THE SDEROT BEACON

The Max & Ruth Schwartz Sderot Hesder Institutions
Never before has Sderot become such a symbol of Israel's national fortitude and shared destiny than during the past era. Rockets, missiles, tunnels, Iron Dome installations, resilience, growth and coming together as one in the face of all of these threats – have all defined how complex life is in Sderot. As Israel faces a new wave of terror, this very location continues to display the real source of Israel's invincibility: the sacred, eternal values of the Jewish People. It’s only natural, therefore, that the Yeshivat Hesder in Sderot, which fuses Torah, Zionism and mutual responsibility, is currently building The Sderot Center of Heroism and Courage and the adjacent Gevura Park. The Sderot Center of Heroism and Courage will be Sderot’s visitors’ center, educating myriads of students, citizens and diplomats about the meaning of courage—particularly within the Jewish narrative.
WHAT YOU HELPED US ACCOMPLISH SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

- The ability to continue singing and dancing in the Yeshiva’s Dining Room despite the direct rocket attack during Elul
- Enough dormitory space to accommodate the largest first-year enrollment in Israel for any Hesder Yeshiva
- Security for Sderot’s kindergartens and preschools via the Yeshiva’s First Response Team during the recent shortage of security guards
- Additional fortified dormitories for our talmidim, making sure they have the safety and security necessary to fully engross themselves in their studies
- Israel’s Education Minister, Mr. Naftali Bennett, comes to Sderot to tell the Yeshiva’s talmidim: “You give us the strength to make the right decisions in the Knesset!”
Sderot's Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Fendel, sends his post-military talmidim to protect the public.

"The days when Jews remain passive are over."

By Benny Tocker, Arutz Sheva
[Translated by Binyamin Schwartz]

ONCE AGAIN, THE HESDER YESHIVA IN SDEROT enlists to protect the public. The city created an Emergency Response Team during Operation Protective Edge to respond in case of emergency or when professionally-armed manpower is short. The Team is comprised of volunteers, post-military local residents in good physical shape, and dozens of Hesder Yeshiva talmidim from Sderot – all of them having served in combat units and currently active in the IDF Reserves. Rabbi Dovid Fendel, the Rosh Yeshiva, is very proud of his talmidim.

"The Team provides a significant and effective service. The volunteers helped man the city's educational institutions with armed guards at the entrances.

"The city's Emergency Response Team is prepared for anything. They asked us to man a number of kindergartens and we responded immediately. The Yeshiva is an integral part of the city, so, naturally, in order to strengthen the residents' sense of security and the city's overall resilience, our students gladly came to strengthen the kindergartens' security for a few hours each day."

Rabbi Fendel says the time when Jews didn't know how to defend themselves is over. "Baruch Hashem, we have a Response Team and we're full partners in [the city's] security. [As Chazal say,] the Torah 'protects and saves'- we are guardians of the city. The days when Jews were passive about their security are gone. Let's hope our enemies get the message. We all must protect ourselves."
The Amit Yeshiva High School in Sderot’s seventh grade class are currently completing the second tractate of the Talmud Hayisra’eli program. The talmidim get together each week in Sderot’s Hesder Yeshiva’s Beit Midrash as they routinely learn together, as part of their Bar Mitzvah preparation. Rabbi Avraham Yifrach, the class’ homeroom teacher describes the special study session: “It’s amazing to see how the talmidim come every week with their Gemaras to learn with the Yeshiva guys. This is a wonderful way to create love of Torah and love for Jewish learning. I’d like to thank the Hesder Yeshiva guys, and Rabbi Fendel, for their holy work which is totally voluntary.”
A MIRACLE FROM SDEROT ARRIVES IN THE FIVE TOWNS

By Judah Rhine

While visiting Israel a number of years ago, David and Debra Segal visited the City of Sderot and met with Rabbi David Fendel, Rosh Yeshiva of the Hesder Yeshiva in Sderot. On the rooftop of the Yeshiva stood the amazing Menorah made out of Kassam rockets that were fired from Gaza into Southern Israel. Upon hearing this, David Segal envisioned having such a Menorah in the Five Towns. The Segal’s children, Jason and Danielle Bokor visited Sderot about three years ago and were equally moved by the Menorah. When David Segal brought up his idea of replicating and bringing the Menorah to their community, the Bokors agreed and said that it would be very significant to have the Menorah at HAFTWR, where their children/grandchildren attend school. They decided to fund the project together. They arranged with Rabbi Fendel to have Yaron Bob, the artist, commissioned to do the Menorah. Yaron was very excited about the project from the start. He assembled the Menorah in his studio in Sderot, sending updates and pictures every few weeks. When all was set, they arranged to have the Menorah shipped to HAFTWR High School and welcomed Yaron to come in for 10 days to assemble and weld the Menorah on site.

Danielle Bokor designed a base for the Menorah and contacted local artisans that she deals with in her architecture practice about doing the job. Once they learned about the project, each one offered their services at no charge.

When Yaron came to HAFTWR High School to assemble the Menorah, he also took the time to interact and meet with the HAFTWR students. He answered many questions and explained about the situation in Southern Israel and described for them about Yatid, the yeshuv where he lives. He also did many projects with the students including bending forks and wire into artwork such as snails, scorpions and trees. Yaron has a true passion for his work that is evident to all who meet him. He has a full website about his work at rocketsintoroses.com where he explains how he came to this particular art and the meaning behind it.

On the fifth night of Chanukah, HAFTWR hosted a dedication ceremony for the Menorah. HAFTWR parents and the community were invited for this special and spectacular event. Following welcoming remarks by Jason Bokor, Rabbi Oppen, principal of HAFTWR High School, welcomed the attendees with Divrei Torah and described the miracle of the Menorah Project. The program also included a time line video showing the intricate details of how the Menorah was assembled on the HAFTWR campus. The Menorah was then lit and the torch lights illuminated the sky for all to see. There was another brief video showing the lighting of the Menorah on the rooftop of Yeshivat Hesder in Sderot, as well as the Chanukah celebration with the singing and dancing of the Yeshiva students just days before. As a treat, latkes and sufganiot were served to all.

The highlight of the program featured Rabbi David Fendel, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Hesder in Sderot, who came to the U.S. from Sderot in honor of this historic event. Rabbi Fendel expressed his profound appreciation to the Segal and Bokor families for their commitment and generosity in taking their idea and making it into a reality. Rabbi Fendel also spoke to the crowd about the rebirth of the city Sderot since last
year’s war and how the students of the Yeshiva are vital components of the Sderot community at large. Yeshivat Hesder in Sderot is the largest Hesder Yeshiva in Israel, with over 500 students. The Yeshiva is housed in a beautiful rocket proof Beit Midrash, which also served as the home base for the Gefen Special Forces Battalion, hosting 600 soldiers who dormed with the Yeshiva students on the campus during Operation Protective Edge just last year. Rabbi Fendel concluded by saying, “Let our neighbors in Gaza see for themselves how we turn their hate and terror into a beacon of light, hope and devotion.” Additionally, HAFTR has undertaken a project to dedicate a Safe Room in the new dormitories at the Yeshiva. This will further serve to form a strong bond between Yeshivat Hesder Sderot and the HAFTR family.

The Menorah means a great deal to the Five Towns community. This news worthy event drew the attention of two local news stations. WPIX Channel 11 News broadcast live from HAFTR High School on Thursday morning on the 4th day of Chanukah and WNBC Channel 4 News produced a very meaningful segment about the Menorah project (http://www.nbcnewyork.com/video/#/on-air/as-seen-on/Long-Island-High-School-Commissions-Menorah-of-Missiles/361627241). As explained by Jason Bokor, “I believe the reason why the Menorah has evoked such tremendous interest is the message that it sends. We are taking the instruments of war and terror used against innocent civilians and using them to make a Menorah which is a symbol of light and peace. In light of all that is going on today, whether it is in Israel, Paris or San Bernardino, people want to see concrete statements that we will not let the evil people of this world win. Instead, we want to see good and peaceful times in our lifetime”.

For dedication opportunities of a Sderot Menorah for your Shul/School/ Community, please contact Judah Rhine, American Friends of Sderot at Judah@sderot.org.

SAVE THE DATE - The 20th Annual Dinner to benefit Yeshivat Hesder in Sderot will take place on April 13, 2016.
Wednesday April 13, 2016, 5 Nissan 5776

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Yeshiva that defied all odds

Join us at the Annual Dinner for The Hesder Yeshiva of Sderot
The Largest Hesder Yeshiva in Israel with over 750 Talmidim

Rabbi David Fendel, Rosh HaYeshiva
Mr. David Sultan, President
MK BENNETT VISITS SDEROT

Israel's Minister of Education, Mr. Naftali Bennett, came to visit the Hesder Yeshiva in Sderot in November. Speaking in the Beit Midrash, the Minister told the students, "You are Israel's and Am Yisrael's Iron Dome System. From time immemorial, Am Yisrael's strength stemmed from the Beit Midrash, and I'm proud to see the strength that exudes from Sderot's Beit Midrash. Particularly today, in the midst of an uneasy period, we need this strength in order to give us, the people in the cabinet and Government, the ability to make the right decisions for Am Yisrael."

The Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi David Fendel, blessed Minister Bennett for his strong stance on Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Torah, and for his great assistance to the Yeshiva. The Minister then continued to visit schools in the city and met with Sderot Mayor Mr. Alon Davidi.]
Eighty years after the passing of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook, one of the founding fathers of religious-Zionism, Sderot’s Hesder Yeshiva launched a new explanatory commentary on his writings. The series, entitled “Rav Kook Explained”, is a joint publication of Yediot Sfarim and Dabri Shir, and was written by Rabbi Chagai Lundin, a rabbi-mentor at the Yeshiva.

The event was attended by the Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Dovid Lau, Mr. Dov Eichenwald, CEO of Yediot Sfarim, Mr. Michael Lev, CEO of Dabri Shir Publications, and Mr. Yisrael Ze’ira, Executive Director of the Rosh Yehudi Movement.

“Rav Kook is no longer living, but his spirit continues to enrich the Jewish People,” said the Chief Rabbi, joining the other speakers who emphasized Rabbi Kook’s importance and relevance in contemporary Israel. They also spoke of the importance of making his teachings accessible to the greater community: religious, secular, and chareidim.

Yediot Sfarim’s CEO, Dov Eichenwald, spoke of how highly Rav Kook viewed literature and publication, and said he was grateful to merit taking part in its publication.

Rabbi Chagai Lundin, who has been studying Rav Kook’s writings for years, says publication of the series fulfills a twenty-year-old dream of his, ever since he was a young Yeshiva student. Rabbi Lundin concluded the event by passionately calling for the continued dissemination of Rav Kook’s writings from upon every possible platform.
THE SONG THAT WILL NEVER BE SILENCED - DIRECT KASSAM ROCKET HITS SDEROT DURING SHABBAT TESHUVA

We were all sitting in the Yeshivat Hesder’s dining room (about 300 of us), singing zmirot. All of a sudden, my little eight-year-old, Shlomo Elyashiv, ran into the dining room at full speed. Because we were their closest protected area, some stray Sderot citizens ran in after him. My son informed me that he heard a Tzeva Adom/Red Alert siren, followed by a big boom – and he ran as fast as he could. (Don’t worry, he was back outside playing a few minutes later. Still, when he went to sleep he asked us to make sure to wake him up if another Red Alert is sounded so he could make it to shelter).

Minutes later, one of our Avrechim (one of almost 100 (!) married couples who live in Sderot) came with a halachic question about someone suffering from a panic attack, asking what is permissible to do for him on Shabbat.

It’s important for you to know that in the dining room we didn’t hear the explosion. We didn’t even hear the siren (!) because the spirited, awesome zmirot were so much stronger and powerful. And that is our message: our dancing, singing, davening and learning – are eternal. We’re so much stronger than those seeking to destroy us!

We began the year with record enrollment at the Yeshiva’s three campuses! From watching our boys daven, learn and interact with one another on Rosh Hashana and Shabbat, we can see we’re succeeding in creating an atmosphere for breeding future leaders on every level of Israeli society!
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SDEROT?

Don't forget to look us up on Facebook: American Friends of Sderot
An IDF officer shares the miracle of a terror tunnel built to reach Sderot but which ended at Nir Am.
By: Hana Levi Julian
Published in the Jewish Press on December 8th, 2015

IDF Southern OC Commander Col. Dudu Bar Khalifa described an unusual incident that he said had taken place during Operation Protective Edge in 2014, while lighting Chanukah candles this week with bereaved families of the brigade.
The officer said during Monday night’s candle-lighting ceremony that the tunnel out of which terrorists emerged during the 2014 summer and which nearly succeeded in their attempt to attack Nir Am, was not their original goal. Hamas originally planned to send 60 terrorists into Sderot.
In a related story, Egyptian forces found a tunnel network from Rafah into Sinai built with 40 cm thick iron walls, dug 10 meters underground.
Egypt says the Hamas-built tunnels were paid for by Qatar.
When the sea water pumped by Egypt along the Gaza-Sinai border, designed to sink the tunnels, didn’t subside in all areas, they realized something must be blocking it. At which point they dug down and discovered a Hamas network of 17 underground iron-walled tunnels.
JOIN US AS WE HONOR ISRAEL’S AMBASSADOR TO THE UN

American Friends of Sderot will be organizing a farewell reception to Consul General Chaim Shacham upon his returning to Israel. Guests of Honor will be Israel’s Ambassador to the UN, the Honorable Mr. Danny Danon, and Mayor of Sderot, Mr. Alon Davidi. The reception will take place IYH in Miami, FL, on February 28th, 2016, with the participation of our Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Dovid Fendel. Benefits will go to the Yeshiva. For more information, please contact Shalom Lerner: lerner8@bezeqint.net.

COME FOR A VISIT!

Will you be in Israel during the next few months? Consider a visit to Sderot in your itinerary. Witness the miracles of Sderot: tour the fortified yeshiva, interact with the students, meet locals who have lived through countless missile attacks, see this desert town has blossomed into a thriving and desirable community.

For more information, please contact Aaron Tirschwell at American Friends of Sderot: aaron@Sderot.org or call 914-775-5120 (US number that rings in Israel).

We look forward to hosting you!

Secure Online Donations at: www.sderot.org/english/donations
Contact: info@sderot.org // Tel: 718-6734945 // American Friends of Sderot 49 Dakota Street, Passaic, NJ 07055
Our website: www.sderot.org/english
Thank you, dear friends, for helping make this all possible. The source of Sderot’s resilience in the face of war is the ideals we share and celebrate so strongly- ideals of Torah-study, Zionism, community and chessed. These shared ideals are Divine; therefore they are eternal. They constantly give us the energy and determination we pass on to our brethren in Sderot and all over Israel in trying times. It’s at the source of our every endeavor. Be a part of this Jewish victory over our enemies. Strengthen our ability to learn Torah and give of ourselves to Sderot’s population. Help us radiate the light of Torah in the face of our enemies. Help us warm the hearts of a city which symbolizes Messirut Nefesh/self-sacrifice like no other.