

B'Yachad

Adar 5757 • 1997

TOGETHER

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created by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

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SPOTLIGHT on an Alumnus

PAUL LASTER

Ohr Somayach alumni come from all over the world, and their influence can rarely be measured. Paul Laster for example, whose family has been in Richmond, Virginia since 1890, and in Israel since 1967, has made an indelible mark in the history of Ohr Somayach as well as the Nation of Israel itself.

After graduating from the University of Virginia and the University of Richmond Law School, Paul opted for a year of community service and soul-searching before beginning legal practice. He joined a program in Israel, teaching English to children of immigrant North Africans, and at the end of the year decided he couldn't leave. After making aliyah in 1969 Paul was recruited by the Jewish Agency Youth Department to be a *madrich* for the same program, a liaison and guide for the incoming teachers.

A year later, after two months of

Basic Training in the Israeli Army, Paul became the Education Coordinator for the Institute for Israeli *Shlichim*. His job was to prepare Israeli emissaries to go abroad to youth groups in English-speaking countries, to spread Israeli pride and Zionist idealism. In 1972, Paul himself went to Boston for two years on full scholarship to earn a Masters degree in Contemporary Jewish Education from Brandeis University.

Upon Paul's return to Israel, his increasingly recognized talents were snatched up by the Israeli military - the *Midrasha Hatzvait L'Hinuch*, or Senior Seminar Center for Non-Military Ideological Education.

After the traumatic failures of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Army created an inspirational corps of trainers to offset the loss of the officers' esprit-de-corps, with Paul at the helm. Realizing that the officers had a basic lack of appreciation of the reasons for a Jewish state, Captain Laster set about re-instilling

them with pride in their heritage. Interested by a newspaper article about Ohr Somayach, he met with Rabbi Schiller and Rabbi Weinbach, and a "shidduch" was made.

During the following three and a half years, thousands of Israeli officers came to Ohr Somayach for meetings, classes and Shabbatonim, where the "electric" mix of officers, students and staff charged and invigorated all of them with renewed Jewish pride.

The program was marvelously successful in boosting morale, and in leading many of the soldiers to become observant. So successful was it, that the Army eventually canceled the program, fired Paul, and would not even let him back on the base during his severance period!

Paul took the opportunity to learn at Ohr Somayach. Most of his time, however, was spent organizing an outreach program, putting his copious talents into teaching and inspiring Jews. The program brought in over two thousand people per year and introduced them to Jewish tradition, thought, and philosophy, as well as to the observant Jewish community.

Today, Paul learns full time at Chafetz Chaim Yeshiva, and works closely with the students in their preparation and review. His Shabbos table is still one of the first stops for new boys at Ohr Somayach, where his wife's delicious *challah* and Paul's innate ability for *kiruv* continue to inspire and enliven returning Jewish *neshamos*.

MESSAGES FROM ALUMNI

KEN FRIEDMAN
 <KFRIEDEN@MAILBOX.SYR.EDU> WRITES:

Shalom Aleichem! I would very much like your help in locating two former students: Aaron Tendler, whose father was a well-known Rabbi in NJ, and Moshe Kirshner, who taught me 'trope' in 1983. I will be reading a parsha in two weeks and would like to thank him again for his tape which I've been using for the Akeidah. Apparently, he was bal korei for the yeshiva back in 1983. With best wishes.

Ken Frieden
 Professor of Judaic Studies, Syracuse University

STANLEY NACHAMIE (JLE, '88)
 <STNACHAMIE@JTSU.EDU> WRITES:

I just want people to be notified that they should write me at my new address <stnachamie@jtsu.edu>

ChoppedLiver®



Written and Created by Rabbi Mordechai Becher
 Illustration by David Podbere

Mazel Tov to...

MR. AND MRS. ZALMAN ROBBINS

on the birth of their son.

MR. AND MRS. CHAIM GREEN

on the birth of their daughter.

MR. AND MRS. JEFF MINTZ

on the birth of their son.

MR. AND MRS. MICHAEL FUERST

on the birth of their daughter.

AHARON & SHAINA SUBAR

on their birth of their son.

ALAN & ODELIA COOPER

on their wedding.

LEVI YITZHAK & OSHRA STEELE

on the birth of their son.

PALTIEL (BRIAN) &

SHARON BRODSKY

on the birth of their son.

JOEL AND MELINDA KLEIN

on the birth of their daughter.

ARTHUR & EVELYN JACOBS

on the birth of their granddaughter

MR. AND MS. DAVEED ARTZI

on the birth of their son.

YOCHANAN MEISLER &

NAOMI ROSENSTEIN

on their wedding.

MR. AND MRS. DANIEL ROSE

on their wedding.

SHIMON COBERSBY AND

MELANIE GOLDSTEIN

on their wedding.

MR. AND MRS. YOSSIE BLALOCK

on their wedding

IRWIN GOLDMAN

on his engagement.

YAAKOV YIRMISCH

on his engagement.

GEDALIA EPSTEIN

on his engagement.

YECHIEL BERKOWITZ

on his engagement.

ALAN LEVY

on his engagement.

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