

MHA/FYOS

Alumni and Friends



Issue 16

**Highlighting the
graduating classes
of 1971-1975**

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Democracy in action! The Academy participated in a mock presidential election on Nov. 7, 1972. Students had the opportunity to vote for either George McGovern or Richard Nixon. The election was coordinated by the eighth grade boys under the guidance of Mrs. Fiona Page and Mrs. Suzanne Friedman.

Pictured are (back row, from left) **Cary Califf** (MHA '73), **Russell Scheinberg** (MHA '73), **Jonathan Whitman** (MHA '73), **Michael Belz** (MHA '73), **Gary Polsky** (MHA '73), **Mark Olswang** (MHA '73), **Tzvi (Ronnie) Levin** (MHA '73), **Marshall Lebovits** (MHA '73); (front row, from left) **Morris Goldstein** (MHA '73), Mrs. Page, Mrs. Friedman and **Avie Kivelovitz** (MHA '73).

This newsletter is dedicated in loving memory of members of the classes of 1971-75 who are no longer with us:

Menachem Carl (YOS '74)

Mark Elster (MHA '71)

Jonathan Finegold (YOS '74)

We also note with sadness the recent passing of

Lois (Ostrow) Goldberg

(MHA '77, YOS '81)

and send our sincere condolences to her family, including her sister

Linda (Ostrow) Schlesinger

(MHA '74).

May their memory forever be a blessing.

MISSED AN ISSUE? ARCHIVES

All previous issues of our alumni publication are now conveniently available at mhafyos.org/alumni.

Joanne Kahane, alumni chair

Amara Levine-Reich (MHA '94, FYOS '97), editor

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MESSAGE TO ALUMNI

Joanne Kahane, alumni committee chair

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Dear MHA/FYOS alumni and friends:



It's Chanukah! The word alone conjures up the beautiful images and feelings of the festival of lights; it always brings a smile to my face and to those of so many others. In the midst of the darkness of winter, Hashem saw fit to bring us the shining lights of the menorah.

Over the past four years of having the incredible joy of working on this newsletter, I've come to see our extended school community as a spark that displaces the darkness by spreading light. The MHA/FYOS has sent forth outstanding alumni who continue to illuminate the world with their Torah knowledge, impressive achievements and noble good deeds.

It became especially clear to me as I was preparing this issue. On the one hand, it brings me great *nachas* (pride) to highlight more recent years in the school's history and to see the young people I know well establishing their paths in life and building beautiful families. On the other hand, I was struck with such emotion working on this issue, seeing photos of two and three generations of Torah-observant families that stem from our precious alumni. Each time I received a photo, crowded with beautiful faces, I felt my eyes well up with tears. This continuity of tradition is the shining legacy of our school and our community.

Our alumni venture forth into the world, taking with them the lessons they so carefully learned at the MHA/FYOS. With G-d's help and a great deal of personal dedication, they raise families imbued with the values that are such an integral part of the Memphis Jewish community. I wish that our school's devoted founders were still with us to see these beautiful photos, to bask in the light of the candle they lit, which is growing and spreading to communities here and abroad.

My theory about the light that emanates from Memphis was reinforced by a [recent *Mishpacha* magazine article](#) about Jewish singing sensation Benny Friedman. It's a moving portrayal of a very successful entertainer who felt he was losing himself in the commercialism of his profession and had become dissatisfied with his music and his performances. As the article explains, Friedman's visit to Memphis served as a major turning point for him. (In January, my son **Josh** (MHA '93, FYOS '97) and daughter-in-law **Elana (Krupp) Kahane** (MHA '92) brought Friedman to Memphis for Shabbos and to perform at a public concert in honor of their daughter Sarah's bat mitzvah.)

"He sang like he was far from New York, letting his voice go the places it wanted to, connecting with an audience thrilled to be experiencing an event of that sort—many of them for the first time," the article states. "It was less commercial and more like the Minnesota of his youth; he found himself responding musically to the crowd's unabashed



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enthusiasm, singing in a voice that is uniquely his." The story describes how Friedman "found his voice again" here in Memphis. Questioning whether he could bring that new sound back to New York, Friedman succeeded at recapturing the energy of Memphis while recording his new studio album. I highly recommend reading his powerful story of self-rediscovery (linked above) and point out once again the magical light that shines forth from our small Jewish community.

Just one more reminder that we continue to need your help with our efforts. If you encounter a fellow alumnus on your journey, please (1) ask them if they receive our alumni newsletter; (2) if not, get their

email address/contact information for us; and (3) take a picture for the Alumni Reunite section of our publication and submit it to us.

Sending all of you our love—and our Memphis light—to carry with you on your journeys,

Joanne Kahane, alumni chair

joannekahane111@gmail.com



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Aileen Cooper

Dear MHA/FYOS alumni and friends,



Rav Aharon Lichtenstein z'l taught us that the miracle of Chanukah is the success of the Jewish nation surviving, both physically and spiritually, and remaining true to its values and tradition. The festival of Chanukah celebrates not a return to what was before, but rather the creation of and entry into a renewed framework. The dedication of the *Mikdash* (Holy Temple) was one of innovation and starting something new, so the Chanukah of the *Chashmonaim* (Hasmoneans) contained a measure of newness and renewed light. The miracle of Chanukah created within the Jewish nation a great wave of energy on a scale that was not previously known. We therefore publicize not only the miracle itself, but also the great movement and propulsion forward.

We are now well into another outstanding school year at the MHA/FYOS. While we work tirelessly to carry on the 70-year legacy of our beloved school, we are also working hard on innovative programming that is spiritually and physically meaningful for our students and the extended school community.

Our 12th annual [Fall Festival](#) was exciting and very well attended. The children were delighted with the many fun activities, including crafts, a moon bounce

and a book fair. Our teachers also showcased their classrooms for the many families who visited.

The [Cooper Invitational](#), now in its 13th year, is one of the largest competitive Jewish high school athletic events in the country. This year's tournament featured 16 of the top Jewish high school boys' varsity basketball teams. Although our FYOS Cooper Macs did not win this year, they had a wonderful time. The Memphis community graciously opened their homes to the visiting teams and fans for a meaningful and inspiring *shabbaton*. The annual tournament has become an incredible opportunity to showcase the best of Memphis.

Through the [CYHSB Beit Midrash Program](#), our high school boys learn Torah twice a week in *chavrutas* (study pairs) with their peers and *rebbeim* from the community. Feel free to join this inspirational experience any time, and watch our young men engrossed in Torah study.

Our 11th and 12th graders are creating a video entitled "[The Ties that Bind: Weaving the Tapestry of Jewish Memphis](#)." The students are conducting filmed interviews with longtime Memphians to explore the history and origins of Jewish Memphis. They will be editing the film and at the end of the year will host a showing for the entire community.

Our school's health committee continues to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle for our students—from [walking or biking to school](#) to



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helping us provide more nutritious breakfast and lunch offerings. Thank you to all the parents and alumni who have been weekly sponsors of the [Monday Fruit Cart](#), which provides students with fresh fruit for the week at no cost to them.

Dec. 6 was our annual [Grandparents and Special Guests Day](#), a memorable time for MHA students and grandparents alike. Our special guests received a unique, firsthand peek into a day in the life of our school.

The [26th Annual CYHSB Steak Dinner](#) will be held on Sunday, Jan. 26. This is sure to be a wonderful evening featuring a delicious four-course meal and terrific entertainment provided by our very own high school boys. Less than two weeks later, the [auction](#) begins online Feb. 9 and culminates in our "Sunday Night Fever" Gala Auction on Feb. 23 at the MHA!

We continue to make progress on the construction plans for our Mary Pikelny STEAM Center, featuring spaces dedicated to the study of science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics. The STEAM center will feature a top-of-the-line science lab, art center, innovation lab and outdoor class space. Our students will have the perfect facility to collaborate on 21st-century skills, like 3-D printing, coding, moviemaking and more.

Please consider sponsoring a day or a week of learning at the MHA/FYOS to show your *hakarat*

hatov (appreciation) to your alma mater and its hard-working teachers and administrators. It's a wonderful way to remember a loved one on their *yahrzeit* or to honor a special occasion, like the birth of a child, an anniversary or a birthday. To schedule a day or week of learning or with any questions you may have regarding dedication opportunities, please reach out to our director of recruitment and marketing, **Jessica (Baum) Sukhodolsky** (MHA '99), at 901-682-2400 or jessica.baum@mhafyos.org. We appreciate your financial support to keep our school going strong as we celebrate the 70-year legacy of the MHA.

I invite y'all to visit the MHA/FYOS for a firsthand look at all the wonderful and exciting new things happening at our school; please call or email Jessica to arrange a visit. And please continue to tell your friends about our [wonderful school](#) and [Memphis Jewish community](#).

Wishing you a *chag sameach* — a very happy Chanukah!

Aileen Cooper
President, MHA/FYOS Board of Trustees
aileencoop@aol.com



During the time of year when we celebrate Chanukah, we read from the Torah about the story of Joseph in Egypt. With this in mind, I'd like to share some parallels between these two times in history, as well as their application today.

The Dreams

Joseph's rise to power came about due to his ability to interpret dreams. But what was the big deal about Pharaoh's dream? Why did it bother him so much? We all dream!

Perhaps we can say that Pharaoh felt threatened by his dreams. The message seemed to go against everything he believed. Those with power ruled the world, and he was the most powerful. The skinny cows eating the healthy cows in his dream conveyed a message that the weak would overtake the mighty, and he could not live with this idea.

In Hellenistic philosophy, G-d is within nature; He is not supernatural and cannot change nature. Judaism challenges this belief and refutes Hellenism. Like Pharaoh, they could not live with this, and thus had to destroy the Torah.

Judaism in Egypt

Both Judah and Reuben wished to save Joseph. Judah told the brothers to sell Joseph to the descendants of Ishmael. Though he would be physically safe, he would be in spiritual danger. Separated from his family, he would likely assimilate into Egyptian society and culture.

Reuben told his brothers to throw Joseph into a pit. His intent was to save him. There, he would remain spiritually pure. Hashem would decide whether or not he would make it out alive.

The brothers listened to Judah. Joseph spent 22 years in Egypt but did not succumb to their culture. He remained true to the Torah.

Years later, the Jews lived amid the Greek culture and society. What would be their fate? The Greeks were successful in Hellenizing the Jews. However, there was a small group—the Maccabees—who, like Joseph, remained true to the Torah.

Neutralizing the Greeks

Joseph told Pharaoh, "*Biladi*"—it was not me, but rather Hashem who interprets dreams. Hashem is above nature and controls everything. It was this declaration by Joseph that was transmitted to his descendants and enabled the Maccabees to declare the same, stay true to their beliefs, and defeat Hellenism. (It's interesting to note that the numerical value [*gematriya*] of *Yosef* and *Melech Yavan* are the same: 156.)

Throughout history, the Jewish people have faced the same challenges as Joseph in Egypt and as the Jewish nation living among the Greeks. What is the secret of our survival? The answer lies in the Torah portion cited above. Prior to Jacob and his sons moving to Egypt, Judah was sent ahead to set up a place of learning: a yeshiva. Torah is the antidote to assimilation. Torah is the key to Jewish survival.

Memphis is a city with a beautiful Jewish presence, boasting shuls, mikvahs and kosher food. However, the key to the success of the community is the MHA/FYOS. Taking a lesson from Judah setting up a *beit midrash* in Egypt, the Memphis Jewish community established the Hebrew Academy 70 years ago, at a time when formal Jewish education was not in vogue. My wonderful parents, Rabbi Efraim and

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D'VAR TORAH

Rabbi Yitz Greenblatt (MHA '75)

Mrs. Miriam Greenblatt, of blessed memory, and many others dedicated their lives to teaching at the Academy and to spreading Torah in the Memphis community. The fruits of their labor have spread far and wide, and graduates of the school represent Memphis well throughout the world.

Ki ner mitzvah v'torah ohr — The candle is the mitzvah and Torah is the light (Proverbs 6:23). As we celebrate Chanukah and the importance of dedication to Torah education, it's an appropriate time to reflect on the historic and profound accomplishments of the MHA/FYOS, as well as its promising future.

Rabbi Yitz Greenblatt (MHA '75) serves as principal of Yeshivat Lev Torah in Brooklyn. He lives with his family in Far Rockaway, New York. A profile of his father, longtime MHA faculty member Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt, z'l, can be found on page 31 of this issue.



‘75

When is “We” not “we”?

Over the past year or so, I've been studying the relatively new [Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer Foundation's edition](#) of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary on *Chumash* (first five books of the Torah). It is an excellent and clear English translation that reflects Rav Hirsch's approach to *hashkafa* (philosophy) and *halacha* (Jewish law). His writings continuously aid me in responding to today's crude, coarse and vulgar assaults on the spiritual values and moral choices demanded by the all-knowing G-d. I'd like to share a quick thought from this inspiring work.

Chapter 42 of *Bereshit* (Genesis) begins with the 10 sons of Yaakov (Jacob) being sent down to Egypt to purchase foodstuffs for their families, servants and herds back in Canaan. As was the protocol for foreigners, they were brought before the viceroy, who was supervising the sale of grain from Egypt's storehouses. They did not realize that their long-lost brother Yosef (Joseph) had been miraculously appointed viceroy, but he recognized them. Yosef's probing of their intentions and motivations began with an accusation: "You are spies!"

We know that our hero, Yosef, was conducting a little test that would ultimately prove successful in reuniting the family in peace and harmony, while avoiding potential trauma for their father Yaakov, disowning his older 10 sons for their earlier betrayal of his beloved Yosef. As viceroy, perhaps Yosef's accusation was a logical assumption. After all, the 10 brothers arrived as one large group. This might have been construed as intimidation or to intimate that a larger army back in Canaan was ready to attack if they did not peacefully negotiate for the supplies they needed. The brothers did not present themselves as separate individuals with independent families just trying to survive in times of calamity and starvation.

The brothers responded to this accusation (Genesis 42:11) as follows:

Kulanu bnei ish echad nachnu, kaynim anachnu, lo hayu avadecha meraglim. We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants were never spies.

Rav Hirsch comments: The 10 sons of Yaakov were meeting the viceroy of Egypt for the first time. The viceroy had just accused them of being spies. They declare, "We [*nachnu*] are the sons of one man. We [*anachnu*] are honest men. *Nachnu* is a weaker form of the word "we"; *anachnu* is a more powerful, more aware form of "we." We come from a powerful clan, and more importantly, we are honest men.

When it came to social status, the brothers were humble and described themselves more modestly, using the word *nachnu*. When their character was attacked, they described themselves as *anachnu*, with proud awareness of themselves. Honesty and integrity are more valuable than status. *Midos* (good character traits) are more important than *yichus* (lineage).

A noteworthy trait of the Memphis Jewish community—epitomized by the founders, families and supporters of the MHA/FYOS—is the desire to attract people with honesty and integrity to join their ranks. Whether it's recruiting students to attend the school or teachers and leaders to administer local institutions and organizations, the community of religiously observant Jews in Memphis, Tennessee, has become a well-recognized model of *anachnu*: the desire for individual character and responsibility to succeed over status and power.

D'VAR TORAH

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With G-d's help, may the lessons we learned at the MHA/FYOS continue to be an enduring, shining light of strength and stability, guiding us to forever strive to be good and positive Jewish role models for our family, friends and peers in an environment of spiritual and moral growth.

Dr. Morris Gavant (YOS '72) is a partner physician at Advanced Radiology in Baltimore, Maryland, where he specializes in emergency radiology and tele-radiology, and a Fellow in the American College of Radiology (FACR). He and his wife **Ann Ellen Blockman Gavant** (MHA '70) are the parents of four sons—**Josh** (MHA '94), **Aaron** (MHA '97), Yonasan and Judah—and doting grandparents.



‘72

We welcome your feedback on the alumni newsletter at alumni@mhafyos.org. Here are some of the responses we received to Issue No. 15.

Thank you so much for including the picture of me with Rabbi Schreiber in your last issue; what a wonderful memory that was! At the annual MHA auction, my parents [Gary Mantell and **Julie Parker** (MHA '70)] won the "Dean for a Day" prize, which entailed shadowing Rabbi Schreiber for the day—from greeting students at the morning carpool line to taking notes in various classes and reporting back to him. If my memory serves me correctly, I might have even advanced a policy of extended recess for the day.

I know I join every other MHA graduate in being tremendously grateful for your tireless efforts to make the publication as special as it is.

-**Parker Mantell** (MHA '06)

Thank you so much for the beautiful profile of my father and our family!

-Yael (Schreiber) Gersten, daughter of Rabbi Nosson Schreiber and wife of **Mordechai Gersten** (MHA '00)

I love reading this newsletter each time I get it! It keeps me up-to-date on so many people I grew up with.

-**Deena (Katz) Yarmush** (MHA '94, FYOS '97)

Thanks so much for keeping these wonderful newsletters coming. You are doing an unbelievable job, and it is so appreciated by so many alumni.

-**Mashie (Greenblatt) Langsam** (MHA '73, YOS '77)

I wish to thank the entire Alumni & Friends publication staff for the wonderfully enjoyable recent edition of the newsletter! It provided a delicious trip down Memory Lane, and it was indeed heartwarming to read of the unknown impressions and memories left behind. How beautiful and what *nachas* (pride) to read the meaningful and thought-provoking *divrei Torah* from our own alumni.

While I'm embarrassed that I couldn't answer all the trivia questions, I believe I can positively identify the "unidentifiable" figure (second from right) in the photo from *Twelve Angry Men* on page 34 [also shown below] as the show's star, the (still) inimitable **Rabbi Binyamin Ehrenkranz** (MHA '00, FYOS '04)!

It is thrilling to read about the cutting-edge and successful recruitment and enhancements the MHA/FYOS is undertaking. May the school continue to grow as a beacon of Torah light and warmth throughout the region and beyond!

-Rabbi Nosson Schreiber, former MHA/FYOS dean
(2000-2006)



Corrections

Allan Katz (MHA '65, YOS '69) wrote in to let us know that some of the answers listed in Issue 15 for the trivia questions from Issue 14 were not correct. We should have verified the accuracy of the answers provided by those who originally submitted the questions for consideration and thank Allan for helping us maintain our credibility. Allan's corrections are provided below; if you disagree with Allan's recollections, please let us know.

- The first kosher restaurant in Eastgate Shopping Center was Rick's, owned by Rick Keer from Chicago. Next was Albert's Kosher Restaurant, and then came the Fiddler Kosher Restaurant and Deli.
- The Samovar was a later restaurant, not the Silver Samovar.
- The *mashgiach* (kosher supervisor) of Albert's and Rick's was Mrs. Shirley Bluestein.
- The *mashgiach* of the Fiddler was the Vaad of Memphis, not **Bart Ehrenkranz** (YOS '77), who is now a rabbi but was not then.
- He thinks the country singer who used to sponsor a full-page ad in the MHA journal each year was not Johnny Cash, but rather Charlie Rich.

Also, our memorial tribute to Rabbi Sy Kutner, z'l, in Issue 15 referenced that he was at the Memphis Jewish Home. While Rabbi Kutner did a few short stints at the MJH for rehab, he was never a permanent resident there. He lived out the conclusion of his life in his own home, under the tender care of his beloved wife, Malka. We apologize for any confusion our story may have caused.



TRIVIA ANSWERS 2001-2005

Thanks to everyone who sent in responses to the trivia questions featured in our [15th issue](#).

Leba (Ehrenkranz) Friedman (MHA '03) correctly answered 7 out of 10 questions and is the winner of our last trivia contest.

She will receive a tin of cookies from [Ricki's Cookie Corner](#)—owned and operated by **Ricki (Thomas) Krupp** (MHA '66, YOS '70).

Here are the correct answers to the trivia questions from issue No. 15. How did you do?

1. During which academic year did the high school boys and girls switch campuses?
ANSWER: 1999-2000.
2. Which member of the Kollel Torah MiTzion married the sister-in-law of faculty member Rabbi Jeremy Leibowitz?
ANSWER: Dubi Weiss.
3. Which teacher reminded students before each test to use only blue or black ink?
ANSWER: Rabbi Eliyahu Skaist.
4. Who wore tie-dyed leggings under her skirts at school?
ANSWER: Mrs. Marla Littlejohn. (Mrs. Sandy Gersten was also considered an acceptable answer, although she wore tie-dyed tights, not leggings.)
5. Who constantly talked about her children named Lindsay and Martin?
ANSWER: Mrs. Lisa Liukin.

6. Who color-coded all of their handouts by subject, in the style of noted Jewish educator Mrs. Shira Smiles?

ANSWER: Mrs. Sandy Gersten.

7. What was Mrs. Charlana Vaughn's No. 1 obsession?

ANSWER: Dissecting English sentences.

8. Coach Jake often teased that Jewish people and Italians have what in common?

ANSWER: Both talk with their hands.

9. Who was honored at the Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys' Steak Dinner in 2003?

ANSWER: Coach Robert "Jake" Jacobson.

10. Who is the CYHSB student dressed up for Purim as Mrs. Anat Kampf (at far left in this photo, with **Michael Emerson** [MHA '99, FYOS '03] and **Zev Levine** [MHA '01, FYOS '05])?

ANSWER: Mordechai Thomas (FYOS '05).



TRIVIA QUESTIONS 1971-1975

Regardless of when you graduated, have some fun with these trivia questions!

Send your answers to joannekahane111@gmail.com. The person who gets the most answers correct (or in the case of a tie, the earliest respondent) will win a tin of Ricki's Cookies, made by **Ricki (Thomas) Krupp** (MHA '66, YOS '70). Good luck!

1. In the theatrical production of "Arsenic and Old Lace," which two students played the male and female leads? Who played Teddy?
2. What was the first food prepared in the home economics classroom?
3. What did students sell each year during this period as a school fundraiser?
4. Which two alumni from this period got married outside the Yeshiva of the South?
5. What name did Rabbi Yosaf Silverman z'v use when announcing the news over the loudspeaker during the weeks leading up to Purim?
6. Which colorful character often drove the high school boys home by bus after night *seder*?
7. How much was full high school tuition for the 1970-71 school year?
8. Which high school teacher included Bob Dylan's music in his English curriculum?
9. In what year during this period did the girls' basketball team win the championship at the JCC (in skirts and long sleeves)?



10. Math and science teacher Mr. David Cotton moonlighted as a musician. Which instrument did he play?
11. Who joined the eighth grade class in the middle of the 1973-74 school year when his family moved to Memphis?
12. Which YOS graduate from this time period married a descendant of one of the *gedolim* (preeminent Torah scholars)?
13. Who delivered bananas to school every Friday, sporting her beehive hairdo?
14. Who had the best collection of 45 RPM records in the school?
15. Which teacher's car did seventh and eighth graders move from one side of the parking lot to the other on his birthday? How did they move it? *Bonus question: What kind of car was it?*
16. Who was known for saying, "Is Menachem on the bus?" *Bonus question: Who is Menachem?*

THANK YOU

We express our deepest appreciation to all those who gave of their time to help us publish this issue. First, thank you to the staff of the MHA/FYOS, most especially Erica Stoltz, Amanda Minner and Laura Timmons. Second, thank you to the alumni who assisted us by supplying photographs, identifying the individuals in those pictures, providing historical background, trivia questions and more, including **Naomi (Belsky) Homnick** (MHA '74, YOS '78), **George Wollner** (MHA '67, YOS '71), **Ronnie Katz** (MHA '70, YOS '74), **Jeff Dlugach** (MHA '80), **Morris Gavant** (YOS '72), **Jeremy Cooper** (MHA '08, FYOS '12), **Hugh Freiden** (MHA '72, YOS '76), **Steve Graber** (MHA '70, YOS '74), **Larry Graber** (MHA '71, YOS '75), **Marshall Lebovits** (MHA '73), **Stuart Thomas** (MHA '75, YOS '79), **Judy (Yormark) Fruchthandler** (MHA '75, YOS '79), **Chana (Anet Yaffe) Silver** (MHA '76, YOS '80), **Julie (Brown) Roll** (MHA '75, YOS '79), **Lee Baum** (MHA '74), **David Winestone** (MHA '74), **Cindy (Cooper) Ehrenkranz** (MHA '76, YOS '80), **Linda (Ostrow) Schlesinger** (MHA '74), **Asher Kirshtein** (FYOS '19), **Talya Levin** (MHA '96, FYOS '00) and **Yoni Freiden** (MHA '96, FYOS '00).



ENGAGEMENTS/ WEDDINGS:

Mazel tov to:

Rick and **Sally (Rhodes) Baer** (YOS '74) of Memphis on the engagement of their daughter Melissa to Julian Spector. The couple is planning a June 7 wedding in Memphis and will make their home in New York City.

Nancy and **Mordechai (Marty) Wolff** (MHA '80) of Brooklyn, New York, on the engagement of their daughter Miriam to Yisroel Shechet. The couple will marry Feb. 20 in Lakewood, New Jersey, which is also where they will reside.

Michael and **Aliza (Levin) Segal** (MHA '87) of Beit Shemesh, Israel, on the engagement of their son Amichai to Shana Dubitsky. They are planning a March wedding in Neve Ilan and plan to live in Jerusalem.

Ethan Cooper (MHA '09, FYOS '13), son of **Pace Cooper** (MHA '77, YOS '81) and MHA/FYOS board of trustees president Aileen Cooper of Memphis, on his engagement to Elisheva Fridman.

The couple will marry June 28 in New Jersey.

Sarah Broniscer (MHA '11, FYOS '15) of Pittsburgh on her engagement to Max Lent. The couple is planning a June 7 wedding in New York City and will make their home near Philadelphia, where the bride will attend law school at the University of Pennsylvania.

Daniel Katz (FYOS '17), son of Michelle and **David Katz** (MHA '88) of Memphis, on his engagement to Meira Hardoon. The couple will wed Feb. 13 in Lakewood, New Jersey, and plan to make their home in either Memphis or Israel. Mazel tov also to the groom's grandparents, Esther and **Allan Katz** (MHA '65, YOS '69), also of Memphis.

BIRTHS:

Mazel tov to:

Sylvia and **Erwin "Bubba" Albert** (MHA '71) of Memphis on the Nov. 1 birth of granddaughter Ayla Belle to Memphians Laura and Larry Wilons, making Max a big brother. She was named for her maternal great-grandmother,

tireless MHA supporter Belle Albert, z'l.

Gloria and **Mark Roberts** (MHA '71) of St. Louis, Missouri, on the Oct. 8 birth of a grandson, Levi Richard, to new parents Jonathan and Stacey Schnayer of Deerfield, Illinois.

Rabbi Menachem and **Debbi (Brown) Nissel** (MHA '76, YOS '80) of Jerusalem, Israel, who welcomed grandson Shimmy on Nov. 11. His proud parents are Shira and Yehuda Klein, also of Jerusalem. Mazel tov to siblings Bluma Nechama and Chava Ayala.

Avi and **Dawn (Posner) Goldstein** (MHA '77, YOS '81) of Far Rockaway, New York, on the birth of two grandchildren. On Oct. 21 (Simchat Torah), Shayna and Akiva Friedman, also of Far Rockaway, welcomed their first child, daughter Shulamis Rus. Her cousin Moshe was born 12 hours earlier (on Shmini Atzeret) to new parents Ayala and Netanel Goldstein of Baltimore, Maryland. Moshe is named for his great-grandfather, beloved Memphian and longtime MHA supporter Marvin Posner, z'l.

Rabbi Joey and **Melissa (Freiden) Friedman** (MHA '79, YOS '83) of Denver, Colorado, on the Oct. 17 birth of twin grandchildren Eden Shalom and Ella Vera to Shira and Avi Friedman of Beit Meir, Israel.

Nancy and **Mordechai (Marty) Wolf** (MHA '80) of Brooklyn, New York, who welcomed two grandchildren in recent months. On Oct. 14, Yaakov and Sorala Wolff of Monsey, New York, welcomed their first child, daughter Ahuva Rochel Leah. Her cousin Yeshaya Ezra was born Nov. 4 to Estee and Samuel Fleisher of Lakewood, New Jersey; mazel tov also to new big brother Noam Aaron.

Ruchama and **Daniel Lewis** (MHA '01, FYOS '05) of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on the Nov. 5 arrival of their first child, son Benjamin Moshe. Mazel tov also to grandparents Teri and **Larry Gruber** (MHA '71, YOS '75) of Memphis.

Moriah and **Ezra Kaplan** (MHA '04, FYOS '08) of Givat Shmuel, Israel, on the Nov. 30 birth of baby boy Yitzchak Zev. Mazel tov also to big brother Binyamin and grandparents Jonathan and **Abbe (Seiger) Kaplan** (MHA '71) of Memphis.

Binie and **Yossi Klein** (MHA '08) of Miami, Florida, who became parents with the Oct. 16 birth of daughter Sheva.

BNEI/BNOT MITZVAH:

Mazel tov to:

Michael and **Aliza (Levin) Segal** (MHA '87) of Beit Shemesh, Israel, on the Dec. 21 bar mitzvah of their son Ori.

Josh and **Ariel (Groveman) Weiner** (MHA '93) of Riverdale, New York, who celebrated their daughter Yael's bat mitzvah on Nov. 2.

MAZEL TOV!

SEND US YOUR ALUMNI NEWS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE AT ALUMNI@MHAFYOS.ORG.



THE MHA/YOS CLASSES OF 1971-1975

Where are they now?

George Wollner (MHA '67, YOS '71) and his wife have three grown sons and split their time between Silver Spring, Maryland, and Miami Beach, Florida. He works in real estate investment and management.

"I have an abundance of *hakarat hatov* [gratitude] to the Memphis Jewish community for providing me and my siblings with a foundational Jewish education," Wollner said. "In addition, I feel deeply privileged to have lived in a community with many great role models who taught me how to lead a purposeful Jewish life, anchored by and filled with Torah values."

‘67
‘71

Among his favorite memories of his school days is installing a candy machine in the MHA gym when he was in ninth grade. "Very profitable high school years followed," he joked. His favorite teacher was Rabbi Eliyahu Hartman.

"How about we plan a reunion?" he suggested to his classmates. "Either in Memphis or maybe in Gatlinburg to harken back to the early days of the annual Torah retreat."



Steve Graber (MHA '70, YOS '74) and his wife live in New York City, where he works as an attorney. They are the parents of **Julia (Yehudit Graber) Berger** (MHA '93), **Laura** (MHA '98) and Aryeh and are proud grandparents.

His favorite MHA/YOS teachers included Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt z'l, Mr. David Cotton, Mr. Effie Bluestein, Mr. "Wild" Bill Sullivan and Mrs. Joyce Casada.

‘70
‘74

Rabbi Yitzchok Adler (YOS '71) came from Atlanta, Georgia, to attend the boys' high school. He now serves as spiritual leader of Beth David Synagogue in West Hartford, Connecticut. He and his wife have three married children and nine grandchildren.

‘71

"Thank you for providing an education that launched a career that has fulfilled a dream," he said.

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THE MHA/YOS CLASSES OF 1971-1975

Where are they now?

Mark Roberts (MHA '71) and his wife live in St. Louis, Missouri. They have two children and three

grandchildren, whom they regularly visit in Philadelphia and Chicago. He works as a software engineer for Boeing.



Mark Roberts family

"It has been a long time since I've seen or heard from most of my classmates since I no longer live in Memphis," Roberts said. "I'm glad to have this opportunity to say hello and find where you are and what you're doing."

His favorite teacher was Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt, z'l.

Larry Gruber (MHA '71, YOS '75) and his wife Teri (nee Petrovsky) are both fourth-generation Memphians. Their blended family

includes children **Richard Lewis** (MHA '99, FYOS '03—married to **Aviva (Krupp) Lewis**, MHA '02, FYOS '06), **Daniel Lewis** (MHA '01, FYOS '05), Ahuva (Gruber) Winik, Joel Gruber and **Isaac Gruber** (MHA '10, FYOS '14), and seven grandchildren.

Among his most vivid MHA/YOS memories is a high school field trip to the Shelby County Penal Farm. "Those who were with me that fateful day will never forget what we witnessed," Gruber said. "We were invited to watch 50-plus hardened criminals participate in a group therapy session. Their assignment that day was to persuade one another to become better citizens and, if applicable, obtain a GED. It was one of the more bizarre moments in my lifetime."

His favorite teacher was Mr. David Cotton, whom he called "a super cool dude and a true math whiz."

‘71
‘75



Longtime MHA supporters Evelyn (seated, center) and Marlin (standing third from left) Gruber with their four sons and daughters-in-law: Pammy and **Glenn Gruber** (MHA '74, YOS '78, standing far left), Tova and **Roy Gruber** (MHA '76, YOS '80, seated far left), Esther and **Steve Gruber** (MHA '70, YOS '74, standing third and fourth from right), and Teri and **Larry Gruber** (standing far right).



Abbe Kaplan family

Abbe (Seiger) Kaplan (MHA '71, YOS '75) and her husband live in Memphis. They are the parents of **Zac** (MHA '01), **Franny (Kaplan) Waisman** (MHA '02, FYOS '06), **Ezra** (MHA '04, FYOS '08) and **Yaakov** (MHA '09, FYOS '13)—the youngest three of whom live in Israel—and proud grandparents.

‘71
‘75

Among her favorite MHA/YOS teachers were Mrs. Alisa Kamin z'l, Mrs. Shirley Metcalf, Rabbi Yehudah Silver and **Rabbi Nechemiah Kibel** (MHA '65, YOS '69), z'l.



Morris Gavant family



Morris Gavant family

Morris Gavant (YOS '72), a dorm student originally from Atlanta, now lives in Baltimore, Maryland, where he is a partner physician with Advanced Radiology and a Fellow in the American College of Radiology. He and his wife **Ann Ellen (Blockman) Gavant** (MHA '70) are the parents of four sons—**Josh** (MHA '94), **Aaron** (MHA '97), Yonasan and Judah—and are proud grandparents.

"I will always be grateful for how the Memphis community opened their homes to out-of-town teenagers to give us an opportunity to become good and serious Jews," Gavant said. "They allowed their own children to be exposed to classmates of different backgrounds and life circumstances. There were risks, but look at the friendships, successful Jewish men and women, marriages, grandchildren and great-grandchildren that are the results of their love and warmth."

‘72

He fondly remembers "wondering who would get Rebbetzin Regina Belsky's kishke balls with the chulent every Shabbos," he said. "They usually went to **Nechemiah Kibel** z'l (MHA '65, YOS '69) or **Yitzchok Yarmush** (YOS '69)."

Among his favorite teachers was Mr. Effie Bluestein. "Before he went on to great success at Germantown High School, his first position was teaching at the Yeshiva of the South," Gavant said. "He started the Thespian Society (who knew what that was at the time?), and he was a great teacher. Ms. Lilian Feldman, of blessed memory, was also a positive influence in that she expected much from her students."

Rabbi Yitzchok Mitnick (YOS '73), who hailed from Brooklyn, New York and attended our high school as a dormer, now has nine children and about 20 grandchildren. He directs Machon Avodah Berurah, a kollel program of scholars working to produce a series of explanatory works on the Talmud.

‘73

His favorite YOS teachers were Mrs. Shirley Metcalf and Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt, z'l. "I would like to see y'all again," Mitnick said of his classmates.'

Lisa (Epstein) Garfunkel (MHA '70, YOS '74) lives in Savannah, Georgia. She and her husband have six children, five of whom are married. She enjoys doting on her grandchildren, who range in age from three months to 20 years old.



Lisa Garfunkel family



Lisa Garfunkel family

‘70
‘74

She sends her best regards to all her classmates and considers her time at the MHA/YOS "some of the best years of my life."

Ronnie Katz (MHA '70, YOS '74) lives in Dallas, Texas, where he works in life settlements and life insurance. He is the father of five alumni—**Deena (Katz) Yarmush** (MHA '94, FYOS '97), **Shira (Katz) Nathan** (MHA '95, FYOS '99), **Daniel** (MHA '98, FYOS '02), **Noam** (MHA '01, FYOS '05) and **Aviva (Katz) Fink** (MHA '08, FYOS '12)—and has eight grandchildren.

His favorite teachers at the MHA were Ms. Lillian Feldman, z'l, and Mr. Effie Bluestein.

‘70
‘74

Annette (Silber) Eisenberg (YOS '74) is a learning specialist at the Bornblum Jewish Community School in Memphis. She and her husband have three children—including two married daughters who also live in Memphis—as well as two grandsons and a third grandchild on the way. Eisenberg reported that her twin sister



Silber twins and grandchild

‘74

Sylvia (Silber) Feldbaum (YOS '74) lives in Memphis, too, with her husband, and they have two children.



Annette Eisenberg family

Jesse Schwartzman (MHA '72), who attended our school as a dorm student originally from Houston, Texas, now lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, and works as an aerospace engineer for Boeing Defense & Space Systems. He and his wife have five children and three grandchildren.

‘72

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THE MHA/YOS CLASSES OF 1971-1975

Where are they now?

"Thank you for the cherished memories," Schwartzman said to his classmates. "I am forever grateful for your friendship and hospitality. I have *hakarat hatov* [gratitude] to you for making me feel so welcome, especially to those families who opened their doors to the dormitory students. I enjoyed spending Shabbos at the homes of classmates on both sides of town, when there was 'another side.'"

He fondly remembers the whole school going for ice cream, Friday afternoon softball games, and visiting the home of Eva and Meyer Rosenberg, z'l, whom he called "the surrogate aunt and uncle to all the dorm students."

His favorite teacher was Mr. David Cotton, who taught math and science.



Hugh Freiden (MHA '72, YOS '76) lives in Memphis and owns Club Z Tutoring of the Mid-South. He and his wife are the parents of five alumni—**Yoni** (MHA '96, FYOS '00), **Shirli (Freiden) Gotlib** (MHA '99, FYOS '03), **Ariella (Freiden) Schwartz** (MHA '01, FYOS '05), **Tamara (Freiden) Goodman** (MHA '03, FYOS '07) and **Meirah (Freiden) Weiss** (MHA '04, FYOS '08); they also have 14 grandchildren.

"I'm thankful that my parents had the insight and wisdom to send me to the Hebrew Academy," he said. "Because of their decision, our five children graduated from the school and now all my grandchildren attend Hebrew day schools. Sometimes I wonder, 'what if?'" Freiden particularly enjoys seeing his grandson Benny, a sixth grader, "running the halls of the MHA. He reminds me of myself!"



Hugh Freiden family

His fondest memories of the MHA include judo classes with Rabbi Yaakov Goldfein, z'l. "There is nothing better than looking forward to wrestling your *rebbe* after school—and now that I think about it, he probably thought the same thing about his students," Freiden said. His favorite teacher was Rabbi Benjamin Wolmark, z'l.

Tzvi (Ronnie) Levin (MHA '73) and his wife are the parents of three children and grandparents of one little girl. They live in Chicago, Illinois; his mother, former MHA faculty member Mrs. Judy Levin, lives in a nearby retirement home. (His father, Rabbi Arthur Levin, z'l, who led the Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth Congregation, passed away in 2011.) He enjoys serving as *gabbai* (sexton) of Congregation Khal Chasidim.



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THE MHA/YOS CLASSES OF 1971-1975

Where are they now?

"Let's keep in touch," he said to his classmates. "I would love to know what's going on with all of you. I do message **Marshall Lebovits** (MHA '73) every now and then. Two years ago, my whole family went down to Memphis, and we saw the Freidens and Larry Brown and visited the shuls. Funny enough, I met Rabbi Shuki



Tzvi Levin family

Nissan [of the Memphis Community Kollel], who is a cousin of my rebbe, Rabbi Efraim A. Twerski. It was such an awesome trip; for a while after we got back, we were seriously thinking of moving back to Memphis!"

He has so many fond memories of his days at the MHA, saying, "My parents and I had the most wonderful time living in Memphis and being associated with the Academy."

Mashie (Marsha Greenblatt) Langsam (MHA '73, YOS '77) lives in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem. She and her husband have 12 children, 10 of whom are married and living in Israel. (They also lost a son, Chanina z'l, 10 years ago at the age of 7.) She works as student coordinator of Chemdas Bais Yaakov in Jerusalem.

"For our latest family activity, my children and grandchildren 'kidnapped' me (along with my husband and mother-in-law) and put us on a bus traveling down toward the Dead Sea," Langsam said. "What fun when we all got out at a bowling alley that was rented out exclusively for our family for two hours of bliss in honor of my 60th birthday celebration. Gone are the days when I thought 60 was old!"

Langsam carries her Memphis heritage with pride in the Holy Land. "You cannot imagine how often I meet people who, when they hear I'm from Memphis, smile and say, 'The nicest, warmest people come from Memphis. How does a community manage to pull that off?'" she said. "With a full heart and a smile on my face, I simply agree. That being said, let me add two very important words to the school and the entire community: THANK YOU! Every one of you knows and feels how much is really packed into those two words."

She sends her classmates "a huge thank you for the wonderful memories I have of being in school with you." Langsam recalls recess time in the big yard in elementary school, playing



Mashie Langsam family



kickball, spending time in the lounge in the girls' high school, and having lunch and schmoozing with friends. "I also have really fond memories of all my teachers—and no, I have not gone senile!"

"It would be so nice to touch base again," she says of her schoolmates. "Please email me at mashielangsam@gmail.com. I know that doesn't exactly sound like Marsha Greenblatt, but it's me!"

Naomi (Belsky) Homnick (MHA '74, YOS '78) is a fifth grade Judaic studies teacher living in Chicago, Illinois. She and her husband have one son and two grandchildren.

"I have such great memories of school," Homnick said. "I would love to know where **Eddie Siegel** (MHA '74) is. I still have the needlepoint I finished in the eighth grade while he filled in graph paper!" Her favorite teacher was Mrs. Joyce Casada.



David Finkelstein (MHA '75) lives in Baltimore, Maryland, with his wife, with whom he has four children and four grandchildren. His sister **Sara (Finkelstein) Schachter** (MHA '73) lives across the street from him. His mother, Naomi Finkelstein—who worked in the front office of the MHA for many years—lives next door with his brother **Sam** (MHA '70) and family. "Each time I was sent to the office for misbehaving in school, my mother couldn't believe I did anything wrong," he said. "What a great mom!" He now works as the executive director of the Shoresh outreach organization and considers himself "blessed."

He called the 40th reunion of his eighth grade class in Memphis in 2015 "one of the most special weekends of my life. From that reunion, we started a WhatsApp group and talk daily! Memphis was and always will be unique. It was a special place to grow up. Everyone in the Jewish community felt like they were family. Maybe it's because they were, literally and figuratively!"

Finkelstein's most cherished memories from school include learning to read Hebrew from his favorite teacher, Rabbi Mordechai Yormark, z'l and playing ball with him at recess. He also remembers "playing kickball with my awesome classmates, 'Gibbs, Gibbs,' Benny stories from Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt, z'l, learning Mishnayos by heart and being tested on them by Rabbi Eliyahu Hartman, choir with Cantor Israel Meller and duets with **David Kipper** (MHA '76), **Julie (Goldstein) Brown** (MHA '76, YOS '80) and **Cindy (Cooper) Ehrenkranz** (MHA '76, YOS '80). That probably doesn't happen anymore," he joked.

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THE MHA/YOS CLASSES OF 1971-1975

Where are they now?

Brad Freiden (MHA '75, YOS '79) lives in Modiin, Israel, with his wife Dena Wieder-Freiden (a relative of former Memphians Shelly and Barbara Wieder) and serves as vice president of Israel-Diamonds.com. He is a father of five children—including alumni **Danielle (Freiden) Gold** (MHA '98) and **Matthew** (MHA '01)—and a proud *saba* (grandfather).



Brad Freiden family

‘75
‘79

Freiden is proud of his lifelong connection to the MHA/FYOS. He attended the school for 12 straight years, his father Bernard served as president of the board, and his mother Noreen is a past-president of the PTA. “She also was a fixture in the school office and served as a substitute teacher when needed,” he recalled.

“Of course, I have many memories of attending the MHA/YOS,” he said. “It was always a topic of conversation in the Freiden home. What I feel I gained most were the friendships with my classmates and all the relationships that were formed. Additionally, the MHA/YOS was the first step in my journey of actualizing the Jewish dream of living in *Eretz Yisroel* [the land of Israel].”

He can be reached at bradfreiden@gmail.com.

Judy (Yormark) Fruchthandler (MHA '75, YOS '79) recently remarried and is “enjoying a full and busy life with our large, blended family and extended families,” she said. She hopes her classmates will continue to stay in touch.



Judy Fruchthandler family



Judy Fruchthandler family





ALUMNI GAME

Join us Jan. 19 for the annual Alumni Basketball Game

We invite you to come home to the MHA/FYOS Sunday evening, Jan. 19, 2020 (the weekend of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday) to continue the tradition of the Irby and Bernice Cooper Alumni Basketball Game as our boys' high school varsity team takes on our graduates. The game will be held in the school's beautifully renovated gym.

If you'd like to play in the Alumni Game, contact Coach James Nokes, athletics director, at james.nokes@mhafyos.org or by phone at the school office, 901-682-2400. We also welcome those who prefer to stay on the sidelines to come and root for their fellow alumni.

You can [follow Coach Nokes on Facebook](#) for updates on the school's athletics programs and the alumni basketball game.

Whether you're coming to play or to cheer, we are glad to help with your arrangements. Local home hospitality can be arranged for out-of-town visitors; please contact Alumni Chair Joanne Kahane at joannekahane111@gmail.com for more information.

We look forward to seeing a large contingent of alumni in January!

ALUMNI REUNITE

We continue to be impressed by the submissions to the “Alumni Reunite” section of this publication.

Any time two or more alumni get together for any reason—whether a *simcha* (celebration) or otherwise—we would love to get a photo. Our thanks to those who provided these pictures, especially those who took time out during a *simcha* to assemble a group of MHA/FYOS alumni and friends. *Yasher koach* (kudos)!



Alumni (from left) **Jeremy Cooper** (MHA '08, FYOS '12), **Yishai Berendt** (MHA '14, FYOS '18) and **Gary Goldmeier** (FYOS '17) attended a mutual friend's simcha together.



On Sept. 19, former MHA student Mo Katz—son of Malkie and **Larry Katz** (MHA '67) of Wesley Hills, New York—married Devora Erlich. The father of the groom (pictured far right) celebrated the occasion with his sisters **Lynnie (Katz) Mirvis** (MHA '62, second from right) and **Barbara (Katz) Kutner** (MHA '64, YOS '68, second from left) and family friend **Marilyn (Weinreich) Schacter** (MHA '71, far left).



(from left) **Dovy Katz** (MHA '92), brother of the groom; **Larry Katz** (MHA '67), father of the groom; groom Mo Katz; **Judah Katz** (MHA '94), brother of the groom; and Eli Shapiro, the groom's brother-in-law and husband of **Aliza (Katz) Shapiro** (MHA '96).



Also in October, alumnae **Jenny (Kagan) Gelfand** (MHA '96, pictured above, center) and **Talya Levin** (MHA '96, FYOS '00, far right) met up in Memphis (traveling from Washington, DC and Jerusalem, Israel, respectively) to explore their old stomping ground and see longtime friends, including classmate **Yoni Freiden** (MHA '96, FYOS '00, far left).



(from left) **Yoni Freiden** (MHA '96, FYOS '00), **Hershel Krupp** (MHA '97), **Talya Levin** (MHA '96, FYOS '00) and **Jenny (Kagan) Gelfand** (MHA '96).



Talya Levin (MHA '96, FYOS '00, left) with **Amara Levine-Reich** (MHA '94, FYOS '97, editor of this publication) in front of the Mighty Mississippi River and famed M-Bridge.



In October, four recent FYOS graduates currently studying in Israel were guests of Rabbi Refael and Orit Azugi, who directed Memphis's Kollel Torah MiTzion for three years and now live in Maalei Adumim. Pictured with the Azugi family and several alumni of the Torah MiTzion and Bat Ami programs are **Yaffa Goldkin** (FYOS '19, far left, back), **Dovid Freiden** (FYOS '19, far left, front), **Asher Kirshtein** (FYOS '19, center, front) and selfie-taker **Eli Stone** (FYOS '19, bottom-right).

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ALUMNI REUNITE



MHA first grade teacher **Ronit (Sauer) Brakha** (MHA '83, YOS '87, pictured at left) met up with longtime classmate **Rochel (Goldfein) Rosenberg** (MHA '83) during a Thanksgiving weekend visit to New York City.



Dawn (Posner) Goldstein (MHA '77, YOS '81, center) celebrated the arrival of grandson Moshe in October. She was joined in Baltimore at his bris by schoolmates **Grace (Rosman) Weissman** (YOS '80, left) and **Devora (Kipper) Gradon** (MHA '77, YOS '81, right).

Save the Date

June 4-7, 2020

for the MHA/FYOS gala scholarship banquet and alumni reunion weekend as we celebrate the school's 70-year anniversary.

For those traveling from out of town, home hospitality will be available upon request and special room rates will be available at the DoubleTree by Hilton in East Memphis.

We hope to see you there! Watch your email in the coming weeks for details.

SPOTLIGHT FEATURE



Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt, z'l

A sage in our midst

By **Amara Levine-Reich** (MHA '94, FYOS '97) and **Linda (Ostrow) Schlesinger** (MHA '74)

Note: Portions of this article are excerpted from and based on "A Torah Sage in Our Midst: Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt Left His Mark on Memphis and the World," a book about his life and legacy written by Linda (Ostrow) Schlesinger and published by Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth Congregation. The volume was made possible by Aileen and **Pace Cooper** (MHA '77, YOS '81).

In 1953, the same year Elvis Presley graduated high school and began his singing career, Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt moved to Memphis. Both put Memphis on the map—though, clearly, in very different ways.

Born into a rabbinical family in pre-statehood Jerusalem and the oldest of 11 children, Efraim Greenblatt showed a penchant for and dedication to Torah study from an early age. His yeshiva studies were abruptly interrupted in late 1947 when the Arab Legion sieged Jerusalem following the passage of the United Nations partition plan.

Together with other restless yeshiva boys, he joined the Lechi paramilitary underground movement, serving as a telephone operator and courier for several months. When he was 15, he was caught smuggling pistols, and he was arrested and imprisoned. Due to his small size and agility, he



As a young man, Rabbi Greenblatt worked for the underground resistance in the Israel war for independence. The story of his escape from Akko prison is legendary among MHA alumni.

managed to escape from jail after just three days. "He was a small cog in a wheel of adults who did much bigger things," said **Rabbi Menachem Greenblatt** (MHA '69) of his father's service to Lechi.

In 1951, Efraim Greenblatt heeded the call of his grandfather in New York, who encouraged him to come to America to further his yeshiva education and pursue a career in the rabbinate. On the Lower East Side of Manhattan, he found a lifelong mentor and teacher in Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, z'l, who is regarded as one of the greatest Torah scholars of the 20th century.

Following intensive study with Rabbi Feinstein at Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim (MTJ), Rabbi Efraim was invited to Memphis in 1953 by his uncle, Rabbi Nathan Greenblatt, to teach at the

fledgling Memphis Hebrew Academy and work as a local *shochet* (ritual slaughterer). Rabbi Feinstein encouraged him to take the position and certified him in *shechita*—a job at which Rabbi Efraim worked for nearly a decade.

In 1954, Rabbi Efraim's grandmother arranged for him to meet Miriam Moskowitz, an impressive young woman from her Brooklyn neighborhood with a friendly smile and cheerful nature. Rabbi Feinstein officiated at the wedding of Miriam and Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt in New York several months later. The groom was so excited to introduce Miriam to his students in Memphis that MHA principal Rabbi Joseph Nayowitz, z'l, scheduled a special assembly in front of the school so everyone could welcome her.

For nearly four decades, Rabbi Efraim was a fixture on the MHA faculty (as was Miriam, who was known to generations of MHA first graders as Morah Greenblatt). He taught junior high and high school at various points in his career, but for hundreds of students, he is inextricably associated with third grade. Through his jokes, stories and signature warmth, he developed unparalleled rapport with his young students and left an indelible impression.

"Rabbi Greenblatt's class was more about how he was than what he taught," said **Mike Stein** (MHA '68, YOS '72). "You could

feel that he was something special, even as a third grader. He had a way about him that made you want to learn."

"I have such fond memories of Rabbi Greenblatt, z'l, including his infamous Benny stories," said **Judy (Yormark) Fruchthandler** (MHA '75, YOS '79).

Others who passed through Rabbi Greenblatt's third grade classroom recalled his endearing antics, such as peeling an entire orange in one piece and cleaning his glasses with a \$100 bill. He also regaled students with his encyclopedic knowledge of Torah.

"When I had him as a teacher, I asked him a specific Talmud question, and for three or four weeks he didn't have an answer," said **Tzvi (Ronnie) Levin** (MHA '73). "I said to myself, 'Wow, I stumped Rabbi Greenblatt for a little while!' Finally, he approached me in shul one Shabbos with an answer. Rabbi Greenblatt was the *baal koreh* [Torah reader] at my father's shul [Rabbi Arthur Levin, z'l, of Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth] and my father's *chavrusa* [Torah study partner]. I remember listening to their learning, especially on Shabbos, and admiring two great *lamdanim* [learners] at work. We all had the utmost respect for this *tzaddik* [righteous person]."



In August 1954 Rabbi Greenblatt married his beloved wife Miriam. Together they were a dynamic teaching duo at the MHA for four decades.

"I was always amazed that someone could read a few words from *Tanach* or *Gemara*, and Rabbi Greenblatt could tell you the next words," said **Jesse**



Rabbi Greenblatt teaching the seventh and eighth grade boys in 1974. Pictured in the foreground are students (from left) Marty Grusin, **Stuart Thomas** (MHA '75, YOS '79) and **Marc Katz** (MHA '75, YOS '79).

Schwartzman (MHA '72). "He was a real *talmid chacham* [Torah scholar]. His wisdom was exceeded only by his warmth and humility."

Beyond inspiring students in the classroom, Rabbi Greenblatt prepared hundreds of boys for their bar mitzvah ceremonies. He lovingly instructed each one on how to lead the Shabbat morning prayers, chant his Torah portion, and deliver his speech.

"Rabbi Greenblatt did such a good job teaching me trope [Torah cantillation] in preparation for my bar mitzvah that it's still ingrained in me 45 years later," said **Marshall Lebovits** (MHA '73). "As a result, I am one of the volunteer Torah readers for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur where I have attended High Holiday services for the past four years. It also prepared me to tutor a friend's son when he needed extra assistance with his bar mitzvah preparation."

"In the fall of 1970, when I was 13, Rabbi Efraim was one of our eighth grade Judaic studies

teachers," recalled **Larry Graber** (MHA '71, YOS '75). "He was also quite a busy bar mitzvah teacher and had a few remaining 12-year-old students in our class. One particular student needed extra help to learn his *haftorah*, and he received some of this extra help during class time. Due to the repetitious nature of the instruction, the entire class learned this young man's *haftorah*. I suspect that many members of our class can still recite the first few verses by heart."

"Rabbi Greenblatt was my third grade *rebbe*, and he taught me to *lai* my bar mitzvah *parsha*," said **George Wollner** (MHA '67, YOS '71). "He was wonderfully kind, patient and supportive in a fashion that filled me with the confidence I needed to succeed at the various learning tasks we worked through together. His brilliance and skill in teaching kids Torah and *midos* [good character] are reflected in the profound positive results he achieved across the vast number of students he taught and influenced."



Rabbi Greenblatt marching in the school's *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israeli Independence Day) parade in 1985.



In April 2000, Rabbi and Mrs. Greenblatt attended the wedding of their granddaughter, Aviva Greenblatt, daughter of **Rabbi Menachem Greenblatt** (MHA '69).

For more than 40 years, Rabbi Efraim and Miriam Greenblatt were true partners in teaching Judaism and modeling *chesed* (loving kindness) to the Memphis community, as well as spreading Torah the world over through the rabbi's prolific published works and correspondence with scholars across the globe. In December 2000, that partnership was tragically shattered when Morah Greenblatt was struck by a car while crossing the street at the intersection of Yates and Walnut Grove. The accident and several subsequent surgeries left her in a coma from which she never awoke; she passed away peacefully in May 2002 at the age of 68.

Rabbi Efraim stayed in Memphis until 2009, when he decided it was time to fulfill his lifelong dream of returning to Israel. He settled in an apartment in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem, across the street from his daughter **Mashie (Marsha Greenblatt) Langsam** (MHA '73, YOS '77).

In Jerusalem, Rabbi Efraim enjoyed studying Torah with students of all ages and from all walks of life. He also used the opportunity to reconnect with his

siblings and get to know his grandchildren better. During the final four years of his life, he merited to attend the weddings of five grandchildren and celebrated the births of 16 Israeli great-grandchildren. "He came back to his roots and he was definitely happy about it, but he really missed all his *seforim* [his vast library of Torah books was sold before he moved to Israel] and the Memphis community," Langsam said.

Rabbi Efraim's life ended where it began 87 years earlier—in the holy city of Jerusalem. He passed away on Jan. 3, 2014. Rabbi Efraim is survived by his five children: Rabbi Menachem Greenblatt, **Goldie (Greenblatt) Koenigsberg** (MHA '72), Mashie Langsam, **Rabbi Yitz Greenblatt** (MHA '75) and **Sima (Greenblatt) Goodman** (MHA '81, YOS '85). At the time of his passing, Rabbi Efraim had 44 grandchildren and more than 70 great-grandchildren.

"My father loved all of you," Rabbi Menachem told those in attendance at a memorial gathering for Rabbi Efraim at his beloved Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth. "Memphis was his life. He had a gleam in his eye when he spoke about Memphis and thought about the shul and the MHA. He recognized that he wouldn't have been able to accomplish what he did without all of you—his good friends in Memphis who enabled him, appreciated him, accepted him, and loved him."

Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt is widely known as a preeminent Torah scholar whose written works will be appreciated for generations. Among the hundreds of students whose lives he touched

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SPOTLIGHT FEATURE Rabbi Efraim Greenblatt z'l

firsthand in Memphis, he will be remembered for his quick wit, brilliant storytelling and genuine care and respect for every individual.

"It wasn't just about teaching them, but about loving them, making them happy, and making them love him," said Pace Cooper of Rabbi Efraim's longtime success in connecting with his third-grade students. "That was one of the key ingredients."



Rabbi and Mrs. Greenblatt (seated, left) with their family at their granddaughter's wedding in 2000. Also pictured are **Goldie (Greenblatt) Koenigsberg** (MHA '72, seated next to her mother), **Rabbi Yitz Greenblatt** (MHA '75, standing third from left) and father of the bride **Rabbi Menachem Greenblatt** (MHA '69, standing fourth from left).

FLASHBACKS 1971 - 1975

Photographs from the past

The first four pictures were taken at the childhood home of **Ann Ellen (Blockman) Gavant** (MHA '70) and **Sandy Blockman** (MHA '71, YOS '74) on Melody Lane circa 1971. The Blockman family home was a popular hangout for MHA/YOS students during this era.



(from left) **Yehoshua (Josh) Yarmush** (YOS '71), **Tova (Therese Hochdorf) Yarmush** (YOS '73), **Ann Ellen (Blockman) Gavant** (MHA '70) and **Morris Gavant** (YOS '72). Fun fact: Josh and Tova have been married for 45 years, and Morris and Ann Ellen have been married for 44 years!



Ann Ellen (Blockman) Gavant (MHA '70, left) and **Mike Stein** (MHA '68, YOS '72).



(clockwise from top-left) **Tova (Therese Hochdorf) Yarmush** (YOS '73), **Leah Malka Cheruff** (MHA '70, YOS '73), **Karen (Katz) Rubenstein** (MHA '69, YOS '72), **Trudy (Hanover) Klugman** (MHA '70, YOS '74), **Lisa (Epstein) Garfunkel** (MHA '70, YOS '74), **Wendy (Hanover) Brecher** (MHA '72) and **Ann Ellen (Blockman) Gavant** (MHA '70).



(from left) **Tova (Terese Hochdorf)**,
Yarmush (YOS '73), **Trudy (Hanover)**,
Klugman (MHA '70, YOS '74), **Karen (Katz)**,
Rubenstein (MHA '69, YOS '72), **Lisa (Epstein) Garfunkel** (MHA '71) and **Gitti (Belsky) Thomas** (MHA '70, YOS '74).



Classmates **Michael Schneider** (MHA '72, left) and **Hugh Freiden** (MHA '72, YOS '76), circa 1968.



(from left) **Daniel Yormark** (MHA '72),
Hugh Freiden (MHA '72, YOS '76) and **Jerry Weinreich** (MHA '72) in the eighth grade.



Hugh Freiden (MHA '72, YOS '76) accepting his eighth grade diploma at graduation from MHA board president Stanley Wender.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The 17th issue of our newsletter is scheduled for publication sometime around Pesach. In it, we will highlight the **eighth and 12th grade graduates from the years 1991-1995**. Members of those classes will receive questionnaires by email (or regular mail) sometime in February. Please return your completed survey promptly so that you can be included.

Our feature story in that issue will spotlight **Mrs. Shelley Kutliroff**, who served as a teacher and administrator at the MHA/FYOS for three decades. If you have any stories, photos or memories of Mrs. Kutliroff that you'd like to share, please send them to Joanne Kahane, alumni chair, at joannekahane111@gmail.com or to her attention at the school's mailing address below.

Also, be sure to submit your "Mazel Tov" events and photos for the "Alumni Reunite" feature so we can include them in our next issue. Thank you!



Rabbi Benjy Owen, head of school
Aileen Cooper, president, board of trustees
Jessica (Baum) Sukhodolsky (MHA '99),
marketing and recruitment director