



Strengthening Those Who Strengthen Others

For the cream-of-the-crop of Israel's youth engaging in a pre-military year of service, being enriched by Yachad Program Jewish identity activities makes their commitment to Israel and the Jewish people even stronger.



VALUES OF GIVING AND COMMUNAL RESPONSIBILITY: SHINSHINIM ARE "CREAM OF THE CROP"

I chose to spend this year working with troubled kids in Kiryat Shmona," said 18-year-old Shirli Avital, from Yerucham. "Because I come from the periphery myself, I'm interested in contributing to Israel from my own experiences."

Shirli is a *"shinshinit"* – one of approximately 3,500 socially-conscious Israeli teens who have deferred their mandatory army service in order to contribute a *"shnat sherut,"* meaning "year of service," to the country. Considered cream-of-the-crop, *shinshinim* work in dorms and afterschool programs for youth-at-risk, provide agricultural or security support, serve as youth movement counselors, and even act as youth ambassadors for Israel in Jewish communities abroad.

Shinshinim who do their *shnat sherut* through the Israel Community Center Corporation (ICCC), like Shirli, spend their mornings in the local schools and their afternoons coordinating programs for kids and families in distress. "These teens are doing holy work," declared the ICCC's Youth Director, Zahava Elharar. "They provide a listening ear, run programs and projects and mainly serve as role models and mentors to keep kids in their educational frameworks and off the streets."

A STRONG JEWISH IDENTITY MEANS A STRONG JEWISH STATE

In developing the ICCC's *shinshin* program, Elharar sought to introduce an element of Jewish identity. "The values of giving and communal responsibility which motivate the teens toward a year of service are steeped in their Jewish heritage," she explained. "A strong Jewish identity means a strong Jewish state." Naturally, she turned to OTS's **Yachad Program**, whose 32 Jewish Cultural Facilitators run Jewish identity and heritage awareness programs in 80 community centers across the country. But this time, the idea wasn't to work with the *shinshinim* locally – something that many of the facilitators were doing anyway – but rather, to create a framework which would impact on a nationwide level.

"It was very important to Zahava to find the right facilitators for this project, who would be able to impart strong Jewish elements without making the teens, who are secular, feel uncomfortable," shared Yigal Klein, Yachad's Educational Director. "Although we don't have facilitators in every community center where the *shinshinim* are, she trusted us to select and train counselors who would really make a difference," he related.

A GUIDEBOOK FOR LIFE

Each *shinshin* group is visited on a weekly basis by their Yachad-trained counselor. "I look forward to the Yachad class with Arik all week long," says Shirli. "I especially like that everything is rooted in the sources of our heritage because it gives me a feeling of connection to my past and my future at the same time." Shimon Cohen, 19, from Tirat Hacarmel adds: "Nechama talks to us about all the regular things – what to do with students acting out, where we see ourselves in the future – but from a different perspective. I like the idea that Judaism is informing my day to day activities. It's become like a guidebook for life."

Elharar is already working on the next phase – creating leadership groups of 11th and 12th graders from Israel's periphery who will feed into the ICCC's *shinshin* program – and she's already tapped Yachad to create a parallel Jewish identity program for this cadre too. "Yachad has consistently proven that it knows how to convey Jewish ideals and values to a secular audience in their own language and on their own terms," she told Klein. "I know Yachad will continue to bring to the table the things which are relevant to us, and which continue to motivate our work in building a better and more compassionate Israel."

"IT'S BECOME LIKE A GUIDEBOOK FOR LIFE"



OTS Educators Never Stop Learning

Continuing education for OTS senior faculty is one of the unique facets of OTS, playing a significant role in keeping its educational programs on the cutting edge. Recently, a day-long seminar addressed two very different but equally important issues.



OTS PRINCIPALS AND PROGRAM HEADS: CUTTING-EDGE EDUCATION

OTS principals and program directors meet five times a year for intensive enrichment on a variety of subjects relevant to imparting the OTS vision to the next generation and teaching students in a postmodern world. Most recently, a day-long seminar addressed two very different but equally important trends: combatting sexual harassment, and methods for inclusion of people with disabilities.

“Both of these topics often get swept under the rug,” related Avichai Foa, OTS Director of Educational Projects. “But as an institution on the cutting edge of education, we are obligated to address them.”

ONE IN ONE

Foa remarked that the #metoo campaign created a widespread, unprecedented, world-wide conversation about sexual harassment and sexual violence. “It provided us with an opportunity to re-examine our educational approach toward the issue,” he said.

Rabbanit Rivky Yisraeli, Educational Director at **Neveh Channah High School, in Memory of Anna Ehrman**, opened the discussion with a story about one of her students. “For every story like this,”

she said, “there are hundreds more in our institutions each year. According to statistics one in every three girls are victims of sexual assault – boys too, though the statistics are lower. But when I tell the girls this they say, ‘No, no, it’s not one in three. It’s one in one.’ That’s a very difficult statement,” Yisraeli paused, “and it’s crucial that we digest what it means. We must teach toward prevention, recognize signs, make ourselves available, and find better ways of restoring their shattered trust and confidence,” she said.



FOR EVERY ONE, HUNDREDS MORE:
RABBANIT RIVKY YISRAELI (LEFT)
ADDRESSING THE PRINCIPAL'S FORUM

STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE

The afternoon session was spent in discussion of how OTS can improve inclusion of people with disabilities. The topic was introduced by Elana Goldscheider, founding director of OTS’s **Elaine and Norm Brodsky Darkaynu Programs** – the only existing initiative enabling youth with special needs to experience a gap year in Israel.

“It used to be that people with disabilities were completely secluded, so we’ve definitely come a long way,” Goldscheider said. “But as people with special needs continue to be integrated, new challenges arise. A child in a mainstream environment will expect to attain the same future milestones as his peers. This includes spending the year in Israel, working, living independently and even starting a family. We have to remember that inclusion is not a *chessed* – an act of charity – but rather a manifestation of *tzedek* – justice. People with disabilities have the right to be full participants and as people, parents, and educators who represent Jewish values, it’s our duty to step up to the plate and find solutions.”

WOMEN MOVING MOUNTAINS

250 women from all backgrounds and locations. A grueling 22 km hike. 2 magical days in Israel’s Arava desert. 1 goal: to raise awareness and funds for **Yad La’isha: The Monica Dennis Goldberg Legal Aid Center and Hotline** for *agunot*.

The first annual “Women Moving Mountains” event, produced for Yad La’isha by Israel Marathon Corp, attracted women from Eilat to the Golan Heights (and even a small contingent from the USA) to a challenging hike alongside Yad La’isha’s advocates, current and former clients. The result was an unforgettable experience, an incredible amount of fun, and an inspirational display of strength and camaraderie proving that women can, in fact, move mountains.



This year's OTS Annual Dinner honored Sharon and Jeffrey Lewis and Rabbi Shaul and Sarah Robinson; acknowledged Distinguished Benefactors Drs. Monique and Mordecai Katz; and recognized Yad La'isha: The Monica Dennis Goldberg Legal Aid Center and Hotline for 20 years of freeing and empowering agunot — women who are trapped in abusive or unviable marriages.



DINNER HONOREES SHARON AND JEFFREY LEWIS OF STAMFORD, CT, EXEMPLIFY THE IMPACT LAY LEADERS CAN MAKE THROUGH THE COMMITMENT OF THEIR TIME AND RESOURCES TOWARD STRENGTHENING JEWISH LIFE IN ISRAEL AND THE DIASPORA



ALUMNI OF THE **JOSEPH AND GWENDOLYN STRAUS RABBINICAL SEMINARY** AND **MIDRESHET LINDENBAUM**, RESPECTIVELY, RABBI SHAUL AND SARAH ROBINSON WERE HONORED AT THE DINNER FOR SUCCESSFULLY TAKING THE LESSONS OF THE OTS STUDY HALLS OUT TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE



THE DISTINGUISHED BENEFACTOR AWARD WAS BESTOWED UPON DRs. MONIQUE AND MORDECAI KATZ WITH GRATITUDE FOR THEIR EPONYMOUS **INTEGRATED STUDIES PROGRAM**, WHICH PROVIDES FUTURE LEADERS WITH AN APPRECIATION OF THE CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES OF WORLD WISDOM AND THEIR EFFECTS UPON JUDAISM. (PICTURED L TO R: OTS FOUNDER AND ROSH HAYESHIVA RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN, DR. MORDECAI KATZ, DR. MONIQUE KATZ, OTS INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR DAVID KATZ)

In many ways, the pioneering story of Yad La'isha is the story of OTS writ large: breaking down barriers in order to provide authentic Torah solutions to the challenges of modern Jewish life.



"YAD LA'ISHA IS A FITTING TRIBUTE TO THE UNIQUE SPIRIT OF ITS NAMESAKE, MONICA DENNIS GOLDBERG, A WOMAN WHO WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT EMPOWERING THE DISENFRANCHISED AND PURSUING JUSTICE," SAID DIRECTOR PNINA OMER. (PICTURED, SEATED L TO R: RON DOMB; PAM GOLDBERG RABIN, MONICA'S BELOVED DAUGHTER; BERNARD GOLDBERG, MONICA'S LOVING HUSBAND; JOSEPH ALLERHAND. STANDING, L TO R: MR. AND MRS. DAVID DUKE; PNINA OMER; RABBI BEN SKYDELL)



IN HIS REMARKS AT THE DINNER, INCOMING OTS PRESIDENT RABBI DR. KENNETH BRANDER (PICTURED WITH HIS WIFE, RUCHIE) SAID: "BECAUSE OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE TALENT THAT THE LAY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP HAVE CREATED, THE LATITUDINAL AND LONGITUDINAL IMPACT OF OTS ON ISRAELI SOCIETY AND WORLD JEWRY IS POISED TO GROW EXPONENTIALLY. I LOOK FORWARD OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS TO WORKING WITH ALL OF YOU IN CREATING THAT GROWTH AND ACTUALIZING THE IDEALS OF OTS."



"I WISH YAD LA'ISHA GREAT SUCCESS," SAID OTS CO-CHANCELLOR RABBI DAVID STAV (LEFT). "MAY WE CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AND FLOURISH, BRINGING BOTH HOPE AND SOLUTIONS TO THE ENTIRE JEWISH WORLD."

THE DINNER WAS GRACIOUSLY EMCEED BY RACHEL WEISMAN (LOWER L) AND HELENE ROTHENBERG (LOWER R), CO-CHAIRS OF THE NEWLY FORMED **FRIENDS OF YAD LA'ISHA: THE MONICA DENNIS GOLDBERG LEGAL AID CENTER** IN NORTH AMERICA



Open Doors

OTS's **Joseph and Gwendolyn Straus Rabbinical Seminary** and **Yeshivat Hesder Machanaim, Named in Memory of Joseph and Leila Applebaum** enrich the classic yeshiva curriculum with lessons from the outside world, preparing leaders who are connected, relevant, and better equipped to address challenges presented by contemporary living.



NEW PERSPECTIVES: JUSTICE RAPHAEL YAAKOBI VISITS THE STRAUS SEMINARY

Two and a half years ago, Yonadav Samet joined the **Joseph and Gwendolyn Straus Rabbinical Seminary** at **Yeshivat Machanaim, Named in Memory of Joseph and Leila Applebaum**. "I came from one of the 'elite' yeshivot, but although the studies there were intense, I always felt that something was lacking in the structure and quality of the learning," he related. "Here, in contrast, I am being exposed to rich and varied methods of study – something that provides me with a very wide perspective and gives me a far deeper understanding of the texts' complexity."

A recent visit from a Jerusalem District Court judge provides a typical example. "We invited Justice Raphael Yaakobi to speak to the *kollel* students, who are learning the laws of damages this year," explained Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Shlomo Vilk. "They studied

sources from the *gemara* together, providing our rabbis-in-training with a better understanding of the connections between Jewish law and Israeli law, as well as a glimpse into the practical realities taking place outside the yeshiva walls," he said.

"We were covering the Tractate of *Makot*, dealing with questions of justice, law and ways of investigating truthfulness," added Samet. "The judge's lecture related to how Judaism and the Sages aim to create a society balancing myriad values, opening our eyes to the complexities that justices deal with today," he said. "When we returned to the *beit midrash*, our perspective on the subject matter was completely different. A curtain had been pulled back, exposing new and varied perspectives which made our learning more accurate and profound."

It is this interdisciplinary approach – provided through the **Monique and Mordecai Katz Integrated Studies Program** – which lends Machanaim and the Straus Seminary their unique flavor, differentiating them from other yeshivot and rabbinical seminaries. Learning about *tefillin* and *tzitzit* [ritual fringes] is complemented by a visiting anthropologist who reviews sacraments in the ancient world and an archaeologist who examines the religious symbols of Mesopotamia. Studies about Jewish ritual purity inspire classes about feminism, prenuptial agreements and parenting; an examination of the laws involving money spurs a group visit to the Israel Democracy Institute. The country's future rabbis and leaders are learning Jewish law at the most intricate levels; but they are also being steeped in philosophy, history, world religions, political and economic thought.

"The doors of our *beit midrash* remain open not only so our rabbis can go out and teach, but also to allow the outside world to come in," said Vilk. "The interchange enriches our study of *halakha* with the day-to-day reality of living, and makes our learning more relevant to the Jewish world."

Visiting Israel in his new capacity as President-Elect and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander began each day by learning Torah in OTS institutions' batei midrash. Rabbi Brander, who will be making aliya with his family this summer, has been utilizing this period of transition to establish relationships with faculty, staff and students.

PICTURED: STUDYING IN THE **ISRAEL HENRY BEREN BEIT MIDRASH** ALONGSIDE STUDENTS FROM THE **JOSEPH AND GWENDOLYN STRAUS RABBINICAL SEMINARY** AND **YESHIVAT MACHANAIM, NAMED IN MEMORY OF JOSEPH AND LEILA APPLEBAUM**



"Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep it Holy"

Scholars from the **Susi Bradfield Women's Institute of Halakhic Leadership** bring Jewish law out of the hallowed halls of the *beit midrash* and into the public realm through a symposium reflecting upon the character of Shabbat in the state of Israel.



RABBANIT DEVORAH EVRON: "IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW THE LAWS"

A few days after the Israeli Knesset passed the infamous 'minimarket bill,' enabling the Interior Minister to override municipal bylaws permitting operation of stores on Shabbat, fellows in **Midreshet Lindenbaum's Susi Bradfield Women's Institute of Halakhic Leadership (WIHL)** held the year's first symposium in the **Besen Family Center for Advanced Women's Studies**, on the subject of "Shabbat in the Public Sphere."

"The timing is coincidental," said WIHL co-director Rabbanit Devorah Evron in her opening remarks. "This evening was planned as a celebration of the fact that our fellows have completed their exhaustive study of the laws of Shabbat – but with the understanding that it's not enough to know the laws; we must also examine their application and explore resultant dilemmas, social ramifications and potential solutions."

The female students in the WIHL cover the same subjects as men preparing for rabbinical ordination – Shabbat, *Niddah* and *Kashrut* – and more, ultimately earning them the title "Manhigot Ruchaniyot," enabling them to serve as spiritual leaders and to answer *halakhic* questions. They are also trained in pastoral matters such as counseling, teaching and public speaking, gaining skills which were on display as they led group learning circles and moderated thought-provoking panel discussions about the nature of Shabbat in a modern Jewish state.

TOO MUCH CONFLICT

The first panel, about the dilemmas, considerations and solutions necessary for keeping Shabbat within the framework of public service, was moderated by second-year WIHL fellow Chamutal Shoval. "When I finished studying journalism, I got a phone call from Channel Two which was, at the time, top of the line," Shoval revealed. "About ten minutes after we scheduled an interview, the secretary called back. 'What is this on your resume, this **Neveh Channah** high school?' she asked. I explained it's the OTS high school I had attended. 'So,' she inquired, 'are you religious? Or were you religious?' After I answered in the affirmative to both, she said, 'You know what? Don't come.' She clarified: there would be too much conflict about working on Shabbat and holidays, it just wouldn't work out.



"I WAS DEVASTATED. BUT IT MADE ME THINK" – WIHL FELLOW CHAMUTAL SHOVAL

"I was devastated," Shoval admitted. "But it made me think. The secular public makes our lives easy for us. We prefer not to think about it, but even when we turn on the news after Shabbat is over, we must acknowledge that we're benefiting from the work they did on Shabbat. And we benefit from other people working in the electric company, on infrastructure projects and more," she pointed out.

Guest panelist Rabbi Rami Berachyahu, chief rabbi of the Israeli Police Forces, shed light on some of the great challenges facing government services that work on Shabbat. "As opposed to emergency services like hospitals or the IDF, the police can't rely on the *halakhic* framework of *pikuach nefesh* [saving lives] in determining what can be done on Shabbat and how. In the time of the Shulchan Aruch, there was no Jewish state – and most certainly not a police force," he

reminded those present. "This is the reality I grapple with, and we need today's scholars to roll up their sleeves and dive into the world of *halakha* to find answers."



ISRAELI POLICE FORCES CHIEF RABBI RAMI BERACHYAHU: TODAY'S REALITY ISN'T DISCUSSED IN THE SHULCHAN ARUCH

"I DON'T WANT TO BIND, BUT I WANT A BOND"

A second panel discussion, moderated by WIHL fellow Dr. Hannah Hashkes, featured a frank discussion between Dr. Motti Zeira of the secular Midrasha at Oranim; Kibbutz Alumim's Rabbi Amit Kula; and Tehilla Friedman, Chairperson of Neemanei Torah V'avoda; about the public face of Shabbat in the state of Israel.

As is so often the case, respectful discourse proved that what unites us is far greater than what divides us, with Rabbi Kula declaring, "I am repulsed by religious coercion. I don't want to bind, but I do want a bond." Dr. Zeira agreed: "We have to calm down and stop legislating everything through the Knesset and defining exactly what 'the joy of Shabbat' entails. We must cultivate within the Israeli public an appreciation of the importance of Shabbat. But we will never get there through religious coercion – or through secular coercion," he added.

WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE

Final panel speaker Friedman digressed for a few moments, expressing unbridled appreciation of the beautiful **Linda and Murray Laulich Beit Midrash**, in which the symposium took place. "I was a student at Midreshet Lindenbaum years ago, before it moved to the **[Chana and Yaacov] Tilles Campus**," she said. I have to share how
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Coming Home

Midreshet Lindenbaum remains a popular winter break destination for college students who return “home” to recharge their batteries, re-examine real world challenges through the prism of Torah learning, and meet Judaism’s greatest scholars and personalities in their own living rooms.



“MEETING THE VISIONARY BEHIND MIDRESHET LINDENBAUM FIRSTHAND” – RABBI RISKIN AND THIS YEAR’S ORA PARTICIPANTS

There’s no better feeling than returning to your alma mater and still feeling at home. Just ask Stephanie Dweck, one of 21 former **Maria and Joel Finkle Overseas Program** students who opted to spend their winter break on **Midreshet Lindenbaum’s Chana and Yaacov Tilles Campus**.

“I needed to recharge,” said Dweck, 20, a Mathematics major in William E. Macaulay Honors College at Brooklyn College. “By the time I arrived I already had a whole list of questions ready, things that had come up for me as a woman engaged in Jewish learning amidst secular studies and exams. Every single teacher met with me and answered my questions in different ways. It made me realize that I would always continue learning, that I would always have a place in Israel, and that Midreshet Lindenbaum would always be there for me,” she said.

LEARNING FROM GREAT MINDS

Dweck was especially glad to catch an ORA session with Rabbi Shlomo Riskin in Efrat. “ORA is an optional enrichment initiative for students, providing participants with a unique learning opportunity on their weekly ‘free night,’” explained Finkle program director Rabbanit Nomi Berman. “Named after our alumna Liora Mirvis, z”l, who took her learning very seriously and always strove to push a bit further, the ORA group visits Midreshet Lindenbaum faculty and Torah scholars of the greater Jerusalem area in their homes. Being exposed to great intellectuals, leaders and visionaries around their dining room tables or living room couches enables the girls to learn from great minds while also really meeting each personality in an informal atmosphere of warmth, intimacy, and family,” Berman said.

A FINE LINE

“ORA was one of the highlights of my year,” recalled Dweck. “Every week we got to meet a different person: Rabbi Stav, Yael Ziegler, Aviva Zorenberg... figures in Judaism who you look

up to, whose articles and books you’ve read and heard about throughout the scholarly world,” she said.

“It was amazing to meet Rabbi Riskin, the visionary behind Midreshet Lindenbaum, to learn the sources from him firsthand, and to hear about what Midreshet Lindenbaum is doing to create a place for women in Judaism,” Dweck enthused. “Rabbi Riskin maintains that women can be *gedolei hador* and that women and men may share responsibility for a shul, but at the same time, he taught us the *halakhic* limits and traditions. It’s a fine line, but he is able to draw the boundaries at exactly the right place. Rabbi Riskin confirmed everything I believe in: that balance can be achieved, and that challenges can be met through learning,” continued Dweck. “One can be fully *halakhic* but also revolutionary.”

Spreading the Light of Torah

Rabbi Ohad Teharlev’s weekly visits to his 290 student-soldiers on IDF army bases across the country – bringing words of Torah, snacks and good advice – have earned him the nickname “*Rav hachayalot*,” or “Rabbi of the female soldiers.” His longtime direction of the groundbreaking **Claudia Cohen Torah/Army School (Hadas)** at **Midreshet Lindenbaum** has also made him an expert on the subject of religious women’s military service and, as a result, he is a sought-after speaker and media commentator.

Recently, Teharlev was invited to address the Knesset’s Committee for the Advancement of Women (*pictured, screenshot from the Ch. 13 evening news*). “The world of Torah has grown as a result of women serving in the army,” he testified. “Not only are there more religious soldiers than ever before, but as a result of our preparatory programs, there are also more women engaging in Torah study than ever before – a growing phenomenon which has led us to open two additional branches in **Carmiel** and in **Lod** – both of which are witnessing exponential growth. Meanwhile, our Jerusalem branch had to close registration in February, with 32 girls on the waiting list,” Teharlev revealed. “These young women are combining their dedication to *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*, spreading the light of Torah and sanctifying God’s name.”



הרב אוהד טהרלב

ודה לקידום מעמד האישה, הכנסת

יש לנו, יותר ויותר בנות מגיעות
ממוסדות שפעם בנות לא היו מתגייסות.

החדש

אז נשארות חיות | בנות הציונות הדתית שחוזרות להתגייס עונות לרב קלנר

First a Family, Then a Nation

Students in OTS's Straus-Amiel, Beren-Amiel and Claudia Cohen emissary-preparatory programs are specially trained to serve Jewish communities, campuses and congregations all over the world. Part and parcel of their preparation includes addressing their personal concerns and providing them with the tools they will need for overcoming the challenges faced by rabbis and educators in the public eye.

“Love in the real world isn’t Hollywood style,” Rabbi Shlomo Riskin told future OTS emissary couples studying in the **Joseph and Gwendolyn Straus Rabbinical Seminary’s Straus-Amiel Rabbinical Emissary Program**, the **Ethel and Adolph Beren Educator Institute’s Beren-Amiel Educator Emissary Program** and the **Claudia Cohen Women Educators Institute**. “Hollywood would have us believe that you ‘fall in love,’ but love and relationships don’t just happen; they require hard work, time set aside for chatting and being together. This is true for all couples,” he said, “but it’s especially true for *shlichim*.”



RABBI RISKIN: “LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS DON’T JUST HAPPEN; THEY REQUIRE HARD WORK”

Rabbi Riskin’s remarks were made at a recent seminar held for the emissaries-in-training on the subject of Relationships, Family and Children. “Our students are highly motivated and specially trained for their mission,” said Rabbi Eliahu Birnbaum, director of the Straus-Amiel and Beren-Amiel programs. “But in addition to professional challenges, emissaries also have personal concerns, like feeling a sense of isolation, marital tension, or conflict between dedication to one’s family and dedication to one’s mission. Seminars like these provide them with crucial tools for safeguarding and nurturing their family, above and beyond the tools they acquire for working in a community, congregation or school,” he explained.

A BALANCING ACT

According to Shiran and Yoni Dreyer, currently training to fulfill their dream of “strengthening *Am Yisrael* in the Diaspora,”

the highlight of the day was “the incredible opportunity to meet with alumni families who have just returned from their *shlichut*.”



FORMER CHIEF RABBI OF WARSAW, STRAUS-AMIEL ALUMNUS RABBI MOSHE BLOOM, SHARED CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS WITH OTS EMISSARIES-IN-TRAINING

Straus-Amiel alumnus Rabbi Moshe Bloom shared some of the challenges that he and his wife Chava faced as the chief rabbinic couple of Warsaw, Poland, and outlined the innovative methods they devised to overcome them.

Claudia Cohen alumna Leah Rosenfeld spoke about how she and her husband, Rabbi Michael Rosenfeld, “learned to walk a tightrope” as they served the community of Kiev, Ukraine. “Because you are alone, with no extended family support, you can sometimes feel isolated,” she said. “But at the same time, because you share a mission, your connections can also be strengthened,” she said.

Effi and Rabbi Shalom Tzvi Krell, who just returned from a three-year teaching stint at CHAT in Toronto, spoke extensively about this balancing act and about one of the ways in which they successfully addressed the challenge in their own home. “When we invited our students over for Shabbat, it was understood that it wasn’t just the teachers but the entire Krell family inviting them,” shared Effi. “The kids were an active part of the *shlichut* experience; they opened the door and welcomed the students inside, they called out the page numbers in the songbooks. It was a family venture which built relationships which have extended even now that we have returned home.”

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incredibly exciting it is for me to be in this building and to see the serious investment that has been made in fostering serious Torah study for women."

Friedman, a "halakhic Jew who prays and covers her hair and rips toilet paper before Shabbat," discussed why she fought tooth and nail for communal Shabbat activities for secular Israelis in Jerusalem's public realm. "If secular Jews leave Jerusalem in droves because nothing is open, and only some people feel comfortable here, how can it be the eternal capital of the Jewish people in the Jewish state? Maybe keeping Jews in Jerusalem is a matter of *pikuach nefesh*?

Where is the line drawn between personal and public? Why is a shul allowed to be open on Shabbat for religious Jews," she asked, "but secular Jews find the community center locked?"

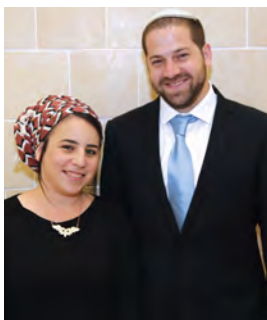
All of these questions are part and parcel of modern Israeli dialogue, summarized WIHL co-director Rabbi Shmuel Klitsner at the evening's end. "While the WIHL continues to engage in the classic curriculum for those who answer *halakhic* questions regarding Shabbat and all the other topics of study, it does not shy away from the larger questions which challenge *halakhic* discourse and which stand at the center of the historic effort of forming a uniquely Jewish sovereign and modern society," he said.



TEHILLA FRIEDMAN: KEEPING JEWS IN JERUSALEM

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EVERY SHABBAT IS A GIFT



SHIRAN AND YONI DREYER:
"CONCRETE ANSWERS"

Like the other former emissaries, Beren-Amiel graduate Shimon Hirsch, former Youth Education and Programming Coordinator at Dor Tikvah in Charleston, SC, and his wife Meira, who taught in the community school, also spoke about finding equilibrium between family life and mission fulfillment. "On the one hand, it was very important for us to make time for family-only meals. But on the other hand, we knew that we only had a few years there, and that each Shabbat was a gift during which we could really make an impact," Shimon said.

"As a couple slated to work with youth in the Diaspora, we found these round-robin sessions incredibly eye-opening," said 27-year-old Shiran Dreyer. "We feel privileged that we were able to hear firsthand about the effects emissary life had on their personal, couple and family lives." Yoni agreed: "Over the course of our training in Beren-Amiel and Claudia Cohen we've learned from myriad experts, but hearing this kind of

testimony from former emissaries gave us an opportunity to ask for concrete answers to questions that until now, we've only discussed in theory."

INVESTING IN THE FAMILY

"Beyond being an inherently important value, investing in your family can also become a work benefit," maintained Rabbi Yehoshua Grunstein, director of training and placement for the emissary programs "The community also looks to you to see how you relate to one another, how you educate your kids, how you run your Shabbat table. What you do as parents and spouses is more powerful than any class or lecture you can give."

Claudia Cohen Institute director Renana Birnbaum capped the day-long seminar, reminding the young couples that Diaspora communities are looking for emissaries who are like them: husband-wife teams, families with kids who are facing the same life concerns and issues that they are. "The family will therefore be a part of what you're doing, and you must give great thought to that," she said. "Perhaps that's why we learn about our Patriarchs and Matriarchs in Bereishit before moving on to the birth of the Jewish people in Shemot," pondered Birnbaum. "It's the Torah's way of teaching us that without a strong family, there can be no strong nation."



"WALKING A TIGHTROPE"—LEAH ROSENFELD AND HER HUSBAND, RABBI MICHAEL, PROVIDING CURRENT STUDENTS WITH INSIGHTS IN THE ETHEL AND ADOLPH BEREN LIBRARY



FOUNDER AND CHANCELLOR:

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Riskin

PRESIDENT-ELECT AND ROSH HAYESHIVA:

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander

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