

SPECIAL
YOM HA'ATZMAUT
EDITION

Koleinu

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Robert M. Beren Academy
Torah U'Mada | תורה ומדע

Avidan Abramson (ECE 4)

Rabbi Ari Segal
Head of School

It Takes a Role Model

I am often asked why role modeling is such a significant factor in education and why making such an effort to recruit a number of *dati leumi* (Religious Zionist) role models from Israel is so important.

The success of the school and the achievement of our full mission is contingent upon recruiting and hiring a cadre of dynamic role models who embody, in their actions as much as in their words, the values and ideals of the school.

There is a story that is told of a renowned ethicist who lived a very unethical and amoral lifestyle. When

confronted by his students with this seeming contradiction, he asked his students if a mathematician has to be a “square” to be a good teacher.

While this example may be humorous, it is far from accurate. In the molding and shaping of young people, teachers play a key role in the transmission of values. If a teacher professes one value yet lives according to another, young people immediately pick up on the inconsistency. I’ve noticed in my years of working with teenagers that almost nothing frustrates them more than perceived hypocrisy on the part of the adults in their life.

This clearly indicates the need to have teachers who share our values so that we avoid sending inconsistent and contradictory signals to our children. However, that doesn’t answer the entire

question nor does it do justice to the need for role models.

Our vision of Judaism is one that celebrates the Modern State of Israel as well as the Biblical Land of Israel. It affirms that we can live as Jews anywhere but that the fullness and richness of Judaic life can most ideally be experienced there, in that land. This vision of Judaism is one that we can be proud of. However, it’s also one that is nuanced, requiring significant elucidation and effort to communicate. This is especially true for those who are not already intimately familiar with it. The fine distinctions and shades of gray that are part and parcel of who we are require countless hours of lectures, reading and personal experience to understand and appreciate. I have learned personally, however, that there is another way to accomplish this, ▶

President Ira Mitzner

Head of School Rabbi Ari Segal

Editor Rachel Jacobson Gold

Copy Editor David Jacobson

Graphic Designer Emuna Carmel

www.berenacademy.org

Robert M. Beren Academy. 11333 Cliffwood Dr., Houston, Texas 77035. 713-723-7170

one that is even more effective and often requires a lot less time. That way is role modeling.

When a student spends time with an individual who has served in the Israeli army AND who has also learned in a yeshiva for 5 years, it teaches that student what sacrifice for the Jewish people and true Torah study is all about. We can only tell our kids how critically vital Israel's existence is to the Jewish people and to the world at large. Our words may, or may not, be heard and absorbed. When, however, they sit in a classroom with a teacher who literally lives and breathes that message – that's when they really get it. That's when it truly sinks in.

Having the right role models that embody the totality of the values of religious Zionism will, undoubtedly, make the kinds of lasting, positive impressions on our children that we want. These days, that can make all the difference in the world. ■

Rav Aharoni Carmel and Shaked Carmel (2M) celebrate on Yom Ha'atzmaut



Atara Segal
Judaic and Mathematics Teacher

Israel Comes to Life on the Smart Board

It's difficult for us to imagine - living as we do in the age of Google Earth where we're able to view any place on earth instantly with the click of a mouse - that for much of our history, Jewish scholars had no idea what the Land of Israel really looked like. Basic knowledge of the Land that we take for granted was unavailable to them. They didn't know, for instance, that Hebron is essentially walking distance from Jerusalem. They didn't realize that the Jordan River flows all the way from the Kinneret to the Dead Sea. Their perception of what they thought the Holy Land looked like is reflected in the maps that were created in medieval times. These maps sometimes depicted the country as being as wide as it was long or with the mountains of the North situated in the South. Such inaccuracies are totally forgiven, however, when we hear these sages speak with such fanciful loveliness of their yearning for Zion, feelings they expressed so poignantly in their poetry.

We are blessed to live in an era in which we experience Israel with precision – whether by actual firsthand

knowledge or by accurate maps and satellite images. We may have lost some of the fabled longing of our ancestors, but we have discovered treasures of accuracy that only modern archaeology and geography can provide. This is something that has transformed the way that we can study *Tanach* (Bible) today. When we learn in *Chumash* class how Moshe fled from Egypt to Midian and back again to the desert of Sinai, we are able to summon a map program on the SmartBoard and trace his route – actually counting the miles – and appreciate the length of his journey. Looking at the distance outlined in a squiggly green line on the screen, we can fully understand the *midrash* that credits Moshe for the great sacrifice involved in pasturing his sheep in the faraway desert of Sinai to avoid stealing any grass from his neighbors. We can overlay the present-day borders of the State of Israel on this topographical map and understand at a glance the strategic issues involved in the Camp David accords that gave the Sinai desert back to Egypt.

We may not have the worldview of the sages of the 12th century. Nevertheless, technology has only made the call of R. Judah Halevi, expressing his inconsolable desire for Israel, all the more clear to us: “My heart is in the East, but I am at the ends of the West.” Thankfully, we now have the means to visit holy Jerusalem – both virtually and actually. ■

SMART Board equipment in room 212 has been generously donated by Legacy Heritage Fund Limited.

