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Legacy of the “Jewish Jordan”
Interview with Tamir Goodman

Tamir Goodman, an Orthodox Jew from Maryland, made a name for himself as an incredibly talented basketball player, was interviewed by Sports Illustrated and numerous other prestigious media outlets, and earned the nickname, “Jewish Jordan.”

Tamir Goodman first got into basketball when his older brother took him to the gym when he was a little kid. It was a match made in heaven and he’s been obsessed with the sport ever since. Tamir feels incredibly blessed that he lived out his dream of playing basketball. He played at every level up through the highest level of college basketball, always wearing his kippah, keeping Shabbat and kosher, and making a kiddush Hashem every time he came onto the court.

Tamir’s year at Yeshiva Schools in ninth grade provided him with a strong spiritual foundation and grounded him in chassidus. He learned about combining the physical with the spiritual to make the world a dwelling place for Hashem – each and every person in his or her own way – with their specific talents, blessings, and hobbies. “For me, that was basketball,” he said. Yeshiva gave him the conviction that he must use his athletic talents to serve Hashem in every way

possible. An informal team at Yeshiva used to play against other high school teams, and he remembers going to the game with his teammates, all of them in high spirits, singing Jewish songs on the bus. “We were able to infuse that Jewish pride with basketball even in ninth grade at Yeshiva,” he said. The Yeshiva experience “left a very positive, lasting impression on me for the rest of my life.”

Before ninth grade, Tamir played varsity basketball in middle school. Everyone kept telling him that the idea of professional basketball was out of his grasp, and it would be better to immerse himself in a

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Yeshiva environment. But after he came to Pittsburgh, he said he realized that Hashem didn't want him to ignore his talents and that gave him the confidence to pursue his basketball dreams. "Every rabbi that I spoke to understood me. I think they understood where I was coming from and that was very much encouraging for me." He added that



they all recognized his unique mission. "That is what chassidus is all about, you know – helping another person reach their potential in their service of Hashem."

Tamir took the inspiration gained at Yeshiva Schools – the connections he made with teachers and friends – and kept those feelings close throughout his entire basketball career. He even returned to Pittsburgh a couple times since ninth grade: once when he was invited to play in an elite basketball program at Robert Morris University, and again a couple of years ago to speak to the mesivta.

One quality that Tamir feels is extremely important to pass on to future generations is resilience, which gives people the confidence to use their talents for a higher purpose. "No matter

what comes along the way, no matter how many times you get knocked down, no matter what happens, if you feel like Hashem wants you to do it, you have to be resilient and make that happen."

At one point in high school, Tamir received over 700 media requests in a week. How did Tamir deal with all the media attention? It was intense and overwhelming at times. "I played for Hashem and the Jewish people so that helped me with the media – because it wasn't about me, the media was about something bigger than me, so it allowed me to stay on my path." Tamir's wife Judy had a similar story; she was an incredible athlete who gave up a scholarship because she wouldn't play on Shabbos. The challenges he faced became easier to deal with after Tamir got married. "The way she saw everything helped me handle even the bigger challenges, with my injury even, and everything else."

It's a rare occasion when Tamir meets another young individual with the necessary drive and passion for a sports career. But when he does, he will



do everything he can to help the person get there. "I think we're seeing it more



and more, more than ever actually, that whatever field people are in, they're able to unite it with Hashem, and make a kiddush Hashem," Tamir said. "Sometimes with Judaism, people have the wrong impression that it takes you away from your dreams. But the truth is – what I've learned – is it aligns you with your dreams and shows you how to get there."

Tamir eventually stopped playing basketball due to a serious injury. He went on to write a book about his experiences and took on a number of projects, such as opening sports programs for youth, developing products such as Sport Strings Tzitzit, and Zone190. Zone190 helps players improve their basketball skills and has earned praise from basketball coaches and schools all over the country, at every level of basketball. Tamir travels often to give live demonstrations and feels that Zone190 has given him another opportunity to make a kiddush Hashem on the basketball court.

My Rebbi by Rabbi Mordy Rudolph, Class of 2000

As a young boy, particularly having become frum at an early age, there were some things that took a little getting used to. One example is, having "become Chabad" as quickly as we became frum, learning the difference between the Rebbe (eh) and a rebbi (ee). This was made particularly confusing as "The Rebbe" was an iconic figure to me from almost as early as I can remember, but the concept of a rebbi did not enter my life until I was in about 4th or 5th grade.

Even still, the Rebbe was a perfect figure in my eyes, while some rebbis, as with any person of any profession, could

be better than others. As a young, impressionable boy, I would say that there was one rebbi who truly blurred the lines between these two terms as much as I believe possible. This rebbi was Rabbi Nadoff, a"l.

Rabbi Nadoff was a great teacher, but it was far more than his teaching ability that made him special. Rabbi Nadoff was respectable, but it wasn't just his impression of always being well-dressed and put together in such a way that demanded honor.

Rabbi Nadoff was a rebbi. We feared him and we loved



taught us (see my previous note about our class; not sure if it's by coincidence), the knowledge that he was with us in this world meant a great deal. Having heard the news this morning, there was a lump in my throat and an emptiness in my heart at the same time. We lost a special man. We lost a Talmid Chacham. We lost a kind-hearted individual and a father far too young. But to me, I lost my rebbi.

May his wife, siblings and children (v'talmidim heim kabanim) be comforted among all mourners of Zion and Jerusalem, until we are all comforted with the coming of Moshiach speedily in our days.

Rabbi Mordy Rudolph is co-director of The Friendship Circle in Pittsburgh.

him. We laughed with him but would never even consider disrespecting him (quite a feat, I may add, as our 8th grade class was pretty legendary, and not for the best reasons). He was regal. He was handsome. He was smart. He was witty. He was funny. And I loved going to his house on Wednesdays when Aharon Tzvi would invite me for ping pong, some games on their (then high-tech) Packard Bell computer, and pizza dinner.

It was a special home. It was the home of my rebbi. Such an authoritative figure and yet such a beautiful home. It was the classic home full of Torah and Mitzvos. It was just a practical example for me, as he was personally, of what a proper Jewish home and family should look like.

Rabbi Nadoff was my rebbi. When my son listens to Country Yossi and plays the song, "Rebbi," it was, is, and always will be Rabbi Nadoff whose face comes to mind when I hear it. Rabbi Nadoff who didn't just teach us Gemara, he taught us how to learn and he lived it. He didn't just teach us, he lived by example and showed us what to do.

"Someday when we're older and much wiser, we'll realize how much we don't know. We'll look and cry up to Shamayim, 'Oh Rebbi, I miss you so!'"

While I can't say I was specifically close with Rabbi Nadoff

in recent years, and especially as he moved to Monsey the year after he

About Rabbi Nadoff



Rabbi Chanina Nadoff ob"m, was born in Pittsburgh to Rabbi & Mrs. Benyamin and Miriam Nadoff. He attended Yeshiva Schools as a child, and went away for high school with his brothers to Yeshiva in Philadelphia. He was at the top of his class but always remained humble and unassuming.

His teaching career lasted most of his life, and he had many students – Rabbi Nadoff taught in Stamford, Connecticut; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Monsey, New York. His students all praise his teaching abilities and said that he could take lofty, complicated concepts and explain them in a practical, clear way. Rabbi Nadoff battled cancer for the last five years of his life, and passed away shortly before Pesach at the age of 60. His illness didn't shake him; he always remained calm and in control of his emotions, both in sickness and in health. He is survived by his wife Chaya and nine children – eight sons and one daughter, a number of grandchildren, three brothers and three sisters.

Rabbi Nadoff was a calm, regal individual, and extremely knowledgeable in many areas of Torah. He was sweet, humble, cared deeply about others, and had a witty sense of humor. He was a wonderful husband, father, and teacher. He was respected and beloved by all who knew him, and is deeply missed.

An American in Rostov

Interview with Kaila (Estrin) Danzinger, Class of 2001



Rostov, he and his siblings have plenty of friends.

The Russian culture took some getting used to. Kaila didn't appreciate when people (both friend and stranger) walked over to her stroller to tuck a blanket around her toddler, insisting that the baby wasn't bundled enough and would catch cold, a gesture which showed her that

To most people, Rostov-on-Don, Russia is known as the resting place of the Rebbe Rashab. Therefore, it's a great place to visit while attending seminary or Yeshiva. But for Chaim and Kaila (née Estrin) Danzinger, it's their home.

Kaila, a native Pittsburgher and Yeshiva Schools graduate – class of 2001, never dreamed that she would someday find herself on shlichus in Russia. But when her husband was offered the position six years ago, she readily agreed. At the time, their son Mendel was a toddler with no voice in their decision to move. Now the oldest of four children, he expresses mixed feelings about his family's shlichus. On one hand, he is proud and feels privileged to live in this city revered by Lubavitchers. He feels a strong connection to the Rebbe Rashab, who moved from Lubavitch to Rostov in 1915 to escape the Bolsheviks in World War I (and later was buried there). But Mendel misses America. The two-hour trip to Moscow, ten-hour flight to New York, and additional hours it takes to get to his grandparents in Pittsburgh or Toronto, make it hard for him to live so far away from family. He doesn't complain too much, however, because thanks to the Or Avner Day School in

interfering with parenting is an accepted practice in Russia. Kaila's children have a hard time finding cold drinking water in Russia outside of their own home, because Russians believe that ingesting cold water causes sickness. Cold drinking water may not be available, but running water is not always accessible either when the city inexplicably turns it off for "maintenance purposes" every so often. Kaila didn't always understand the appeal of drinking parties, but she noticed that people build a sense of camaraderie and friendship by drinking with their friends and bestowing good wishes and blessings upon each other. She believes that Chassidic farbrengens have inspired this type of gathering and has developed an appreciation for the dancing, singing and playful matchmaking of their children by community members.

Chaim, Kaila's husband, is the rabbi of the Rostov Community shul. It is a beautiful structure, built in 1872 by Jewish Cantonist soldiers who had been drafted for the Czar's army. Every Shabbos about 100 community members attend, including middle aged professionals, families from the day school, and college students for

prayers and a sit-down kiddush. As many as 300-400 people attend the shul for holidays such as Purim, Pesach and other major yomim tovim.

Before the Danzingers settled in Rostov, there wasn't much going on for the Jewish college students. But after putting a lot of their focus and energy on strengthening this demographic, through special youth programs and making personal connections, they have seen a very big growth in attendance. Just over a year ago they built a beautiful new youth lounge on the top floor of their shul for the young people to gather for programs, Shabbos meals, and even birthday parties. In addition, Chaim has been one of the first to pioneer a special program for all Russian communities called Euro STARS, where college students gather every Sunday to enjoy a variety of classes and events. Students who attend the youth programs for a year are rewarded with an all-expenses paid trip to tour Jewish sites in Europe (this year the group is traveling to Italy, Slovakia and Poland). The students join several other youth clubs from all over Russia for this exciting, unforgettable trip. The Danzingers have about 60-70 Euro STARS members, and their group is one of the largest youth clubs in Russia. Last year the students returned from the trip so inspired to make Yiddishkeit a priority, that several of the boys decided to have brissim done as soon as they got back to Rostov.

Kaila enjoys getting together with the girls from youth club for Thursday night sessions to make challah and prepare Shabbos dishes, which have become unofficial cooking classes. While waiting for the food to finish baking and cooking, they engage in learning about Jewish topics that are of particular interest to these girls: women's issues such as tznius, shomer negiya, yichud, marriage, and more.

Every Tuesday, Kaila teaches a parsha & halacha class for women of all ages in the community, and she has seen tremendous spiritual growth as a direct result. Many women have come

back to tell her that after learning about a particular subject, such as kashrus or Shabbos, they have taken it to heart and started observing it more at home. In the beginning, giving classes and speaking in front of a crowd was difficult, something Kaila never imagined herself doing, especially in a foreign language. At first she only felt comfortable speaking in Hebrew and someone would translate for her, but the more Kaila spoke the more she felt comfortable. Now that her Russian has improved, she gives all her classes in Russian, and it's become one of her favorite activities on shlichus.

Chabad of Rostov places special emphasis on the Rebbe Rashab's birthday and yartzeit. The Jewish community attends special lectures with guest speakers and usually farbrengen in the Rebbe Rashab's house. On these days the community gathers at the Rashab's ohel to daven together, as do students in the Or Avner day school.

The community takes care of each other. The socio-economic differences are evident and there are clear distinctions as to who is comfortable and who is lacking, so the Rostov Jewish community helps in every way possible by offering social services, food packages and hot meals to those in need on a daily basis.

Kosher food was extremely hard to get before the Danzingers moved to Rostov, but they recently opened a beautiful kosher store

inside the shul and some local grocery stores have started to carry kosher products from Europe and Israel. They get kosher shipments from Moscow, which they rely on for most of their meat and chicken. Chaim and Kaila have seen an increase in the number of Rostov Jews keeping kosher now that food has become much more accessible.

The Danzingers' biggest event for the year is their annual Chanukah concert. About 1,200 people attend, and for a crowd that size they hold it in Rostov's largest



concert hall. They bring an Israeli or Russian-Israeli singer from Israel, and provide musical accompaniment from the local Russian orchestra. It's a big deal for native Rostov Jews to partake in such a public display of Jewish pride, because it used to be very difficult to celebrate their Judaism openly.

Just two years ago, the Danzingers initiated a car menorah parade on Chanukah, something

very revolutionary to Russian Jews, who are accustomed to hiding their Judaism, rather than publicizing it.

So far the Danzingers have thankfully only had very positive experiences associated with this parade, and good feedback from the local Jews who take part in it and from those who witness it.

Their latest project is quite exciting: they are opening a brand-new overnight camp for children in Rostov and from neighboring towns. The camp will accept post-seminary girls as counselors, and they already have a staff group confirmed for the summer (Chaim and Kaila had already reserved a campsite in Crimea, Ukraine, but because of all the political unrest, they are working to find a location closer to home). The camp will have separate divisions for boys and girls, and they are expecting 100-150 kids. Camp tuition will be subsidized for an extremely affordable and fun experience.

"...Even though life can be difficult living so far away in a foreign country," Kaila said, "We feel very fortunate to be a part of the spiritual growth of a city that was almost destroyed in the Holocaust but is now once again bursting with Jewish life and a new generation of children who love Torah and mitzvos."

Mrs. Kaila Danzinger, shlichua, is currently serving the Jewish community in Rostov-on-Don, Russia together with her husband Chaim and four children.



Once Upon a Yeshiva Girl

by Chana (Zeidman) Cohen, Class of 2001

When I turned 12, I made two life-changing decisions: I committed myself to dress tzniusly, and to attend a Jewish girls' high school. These resolutions were a big deal, coming from a young girl in Raleigh, North Carolina. The day after my bas mitzvah, I wore only long-sleeved shirts and ankle-length skirts. The other part of my bas mitzvah hachlata – finding the right school – would take a little more time.



By the following year, my parents and I had whittled the list of possible schools down to two: a small start-up school in Richmond, Virginia, or Yeshiva Schools of Pittsburgh. I visited both, and found that there were pros and cons of each place. Richmond was closer to home, which meant visits more often. It was also still in the “ACC,” the college basketball conference of my favorite team, Duke. I might be able to catch the games on the radio! The cons were that it was a new school with very few students, which meant it was one class of a bunch of different aged girls. What if I didn't find a friend from among that small group? Did I want to learn in a basement all day? Oh, I did forget to mention a very big pro – as they were trying to build up the school and attract students, they were offering one year of free tuition!

But then there was the other choice – Pittsburgh. I went to visit the school and sat in on one English

class given by Mrs. Naiditch. Though I felt a tad bit out of place in my hot pink sweater, (the Richmond girls didn't have a uniform like Yeshiva girls did), I did feel very welcome by the girls in that class. That class which would become my class.

I went over the pros of Yeshiva in my mind (and on paper too): The girls in the class I sat in on were friendly. The school building looked clean and modern. The staff members I met were kind. The school was a Lubavitch school (unlike Richmond) and that was the derech I felt more comfortable with at the time, since it was because of Rabbi Pinney and Helana Herman, the Rebbe's shluchim in Raleigh, North Carolina, that I started on my path to becoming frum in the first place. It also didn't hurt that Rabbi Herman and some dear camp counselors through the years all hailed from Pittsburgh! After giving it some thought, I chose Yeshiva and enrolled for my 9th grade year. September came and I dove into the new world I had so wanted. I quickly made many friends and worked to get myself up to speed in my Judaic studies.

When I came, I could barely read Rashi, and was put in the most beginner Chumash level, taught with utmost patience by Mrs. Nadoff a”h. I was grateful to the school for being so accommodating. I took the English parsha and midei chodesh tests. I was allowed to use a Navi with English translation (out of school, my aforementioned addiction to Duke basketball was also accommodated, but I'll keep the



whos and whats to myself.)

Four years of high school quickly passed, filled with classes, Shabbatons, Rosh Chodesh brunches, mincha announcements, two productions, and countless events and celebrations. After starting off in the “lowest” Chumash level, I slowly moved up through the other groups until the middle of eleventh grade when I reached the top – Mrs. Shollar's group. This ascending through the groups is something I'm still proud of. It's a reminder that when you surround yourself with caring and gifted teachers, you will climb. You will succeed.

B”H, I am now married, with a little Mushky and a little Mendy to boot. I am a graphic designer, doing work for Tzivov Hashem. My Pittsburgh classmates are some of my closest and most amazing friends.

My time at Yeshiva shaped me and paved my path for life. For that, I am ever grateful.

Mrs. Chana Cohen is a graphic designer living in Bay Harbor Islands, Florida with her husband and two children.

The Yeshiva



CHARIDY Campaign

As principal and teacher at Yeshiva, Mrs. Keny Deren, a"h, dedicated her life to giving students the most nurturing, highest quality education possible. After her recent passing, we decided to start a scholarship fund in her honor and memory. We used Charidy.com as a platform to jumpstart this effort and, in turn, earned a plethora of positive feedback from Yeshiva alumni and current Yeshiva families, as well as from Mrs. Deren's family and friends. The response to our cause was absolutely overwhelming! As a result, we decided to try launching a second campaign, exceeding our original goal of \$40,000 to a total of \$60,000.

Your support during the Charidy campaign was incredible and so unbelievably appreciated. It has empowered Yeshiva to fulfill Mrs. Deren's legacy by funding a department in our school devoted exclusively to professional development. This department will, among other things, support the development of new and exciting curricula and sponsor ongoing teacher training in all areas. We feel there is no better way to honor such a magnificent mentor and friend as Mrs. Deren, and we thank you for the instrumental part you all played in helping us strengthen our school.



The screenshot shows the Charidy website interface for the 'Yeshiva Schools' campaign. At the top, there is a search bar, 'About' and 'FAQ' links, and 'SIGN UP' and 'LOG IN' buttons. The main header reads 'YESHIVA SCHOOLS'. Below this, there are three matchers: 'Yeshiva Schools' (OUR WATCHERS), 'In Memory of Mrs. Keny Deren' (Alumna Yochev Ben Rivka), and 'In Memory of Sosia Bas Rochel' (A GrassVal Community Member). A progress bar on the right shows a goal of \$40,000 with \$40,225 donated, marked as 'Success' and '100%'. Below the progress bar, it states 'Each cent you give multiplies x4' and 'LEARN HOW ABOUT MATCHING'. There are 'Share!' buttons for Facebook and Twitter. A 'Recent Donors' table lists Alexander Kapasky (\$1000) and Lewis Cohen (\$500). The bottom section is titled 'ABOUT THIS CAMPAIGN' and features three images of students in a classroom.



The screenshot shows the Charidy website interface for the 'Yeshiva Schools Second Campaign'. At the top, there is a search bar, 'About' and 'FAQ' links, and 'SIGN UP' and 'LOG IN' buttons. The main header reads 'YESHIVA SCHOOLS SECOND CAMPAIGN'. Below this, there are three matchers: 'Yeshiva Schools' (OUR WATCHERS), 'Shomo & Leva Jacobs', and 'Austrian Ben Lieb'. A progress bar on the right shows a goal of \$20,000 with \$20,737 donated, marked as 'Success' and '103%'. Below the progress bar, it states 'Each cent you give multiplies x4' and 'LEARN HOW ABOUT MATCHING'. There are 'Share!' buttons for Facebook and Twitter. A 'Recent Donors' table lists LAMARCA KAMINSKY (\$1000) and another donor (\$500). The bottom section is titled 'ABOUT THIS CAMPAIGN' and features three images of students in a classroom.



Yeshiva Schools

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Congratulations Class of 2014!



11th Grade Boys:

Baruch Bar-Nir
Jacob Katz
Yitzchok Lutsky
Chaim Dovid Merkur
Ari Rafkin
Yissachar Shollar
Levi Weiss

12th Grade Girls:

Chava Backman
Miriam Barber
Sasha Deren
Vichna Eisen
Brochie Ezagui
Cheli Greenberg
Yocheved Krasnjanski

Batsheva Leeds
Devorah Reisner
Fraidy Rosenblum
Katya Sheftel
Devorah Soblick

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