Beit Chagai in September 2023, it was a pivotal moment for the facility, which had long struggled with financial

instability, educational challenges and high staff turnover. Originally founded by area residents, Beit Chagai faced significant hurdles in achieving its mission. Recognizing its potential, and armed with extensive experience in creating transformative, educational homes for at-risk youth, AMIT stepped in to provide the expertise and leadership needed to set the school back on track.

As Israel's leading educational network, AMIT has a proven track record of uplifting youth from Israel's periphery, empowering them to maximize their potential through innovative education and a nurturing environment. For decades, AMIT's Frisch Beit Hayered in Jerusalem has been a model of excellence, known for its holistic approach to education. Now, with AMIT overseeing Beit Chagai, boys who age out of Beit Hayered at 13 can seamlessly transition to Beit Chagai, ensuring continuity in their growth and development.

To lead Beit Chagai into this new chapter, AMIT appointed Yoni Elmashali, a seasoned and compassionate educator who previously served as vice principal of Beit Hayered. Under his leadership, and with AMIT's unwavering commitment to creating

groundbreaking opportunities for its students, Beit Chagai is positioned to become a vital resource and a safe haven for at-risk boys in Israel's southern region.

"I came here to return the village to its glory days and offer a positive, appropriate and respectful response to the boys' needs," said Elmashali. "After a year and a half, we're firmly on the right track."

PROVIDING A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK

Beit Chagai currently serves 35 boys living in four *mishpachtonim*, family-like units where the youth live together. Each *mishpachton* is headed by a devoted young couple who live in the same apartment as the children, serving as surrogate parents. Each *mishpachton* is also staffed by a counselor and two young women who are completing *Sherut Leumi* (national service). A night shift was instituted to provide around-the-clock care and attention to the dorm's teenage residents.

Elmashali resides on-site with his wife and their five children, fostering a close-knit and nurturing community. Adding to this foundation is the spiritual guidance of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Schwartz, the rav of Kiryat Arba, who visits daily to pray and study Torah with the boys, enriching their lives with inspiration and meaning.

A significant part of the village's success lies with its teachers—dedicated and compassionate educators who pour their time, energy and hearts into supporting their students.

The ratio of 35 students to 54 staff members underscores the school's deep commitment to providing individualized care and attention. The staff's dedication is evident in their tireless devotion to the boys under their guidance.

"Despite the challenges posed by the war, like heightened tension and staff members serving in *miluim* (reserve duty), we've been able to achieve greater stability," said Evyatar Shaki, director of Beit Hayered, who also oversees Beit Chagai. "Four couples joined us at the start of last year, and all have remained deeply committed in their roles."

"I've learned a lot here, and changed a lot," a 15-year-old student shared. "The teachers are not regular teachers. They go above and beyond and do a lot for me."

VALUING EVERY STUDENT

Another aspect of Beit Chagai's success is its personalized approach to supporting at-risk youth. Each student thrives under an individualized therapeutic plan, carefully crafted by a dedicated team of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. Recognizing the unique challenges some boys face, such as substance abuse or the need for intensive support, the village also established tailored frameworks to meet their specific needs—whether through the school's core programs or alternative approaches better suited to their circumstances. This comprehensive and compassionate system ensures a safe, focused environment where all students can fully engage in their academic growth and therapeutic healing.

Along these lines, students actively participate in transforming the campus through hands-on classes in art, carpentry, metalworking, gardening and animal care—skills that not only enrich their lives, but also help revitalize and beautify the village they call home. For example, students in the carpentry class built some of the wood structures on campus, while those in the metalworks class contributed to some of the metal framing and structures.

Motti Arbel, AMIT's community director overseeing schools for at-risk youth, shared a meaningful moment from his recent visit to the metalworks class. "This week, I asked the teacher what they needed. He

explained that they were working with basic metals but lacked enough of a high-quality one called MIG. When I inquired about the cost, he said 10,000 shekels (about \$2,500). I immediately said, "You got it."

Arbel continued, "Seeing the students' faces light up was worth far more than the cost. Here, they know they are valued, their needs are met, their teachers believe in them—and they feel it. That's what makes all the difference. It gives them strength, hope and faith in themselves and in others."

INVESTING IN EMPOWERMENT

Most of Beit Chagai's budget comes from Israel's Ministry of Welfare, but some funding comes from AMIT as well as private donors invested in its unique mission to empower Israel's youth. Sometimes, those donors come from within the AMIT school itself, Arbel explained.

He shared the story of a student who struggled mightily with self-control. The student was unable to sit still and often acted out destructively. Seeking a solution, the principal asked what might help him calm down. The student's answer was simple: music. When the principal explored the cost of creating a music room and purchasing instruments, the estimate came to 30,000 shekels—a sum he didn't have readily available.



Moved by the need, one of the teachers stepped forward and offered to fund the project in memory of his late wife, Kochava Even Chaim, who had been tragically murdered by terrorists. Today, the music room, *Kochav HaKfar* (The Star of the Village) is a state-of-the-art facility complete with a recording studio, named in her honor. It's a powerful tribute and a wonderful space for students to explore.

TRANSFORMING LIVES

Arbel shared another anecdote that illustrates Beit Chagai's transformative power. "One day a relative of mine called me up because her son was acting out, and I told her to come look at the village. She hesitated because they're *Charedi* (ultra-Orthodox), and Beit Chagai accepts students from across the religious spectrum. Six months later, when her son was in danger of being forced to attend a secular school, she came to see our center and was blown away."

Arbel continued, "Her son not only came but he thrived, discovering talents he was never allowed to pursue. He immediately became the official *chazan*

(cantor) in the synagogue and led Selichot. He also loves to cook and began cooking for all his friends. He's soon going to join the army but today, thanks to Beit Chagai, he believes in himself and what he can accomplish."

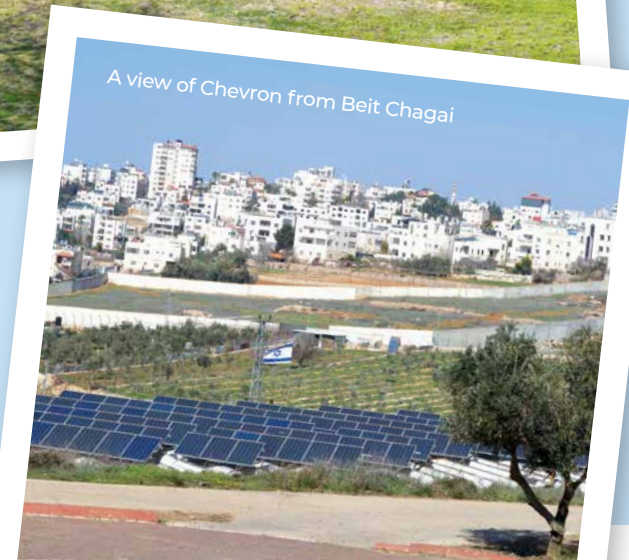
Beit Chagai's success can be seen not only in stories like these, but in statistics. Four out of the five 12th graders who took Israel's demanding matriculation exams last year passed handily, and there's been a 30% increase in enrollment since last year.

The students feel cared for, and when they see that their contributions to the village are valued, their confidence grows because they are seen as trustworthy and reliable.

"Many times, kids who come from troubled backgrounds perpetuate the cycle and build a troubled home themselves," said Arbel. "We're working to break that cycle."

"There's nothing like our village," said a 17-year-old, with enthusiasm.

Beit Chagai is more than just a youth village—it's a lifeline, a home and a launchpad for growth. In its short time under AMIT's leadership, it has become a beacon of hope for at-risk boys, empowering them with the tools, confidence and sense of belonging to break through hardship and build a brighter future—for themselves, and for Israel. ■





AMIT Father and Son HEROES

Nedavya Naeh with
students at his school

Nedavya and Oz Naeh, father and son, have completed more than 500 days of reserve duty combined since the beginning of the war in October 2023.

BY LINDA GRADSTEIN

The Father: Leading by Example

Nedavya Naeh, a company commander, left his position as principal of the AMIT Tzfat Vocational High School to serve in Lebanon for many months. Several of his teachers were called up for reserves as well.

“My second-in-command, who is an educator at my AMIT school, talks to my signaler, who was also a student of mine. I look around: They’re all from AMIT,” said Nedavya.

“The fact that the principal does extensive reserve duty—and I’m not the only one who does this—is making a statement: This is the most meaningful education there is,” he added. “The students see that although the educator is not present with them, some things are more important. There is educating through words and educating through action.”

The northern town of Tzfat was the target of dozens of missile attacks, so schools were closed for months. One rocket even hit near the school and set fire to some of the trees on campus. Classes were moved

online—a challenge for any school, and even more so for AMIT Tzfat, where many students have learning and emotional issues. In some cases, students have even gotten in trouble with the law.

“It’s seen as a last chance school for kids before dropping out of the system,” Nedavya said. Even when classes went online, teachers continued to visit students at home to maintain their connection, he explained.

Nedavya connects to students through his own life experience. He became a teacher without obtaining a *bagrut*, a graduation certificate, due to his struggles with dyslexia. So, at age 30, he studied for the exam along with his students, a decision he sees as an important message that it’s never too late to strive to do better for yourself and get a degree.

In his two years as principal, Nedavya has turned the school around. Almost all students will get a *bagrut*, some even accomplishing a rigorous course of study—quite an achievement for any school, let alone for kids at risk. AMIT also funds vocational courses and activities to keep the children off the streets and participating in meaningful programs.

Education is less what the teachers say, and more about setting a personal example.

Nedavya shared a story about 10 young women who recently completed a cosmetology course that taught them not only a vocation, but also how to write a business plan, and explored the challenges of opening their own businesses. It was an expensive course, he noted, but AMIT was able to pay for it and give these students the opportunity for advancement.

"[AMIT] was prepared to invest in the students," Nedavya said. "In our school, you see all of Israel: We have some kids in special education, some on the autism spectrum and some who are doing the highest-level math and science. It's amazing."

Nedavya shared another example about a trip he took to the U.S. He visited a high school where students were studying firefighting and volunteering with the fire department. He brought the idea back to Israel and incorporated the program into AMIT Tzfat's offerings. He and his team are intentionally keeping enrollment small, with just about 100 students, sometimes even turning applicants away.

The AMIT Tzfat Vocational High School offers more than just a place to learn; it's a home, and the people, a family. The building has a kitchen and living room where students can relax and spend time together. Even in the summer, when there are no classes, you can find students hanging out at school, Nedavya said.

The Son: Motivated by AMIT

Oz, 23, is also a graduate of AMIT. He works at Rafael Advanced Defense Systems in top-secret security-related work. Oz said he wasn't much of a student, but his teachers never gave up on him. He mentions one high school teacher, Rabbi Gil Karasente, who invited all his students to his home for a Shabbat once a year.

"HaRav Gil loved us like his own children," Oz said. The invitation for Shabbat continues to this day, even though Oz finished high school five years ago. Every year, he and his classmates spend a memorable Shabbat with their former teacher.

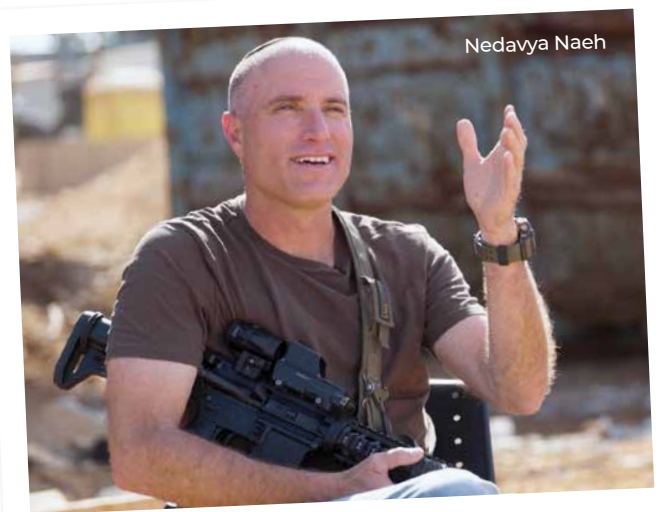
"Education is less what the teachers say, and more about setting a personal example," Oz said. "It's the kind of atmosphere he creates in the class, and how he

talks about values and Zionism. [Rav Gil] encouraged all of us to do combat service if we could."

Oz was drafted to an elite combat unit, Maglan, where he continued even after his mandatory service ended. Since the war began, he has spent several months serving in Gaza.

Oz explained that Rav Gil encouraged him to work hard for his *bagrut* even though he wasn't a great student. In Israel each student must choose a major in high school, like college in the U.S. Rav Gil introduced Oz to a major called "Land of Israel" that included hiking, something Oz has always enjoyed.

*Oz cannot be seen in photos for security reasons.

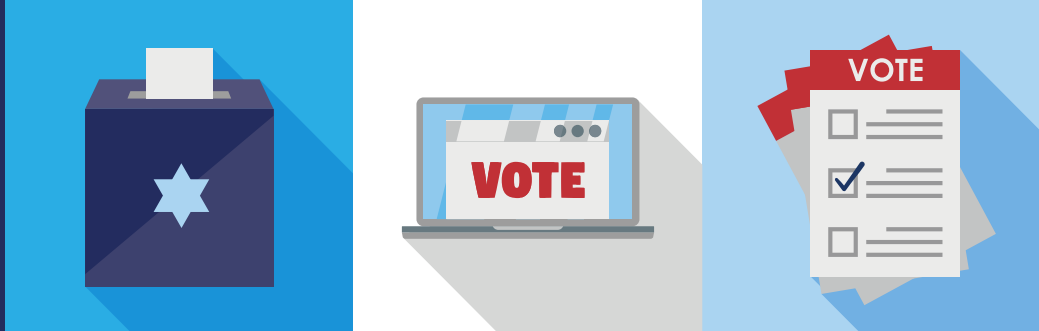


The Family: A Powerful Legacy

The Naeh family's connection with AMIT goes back many years. Nedavya's wife, Efrat, did Sherut Leumi in an AMIT school many years ago. When Nedavya once snuck in to visit her, he was caught and kicked out by none other than AMIT's director general, Dr. Amnon Eldar.

The strong relationship between father and son, with the backdrop of AMIT schools woven through their lives, is evident when speaking to this impressive family. Oz is very proud of his father and his achievements, and Nedavya lights up when he talks about his son and finding his niche as an educator at AMIT.

"I always had an affinity toward working with children and teens," Nedavya explained. "I was going to work in agriculture; I even had a farm. When the opportunity with AMIT came my way, my wife said, 'You won't grow tomatoes, you'll grow people.'" ■



WHY THIS ELECTION MATTERS

THE WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS

BY MICHAL ROSENBERG

IT'S TIME TO VOTE!

No, it's not November. This election is for the World Zionist Congress (WZC) and voting is open until May 4, 2025. The WZC election occurs every five years and determines the influence of world Jewry on the future of key educational and infrastructure decisions in Israel. **Slate #5, the Orthodox Israel Coalition-Mizrachi**, represents the Dati Leumi community and stands for Modern Orthodox, Religious Zionist values. Cast your vote to support Torah and Zionist educational programs worldwide.

What Is the World Zionist Congress?

The initial World Zionist Congress was convened by Theodore Herzl in 1897 with the goal of establishing a Jewish homeland in Israel. Delegates from around the world with different political and religious backgrounds participated. Once the State of Israel was established in 1948, the WZC became a de facto "Parliament of the Jewish People," giving voice to world Jewry in decisions affecting Israeli society and the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

The Congress, which will meet in Jerusalem in October 2025, will make crucial decisions regarding who will fill key leadership roles in the national

institutions of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael and The Jewish Agency, and what policies and values will be prioritized. The delegates have discretion over \$1 billion annually to address the most pressing needs across Israeli society and the Diaspora, including:

- Promoting Zionist education, activity and values worldwide
- Increasing Jewish identity, education and unity worldwide
- Combating antisemitism and improving Diaspora relations
- Encouraging aliyah, facilitating absorption and supporting vulnerable populations
- Fostering the religious, moral, social and ecological values that align with the delegates' understanding of Herzl's vision to make Israel an exemplary society

AMIT's Role

AMIT, originally founded as Mizrahi Women, has been attending the Congress since its inception, ensuring the voice and values of Religious Zionism continued to be influential after the establishment of the state. After the Holocaust, Mizrahi/AMIT delegates insisted on incorporating religious curricula into Israel's public education system, seeing its vital role in preserving Jewish cultural, religious and national identity. Today, AMIT's vast network of 88 schools educates 40,000 students throughout the country, forming their strong Jewish identity and encouraging meaningful connections to the state.

AMIT Board of Directors Chair Chana Shields said, "We represent the Dati Leumi community, specifically the female voice, and our participation ensures that religious values and Zionist ideology remain a central focus of the WZO and its institutions. These institutions shape the future of Israel, and it is important that the ideals we promote of dedication to Israel, service to the country, Torah values and unity are at the forefront."

Among its many contributions through the years, Mizrahi/AMIT was instrumental in the establishment of a Chief Rabbinate in Israel in the 1920s, and played a significant role in the post-World War II youth aliyah. Settling immigrant children in youth villages, AMIT staff taught them trades, farming, sewing and typing—and imbued them with Jewish values. This effort included Ethiopian refugees who arrived in programs such as Operation Solomon.

These foundations of Israeli society were hard-fought victories that succeeded because of the persistent efforts of early Mizrahi/AMIT advocates who understood the importance of their mission.

What's at Stake

Every five years, organizations from around the world form coalitions that run on slates of potential delegates for the WZC. The U.S. sends 152 delegates, about a third of the total 550, with 75 coming from other countries around the world.

AMIT and Religious Zionists of America lead the Orthodox Israel Coalition-Mizrahi (OIC) slate with the tagline: "On the Front Lines for Israel's Future." The OIC slate represents the Dati Leumi community and includes the Orthodox Union, Yeshiva University, Rabbinical Council of America, National Council of Young Israel, Touro University, Torah MITzion, Bnei Akiva, Shvilim, UMJCA and other affiliate institutions.

"For over 120 years our coalition has represented the Orthodox community in the WZO and has introduced and supported important initiatives, including support for chayalim, Sherut Leumi and miluim families; educational initiatives in Israel and the Diaspora; building communities; fighting antisemitism around the world; supporting students on campuses; and of course, building bridges and promoting unity within the WZO," said Shields.

YOUR VOTE FOR ISRAEL'S FUTURE

March 10 - May 4, 2025

zionistelection.org

2025 U.S. ELECTION

WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS

AZM American Zionist Movement
התנועה הציונית האמריקאית

The results of this election determine the allocation of \$5 billion over the next five years. “As the number of votes received by Haredi, Reform, Conservative and secular movements has increased, the proportion of funding available for Centrist Orthodox, Zionist programs has declined. We have an opportunity to reverse that trend,” said Sondra Sokal, past president of AMIT.

Past Success and a Future Mandate

The OIC’s success in the last WZC election achieved the placement of delegates in prominent positions within the WZO, Keren Kayemet L’Yisrael and The Jewish Agency, enabling numerous projects that uplift and strengthen Jewish life in Israel and globally.

In Israel, it has helped establish seven temporary housing communities for 800 families from eight evacuated settlements in the Gaza envelope. It has rebuilt communities affected by war in the north and south of Israel and strengthened Israel’s public school curricula with Jewish heritage, identity and values.

Globally, the OIC has given financial support and training for hundreds of Dati Leumi educators to enrich Jewish communities and day schools abroad. It has provided resources for social and educational initiatives, including programs for yeshiva and seminary students, educational seminars for Torah educators in the Diaspora and solidarity and volunteer missions to Israel.

The 2025 election comes at a time of great need in the Jewish community, both in Israel and around the world.

Sokal noted, “With a rise in overt antisemitism and internal dissension in Israel, it is important to send a delegation to the next World Zionist Congress that can work across the aisle. We have demonstrated for decades that we can do this. We have built bridges and friendships that allow for dialogue and compromise while clearly standing by our ‘red lines,’ and are respected for this position.”

The Religious Zionist community in Israel made up a disproportionately large percentage of those fighting on the front lines of the current war and has been hit incredibly hard. A huge influx of support will be needed to rebuild the lives of families that were torn apart.

YOUR VOTE IS CRUCIAL!

Visit www.voteoic.org and vote in the World Jewish Congress, Slate #5, Orthodox Israel Coalition-Mizrachi, so Religious Zionist values can guide the Jewish future.

Stand with us ON THE FRONT LINES FOR ISRAEL and help defend our beloved homeland, foster Jewish identity, build communities across Israel, strengthen global Jewish education and Torah institutions, fight against antisemitism, and be part of the destiny of the Jewish people.

Take 5 minutes
Spend \$5
Vote Slate #5
Influence \$5 Billion



Voting is open until **May 4, 2025.**

Millions of shekels will be necessary to support existing settlements and tens of millions more to help rebuild communities devastated on October 7 and from Hamas and Hezbollah rockets.

Funds will be needed to combat antisemitism worldwide, to support Diaspora Jewry in their fight and enhance their connection to Israel.

“Meaningful service to the State of Israel through military service or Sherut Leumi is the hallmark of AMIT and the Mizrahi movement. Now is the time to increase our ranks to provide a strong voice on behalf of the young men and women who, with a siddur in one hand and a gun in the other, defend Israel,” said Sokal.

דיינו?

You packed bags for soldiers, you wrote your senators,
you attended rallies, **you picked vegetables**, you davened...

BUT THIS YEAR, IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

Every five years the World Zionist Congress election gives
American Jews the opportunity to influence the future of the
State of Israel and its impact on world Jewry.

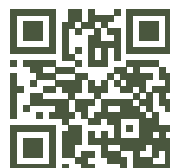
THIS IS THE YEAR.



Your vote for **OIC-MIZRACHI** will enable us to continue to infuse Israel
and Jewish communities around the world with the Religious Zionist
values that you stand for, together building the future of Israel.

DEFENDING MEDINAT YISRAEL - SPREADING TORAT YISRAEL - UNITING AM YISRAEL

 **Vote Slate #5**
VOTE OIC.ORG



**Vote
Now!**


 **ORTHODOX
ISRAEL
COALITION
MIZRACHI**
ON THE FRONTLINES FOR ISRAEL

Building *the* Future

THE GABEL & STRAUS FAMILY CAMPUS AT AMIT K FAR BATYA

BY SARA WOLF

The Kolatch Beit Midrash at
the Gwen Straus High School

In Ra'anana, a groundbreaking educational project is taking shape, transforming a century-old vision into a state-of-the-art campus for the leaders of tomorrow.

Nearly 100 years ago, Bessie Gotsfeld had a dream: to create a sanctuary of education and opportunity for Holocaust refugees. Today, her dream lives on through the Gabel & Straus Family Campus at AMIT Kfar Batya, a revolutionary, student-centered pedagogical model designed to prepare Israeli children for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

FROM VISION TO REALITY

The campus is a bold reimagining of what education can look like. Guided by the renowned pedagogical architects at Fielding International, the AMIT SmartCampus is designed to emulate the most innovative and tech-integrated workplaces. With open learning environments, cutting-edge technology and spaces that foster collaboration, the campus integrates Jewish

identity, connection and leadership development into every aspect of its design.

Architect Itzik Lugasi and his management firm, Insite, are ensuring that this vision is meticulously executed from the planning stage to project completion. Lugasi's leadership and integrated approach to construction—having multiple stages progress simultaneously—has allowed the project to stay on track even under challenging circumstances, including the impact of war on labor availability.

BUILDING WITH PRECISION

A strong emphasis on quality and financial transparency has been integral to the project's success. The Top Romdor platform is used to monitor expenses, ensuring contractors are paid based on verified work. Mock-ups serve as prototypes for classrooms, seminar spaces and training rooms, allowing for refinement before large-scale construction begins. These measures prevent unnecessary costs and ensure high standards are consistently met.

PROGRESS AMID CHALLENGES

Despite setbacks from the ongoing war, the campus construction has made remarkable progress. By advancing infrastructure, finishes and structural work concurrently, the team has minimized delays, ensuring the project's momentum remains strong. The three main buildings that make up the campus—The Gwen Straus High School, The Evan and Layla Green Family Foundation Gogya Building and The Chella and Moise Y. Safra Community Athletic Complex—are all well underway.



Itzik Lugasi and Dr. Amnon Eldar at the site

KEY MILESTONES

Buildings: The structural shells are on track, with concrete casting completed in January 2025.

Infrastructure: The underground parking lot, which connects the campus to municipal systems, is almost complete.

Quality Assurance: Mock-ups for classrooms, seminar spaces and beit midrash areas are being finalized to refine designs and ensure quality.

INNOVATIVE FACILITIES TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

The Gabel & Straus Family Campus will offer a blend of state-of-the-art facilities and creative spaces, integrating technology to springboard students, teachers and the AMIT community into a transformative educational sphere.



The innovation space at the Evan and Layla Green Family Foundation Gogya Building

THE GWEN STRAUS HIGH SCHOOL

Spanning 7,400 square meters, the high school is designed to provide a modern, comfortable learning environment.

- The Kolatch Beit Midrash, Drs. Maxine and Alfred Miller Science Wing, classrooms and open areas are built to invite collaboration and creativity.

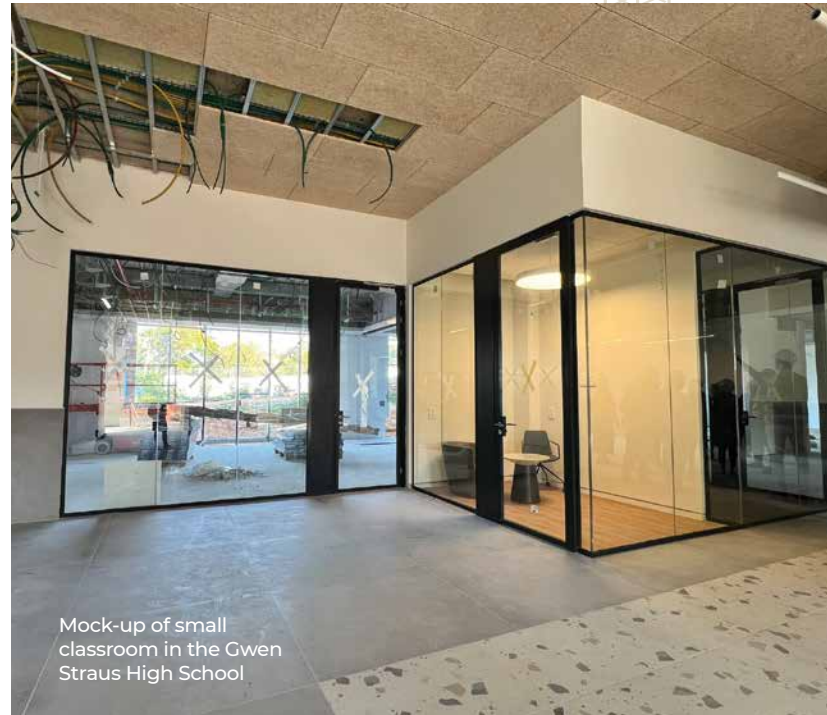
- A curtain wall facade, constructed from aluminum, glass and polycarbonate, provides a sleek, contemporary look while enhancing natural light.
- Advanced HVAC systems ensure optimal air circulation and temperature regulation.

THE EVAN AND LAYLA GREEN FAMILY FOUNDATION GOGYA BUILDING

The 5,900-square-meter Gogya Center will serve as the heart of AMIT's operations, offering:

- Seminar rooms, executive offices and outdoor learning spaces overlooking Ra'anana.
- The Audrey Lookstein Educators' Innovation Center and the Gogya Experience.
- Advanced facilities to foster leadership, innovation and collaboration.

Mock-ups of key spaces, such as the teacher training room and dining area, are set for completion in early to mid-2025.



Mock-up of small classroom in the Gwen Straus High School



The Chella and Moise Y. Safra Community Athletic Complex

THE CHELLA AND MOISE Y. SAFRA COMMUNITY ATHLETIC COMPLEX

With its grandstand complete and steel components on schedule, the athletic complex will feature:

- A spacious sports hall designed for student fitness as well as community activities.

Concrete work will be completed by the middle of 2025, with the full facility expected by March 2026.



A TRANSFORMATIVE FUTURE

The Gabel & Straus Family Campus is more than just a construction project; it's a comprehensive vision for the future of education in Israel. Combining innovative design with a commitment to values and community, the campus is poised to inform and transform the next generation of leaders.

As this exciting project progresses, it reflects AMIT's unwavering dedication to creating opportunities for children across Israel—a legacy of resilience, innovation and hope. ■

To learn more about the campus, please visit <https://amitchildren.org/kfarbatya/>.

To learn more about dedication opportunities, contact LizK@amitchildren.org.



Construction in progress

EVENT *Highlights*



Audrey Lookstein (center) with family



(l-r) Andrew Goldsmith, Mindy Kolatch, Sharon Merkin



(l-r) Dr. Amnon Eldar, Dr. Francine Stein, Ilana Gottlieb



(l-r) Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, Audrey Lookstein, Shira Haas



Ilana Gottlieb (fourth from left) with family and friends

AMIT National Event 2024

On November 11, the AMIT family gathered at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City for AMIT's annual National Event. The gala dinner brought hundreds of friends and supporters together to celebrate the Heroes Among Us, honoring three inspiring women who have made a major impact on future generations.

Ilana Gottlieb has developed Midreshet AMIT into one of Israel's premier post-high school seminary programs, educating hundreds of young Jewish women since its founding. Philanthropist Mindy Kolatch and the Kolatch family dedicated the Beit Midrash and the STEM Lab at the Gwen Straus High School, located on the Gabel & Straus Family Campus at Kfar Batya, combining two essential cornerstones of AMIT's educational philosophy: reaching forward to the future while remaining firmly planted in Torah values. Audrey Lookstein, a legendary champion of Jewish causes and a quintessential educator, will dedicate the Audrey Lookstein Educators' Innovation Center at the new AMIT campus in Kfar Batya through a generous gift

made possible by an anonymous donor.

This special evening also included an uplifting presentation by talented actress Shira Haas, who captivated the audience with her inspiring remarks.

We are deeply appreciative of these remarkable women, whose work showcases their dedication to and love for the children of Israel.



(l-r) Mindy Kolatch, Helen Gross, Vivian Shulman



(l-r) Joyce Straus, Shira Haas, Sharon Merkin

NYC & TRISTATE



(l-r) Avi Adelsberg, Gavriel Kahane, Geoffrey Platt

NYC Annual Guys' Night Out: All in for Israel

AMIT held its 17th annual Guys' Night Out: All in for Israel on September 23. Thank you to all who came out to have some fun at the tables and partake of delicious food and drinks. The event boasted a record number of participants—and a record number of donations as well!

Kudos to amazing event chairs Avi Adelsberg, Gavriel Kahane and Geoffrey Platt, and to their committee for making the event so successful.

NYC NewGen Babka Bake

On October 14, AMIT hosted a NewGen Babka Bake in New York City in support of the children of Israel. Event co-chair Marisa Braunstein spoke about her personal connection to AMIT and its mission, as well as its incredible accomplishments in Israel since October 7. Participants enjoyed a fun and informative tutorial from Avital of Haus of Babka, who demonstrated her technique for delicious babka results.

A special thank-you to event co-chairs Marisa and Brooke Paniri for their continued dedication to AMIT, and to the incredible committee—Rachel Best, Michal Goldstein, Rebecca Horn, Rebecca Lifshitz, Marcelle Sandel, Abigail Seigal and Lizzy Zakay—for their hard work in making the evening so special.



Long Island Stand Up for Israel Comedy Night

AMIT Long Island hosted its first-ever Stand Up for Israel Comedy Night benefiting its students. It was a night filled with laughter, good vibes, great food and a crowd of more than 230 people! Gratitude to the amazing chairs, Michelle Appel, Rebecca Feuer, Caryn Golombeck and Naomi Levinson, for making this evening a resounding success.

Special thanks to the hardworking committee: Sari Braunstein, Paula Bruh, Loren Daitch, Batsheva Donner, Debby Gage, Janet Grosser, Suzanne Gurvich, Rise Kaufmann, Jenny Lent, Elana Lifshitz, Danielle Rosenberg, Rachel Schlusberg, Janet Spector, Esther Weinstein and Stefanie Zauderer.

NYC Ladies' Night Out Mahjong

AMIT's first-ever Ladies' Night Out Mahjong event in NYC was a fantastic evening. Event chair Jennifer Bernstein Platt brought the concept to life and brought women together in support of AMIT. Attendees teamed up in groups—some pros and some novices—to hone their skills at mahjong and crack, bam and dot the night away.

Thank you to the hardworking committee—Ariane Arazi, Jennifer Gershowitz, Tani Gordon and Ashley Platt—for planning such a fun, unique event.



(l-r) Jennifer Bernstein Platt, Ariane Arazi, Ashley Platt, Jennifer Gershowitz



MIDWEST & CHICAGO



(l-r) Daniel Harris, Faith Harris, Sally Aaron, Judy Whisler Aaron, Sandy Miretzky



Rhythm and Jews, University of Chicago a cappella singing group



(l-r) Eudice Greenfield, Judy Milstein, Cheryl Karesh

Midwest Council Annual Dinner

On November 19, beneath a perfect fall sunset in Chicago, AMIT's Midwest Council hosted its annual dinner at the DoubleTree Hotel in Skokie, IL. Emcee Cheryl Karesh welcomed those in attendance and introduced the evening's keynote speaker, AMIT Executive Vice President Andy Goldsmith.

Andy regaled the crowd with an inspiring overview of AMIT's pivotal role in shaping the lives of Israel's children and Israel's future, and the powerful difference AMIT has made in Sderot in the aftermath of October 7. The highlight of the evening was a performance by Rhythm and Jews, the University of Chicago's a cappella group, who wowed the crowd with their harmonies and immense talent. The group is led by Josh Milstein, grandson of 2024 committee chairs and longtime lay leaders Judy and Albert Milstein.

"Andy Goldsmith's speech hit the perfect note before the delightful a capella singers inspired us all," said Karen Kaplan, a donor. "It was a wonderful evening from start to finish."

Participants' connection to AMIT was strengthened by the evening's heartfelt stories of resilience and what their support has helped make possible in Israel.



AMIT members creating Zentangle art



Midwest Council Zentangle Art Event

On September 24, AMIT's Midwest Council hosted its first Zentangle art event in Skokie, IL. Donors received a demonstration on this art form by seasoned Zentangler Lesley Goldberg. The afternoon was a spiritual and inspiring artistic experience, with many attendees discovering newfound talent.

Thank you to event chair Genny Rosenberg for her work in coordinating this event.

MID-ATLANTIC & NEW ENGLAND

Greater Washington, D.C., Mother in Israel Event

The AMIT Birah Chapter of Greater Washington, D.C., hosted its midsummer Mother in Israel event in the Kemp Mill neighborhood of Silver Spring, MD, on July 24. Guests gathered at the home of Sarah and Buddy Stern and heard from Josh and Gabi Lawrence, who shared their incredible experience volunteering since October 7—providing much-needed equipment and meals to IDF troops. Thank you to all who coordinated this meaningful program.



Lawrence family



(l-r) Russell Hendel, Ed Altman, Ann Holstein, Norman & Linda Garfield, Neil & Yaela Baine



(l-r) Susan & Len Getz with Bret Stephens and the Getz family



Honorees Len & Susan Getz

Philadelphia Council Tribute Dinner

AMIT Philadelphia Council/Shira Chapter honored Susan and Len Getz on Sunday, November 10, at Lower Merion Synagogue in Bala Cynwyd, PA. One hundred of their friends and family gathered to support AMIT and enjoy an educational evening with featured speaker, journalist Bret Stephens. His presentation, "What It Means to Be an October 8 Jew," was thought-provoking and powerful.

Thank you to the committee for their tireless efforts in organizing this well-attended event.

New England Tribute Brunch

AMIT's New England Council/Ra'anana Chapter held its Tribute Brunch at Hebrew College in Newton, MA, on Sunday, November 17. Renée and Paul Shane were honored for their contribution to the future of AMIT's children. Family, friends and longtime supporters gathered to celebrate the couple's dedication and impact.

Rabbi Mendy Uminer from the Chabad Center at Chestnut Hill gave an inspiring Dvar Torah. The audience enjoyed hearing an update from AMIT Executive Vice President Andy Goldsmith, entitled "AMIT: Resilience and Response." Hankus Netsky and the Klezmer Conservatory Band kept the crowd entertained with lively music.

Thanks to the committee for their hard work planning this successful evening.



(l-r) Illana & Lawrence Phillips, Rabbi Mendy Uminer, Paul & Renée Shane



(l-r) Paul & Renée Shane, Gary & Debbie Buchman



New England NewGen Hanukkah Gift Swap

AMIT New England's NewGen Hanukkah Yankee Gift Swap in December was a resounding success. The beautiful event, hosted by Lauren Ruchelsman, brought veteran and new members of AMIT together for a fun celebration of the Festival of Lights. Participants learned about AMIT's mental health services within its Sderot schools and swapped thoughtful gifts. Additional gifts were sent to Israel to be delivered to spouses of *chayalim*.

Thank you to those who coordinated this special morning.

SOUTHEAST

Boca Resin & Rosé

More than 25 people attended the AMIT Boca Resin & Rosé event on September 29, generously hosted by Tami Wald, President's Circle member, who inspired the gathering with her personal experience on the AMIT mission. Participants from Boca, Delray and Boynton enjoyed a delicious dinner and explored their creative side with Jacqueline Lieberman, who shared her expertise during the resin portion of the evening.

Thank you to event sponsors Amy Averbuch, Tira Gubin, Monica Glaubach, Sharona Kay, Arielle Kieffer, Leorah Marcus, Susan Silverberg, Amy Tarlowe and Tami Wald.



(l-r) Monica Glaubach, Shoshana Kassoria, Shari Bloom, Susan Silverberg, Tami Wald, Jacqueline Lieberman, Talia Lichtman Lyons, Rosie Davidovics, Tobi Hauptman, Batsheva Nadoff, Tira Gubin



(l-r) Glenn Weiss, Jason Cohen, Yoav Shans

Southeast Guys' Night Out: All in for Israel

AMIT's spectacular Guys' Night Out: All in for Israel hosted 70 attendees for a fun night at the tables. Poker, blackjack and roulette, paired with freshly rolled cigars and a delicious BBQ dinner, drew men from Boca Raton to Surfside for an enjoyable and meaningful evening.

The night was also the launch of the Elef Society, AMIT's newest giving society for dedicated young leaders, and a thrilling 10 participants announced their commitment as founding members.

Thank you to the amazing committee members Brian Farbman, Dani Ross, Etan Marks, Marty Elephant and Yossi Rabinowitz for their hard work and planning.

Annual Southeast Florida Tribute Luncheon

The 2024 Southeast Florida Tribute Luncheon, held on November 14 at the beautiful Westchester Country Club, paid tribute to Vivian and Bernie Schneider, z"l. More than 140 friends and supporters from across the South Florida region gathered to remember the honorees' staunch support for AMIT children in Israel.



(l-r) Carine Schneider, Less & Joyce Ness, Sharon & Jerry Ness, Irene Solomon



(l-r) Guest speaker & AMIT alumna Kinneret Hamburger, Leah Polin, Joyce Ness, AMIT Regional President Sara Gottlieb

Guest speaker and alumna Kinneret Hamburger, from AMIT Bellows Ulpanat Noga High School, reflected on AMIT's role in inspiring her army service as a religious woman and her decision to join a specialty unit, bringing to life the virtues and values instilled in her throughout her years at AMIT.



(l-r) Meryl Palgon & Sandra Rothenberg Lurie, AMIT Tribute Luncheon co-chairs



SHAPING LEADERS

THE AUDREY LOOKSTEIN EDUCATORS' INNOVATION CENTER

BY MICHAL ROSENBERG

A hub of collaborative, educational research, The Audrey Lookstein Educators' Innovation Center will be an integral part of AMIT's new, cutting-edge campus at Kfar Batya. The Ra'anana campus is the new home of AMIT's groundbreaking approach to revolutionize education in Israel and beyond. Made possible by an anonymous donor gift, the center is an exciting and significant milestone on Audrey Lookstein's lifelong journey with AMIT.

The Lookstein family's long history with AMIT began when Audrey and Rabbi Haskel Lookstein met through Mizrahi HaTzair, the youth branch of Mizrahi Women, as AMIT was previously known. Years later, after they married, they spent Shabbat of their honeymoon in Israel at the Kfar Batya Youth Village in Ra'anana. "They always talked about the spirit of Kfar Batya," her children said.

Later, Audrey was co-founder and first president of the Gayle Schechter Chapter on the Upper East and West Sides of Manhattan, as well as chair and vice president of the National Board of AMIT. For many years, she and Rabbi Lookstein were honorary chairs of AMIT's President's Circle.

"There's not as much in the public sphere about our mother, so this anonymous donation is so special. It's beautiful that someone wanted to honor our mother and all the work she's done over the years and the many ways she has contributed," said her children.

A quintessential educator, Audrey taught second grade at The Ramaz School for several years. Later, when her own children had grown, she went to Teachers College of Columbia University for her master's degree in English as a Second Language (ESL), teaching that subject at Queens College for 15 years. She loves and remembers all her students.

This dedication bridges two of the passions that have shaped Audrey's life: education and AMIT. Her children remember their mother always attending AMIT meetings. "She always spoke so glowingly about all the women she partnered with. My father had Kehillat Jeshurun and Ramaz, which of course my mother was also very engaged in, and AMIT was her thing," they said.

Audrey's family—her four children, 16 grandchildren and many great-grandchildren—are her greatest joy and central to her life. She has long set a high bar for personal and professional achievements and continues to lead by example.

The educational focus of this gift is fitting, as Audrey, along with her husband, has devoted herself to educating the next generation. Her legacy will now have an even greater impact on future learners and teachers as AMIT continues to innovate at Kfar Batya. ■

CREATING A LASTING LEGACY

The Drs. Maxine and Alfred Miller Science Wing

Dr. Maxine Miller was a brilliant and determined woman whose impact continues to inspire her family. When she passed in 2023, her daughter, Sarah Liron, decided to honor both her parents, Drs. Maxine and Alfred Miller, with the donation of the Science Wing at AMIT's Gwen Straus High School. The high school is part of the extraordinary new Kfar Batya campus in Ra'anana, which will be the epicenter of AMIT's methodology and transformative vision for the future of education.



Maxine's involvement with AMIT was inspired by her mother, Sarah Ribakow, who was renowned in her Baltimore community for her charitable acts and love of Israel. Sarah Ribakow was a charter member of Mizrahi Women, as AMIT was known, and was so beloved that on her passing, the AMIT chapter was named in her memory. Sarah shared that her grandmother worked as a nurse during WWI and that during WWII, she turned the basement of her home into a kitchen on Passover so Jewish soldiers stationed nearby could enjoy Kosher for Passover food. "My grandmother was a force of nature, and she accomplished an unbelievable amount of

good," Sarah said. "On our first trip to Israel in 1960, we visited Kfar Batya and saw the plaque dedicated to her. That made a big impression on me," she said of the orphan's home dedicated in Sarah Ribakow's memory by the Baltimore community.

Both Maxine and Alfred had PhDs in chemistry and were extremely motivated and ambitious professionals. The donation of the Science Wing perfectly reflects their passion for education, science and community service.

Sarah recalled one Grandparents' Day at her son's high school when Maxine let the teacher know that the equation on the blackboard wasn't balanced. "She was not a shy person," said Sarah. "She spoke up and used her voice." Maxine was immensely proud of her children and grandchildren, and they in turn were inspired and influenced by her.

Devoted to AMIT, Maxine rose to the position of international vice president and, upon moving to Israel, helped found the Chug Ayelet Chapter in Jerusalem, acting as co-president into her 90s. She reconnected with her large extended family in Israel and enjoyed a close relationship with them.

Maxine lived a long and impressive life, beloved by family and friends who celebrated her 100th birthday with video and slideshow presentations showcasing the strength of her legacy. She passed away just two months shy of her 105th birthday. "I was extraordinarily lucky to have her in my life for so long," said Sarah.

CELEBRATING A MAJOR MILESTONE WITH AMIT

Entryway to AMIT Beit Hayaed

To celebrate her 90th birthday, Audrey Wagner's family continued their multigenerational legacy of devotion to AMIT and gave back, dedicating the front entryway to AMIT's Beit Hayaed Youth Village, which serves children from dysfunctional homes. Audrey's mother was a strong advocate for Mizrahi Women, as AMIT was then known, and Audrey was influenced by that desire to make a difference and help change the trajectory for less fortunate children in Israel.

Audrey continued her work with AMIT into adulthood, when she married Max Wagner. The culture of caring and responsibility they crafted together has had a lasting impact on their four children, making this dedication a natural fit for such a momentous milestone.

"It's a recognition of my wife's lifelong support of AMIT's mission, which serves as a continuation of the efforts of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Julius Bienenfeld, and as a guide for our children and grandchildren to continue to support AMIT programs for many years to come," Max reflected.



The Wagners, married for 70 years, are the proud parents of Susan Wagner married to Alan Klinger, Steven Wagner married to Tamara, Stuart Wagner married to Terri, and Barbara Wagner Simon married to Gavy Simon. They have been blessed with numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The family surprised Audrey with a birthday celebration at the American Dream mall to mark this special occasion.

On behalf of the family, Steven shared memories of his mother's work with AMIT: "From a young age, I remember my mother being completely devoted to her work as president of her AMIT chapter. She worked tirelessly and believed deeply in AMIT's mission of educating children and caring for orphans and those less fortunate. For both my parents, this work really touches their souls, especially when they can see the lives of these children being transformed before their eyes."

DVAR TORAH

Education Nation: Leil HaSeder Lessons

BY RABBI ARI ZAHTZ



Rabbi
Ari Zahtz

Why do we call the first night of Pesach *Leil HaSeder*—the “Night of Order”? The Torah refers to the holiday as *Chag HaPesach* or *Chag HaMatzot*, yet the term *Seder* has become the universally accepted name for this pivotal evening. What makes this night so uniquely tied to the concept of “order”?

The *Kol Bo* offers a straightforward explanation: Pesach night is filled with numerous *mitzvot* and *halachot*, all of which must be performed in a specific sequence. The structured nature of the evening gives it its name—*Leil HaSeder*, a night defined by meticulous order.

Yet, this definition only scratches the surface. The *Maharal* delves deeper, explaining that the concept of *seder*, order, is not just about how we conduct the *Seder* meal, but rather speaks to the very fabric of history itself. The Exodus was not just a moment of liberation; it was the moment when history took on a divine order. Until that point, history may have seemed chaotic, but the Jewish people’s redemption set into motion a structured unfolding of events, all orchestrated by Hashem. From the moment we left Egypt, the destiny of the Jewish people was no longer random; it followed a divinely guided path.

The *Sefas Emes* adds another layer: Before *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the world itself lacked clear order. The distinctions between master and servant, between the Jewish people and the nations, were undefined. The night of Pesach was not only about physical liberation, but also about spiritual clarity. Hashem revealed the true structure of the world: He is the ultimate Master, we are His servants, and the Jewish people hold a unique role as

His chosen nation. The night of *Leil HaSeder* is when the world’s *seder*—its divine order—was established.

Each year, as we sit at the *Seder* table, we are not merely recounting a historical event. We are reaffirming our place in this divine order and ensuring that the next generation understands their role within it. The *Seder* is built around engaging children, from the *Mah Nishtana* to the many symbolic foods and rituals designed to spark curiosity. This is not accidental; it is the essence of the night.

Judaism has always placed education at its center, but *Leil HaSeder* is a master class in intergenerational transmission. The structure, the questions, the storytelling—all of it is designed to ensure that our history, our faith and our role in the world are not forgotten. We don’t simply teach facts; we bring our children into a living tradition, allowing them to experience and internalize their place in a story that began thousands of years ago and continues to unfold.

The *Seder* is not just about looking back at what was, but about ensuring what will be—shaping the future and securing the next link in the chain of the Jewish people. The story that began that night in Egypt is the same one we continue to tell, a story of faith, divine providence and hope for the future.

As we sit at our *Seder* tables, let’s ask ourselves: How can we ensure that our children not only hear the story, but feel that they are part of it? What questions can we encourage them to ask? What lessons will we emphasize so they carry this legacy forward? On this night, the responsibility is ours—not just to retell the past, but to inspire the future.

At the conclusion of our *Seder*, we proclaim: *L’Shanah Haba’ah B’Yerushalayim*—Next year in Jerusalem! This is not just a wish; it is a declaration of belief that the divine *seder* of history is still unfolding, bringing us ever closer to the redemption we await.

RABBI ARI ZAHTZ is the associate rabbi at Congregation Bnai Yeshurun in Teaneck. He also serves as a rebbe at the Mazer Yeshiva Program at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University and has lectured throughout the United States.

ULTIMATE PESACH VANILLA CAKE

By Miriam Pascal Cohen
Pareve



Sometimes, in order to consider something the “ultimate,” I test it over and over and over again, tweaking each time to get it just right. That was not the case with this recipe! I made it once and it was great. I quickly shared the recipe with my sisters, and they all loved it as well. I asked each of them, “Any critique? Any changes I should make?” But they all insisted it was perfect. So I left it. Here it is—in all its original version’s no-mixer, one-bowl glory.



INGREDIENTS:

- 6 eggs
- 1½ cups sugar
- ½ cup oil
- 1 (3.25-oz) package vanilla pudding mix
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt
- 2 cups almond flour
- 1 cup potato starch

Vanilla Glaze

- 12 cups powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons almond milk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a Bundt pan, a 9x13-inch pan, or two 2-lb loaf pans well; set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, whisk together eggs, sugar, oil, pudding mix, baking powder, vanilla and salt until combined and creamy.
3. Gradually add almond flour and potato starch; stir until a batter forms.
4. Pour batter into prepared pan(s). Bake about 45 minutes for a Bundt pan, 50-55 minutes for a 9x13-inch pan, and 40-45 minutes for loaf pans, until the tops feel firm.
5. Prepare glaze: Stir all glaze ingredients together in a small bowl until smooth. Drizzle over cooled cake.

PLAN AHEAD:

This cake freezes nicely, well wrapped, with or without glaze.

Miriam (Pascal) Cohen is a food blogger, recipe developer and best-selling author of four cookbooks: *Something Sweet*, *Real Life Kosher Cooking*, *More Real Life Kosher Cooking*, and *Real Life Pesach Cooking*. Miriam connects with her large following over family-friendly, approachable and delicious cooking. Miriam and her husband serve as the associate rabbi and rebbetzin at The Community Shul, a kiruv synagogue located in Los Angeles, California. Miriam's recipes can be found on Instagram @overtimecook or on overtimecook.com.



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