

## **SHOMREI EMUNAH'S ISRAEL CONNECTIONS** by Mike Lowenstein, Co-Chairman of the Israel Committee

### **JobKatif – Spotlight on Rav Yosef Rimon**

During the past ten years, the Baltimore Orthodox Jewish Community, in general, and Shomrei Emunah members, in particular, have contributed significantly to JobKatif, the organization dedicated to assist the nearly 9,000 Jews who were evicted from their homes in Gush Katif and the Northern Shomron, to find suitable employment. During this decade, JobKatif has been most successful, much of which has been due to the foresight of its founder, Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon, and its dedicated professional staff, headed by Judy Lowy.

This past May, Rav Rimon was presented with the One Israel Fund's Hakarat HaTov Award for his tireless efforts on behalf of so many people for whom he restored their dignity, one job at a time. (As a side note, the One Israel Fund is the organization that Shomrei supported last year by purchasing a security camera for the town of Ofra in the Shomron.) Rav Rimon had previously been awarded the President's Prize for Volunteerism by former President Shimon Peres and the Moskowitz Prize for Zionism ("Lion of Zion Award").

Layne and I had the distinct honor and privilege to be present when Rav Rimon received this most recent award. On a personal note, it is because of the inspiring leadership, ingenuity, and creativity that Rav Rimon continually displays that I have been involved as a volunteer with Job Katif, this amazing organization, for the past decade.



**Rav Rimon with Mike and Layne Lowenstein at the One Israel Fund Dinner**

Rav Rimon continues to dream about helping others. He recently launched the Ethiopian Nurses Training Program, Achotenu (translated as “You are Our Sister”). Achot means both “sister” and “nurse”. This is a pilot program designed to train young Ethiopian women become registered nurses in Israel. Its goal is three-fold: to help young Ethiopians realize their potential, to create inspiring role models within the Ethiopian community, and to fill the critical need of nurses in Israeli hospitals – a Win-Win-Win situation. Rav Rimon’s vision is to create a series of programs designed to enable marginalized population groups to enjoy opportunities for stable careers. It has gotten off to a most successful start.

### **Yishuv Eli, Shomrei’s Sister Community and Eliana Passentin**

Also, a little more than ten years ago, when Jordan Wiener chaired the Israel Committee, Shomrei “adopted” Yishuv Eli as its sister community. Many projects were underwritten by Shomrei members, and a strong bond ensued between then mayor of Eli, Lior Shtul, and the Deputy Director of Talmud Torah Hadar Yosef, Eliana Passentin.

Lior Shtul went on to serve as CEO of Bnei David, Israel’s first Military Yeshiva Academy (Mechina) Program, which was established to combine Torah studies and full-length army service.

The Shomrei women may remember Eliana Passentin as the first speaker in the 2010 women’s lecture series, when she shared her knowledge about the prophet, Shmuel. Eliana has continued as Deputy Director, serving as the public face of Hadar Yosef; at the same time as she assists the Israeli Government, which often calls upon her to lead tours of the Shomron, in general, and of Eli and Shilo, in particular, to leaders both within in Israel and in Chutz La’Aretz. Most recently, she took former Governor Mike Huckabee on a tour of Shilo. It was supposed to be a half hour tour to be followed by his addressing those who donated to his campaign. However, he was so fascinated that he asked to continue, and Eliana ended up spending nearly two hours with him. (Parenthetically, one of the most amazing Israel museums is located in Shilo, utilizing state-of-the-art media displays. One can almost feel as if he or she is actually witnessing Chana’s plea for a child as she addresses the prophet, Eli.)



**Eliana Passentin Leading Governor Mike Huckabee on Tour of Shilo**



### **Eliana with Governor Huckabee at the Museum in Shilo**

It also bears mentioning that the bond between Bnei David and Talmud Torah Hadar Yosef remains strong. Many Shomrei members have supported Eli's Big Brother Program, initiated by Eliana, which matches soldiers, learning at Bnei David, together with young students, whose fathers are serving in the IDF either as career officers or as those fulfilling their compulsory service. This program began when the three sons of Roi Klein HY"D and Eliraz Peretz HY"D entered first grade and needed assistance with their Torah education.

Another connection that we have with Bnei David is through Israel Committee co-chairman, Binyomin Berger, who recently returned from attending his nephew, Yehuda's wedding in Israel. Binyomin's sister and brother-in-law, Rochel and Yonatan Taragin, were former Shomrei members before making Aliyah. Yehuda is beginning his second year at Bnei David and will be living in Eli with his wife, Daniella. Daniella is the daughter of David Rose, international director of Zaka, who spoke at Shomrei this year.



**Yehuda Taragin and Parents at His Wedding**

### **Shomrei Israel Committee Presentations**

During the past year, the Israel Committee has brought a number of speakers to Shomrei. They included:

- Joseph Levy, a lawyer, who shared his passionate interest in the subject of the history of Jews in Arab countries with particular focus on Egypt, where he was born.
- Dr. Herb London, president of the London Center for Policy Research, who highlighted one of the biggest threats to Israel; namely, Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS).
- Dr. Mordechai Kedar, Director of the Center for the Study of the Middle East and Islam, whose topic was “The Other Voice in the Arab World – My Personal Experience”.
- Yonah (Jeremy) Bob, foreign affairs lecturer and correspondent for the Jerusalem Post, who presented professional updates on the Iranian nuclear threat, regional security challenges, and war crimes allegations, among other topics.
- David Rose, international director of Zaka, who shared his personal knowledge of the humanitarian work of his organization during the past thirty years.

On Shabbat, December 12, 2015, an hour before Mincha and during Shalosh Seudot, we will have the pleasure again of hosting Sgt. Benjamin Anthony, founder of Our Soldiers Speak (OSS). Sgt. Anthony will return for his third visit to Shomrei, one of the first places he spoke shortly after he created the organization in 2007.

Benjamin is a veteran and combat reservist in the IDF, having served as a heavy machine gunner in Gaza, Judea and Samaria, and along Israel's northern borders. OSS is a non profit organization that brings the proud truth of Israel's soldiers from the front lines of military service to the campuses of the English speaking world.

A graduate of the University of Manchester, UK (*Yes, he does have a beautiful English accent!*) Sgt. Anthony has lectured to audiences at more than 300 campuses across three continents. In addition, he spoke at the 2013 plenary session of the AIPAC Policy Conference and has been a keynote speaker for Israel Bonds, Christians United for Israel, and at many Federation events.

*He has a tendency to speak to audiences, where one can scarcely hear a pin drop.*



**Sgt. Benjamin Anthony**

### **Sar-El – Volunteers for Israel**

The mission of Volunteers for Israel is to connect Americans and others from around the world with Israel through volunteer service. Its goal is achieved by partnering with military bases that enable volunteers to work and live side-by-side with Israeli soldiers. The program began in 1982, during the first war with Lebanon, when civilian replacements were needed for thousands of reservists called to active duty just as Israel's harvest season began. Israeli General Aharon Davidi sent emissaries to the US to enlist volunteers to harvest crops and save the economy. More than 600 volunteers responded immediately.

Since 1982, more than 30,000 people have signed on to do civilian work on IDF bases. Much solidarity and goodwill have been established between the defenders of Israel and the non-Israeli volunteers: Jews and non-Jews, male and female, married and single, young and formerly young. Volunteering this month are our own Murray and Baila Jacobson. Layne and I plan on volunteering the first two weeks of November. This will be our third “tour of duty”, and we highly recommend the experience. If any Kol Hashomrim readers have any questions about the program, please feel free to speak to us.



**Murray and Baila Jacobson with their Madricha, their Granddaughter, Shana**