

# Israel’s other battlefield cont.

terrorists are killing Israelis, and Israelis are responding in self-defense.”

Additionally, 91 percent of surveyed students feel that social media is falsely portraying news about Israel.

Griffin Levine [10], agrees that the representation of Israel and the Jews is unreliable.

“There have been certain instances where I heard something on social media, and then approached a rabbi to talk about it,” Levine said. “He told me the information is slightly off.”

Levine emphasized that peace must prevail to end the violence.

“No matter what, Israeli or Arab, all deaths are tragic and sad,” he said.

In a recent attack, a 13-year-old Palestinian, Ahmad Manasra, stabbed two civilians before being neutralized by Israeli police. *US Uncut* claimed that Manasra was killed for no reason, and the report spread like wildfire. President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, also condemned the death, blaming Israeli police.

The report didn’t mention that Manasra killed two civilians or that he was alive and being treated in an Israeli hospital. False reports included a photo of a woman posing as Manasra’s grieving mother.

ING, a global financial institution, conducted a survey among an international group of journalists and public relations professionals. The study stated that one-third of journalists said social media posts are not a reliable source of information, and only 20 percent of journalists always check their facts before publishing news articles.

Heidi Kravitz [11], a longtime advocate for Israel, explained how social media plays an integral roll in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

“Most people believe [social media posts] without question,” Kravitz said. “[It causes] a huge shift of people becoming anti-Israel.”

She described how she copes with daily news from Israel, even though it’s skewed by social media.

“If [news] is shared, it is because a Palestinian was killed by an Israeli,” Kravitz said. “They always neglect to mention the harm the Palestinian caused.”

According to Pew Research Center, 60 percent of American adults use social networking sites. 28 percent of social media users have posted links to political stories or articles for others to read, while 34 percent have used social media to post their own thoughts or comments on political and social issues.

Erin Wenick [15] is spending her gap

year on the program Midreshet Torah V’Avodah based in Jerusalem, Israel.

Wernick has become more skeptical of the media since living in Israel.

“I always knew social media and the press was biased against Israel, but now I am sure of it,” she said.

She now receives information minutes after an attack from teachers and staff, making it more personal. If Wernick retrieves any information from social media, she automatically seeks verification from the administration on her program.

Living in Israel, one feels every event directly, Wernick added.

“Instead of reading media and wondering if it is true and exaggerated, I get the real information from a human being. It is a much different experience,” she explained. “I feel more connected, so I feel as if I have to relate the news back to family in the US so they know what is really going on.”

American Press Institute, an educational nonprofit organization, conducted research in 2014 on the average and attentive news consumer.

Overall, 41 percent of Americans reported that they watched, read or heard any in-depth news stories in the last week.

Kravitz finds misleading headlines produced by social media and various news sites to be highly influential.

Instinctively, she continues, people see these skewed headlines and come to believe perpetrators are completely innocent.

*US News* recently stated in an article published on October 15th that social media plays a growing role in the Israel conflict.

According to the article, Palestinian authorities release videos appearing to show Israeli police using excessive force. The article also states that most attacks have been carried out not by militant groups, but by individuals.

“Motives often remain murky, but relatives of assailants have cited as potential triggers both the pressures of life under Israeli occupation and videos seen on social media,” the site said.

Though social media offers an outlet for any uninformed person to spread misinformation, there is also a hidden positive potential many Jewish leaders and Israel advocates have discovered.

With the click of a button, Jews are using the same thing that is hurting them to pull together and fight propaganda on the internet.

“The most important war to win is the media war,” Kravitz said. “I have all the faith in the world, and then some, that Israel can pull through this.”



# Schrager on the big screen

## Teacher stays on staff oceans away

by Avi Baynash

As the second period bell rings, 17 eager-to-learn girls rush into Room 901. When they arrive, something looks different. There is no teacher standing at the front of the room. Rather, Judaics teacher Naomi Schrager’s face appears on the Smartboard screen, and class begins. This marks a new age in school history; students now learn from an instructor 6900 miles away, at the comfort of their desks.

After Schrager announced her decision to move to Israel in the fall of 2014, the administration decided to keep

Schrager teaching through a webcam class. It felt natural to sustain this connection between Schrager and Yavneh’s Matmidot Advanced Track class.

While supportive of their teacher’s move, students expressed concern that they would be unable to continue learning from their role model. However, this class addresses these worries while allowing them to develop morally.

“We all love Mrs. Schrager, and when she announced that she would move to Israel, we searched for a way to maintain a connection with her,” Leonor Attar [11] said. “I am happy that we found one.”

On Friday, while Schrager enjoys Shabbat with her family, Principal Rabbi Maury Grebenau and the girls learn selections from the Twelve Minor Prophets. With Schrager, the group explores the Book of Numbers. Students enjoy discussing and exploring different commentaries that ex-

pand on the morals taught by the Torah.

“I enjoy reading Hebrew and deciphering the meaning,” Sarah Wilensky [11] said. “Learning from the past mistakes of our ancestors is enlightening.”

The group is aided by Bonim B’Yachad, an online education service group that provides software and technological assistance for online courses. In order for the technology to function correctly, Bonim B’Yachad employees set up all of the necessary equipment at Mrs. Schrager’s house in Ramat Beit Shemesh.

“Using the platform is really very helpful,” Grebenau said. “Instead of trying to start from scratch, we are working with somebody who is doing this in 20 different schools in America.”

Although the class has enjoyed their studies, they have struggled with technical difficulties. Once, during partner

learning, the system descended into a noisy chaos. Students’ faces appeared on the screen when they tried to communicate while their voices echoed with distortion. Additionally, the internet signal at Schrager’s house often crashes, resulting in computer freezes and disconnected calls. Shared documents have proved problematic as well, often appearing in poor resolution.

Technological barriers have also hindered class involvement. Sometimes Schrager has difficulty seeing raised hands through the camera, or the video freezes, causing portions of a question or answer to break up and interrupt class flow.

“While I love seeing Mrs. Schrager every day, I take my learning very seriously. It’s hard to concentrate when Mrs. Schrager is trying to get the class’s attention through the video screen but it freezes mid-sentence,” Megan Lacritz [11]

explained. “We then have no direction of what to learn or how to proceed, and the class can get a little out of control.”

In the trial phase of Schrager’s class, American history teacher Mordechai Rees proctored and monitored classroom function. He worked to fix technological issues to the best of his ability and to quiet the class when dropped calls and other obstacles interrupted lessons.

In spite of these problems, students have enjoyed many facets of the online curriculum.

“The online platform allows us all to collaborate and share notes via group docs,” said Attar. “It keeps us on the same page.”

While the class isn’t free of certain difficulties, the Matmidot are proud to be marking a new era for Yavneh and look forward to learning with Schrager every day.