

Hillel Yeshiva Celebrates Israel at 60

It was evident from the beginning of the year that Israel was to be a major theme of the 2008-2009 school year at Hillel Yeshiva. In celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, Hillel students participated in various programs and projects.

For the first time, Hillel Yeshiva hosted two women from the Sherut Leumi program in Israel. These young women work as full-time volunteers at Hillel in place of their obligation to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Our volunteers, Mor and Adi, help pre-school through 8th grade students learn more about Israeli history and culture. In addition to organizing fun activities for Rosh Hodesh, the girls are involved with students on a daily basis, whether it be in tefilla (prayer), learning the Hebrew language, or as assistants in the classroom. Their presence has certainly helped make our students more aware of the importance of Israel, and has instilled in them a love and affinity



Clarisse Cohen, Jacqueline Zeidenfeld and Daniel Massry

for our homeland.

Throughout the year, usually on Rosh Hodesh, Hillel students participated in games, plays, music, dancing, assemblies and projects that all highlighted different aspects of Israel in a fun and exciting way.

From gigantic floor maps that the kids “traveled” through, to a concert by Yaakov Shwekey, everyone had a great time celebrating Israel’s 60th birthday.

Each elementary school student, even the 1st graders, chose a topic related to Israel, investigated and researched, and actually wrote a book which even had their own beautiful illustrations. After months of drafts and revisions, the books were professionally bound and published. In May, an Author’s Tea was held at Hillel Yeshiva where the proud students got a chance to present their work to parents and classmates.

On Yom Ha’atzmaut, Israeli Independence Day, the preschool students of the Early Learning Center (ELC) along with the younger grades of the elementary school, marched in a fabulous parade. The children waved flags

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Vivian Dayan, Esther Mizrahi, Jennifer Betesh, Morris Cohen, Leon Ebani and David Cohen

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and displayed giant, creative and colorful banners that they had made themselves. They even had a seven foot tall float, resembling a cake, in honor of Israel's birthday.

In May, a 3rd grade class presented a play called "Happy Birthday Savta, Happy Birthday Israel." Both the audience and the performers enjoyed this wonderful production, which had magnificent scenery.

The middle school students also had their share of fun with a professional game show where students were quizzed on trivia (many questions were asked on Jewish topics) and also had to participate in activities to win. The enthusiasm of the students was only superseded by the noise level in the auditorium! Our game show host was amazingly able to keep things under total control amidst all the excitement.

Our high school seniors had a two day Israeli-themed color war with four teams. Every team was named after one of the seven fruits



Honey Missry and Rachel Chemtob

of Israel (which is where it got its color from) and represented a certain city in Israel and a historical personality from that city.

The school was alive with team spirit as our students wore pants, skirts, shirts, hats, socks, bandanas, shoes and even jewelry in their vibrant team colors. The students were busy with all sorts of games that tested physical agility, speed, creativity and intelligence. The experience was not only educational, but also tons of fun!

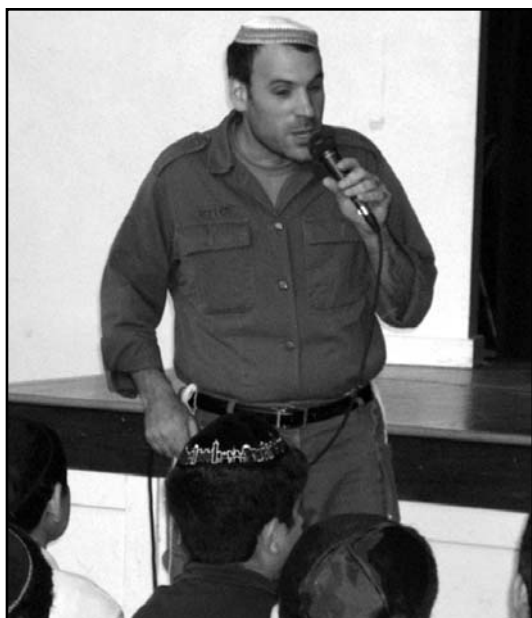
On the more serious side, Hillel had various ceremonies on Yom Hazikaron, commemorating all those who bravely sacrificed their lives for the survival of Israel. Rabbi Shalom Hammer, an educator in Israel and chaplain for the Israel Defense Forces, visited Hillel and mesmerized the students with a powerful presentation. He spoke about his experiences in the IDF and gave students a better understanding of defense in Israel.

Of course, no matter what we did at school, we

could not compete with the thrill of actually being in Israel. Our high school seniors had the experience of a lifetime on their senior trip to Israel. Accompanied by lifelong friends, teachers and rabbis, including our Head of High School, Rabbi Bald, our students had an amazing opportunity to actually see first-hand all that they had learned about for so many years at Hillel Yeshiva.

In culmination, Hillel Yeshiva students and faculty proudly marched in the Salute to Israel Parade on June 1, 2008 to demonstrate their unwavering support of Israel.

Hillel strives to instill a love for *Medinat Yisrael* (the land of Israel) in our students starting in the ELC. Mrs. Ruchie Czermak, our ELC Director; Dr. Ruth Katz, Head of School, ELC through Middle School; and Rabbi Bald, Head of School, High School, should be commended for all the time and effort they have put into the programs and events that occurred throughout the year. They have been incredibly successful in making sure our students feel a strong connection and love for the land that *Boreh Olem* (Creator of the Universe) has given to the Jewish nation. □



Rabbi Shalom Hammer