

Chapter 2: Hadassim



Life in Hadassim

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/4039>

From the moment I arrived at Hadassim, a scared and traumatized child, my world became brighter and my life blossomed into a garden of growth, happiness, and dreams.

The WIZO-Hadassim School Village, where I was sent, was a small collection of buildings near the town of Netanya, just north of Tel Aviv. It had been specifically created to educate traumatized children. One question that the Hadassah-WIZO Canada organization had wrestled with before the

conclusion of World War II was what would happen to all of the Jewish orphans in Europe. One idea was to create special schools and home-like environments in Israel for these anticipated groups of children. The Hadassah-WIZO Canada organization financed the school in 1947 with approximately one million dollars in today's economy. The school's main mission was to house, restore, and educate Holocaust orphans. Some of these children had lived for ten years in basements, boxes, and window-less hiding places, in constant fear



WIZO Hadassim, a children's village
<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1035>



Hadassim, my family
<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/4002>



and hunger, and frequently without their parents. More than a few of them had witnessed their parents being murdered and a few had been the victims of medical experiments.

These Holocaust children were gathered at a transitional camp for war orphans on the Warburg Estate in Balkanza, near Hamburg, Germany. From there, they initially traveled to Paris and then on to Marseilles, France. In Marseilles, they boarded the ship *Providence* which sailed to what was then Palestine. After a short stay in WIZO-Achuzat Yeladim on Mount Carmel in Haifa, they boarded a train and arrived at Hadassim, in 1947. These were Hadassim's first students, mainly from the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

Before these war orphans arrived, a WIZO general council in Jerusalem had decided these children should not be segregated from normal society and, therefore, other children were to be allowed to attend the school. Some of these other students would be traumatized kids from homes with family problems. The problems could be divorce, as in my case, or it could be that one of the parents had died and the surviving parent was unable to care for the child while working at the same time. In addition, to balance the learning and emotional experiences for everyone, some children of diplomats and those from more financially privileged families were matriculated amongst the general population of the school. The idea from the WIZO general council was to

integrate these disparate groups into an environment for academic learning as well as provide an environment to nurture emotional healing.

My own journey to Hadassim was from the second group, the traumatized. My parents were divorced, and my father experienced numerous difficulties trying to care for me while having to work a full-time job. It was his decision to send me to Hadassim, since he believed that I would be cared for and educated in a better environment than he could provide for me living alone with him in Tel Aviv.

Hadassim was run as a kibbutz, a collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. Kibbutzim (plural for "kibbutz") began as Utopian communities and were a combination of socialism and Zionism.

The Hadassim dancers comprised one of the most accomplished dance troupes in Israel, during the 1950s. Students from Hadassim also achieved Israeli records in athletics and represented Israel in the Olympics Games. Each student at Hadassim pursued what was interesting to that individual. Some danced, others wrote stories or poems, and many were interested in politics or scientific pursuit.

The first kibbutz, established in 1909, was Degania. The members had emigrated to Palestine and wanted to be farmers. At that time, prior to World War I, the Ottoman Empire ruled Palestine. These early settlers/farmers were faced with



Hadassim, photo collections

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1037>

a harsh environment. The Galilee was swampy, the Judean Mountains rocky, and in the south of the country, the Negev, was a desert. To make things more challenging, most of the settlers had no prior farming experience.

The sanitary conditions were also poor. Malaria, typhus, and cholera were rampant. Bedouins would raid farms and settled areas. Sabotage of irrigation canals and burning of crops were also common. Living collectively was simply the most logical way to be secure in an unwelcoming land. On top of safety considerations, establishing a farm was a capital-intensive project. However, collectively, the founders of the kibbutzim had the resources to establish something lasting, while independently they did not.

The fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, followed by the arrival of the British, brought with it benefits for the Jewish community of Palestine and its kibbutzim. The Ottoman authorities had made immigration to Palestine difficult and restricted land purchases. Rising antisemitism forced many Jews to flee Eastern Europe. To escape the pogroms, tens of thousands of Russian Jews immigrated to Palestine in the early 1920s.

Zionist Jewish youth movements flourished in the 1920s, from right-wing movements to left-wing socialist groups. In contrast to those who came previously, these youth group members had some agricultural training before embarking. Members of the second and third waves of emigrants were also less likely to be Russian, since emigration from Russia was closed off after the Russian Revolution. European Jews who settled in kibbutzim between the World Wars were from Germany, or from countries in Eastern Europe.

In the early days, communal meetings were limited to practical matters. In the 1920s and 1930s, they became more informal. Instead of meeting in the dining room, the group would sit around a campfire. Rather than reading minutes, the session would begin with a group dance.

The operational strategy for us at Hadassim was that of a traditional kibbutz. Each one of us participated in all activities. Students and teachers worked together in all areas. We had tasks to maintain the school and to keep our dorm rooms clean. We helped with the food production and farming jobs. In addition, we had to study and complete our lessons.

In the early years, there were few amenities. We did not have hot water, and there was no heater or air conditioning in



Coming to Hadassim

the room. Food was rationed at the time. However, the most important thing that we had at Hadassim was each other and the belief that we could become anything or anyone we wanted to be. There was never a hint or suggestion that we were damaged or deficient in any way. We were raised with the diametrically opposite concept—we were wonderful people in a beautiful, loving world.

The philosophy of the school was that each child would be nurtured to develop his or her own particular gifts, be they in the humanities, science, sports, or art. Dialogue would be the main way of teaching. There was dialogue with each other and with the teachers.

To inspire the students, and try to alleviate the pain that so many had suffered, nearly every week some distinguished

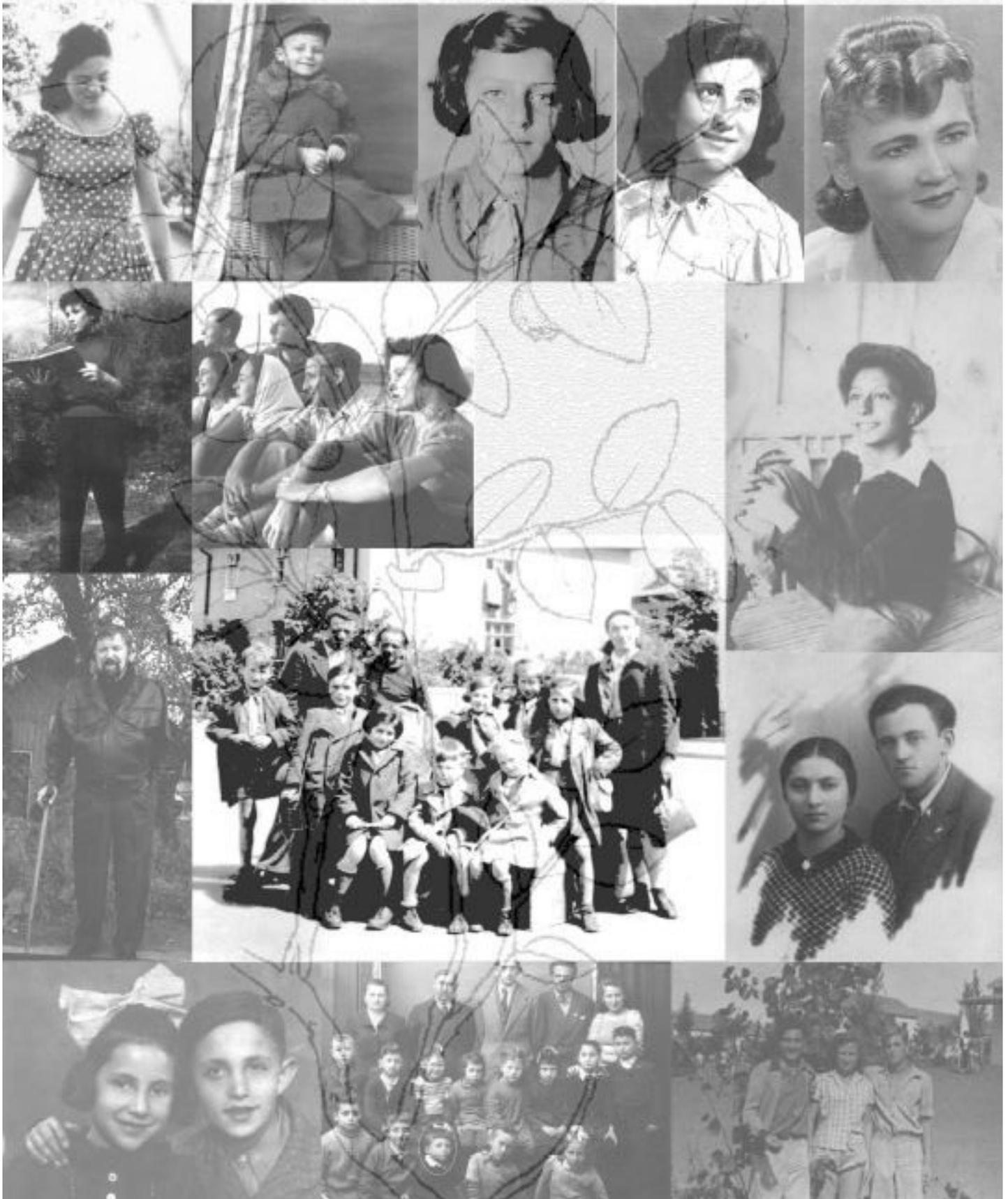


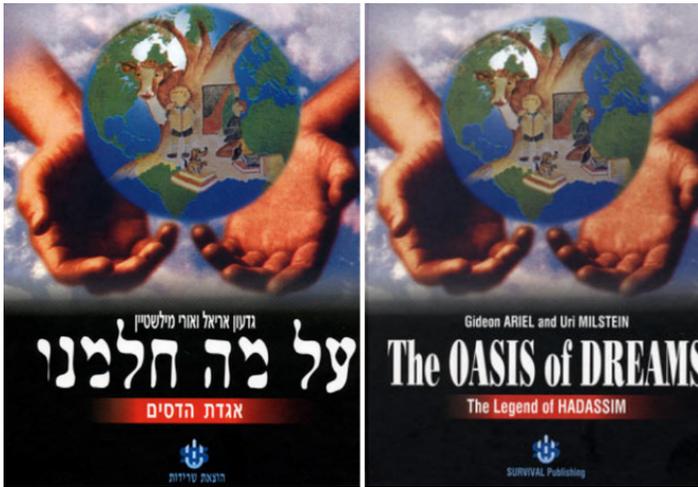
Dancing on the beach and the grass

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1038>



THE OASIS OF DREAMS





The Oasis of Dreams

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1039>

person would come to Hadassim. Many of the world's finest artists appeared at Hadassim including the violinists Yasha Heifetz and Yehudi Menuhin, the choreographer Martha Graham and her troupe, the harmonica player Larry Adler, and the comedian Danny Kaye. The students met Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of former President of the United States Franklin Roosevelt, and the scientist and the current President of Israel, Professor Chaim Weizmann. The best of Israel's directors staged plays at Hadassim, and the most talented musicians taught music there.

Dialogic concepts, inspired by Martin Buber, who was a secular Jew and believed in discussion rather than conflict or war, led us toward a humanistic, non-militaristic way of life. It should be noted that, although Hadassim students fought in all of Israel's wars, none opted for a military career, and there were no generals among us. Buber's belief in discussions rather than conflict apparently was successful, at least with the student graduates of Hadassim.

Even before I had gone to Hadassim, I was fascinated with exercise, physical strength, and the many ways I could enhance my muscular prowess. Perhaps this was reflective of my age as a young boy developing into a man, or maybe it was a nascent talent. I might have been inspired to emulate the abilities and accomplishments of the Israeli athletics I saw and read about in the newspaper. I remember that one of my heroes was Rafael Halperin, who was "Mr. Israel" and a world champion in professional wrestling.

Before I went to Hadassim, I had found a book among my father's things called "My System" by J.P. Müller. Müller's book, first published in 1904, was little more than a long, bound pamphlet, graced with an image of the Greek athlete Apoxyomenos naked and toweling himself. The exercise guide, which promised that just "15 minutes a day" of pre-

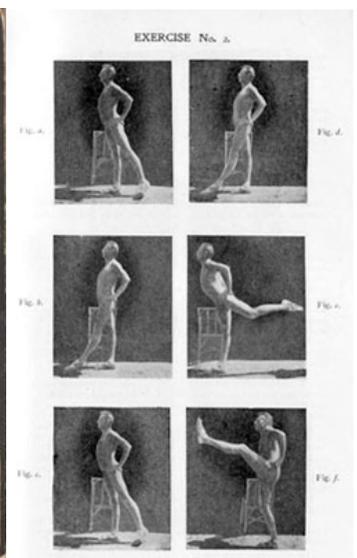
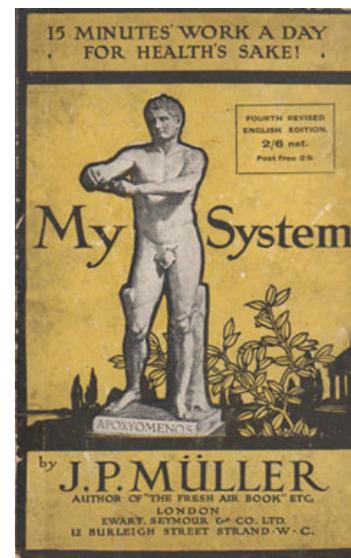
scribed exercises would make "weaklings" into strong men (and women). A friend of mine, Yoram, could read English so he translated the text that appeared around each of the exercises presented in the book. I practiced many of the exercises and read this book repeatedly. I was fascinated by the story of Mr. Müller, who described how un-athletic he had been in his youth and how well developed he became using the exercises described in this book. This book was much more interesting to me than the school books I was supposed to read. I made sure to take the book with me when I went to Hadassim.

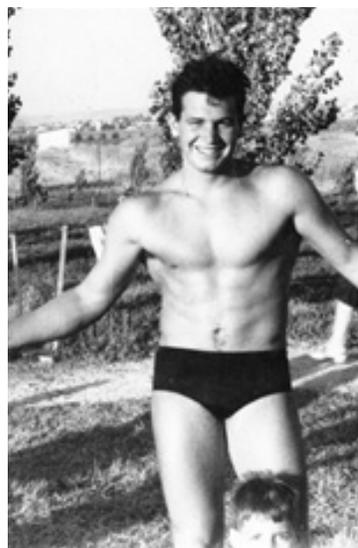
In Hadassim, I continued to perform each exercise and supplemented them with other ones I devised for myself. I would do these exercises every day, seven days a week to the amazement of my classmates and some of my teachers.

One day, an American kid, Zvi, joined our grade. Zvi had been sent to Hadassim by his parents, who lived in New York. His parents had gotten a divorce so they sent their son to the dorm school in Israel to learn to be a good Jewish boy. Zvi was a small, skinny boy who was quiet and relatively passive. It was unclear whether this was due to the language barrier or just his natural character. He could not speak Hebrew at that time and I did not know English. However, Zvi was also interested in exercise.

One particular day, a group of us were exercising by lifting a weight consisting of two wheels attached to an axle that had originally been part of an old freight train. A big Israeli boy, Kombor, continually pushed Zvi out of his way. This was a real David and Goliath moment! A big bully taunting a little kid. Finally, Zvi had had enough of the bully's aggression. He lashed out with his arms and legs flailing in a whirlwind

J.P. Müller's book





of motion. It turned out that because Zvi had always been small, his parents had enrolled him in judo, karate, boxing, kick-boxing, and self-defense classes in the United States. In what seemed like mere seconds, the bully was down and out! We, the onlookers, were more than stunned to witness this transformation and the unqualified victory of the small defeating the large. Then Zvi, calmly, extended his hand to help the stunned Kombor to his feet. Thereafter, these two unlikely adversaries became best friends.

One day Zvi gave me a new exercise spring device. This device, also known as the spring chest expander, is actually an old-school piece of exercise equipment that engages your shoulders, chest, upper back and core through resistance movements. This exercise apparatus traces its origins to England, becoming popular with English gentlemen at the turn of the 20th century. The spring chest expander consists of three to five strands of steel springs or rubber cables that run together with handles on each end. Strongman cables, pulls, or strand pulls, are nicknames often given to the chest expander.

Although the device may have had a long history, it was a new apparatus for me. I could not read the English manual for the spring exerciser, but Zvi helped me. In addition to translating the manual, Zvi showed me the many ways and the different shapes that the springs could be stretched in order to exercise different muscle groups. This exercise device consisted of five springs, which could be attached, or detached, depending on the amount of resistance you wanted to create. It was possible to hold both handles in the hands and stretch the device or connect one end to the towel hanger and pull it on it. Because the handles and springs could be arranged for any number of exercises, I felt that this device had an advantage over the barbell weights I had created.

Previously, Dani Dassa and I had mixed concrete, poured it into canned fruit containers, and added a metal bar in the



Teenage years

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center. Once the concrete hardened in one can, we turned it over and completed the “barbell” by adding a second can. These cement-filled containers with a pipe were my weights before Zvi arrived with this new invention.

Almost immediately, I realized that exercising with this new spring exercise device required much greater effort at the end of the motion, rather than at the beginning. When I worked with my barbells, I could not lift more weight than the weakest part of my movement could achieve. Therefore, I was only working part of my muscles when I did an exercise like the bench press. At some point in the middle of the movement I was weaker than at the beginning of the motion.

The new spring exercise device made the workout much more difficult throughout the range that the springs could stretch. I discovered that I was able to accomplish better results in my training with a more effective device. In other words, this spring device forced my muscles to work in the middle and at the end of the movement, as well as at the beginning of the exercise. It was much more difficult to pull at the end but produced more beneficial results. I was also surprised to discover, after working with this spring device, that I was able to lift more weights on the barbells than I had been able to do previously. I was extremely pleased that I was becoming stronger.

I used my set of homemade dumbbells and barbells during the afternoons after school and before going to Kibbutz work. I noticed that when I did various exercises, such as the bench press lying on a bench, the weight appeared lighter toward the end of the movement, unlike the spring device, where the resistance increased toward the end. This was my first biomechanical intuition although, at that time, I could not have explained it in those terms nor with the mathematical and mechanical knowledge that I acquired in later years.

One day, I had an inspiration. I decided to modify the barbell in a way to achieve the same effect that I experienced with the spring device. I hung chains made of heavy metal at each end of the barbell so that part of the chain would drag on the ground while I started the movements. As I pressed the dumbbell up, the motion pulled more and more of the chain off of the ground. In this way, the weight became heavier toward the end of the movement. This created a variable resistance exercise, but it was many years before I understood exactly what I had created. I was thrilled with my invention. I could feel how much harder I had to lift and discovered many new muscles that were sore from the effort. The most amazing thing for me was the increase in the size of my muscles with my newly invented device.

A week before my thirteenth birthday, the lucky kids in Hadassim went home to their parents to enjoy the Pesach, or Passover, vacation. Although this is one of the most import-

ant Jewish holidays on the calendar, I had to stay in Hadassim with some of the other children, who also had no place to go.

The Pesach vacation was three weeks long. To keep us busy and to keep our minds off our loneliness, we were given busy daily schedules consisting of eight hours of farm work on the kibbutz. My duty was to cultivate the hard, dry soil of Hadassim for the next crops of corn and wheat. I would drive the Farmel tractor that I loved so much. I may have been lonely, but I loved to drive that tractor.

On April 27, 1952, I was driving my tractor as usual. Suddenly, I was summoned to come to the main office for a visitor. I left the tractor with its engine running and walked up the pathway toward the dining hall. I was mildly curious as to who would be visiting me, but I went where I was told to go.

When I approached the dining hall, I saw my father standing there with Rachel Shapira, the school principal. Although time can fade memories, there have been specific events in my life that have been burned into my memory much like a tattoo stains the skin. This was one of those many moments in my life. It had been a long time since I had seen my father, and I was certainly surprised by his presence. I vividly remember looking up into his eyes and noticed how they sparkled in the brightness of the day. I thought, at the time, that I had never seen anything like that. Now, as I remember the event, I know what caused his eyes sparkle; it was my father’s tears welling up in his eyes. It is only now, in my later adulthood, that I realized so many more things that a ten-year-old boy would not understand. “Shalom Abba, what are you doing here?” I asked incredulously.

He leaned toward me and whispered, “Do you know what day it is today?” His voice was unusually soft, as I remember it.

“It’s my birthday,” I answered.

“Yes,” he said slowly. “It’s your bar mitzvah today, did you remember that?”

Well, of course I remembered that. What kid would not recognize one of the most important birthdays in their entire life? According to Jewish law, when Jewish boys reach the age of thirteen, they become accountable for their actions and become a bar mitzvah. Prior to reaching bar mitzvah age, the child’s parents hold the responsibility for the child’s actions.

Once a boy reaches the age of thirteen, he is responsible for Jewish ritual, law, tradition, and ethics and is able to participate in all areas of Jewish community life. Reaching the age of bar mitzvah signifies becoming a full-fledged member of the Jewish community, with all the responsibilities that come with it. These include moral responsibility for one’s own actions, eligibility to be called to read from the Torah and lead or participate in a minyan, the right to possess per-

sonal property and to be legally married according to Jewish law, the duty to follow the 613 commandments of the Torah and keep the halakha, and the capacity to testify as a witness in a Beth Din (Rabbinical court) case. Once a boy becomes thirteen years old, all of these responsibilities are his merely by having a birthday. No ceremony is required to become a bar mitzvah.

Although I was aware that it was my bar mitzvah birthday, I was a little surprised that he remembered, and was amazed that he made the trip to see me. I was continually unprepared and amazed by my father and his actions.

“I brought you a present,” my father said, handing me a small box wrapped in old newspaper. At that time in Israel, there was no fancy colored gift-wrapping paper like we have now, and I could not open my present fast enough. I ripped the paper off and found a charcoal drawing of myself, which had been painstakingly sketched by my father.

“Is this my present?” I asked, desperately trying to hide my disappointment.

“Yes, Gideon, do you know how difficult it was for me to do this? It took me many hours to draw it. I hope you like it.”

“Thank you, father,” I replied, thinking how stupid it was to give me such a present. Most kids would get better presents and some money. I wished he had given me one Lira, which was an Israeli dollar, instead. I could do so much more with one dollar than with this stupid picture. Of course, now I see his incredible talent in drawing my likeness and the love that he felt for me in his careful rendering. He was incapable of expressing his love in a normal demonstration which other parents showed their children. But this picture showed his feeling in the best way he knew how to show his love. At that time, however, I was disappointed at his choice of gift since I would rather have received a more age-appropriate gift, such as money or a toy.

I looked at my father, standing in front of the school’s dining hall, with his drawing of me in my hand. Maybe he was capable of drawing an accurate depiction of my outsides, I thought, but he could never draw a picture of what I felt or of what I was thinking. He had no idea who I was or what I dreamt of becoming. My father and I were worlds apart in our understanding of each other. Neither of us could fathom what the other thought or felt.

We walked together for a while and I was wondering the whole time why he had not hugged me. All my friends’ parents would hug and kiss them whenever they came to see them on their birthdays. As we wandered through the schoolyard, passing between buildings along the flower-lined sidewalks, we approached the dining room kitchen complex. In front of the building was a group of people, including the comedian Danny Kaye. Hadassim always received visits from



Father’s gift

celebrities since our school needed donations from wealthy patrons. Of course, we children were never told about the need for financial donations, we merely enjoyed these visits from celebrities.

My father and I were introduced to Mr. Kaye and the others. Suddenly, from his coat pocket, Mr. Kaye produced a strange looking camera the likes of which we had never seen in Israel. It was a Polaroid camera, and Mr. Kaye immediately took a picture of my father and me. When the picture developed in just a few short minutes, my father was enthralled. Both of us were amazed that a camera existed which could print pictures almost instantly. This Polaroid camera was truly a fantastic mechanical device. My father had built a camera for me when I had been much younger. He had built many other things, such as a tricycle, so in retrospect, I realize that I must have inherited my love of gadgets from my father. That Polaroid camera, however, had been a revelation for both of us. Unfortunately, that early Polaroid picture has faded so that special photograph of us is gone.

After the meeting with Danny Kaye, my father, Rachel Shapira, and I we walked back to the front of the school. Rachel Shapira said to me, “You became a man today, Gideon. We hope you’ll be a very successful person. Your father is very proud of you.”

Then my father blurted out “You’d do better if you studied more, instead of playing with that discus and shot put. Also, you should read more, instead of lifting all those weights.” I understood by his comment that I could have studied and read more, but how was I to measure exactly how much more, since I was sure that whatever I did would still not be enough for him. Besides, he had no idea how much I studied and read at Hadassim.

“He’ll be fine. Don’t worry,” Rachel reassured my father.

“No! He does not do well at important things,” my father insisted with despair and shook his head. From my point of view, he looked at me with his eyes, but his mind seemed not to see me at all. I felt invisible as a real-life son. I was only a charcoal sketch; the sketch was good, but the human would

never succeed. He thought of me as a failure now and in the future as well.

That moment changed my life. I loved my father and I knew that he loved me, but there was an impenetrable, mysterious void between us. Neither of us could comprehend the other. At that moment, I felt an enormous bolt as though I had been struck by lightning. An electrical surge galvanized by thoughts and I realized that I would have to show my father what I could achieve. I would prove to him that I was good and smart. I would be the best in many ways. One day he would see for himself what a smart, creative person that I actually was.

My father took the picture from me, wrapped it up again with the torn newspaper, and turned to leave. “See you next time, Gideon.” He left me there and rushed to the road to catch the last bus returning to Tel Aviv, a journey of approximately 30 kilometers.

Rachel held my hand and walked me back to the Kvutza, the house where my room was. I remembered that I had left



Football team. Yakir on the left and me on the right

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1044>



*Al Oerter*

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1042>

the tractor running and told her that I needed to see to it. I walked slowly back to the orange grove, climbed onto my beloved Farmel, and drove it back to the center.

Later, as I walked back to my room, I realized that I did not even have my gift which my father had made for me. I wondered if he had given me a dollar, whether or not he

*Rafael Halperin*

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1041>

*Perry O'Brien*

<http://arielnet.com/ref/go/1043>

would have taken that back. It was at that point that I realized that the portrait of me was not a gift for me at all. Rather, it was for him and he just wanted to show off his work to me. I felt an overwhelming sense of sadness that the day had left in its wake. I would not see my gift for another fifty years. I found it, after my father died, carefully wrapped among his other treasures he had kept about me and my accomplishments over the years.

After dinner that day, I sat in my room alone with five empty beds around me. I wondered what my roommates were doing. They were probably playing with their families or traveling to interesting places. Maybe they were watching soccer games. I looked at the pictures of my heroes on the wall: Rafael Halperin, Mr. Israel in body building; Perry O'Brien, the gold medalist at the Helsinki 1952 Olympic Games in the shot put; and Baruch Habbas, the Israeli shot put champion, who broke the Israeli record at 15.07 meters. "What distance had Perry O'Brien thrown?", I wondered, and picked up the "Track Book" by Kenneth Doherty. This was an old book, which I had purchased with some money



My friends, Hillel (Chili), Yosef, and Asher (Gingi)

I had earned carrying boxes, and flipped through the pages searching for the record in the shot put section.

I was amazed to read that Perry O'Brien had thrown the shot put more than 18 meters, which is 64 feet using the English system. What an incredible difference between his throw and Israeli shot putter! Perry O'Brien's had put the shot more than 3 meters (10 feet) farther than Baruch Habbas had thrown. What did O'Brien do that made him throw so much farther than Baruch Habbas? O'Brien was taller, and he used a different throwing technique. In fact, he began his throw looking backwards. Wow, I thought, what an innovative style that must be. Why could Habbas not do the same? Maybe it was America that made the difference. I imagined that it must be a dream to be in America.

I jumped out of my chair to get my world map. As I looked at America, I realized that it was a huge country compared to Israel. It must be at least a hundred times or even a thousand times bigger, I thought. At the bottom of the map, there was a picture of a family driving in a Cadillac car representing America. India had a picture of a cow walking down the street and for Africa, there was an elephant being ridden by a little child.

My conclusion was that everything and everyone in America was big, much bigger than in Israel. They had more land, bigger cars, and even larger people. Perry O'Brien was larger, stronger, and could throw farther than the smaller Israeli athletes.

My thoughts returned to the three-meter difference in the shot. I was unable to comprehend this fact. There was

such a great discrepancy between the two athletes and their performances. Someone must be able to throw farther than Baruch Habbas. Maybe I could?

At that moment, I decided that I would represent Israel in the Olympics. What an amazing dream for me to represent Israel in the Olympics. If I were in America, I was convinced that I would be able to throw the shot at least 16 meters. I could see myself driving the Cadillac, and what an amazing car it was. I had never seen a Cadillac in Israel. I assumed you had to be a millionaire to be able to afford such a grand car. For a moment, I doubted myself. There was no way I could do this, I had failed 4th grade. How could I accomplish all that? Could it be possible, I pondered? I, angrily, wiped a tear from my eye off the map. I could not afford another map, so I had better keep this one clean. I put the map away but I kept the dream alive in my mind.

For the remainder of the Passover vacation, I thought about this dream, this Olympic idea percolating in my mind. Every minute, every hour, all day and night, I thought about the possibilities.

Two more weeks went by, and at last, the vacation was over. I was so happy to see my best friends, Hillel, Yakir, Menachem, Eliyaho, and Yosef. My closest friend, Yakir, unfortunately, was not to live a long life. He was killed, later, flying a mission in the Israeli Air Force.

That joyful afternoon, when all my friends returned to school, they could not stop telling me how great their vacations at home had been and all the movies they had seen. I told them how boring it had been here, alone each day.

Suddenly, Hillel, Yosef, and Yakir noticed the new pictures on the wall.

“What are those above your bed?” asked Yakir.

“Those are my heroes,” I replied.

“Why have you put them up there?” asked Hillel.

“I am going to beat them!” I answered boldly. There was total silence for a moment and then they all burst into uncontrollable laughter. Their reaction was more devastating to me than my birthday with my father had been. Not only had they laughed at me, ridiculed my dreams, but they were obviously unsympathetic, and unpersuaded by my goal.

Of course, I should not have been shocked at their reaction since I knew that I was not a particularly good athlete. In fact, Iris, one of my beautiful blonde classmates, whom I loved but was too shy to tell her how I felt, could throw a baseball further than I could. Miriam Sidranski, who was younger and in the class below me, could sprint faster than I could dream of running. There was no sport in which I excelled. In fact, I was unable to defeat anyone, girl or boy, in any sport. So, now, I had made an outrageous announcement of unbelievable, unachievable proportions? Maybe they were right.

“Well, we’ll see,” I thought. I still remember how that ridicule fueled the early determination that I would need to accomplish many of my more memorable victories, both in athletics and in business. Determination would blossom within me and, to this day, continues to maintain my outlook on all of my new, revolutionary ideas.

But as Poet Samuel Beckett said with words in his poem:

“Ever tried ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

I added to this statement:

“And Win!”

After they had stopped laughing, I announced the things I was going to accomplish. I made a list of future accomplishments:

1. Break the Israeli records in the shot put and discus
2. Represent Israel in the Olympics
3. Study in an American university
4. Be a multimillionaire
5. Own a Cadillac

This was too much even for Yakir, Menachem, and Eliyahoo. They left the room to find other friends to talk about their Passover break. Hillel and Yosef tried, desperately, to change the subject without making me feel too bad or ridiculous.

I did not tell my friends about my last and most significant goal. This last one was the most important of all, but I did not tell them or anyone else. My main goal, for the rest of my life, was to prove to my father that I was good and smart and I would achieve great things!

My dreams at 13 years old in Israel



