

# Hillel Yeshiva students love a parade — for Israel

## Marchers in NY salute 60 years of the Jewish state



More than 300 students from Hillel Yeshiva in Ocean marched along Fifth Avenue in New York City in the Salute to Israel parade on June 1.

Photo courtesy Hillel Yeshiva

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Wearing bright yellow T-shirts exhorting people to "Be a Piece of the Story," students from [Hillel Yeshiva](#) in Ocean were among the thousands of marchers in the annual Salute to Israel Parade on June 1 in New York City.

It took eight school buses to transport the more than 300 students from the yeshiva's grades four through 12 to the parade. The "story" referred to on their shirts was the one being promoted as the official parade theme — "The Story of 60," Israel's 60th anniversary — a message also reflected on the banners the students carried.

The parade, which took place along Fifth Avenue, attracted more than 100,000 participants who were cheered by almost one million spectators, parade officials said. Marchers included costumed students from public and private schools and groups from Jewish organizations and community centers.

Hillel Yeshiva students have been part of the Salute to Israel Parade for 20 years, said Dr. Ruth Katz, head of school, Early Learning Center through eighth grade.

The yeshiva's parade banner bore three phrases about the Israeli people, the Torah, and the Jewish state, Katz said. "Our sub-theme this year was religious Zionism. We pray that the people of Israel will keep the Torah in the land of Israel."

The yeshiva also had a 20-foot float that carried students, other members of the extended Hillel family, and a band and singer performing Israeli songs.

The float was preceded by students waving streamers and playing tambourines. More than 125 students and faculty members from the yeshiva's high school marched behind the float; many danced and engaged the spectators in song and celebration, said Rabbi Howard Bald, head of Hillel Yeshiva's high school.

"It was a very special feeling to walk along Fifth Avenue with thousands and thousands of Jews," said Bald. "We remember to be thankful that Israel exists, especially in the post-Holocaust world. It is the home and the haven for world Jewry."

The yeshiva's participation in the parade was the culmination of a year-long course of study that centered on Israel's 60th anniversary. Among other projects, students produced a 40-minute documentary on Israel's history, wrote essays about the Jewish state, and created original artwork.

The most poignant event during the school year, according to Katz, was the appearance at the yeshiva of a 15-year-old Israeli terror victim.

"This young man spoke to the seventh- and eighth-grade students," she said. "After that day, we never had to ask anyone if they wanted to be part of the parade. Our students felt an even greater kinship with their peers in the Jewish state after this young Israeli came to see us."

Since it originated in 1964, the Salute to Israel Parade has been a public affirmation of solidarity with, and support of, the Jewish homeland, as well as an expression of unity within the American-Jewish community, Katz said.

"Our Hillel Yeshiva family will always be committed to support our people, our Torah, and our beloved Land of Israel," she said. "Faculty and students openly showed their support in this year's Salute to Israel parade, and we'll be at next year's parade. That's a promise."