

A day at the Leadership Yeshiva Academy.

Your alarm clock flashes 6:40 as you slap the off button; ending the screeching buzz that has woken you up way too early, way too many times. Rays of sunlight stream in through your window as the sun creeps over the horizon. You hear the crows of the roosters and the sound of your roommate exercising his vocal cords as he simultaneously stretches and rolls his feet off the bed and onto the floor. It's a Sunday morning at LYA in the Golan Heights, and you have twenty minutes until *Shacharit*. Still in your pajamas, you slip on some sandals and slowly make your way out of your room, noticeably dragging along the extra weight you put on from your Shabbat meals and last night's *Melava Malka*, in addition to your aching shoulders which are still sore from Thursday's stretcher run. You pass the bathroom, where someone else is apparently already taking a shower, and head to the kitchen sink to brush your teeth; sliding your feet on the sparkling clean floor that you washed right before Shabbat. After you finish getting dressed you step outside and breathe in the fresh smell of the Moshav. You launch yourself onto your bike and head out to the Beit Midrash.

You ride past rows of houses, and see lots of little children scurrying around and being shewed into their carpools by their parents as the LYA sign fades into the distance over your shoulder. A minute later you jump off your bike, scamper up a few steps, and thrust open the Beit Midrash door to see people finishing up their pre-Shacharit chavrutot. Others are already putting on their tephilin, as the clock hands are pointing toward 6:55, and tephila is about to start.

After *Shacharit*, students disappear out the door, and one by one, hop onto their bikes and proceed to the cafeteria. Before you ride back for breakfast, you say goodbye to some of last years m-16 toting alumni who stayed for the weekend, but have to get back to their army bases. In the cafeteria, scrambled eggs, bread, humus, milk, cheese, and vegetables lay nicely assorted on the tables. The toranim, which are the students whose turn it is to cook breakfast and be in charge of cleaning up, are finishing up making the rest of the eggs, as they already went to the 6:15 minyan with the Moshav. You then finish up your breakfast, wash your dish, glass, and silverware, and head back to your room, knowing that the toranim will clean up the rest. It's now 8:30 and class starts in an hour. Most of the other students are already in the Beit Midrash learning,

Your watch reads 9:10, and your instincts are telling you that anything but Shoko B'sakit and a yogurt before class just won't cut it. So, you routinely leap back on your bike, and set course for the makolet. You pass the Beit Midrash where bikes are starting to accumulate, and then the cow stables, where the smell of the cows translates into you speeding past the stables and into the makolet parking lot. You open the door to the accustomed site of the cashier waving to you, and you make your way to the refrigerated section where you scoop up a bag of chocolate milk and a yogurt and head to the checkout. It turns out that your adopted family is in front of you in line, and they pressure you to just throw your stuff in with theirs. You kindly reject their generosity, but accept their offer for Friday night dinner in two weeks. After you add your groceries to your tab you ride back to the Beit Midrash.

Your watch beeps as the digits shuffle into 10:00, and you close your Gemorah as your first chavruta ends, and a class in Hashkafa with Rabbi Spitz is getting ready to begin. You and your chavruta make plans to continue at the same time tomorrow, as he goes over to his Halacha shiur, and you get ready to learn all the important things your Rabbis in high school forgot to teach you.

Before you blink its already noon, and Rabbi Spitz concludes his shiur as all the jaw-dropped students congregated around the table attempt to take in what they just heard. Your Rosh Mechina, Rav Erez, then proceeds to gather everyone together for a class in Tanach, which like the previous class, ticks away all too quickly.

While everyone is still in the Beit Midrash, you daven Mincha, and then bike back to the main campus for lunch. You walk into the cafeteria to find the toranim already serving schnitzel and French fries, so you grab a clean plate and silverware, and get in line. After lunch comes to an end, you, a bunch of the other guys, and the staff, head to the basketball court. You play some ball for a bit, but it's already 3:00 now and you have physical training in an hour, so you save energy whatever energy you have left.

As 4:00 approaches, everyone is already on the front lawn stretching for *madras*, which is the physical training they do in the army. Expectedly, a familiar white jeep pulls up as all conversation comes to a halt, and out jumps Avi Ben-David, giving out his first directions before he even steps foot onto the ground.

Almost an hour rolls past, and by now, you are gasping for your breath, barely finding the strength to lift your water bottle up to their mouth as you waddle back to your house. You then wash up and get ready for Ulpan which starts at 6:00.

As Ulpan starts, you scamper down the steps of the bomb shelter to find a class full of students already noshing on the cookies that Nomi baked for the class. You claim one of the last ones as you pull up a chair and open up your notebook. By the end of the class you feel you already climbed Hebrew level, but Ulpan is just a small part of your Hebrew language learning. You speak to all of your teachers and madrichim in Hebrew, and you are confident that you will be fluent by the end of the year.

Everyone then goes back to the cafeteria to daven Maariv and eat a dinner which turns out to be pizza. At 8:30, you usually have krav maga (combat fighting), a leadership or navigation class, or a shiur, but you have received instructions from the upper echelons of the mechina to meet in the bomb shelter with dark clothing and good shoes. These directives mean only one thing: there is going to be a terrorist scenario mission.

Everyone finds their darkest clothing; some people going so far as to wear their ski masks, and others even camouflaging their faces with mud. When the last people stroll into the bomb shelter, Alon Moreshet, the director of Mechinat Avnei Eitan, starts describing the situation. He pulls out a detailed map of the Moshav and explains how the "terrorists" are hiding in a cabin in the forest, and picks you as the commander to devise a plan, implement it, and see to it that the terrorist are captured without any of you or your men being discovered.

After a couple hours of abusing the push-to-talk feature of your cell phone, crawling through fields of thorns, and sneaking around roads heavily guard by the staff, you and a



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group of your men storm the scene as the "terrorists" exit the house. You pin them to the ground as backup arrives, and a successful mission puts a great end to your day.

You head back to your room exhausted, and after you shower you flop yourself onto your bed. You have are supposedly going on really cool hike tomorrow after volunteer work at a kibbutz, so you try to get a good night's sleep. In addition, on Tuesday the mechina is going down to Ariel College for the rest of the week to take a couple courses in Middle East studies which should be really interesting. Ariel is giving you a year of credits from your studies at the mechina, and when you go to college you can apply as a transfer student, which will give you the opportunity to get into some colleges you might not have normally been able to get into. So with that, you fall asleep exciting to wake up in the morning.

Aharon Fish Atlanta – 2006/7