

INSIDE YESHIVAT OR CHAIM

2023-2024 • 5784



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Yeshivat Or Chaim is to inculcate within our students an appreciation for and a commitment to Torah observance and values. Yeshivat Or Chaim, founded in 1973, was established in Toronto with several specific goals in mind:

- To create a yeshiva environment where religiously committed Jewish boys will be able to grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, and religiously in a vibrant Jewish setting.
- To offer a dual curriculum of Judaic and General Studies that will arm our students
 with the methodological tools needed to become self-reliant in classical Jewish texts
 and give them a broad-based secular grounding in the classical world disciplines.
- To deepen and strengthen the centrality of Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael as a fundamental element of our Torah beliefs and to this end, to stress the importance of lashon hakodesh as a manner of achieving these goals.
- To encourage and fervently support the notion of our students continuing their Judaic studies at yeshivot in Eretz Yisrael and in other institutions of higher Jewish learning.



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Nachman Sokol '7' C Saul Koschitzky Eli Rubinstein I. Berl Nadler Naftali Winter Jeff Shumacher ('76) Steve Mayer Howard Wasserman

SCHOOL HISTORY

For five decades, Bnei Akiva Schools has been developing outstanding Bnei and Bnot Torah who are immersed in *Ahavat Yisrael*, *Derech Eretz*, and social responsibility towards the Jewish and secular communities in Canada and around the world.

Whether Yeshivat Or Chaim or Ulpanat Orot, the schools are places where boys and girls can grow intellectually, emotionally and religiously in a vibrant Jewish setting. In keeping with the maxim of the worldwide Bnei Akiva organization, *Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael* (the Nation of Israel living in the Land of Israel according to the Torah of Israel), Zionism is an integral part of the school's philosophy and is deeply rooted in the curriculum.

Back in the early 1970s, all this was just a dream. At the time, parents in Toronto's Religious Zionist community had just two options for their children entering high school: a co-ed Jewish high school comprised of students from varying backgrounds and levels of religious observance, or a traditional dormitory-style yeshiva for boys with Judaic studies taught in English.

Among those parents were Saul and Mira איל Koschitzky. With Saul's eldest son about to graduate elementary school, he discussed the idea of starting a high school based on Bnei Akiva principles with his neighbour Phil Schwartz, Nachman "Mr. Mizrachi" Sokol איל and Aron Frankel איל.

The old Torah V'Avodah building on Vaughan Road became the first home for the school. The founders hired Rabbi Yehuda Felix as Rosh Yeshiva and Dr. Sol Burack as Principal of General Studies.

"Our goal was not to create rabbis, but *baalei batim* who go to university, who stand on their own feet, and who have responsibility for Klal Yisrael," recalls Saul. "We wanted them to connect to Israel."

The next important step was fundraising. The Orfus family donated \$100,000 in memory of their patriarch Chaim Orfus – hence the name, Or Chaim – and the other founding members jointly matched the donation. Once the school established

itself as a vital institution within the community, important funding came from UJA.

Yeshivat Or Chaim officially opened in September 1973 with 29 students in Grades 10, 11 and 12. Two years later, the boys and their teachers headed north to the school's current location on Almore Avenue. In 1993, the community celebrated the addition of a new Beit Midrash with a Hachnasat Sefer Torah and the building was renamed the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Torah Centre to honour Saul and Henry's parents. Recent additions include a state-of-the-art gym built in 2006 featuring a regulation-sized basketball court, a new multi-purpose room and a remodelled twenty-first century science lab. In 2017, a new Sephardic Beit Midrash was dedicated. A Fitness Centre was added in 2019.

But what about the girls? Shortly after Yeshivat Or Chaim opened its doors, Phil Schwartz began yearning for a similar version to accommodate his eldest daughter, Adrienne. So did Aron Frankel, whose daughter Esty was also about to enter high school.

"I couldn't envision my sons getting a Religious Zionist education while my daughters would have to go to a high school where secular studies were an afterthought," says Phil. "That's why Aron and I began pushing for a girls' school similar to Or Chaim's model."

Ulpanat Orot opened its doors in September 1974 in a house in Thornhill with 23 girls enrolled in grades 10 and 11. The girls — many of them now parents and grandparents — still laugh about davening in the living room and attending classes in the master bedroom with its sunken bathtub. Two years later, the girls moved to the school's current location on Canyon Avenue. In 1980, a new wing was built, featuring additional classrooms and a gym. Recently, the science lab has been remodelled, as has the Beit Midrash.

As word spread of Toronto's new Religious Zionist high school, parents and students from across Canada and the United States started to take notice of the schools' important role beyond

the Toronto community. Bnei Akiva Schools is a private school, inspected by the Ontario Ministry of Education, and affiliated with UJA Federation's Centre for Jewish Education. Combined enrolment currently stands at over 285 students, including children of early graduating classes.

After graduating Bnei Akiva Schools, our over 2,500 graduates have continued to thrive. Almost all graduates choose to spend a year or more studying in Israel after high school, with most attending yeshiva or seminary to solidify the Jewish education they received in Toronto. Some of these students enlist in the Israel Defense Forces or volunteer for Sherut Leumi where they devote a year or more of service to *Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael*.

All of our graduates apply to university or college and are accepted into one of their top choices. Graduates are successfully employed as rabbis, teachers, accountants, architects, doctors, entrepreneurs, fitness trainers, journalists, lawyers, nurses, paramedics, real estate agents, social workers, and a host of other professions. One in four graduates – about 600 students – have made aliyah.

Rabbi Dr. Seth Grauer holds the role of Rosh Yeshiva and Head of School. Rabbi Grauer joined our schools after over a decade as a distinguished educator in New York. He previously served as teacher and Rav at Ramaz Upper School, Assistant Principal at Yeshiva University High School for Girls and Associate Rabbi at the prestigious Fifth Avenue Synagogue.

"Bnei Akiva Schools has a rich tradition of Roshei Yeshiva in whose footsteps I now have the honour of following," says

Rabbi Grauer. "The buildings are filled with excellent, hard-working educators who use their unique talents and strengths to excite and enrich their students daily. The rabbanim and Judaic Studies faculty strive to find new ways to encourage positive religious growth towards living lives of learning Torah and observance of mitzvot, with a strong emphasis and unwavering commitment to our founding principles of instilling within our students a love for Religious Zionism."

Rabbi Grauer works with his team of administrators and teachers with a keen focus on professionalism, current educational practices and academic excellence, while simultaneously ensuring that Bnei Akiva Schools maintains its warm and welcoming environment.

Though the founders originally thought small, they are extremely proud of how far the school has come and are delighted that the next generation of parents and students are committed to taking Bnei Akiva Schools from strength to strength.

"The school has achieved everything we dreamed about." says Saul. "Our graduates have remained dati, excelled at university, succeeded in their professions, and many have made aliyah. Bnei Akiva Schools has strengthened Modern Orthodoxy in Toronto. Though it wasn't easy getting a new school off the ground 50 years ago, one look at our graduates and there is no doubt that we made the right decision. Henry, Phil and I are so very proud of them, and I know that Aron "T" and Nachman "T" would feel the same."



ADMINISTRATION



RABBI DR. SETH N. GRAUER
Rosh Yeshiya & Head of School

Rabbi Seth Grauer has been the Rosh Yeshiva and Head of School since 2013. Since joining Bnei Akiva Schools, Rabbi Grauer has overseen increased enrollment, significant building improvements, the creation of a mega endowment, and the growth of our educational offerings and religious programming. He also serves as the Honourary President of Mizrachi Canada. Rabbi Grauer previously served as the Assistant Principal at Yeshiva University High School for Girls ("Central") in New York and was a leading educator for nine years at Ramaz Upper School in Manhattan. Rabbi Grauer worked with teenagers at various summer camps for eight years, and served for five years as the Associate Rabbi at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan. Rabbi Grauer studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel for two years, served as their Director of Alumni Affairs for nearly five years, is a member of their Board of Directors and is the current Chair of their Rabbinic Committee. He was honoured as their Alumnus of the Year in 2010. Rabbi Grauer received his B.A. in History (honours) from Yeshiva University, his semicha from Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) of Yeshiva University, and his doctorate in Education from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University. He also earned a J.D. from Fordham Law School and served as editor of the Environmental Law Journal, Rabbi Grauer was a Rabbinic Court Intern at the Beth Din of America and a Legal Intern at the New York State Supreme Court and the New York State Office of the Attorney General. He belongs to the inaugural cohort of Sacks Scholars, a premier Jewish educational and leadership initiative utilizing the teachings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l to address emerging challenges facing the Jewish world and society as a whole. Rabbi Grauer and his wife Leba have four children: Yonina ('21), Yosef ('23), Gila (Grade 10) and JJ (Grade 1 at Netivot).



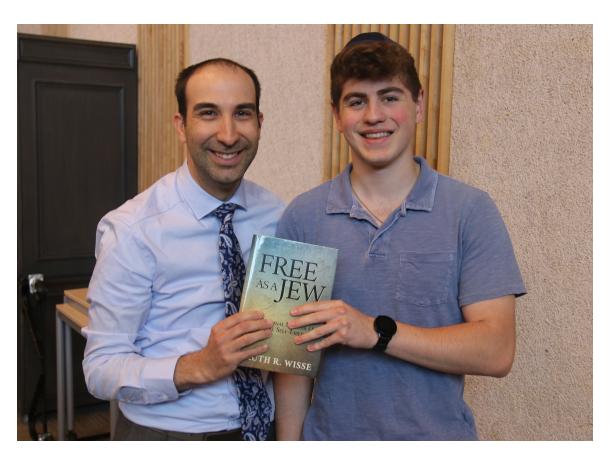
MR. HILLEL RAPP *Principal*

Mr. Hillel Rapp joined the Bnei Akiva Schools administration in 2016 with an extensive background in both Jewish education and finance. Previously in education, Mr. Rapp was the Dean of Students at Ramaz Upper School where he oversaw co-curricular programming featuring more than 80 after-school activities. He also designed curricula and taught courses in Economics, Business, History and Philosophy. In finance, Mr. Rapp managed business development and investor relations, specializing in hedge fund and private equity investments, at Dunbar Capital Management in New York City and Exigent Alternative Capital in Israel. Mr. Rapp holds a B.A. in Psychology from Yeshiva University where he also worked as a Project Manager for YU's Center for the Jewish Future. Mr. Rapp and his wife, Racheli (Meister '01), have three children, Jack, Keira and Aiden.



MR. JONATHAN PARKER Assistant Principal & Director of Education

Mr. Jonathan Parker was born in Buffalo, New York, and has been teaching in Toronto since 2003, when he began at Yeshivat Or Chaim and Ulpanat Orot as an English teacher. He has undergraduate degrees in English and History from S.U.N.Y. Binghamton, a Master's Degree in Teaching English from Boston University, and is a graduate of the Senior Educators Program at Hebrew University where he wrote his thesis on Tanakh education. After four years of teaching English at Bnei Akiva Schools, Mr. Parker taught Judaic Studies at Associated Hebrew Schools. Following that, he taught Social Sciences at TanenbaumCHAT and was the Dean of Students, in addition to being Advanced Placement Program coordinator. Mr. Parker received his Principal's Qualification from York University, and oversees Or Chaim's day-to-day operations, focusing on attendance, discipline and the smooth running of the school-wide systems. He also coaches the Junior Volleyball team and coordinates the Duke of Edinburgh program.





MR. GERALD LAZAR
Dean

Mr. Gerald Lazar has worked at Bnei Akiva Schools since 2007. He has taught a variety of courses including English, World History, Jewish History, Dramatic Arts and Law. Currently, he manages Yeshivat Or Chaim's academic guidance, admissions and student activities, and is also the head of the Arts/Technology department. Mr. Lazar has an Honours B.A. in History and Religious Studies, a B.Ed., and an M.A. in History. He also has a certificate from Yeshiva University's Lead course and has Guidance Specialist certification from Queen's University. Known for its welcoming environment, Mr. Lazar's office is often full of students working on multiple projects.



RABBI EDDIE SHOSTAK Menahel

Rabbi Eddie Shostak was born and raised in Montreal, and over the past 20+ years his communal involvement has spanned the spectrum of their Jewish community as rabbi, teacher, non-profit professional and school administrator. He most recently served as the K-11 School Rabbi of the Hebrew Academy in Montreal. In his new position at YOC, Rabbi Shostak embraces a role that will allow him to continue to serve as a dedicated mechanech and administrator. He looks forward to becoming a voice of Torah and life guidance for all YOC students. As Menahel, Rabbi Shostak oversees Or Chaim's entire Limudei Kodesh program, including shiurim, matmidim, mishmar, minyanim, extra learning initiatives, our rebbeim and rebbe shabbatonim.



MRS. MIRIAM KLEINDirector of Educational Support

Mrs. Miriam Klein has worked as a teacher and student support staff member for over 15 years. Prior to joining Bnei Akiva Schools, she worked in Netivot HaTorah Day School in various grades, both in General and Judaic Studies. Mrs. Klein received her degree in Education and Special Education from the University of Toronto and is an active member of the Ontario College of Teachers. She believes strongly in student support and ensuring the students can meet with success academically, socially and emotionally. Mrs. Klein works closely with the students, parents and faculty at Bnei Akiva Schools to ensure an inclusive environment for all types of learners.

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When I think of my time spent at Or Chaim, I remember the great times I shared with my friends, the close relationships I forged with my teachers, and the genuine learning opportunities that were open to me. Most of all, I remember a place that I looked forward to visiting every day and a setting where I felt at home.

GIDEON BLINICK ('12)

SHLICHIM AND SHLICHOT



KOBI FUCHS Shaliach

Originally from Petach Tikva, Kobi is a student at Herzog College, focusing on special education. Following high school, Kobi studied at the Hesder yeshiva in Shadmot Mechola, out of a desire to increase Torah in the land of Israel in general and in the Jordan Valley in particular. He has recently been involved in Bnei Akiva as a madrich. During his military service, Kobi served as a tank driver in the rank of a sergeant in the Armored Corps. He is extremely excited about coming to Canada and meeting the students of YOC.



RABBI AVISHAI KHARILKAR

Judaic Studies

Born and raised in Yavne, Israel, Rabbi Avishai Kharilkar has dedicated the past seven years to the field of education. He spent five years studying in Yeshivat Hameeiri, and Machon Meir in Jerusalem. He has his B.Ed from Lifshitz College and his M.Ed from Orot College in Education Managment and Administration. He subsequently assumed the role of a specialist teacher in Bat Yam. For the past three years, he has been fulfilling the role of a mechanech, guiding Grade 12 teens at risk in Sanhedria. Avishai's commitment to personal growth is evident in his recent accomplishments. In anticipation of his forthcoming shlichut, he successfully completed World Mizrachi's two-year Shalhevet program, and is actively engaged in its rabbinical semicha program, Musmachim. Beyond his profound dedication to the realm of education, Avishai finds joy in surfing, playing basketball, and spending quality time with his wife and daughters.



RABBI AVISHAI LAX

Judaic Studies

Rabbi Avishai Lax joins us on shlichut from Beit El, with his wife Esther and their four children. An enthusiastic educator and compelling lecturer, Rabbi Lax has taught Torah, Mathematics and English at yeshivot and high schools. He served in the IDF Rabbinate, received semicha from Yeshivat Beit El, and for the past several years, has been a fellow in Ohr Torah-Stone's Straus-Amiel Rabbinical Emissary Program. Rabbi Lax holds a B.A. in Education and Teaching Diploma, specializing in Mathematics and Talmud from Moreshet Ya'akov College, and looks forward to building relationships with the YOC family.



RABBI IDAN RAKOVSKY

Judaic Studies and Technology

Rabbi Idan Rakovsky was born in Israel and grew up in Montreal. He has first-hand experience in North American Jewish communities and synagogues, and has worked with children and teens in many youth movements. Rabbi Rakovsky served for four years as a commander in the IDF Intelligence Unit 8200. A graduate of Yeshivat Givat Shmuel and Yeshivat Ma'ale Gilboa, he strongly believes that Torah study must derive from an honest position, in which inherent human morality meets Darchah Shel Torah ("the path of Torah") and creates a meaningful discourse in the process. Rabbi Rakovsky and his wife Prielle lived in Kibbutz Massuot Yitzchak, located in southern Israel, before coming to Toronto, where he serves as Rabbinic Assistant at Shaarei Tefillah. After spending two years as an avreich at BMZD, Rabbi Rakovsky is excited to teach at BAS.



OREL SHEVACHShaliach

Orel Shevach grew up in Hashmonaim. Following high school, he studied in a mechina (pre-military preparatory school) and at Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim. During his IDF service he dealt with operational solutions for the commando fighters. He most recently served as a madrich for students in a yeshiva high school and mechina. Orel now studies education and hopes to work in informal education. He enjoys event production, guiding youth, community involvement and volunteering as a Magen David Adom medic. He looks forward to arriving in Toronto and getting to know Or Chaim's students!



RABBI BENTZI SHOR Judaic Studies

Rabbi Bentzi Shor joins us on shlichut from Ma'ale Adumim, with his wife Esther and their four children. For six years, he has been a fellow in the Manhigut Toranit Program, a joint venture of World Mizrachi and Eretz Hemdah, where he studied for and received semicha and advanced semicha from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. During his army service in the IDF, he served as a platoon sergeant in the Netzach Yehuda Battalion of the Kfir Infantry Brigade.



MRS. ESTHER SHOR
Judaic Studies

Originally from Geneva, Switzerland, Mrs. Esther Shor made aliyah together with her family when she was eleven years old. She has a B.Ed. in History and Tanach, and taught for seven years at the Amit Ma'ale Adumim High School. Mrs. Shor was a Madricha and later a Komonarit at her hometown Snif in Ramat Beit Shemesh, and served as Komonarit of Moshav Berchia Snif (near Ashkelon) for her Sherut Leumi. For the past six years, Mrs. Shor has been part of the World Mizrachi / Eretz Hemdah Manhigut Toranit Program, where she completed courses in preparation for the shlichut, including Hadrachat Kalot of the Puah Institute.



RABBI AZ THAU

Judaic Studies

Raised in West Hempstead, New York, Rabbi Avraham Zvi (AZ) Thau is a graduate of DRS Yeshiva High School. Post-high school Rabbi Thau studied at Yeshivat Hakotel where, after one year, he made aliyah and joined its Hesder program, serving in Shiryon (tank corps) of the IDF during Operation Protective Edge (Tzuk Eitan). While completing his studies at Hakotel, he served as Rosh Madrichim of the overseas students, Associate and Educational Director of the Hakotel Bergman Family Leadership Program, and Jerusalem Chapter Director of NCSY Israel. Rabbi Thau received his B.A. in Business and Management from Jerusalem College of Technology (Machon Lev) and his rabbinical ordination from World Mizrachi. He is excited to come to Toronto on Shlichut with his wife Hadassah and their children.

BUSINESS AND EDUCATIONAL OFFICES



MRS. ESTHER MENDLOWITZ *Manager, Business Administration*

Originally from New York, Mrs. Esther Mendlowitz moved to Toronto in July 2012 upon her marriage to a native Torontonian. Esther has a Bachelor of Science and a Master's of Business Administration. Her previous work experience was in the financial industry in insurance and financial management. Since June 2013, Mrs. Mendlowitz has served as the Manager of Business Administration at Bnei Akiva Schools. In that capacity, she manages the operations of the school, overseeing the business office, general operations, tuition and subsidy matters.



MRS. GEOULA OSIPOV
Controller

Mrs. Geoula Osipov graduated with honours from business schools both in Israel and in Canada. Bringing over twenty years of experience in the accounting field, she joined Bnei Akiva Schools' business office as controller in the spring of 2011. Mrs. Osipov lives in Thornhill with her husband, is the mother of two adult children, and is a proud grandmother of four!



MR. DANIEL STERNFELS *Operations Associate*

Daniel Sternfels is our Operations Associate responsible for maintenance, IT, and custodial services at Bnei Akiva Schools. Daniel has a B.Sc. (Honours) in Hotel Administration from Cornell University as well as an MBA. He brings to BAS an operations and management background in the hospitality, airline, and educational fields, having worked in Canada, the US, and Latin America. Since joining Bnei Akiva Schools, Daniel has overseen renovation, security, and lease-hold improvement projects, and chairs the government-mandated Joint Health and Safety Committee. Daniel's goal is to create and maintain a proactive, safe, and responsive environment where staff, faculty, and students can fulfill their roles effectively. He is married to Nancy and has two adult daughters and two grandchildren.



MRS. GABRIELLA GREEN
Administrative Assistant



MS. SHANI HALPERIN Administrative Assistant



MS. JULIE HO
Bookkeeper



MS. LIANA UZANI Bookkeeper

DEVELOPMENT OFFICE



RABBI GAVRY MANDEL

Manaaina Director and Judaic Studies

Rabbi Gavry Mandel studied at Aish HaTorah College of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem for five years. While there, he developed a very close relationship with its founder, Rabbi Noah Weinberg, of blessed memory. Rabbi Mandel has been involved in Jewish education for over ten years, working with a number of organizations. For three years, he served as a campus rabbi for the students of the University of Western Ontario, in London, Ontario. Rabbi Mandel was the Associate Director of NCSY Canada for five years. In that position, he managed a staff of 40, running programs across Canada which reached over 3,000 teens annually. Rabbi Mandel is also the author of the acclaimed *Judaism Unravelled*, published by Feldheim Publishers in 2016. Rabbi Mandel and his wife, Deena (a medical student at McMaster University), have three children, Yissy, Nava and David.



MS. RONIT BENDAYANDevelopment Associate, BMZD

Ms. Ronit Bendayan was born and raised in Montreal. She graduated from Beth Rivka Academy and upon graduation went to Midreshet Eshel Seminary in the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem. After her year in Seminary, Ronit enrolled into John Molson School of Business at Concordia University in Montreal and received her Bachelor of Finance in 2019. Upon obtaining her degree, she began a position at Canadian National Railway, until moving to Toronto to join her husband and settle in Thornhill's vibrant and flourishing Jewish community. Ronit has been working at Bnei Akiva Schools as a Development Associate since Summer, 2020, where her role includes assisting in managing donations and fundraisers, as well as managing dedications and pledges to Beit Midrash Zichron Dov.



MS. TAMARA COLODNYDevelopment Coordinator

Ms. Tamara Colodny Velichover joined the Development Office in 2016. With a keen attention to detail and a passion for coordinating special events, Tamara is excited to support the generous donors of Bnei Akiva Schools. Her role includes managing fundraising events such as the IKO Charity Golf Tournament, as well as processing donations and pledges. Prior to joining Bnei Akiva Schools, Tamara worked in marketing and public relations roles for 13 years. Tamara and her husband, Lior, live in Thornhill and have two children.



MRS. ILANA HEYMANN Development Associate

Mrs. Ilana Heymann joined BAS in September, 2020. A graduate of the Concurrent Education program at York University, Ilana holds a B.A. in Sociology and a B.Ed in Intermediate/Senior Education. She has qualifications in French, Social Sciences, Special Education and Junior Education and is an active member of Ontario College of Teachers. During her time at York, Ilana was actively involved in her campus Hillel and with OU-JLIC where she worked to strengthen the campus Jewish community through holiday events, chessed and community outreach. She was elected to represent the undergraduate students on the University Board of Governors and interacted with leaders from all parts of the York community. Ilana is very excited to bring her energy and experiences to the Bnei Akiva Schools family.



MR. COREY ISENBERG
Community Engagement Coordinator

Mr. Corey Isenberg holds an Honours B.A in Professional Communication and a minor in Public Relations from Toronto Metropolitan University. His work experience background consists of various roles in communications, social media, and event marketing. During his time at TMU, Corey was on the committee for Hillel TMU's inaugural Holocaust Education Week. Corey is excited to continue as Community Engagement Coordinator and to work with the Development Team on a variety of projects.



MRS. SOHEILA SABETI
Executive Assistant to Rabbi Grauer and Development Associate

Mrs. Soheila Sabeti is an educational administrator with 25 years of experience in the Jewish Day School system in Toronto. Mrs. Sabeti has held senior positions in Admissions, Marketing, Operations and Educational Management and worked in both Elementary and High School levels. She joined Bnei Akiva Schools as a Development Associate in 2018, working on community outreach projects and publications. Mrs. Sabeti holds a B.Sc. and an M.D. in Family Medicine. She is married with three adult children and two grandchildren.

FACILITIES STAFF



MR. MORRIS BRAND
Information Technology Manager



MR. STEVE HYSTEK *Building Maintenance*



MR. ALKET NICKA

Custodian



MS. LOSANA NICKA

Custodian

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In my four years at Or Chaim, it has developed from what originally was just a school to now – as cliché as it sounds – my second family. The bonds created with teachers, friends, and other students are things I will value for a lifetime and truly could never have been accomplished anywhere else. The atmosphere is always welcoming and inviting, and I am so incredibly proud to be part of the Or Chaim family.

HILLEL BRUMER (GRADE 12)

JUDAIC STUDIES FACULTY



RABBI JARED ANSTANDIG

Judaic Studies

Rabbi Jared Anstandig is from West Bloomfield, Michigan. He studied in Yeshivat Torat Shraga in Jerusalem for a year and a half, followed by Yeshiva College where he studied Psychology and Jewish Studies. Rabbi Anstandig completed rabbinical school at Yeshiva University, while also studying in YU's Marcos and Adina Katz Kollel. He earned a Master's Degree in Tanach from Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies (where he met his wife!). During his rabbinical training, Rabbi Anstandig held numerous rabbinic internships, and also served as an officer in the US Army Chaplain Corps. Following rabbinical school, Rabbi Anstandig lived in Teaneck, NJ and taught Tanach and Gemara at Ramaz High School. For three years he served as the rabbi of the Orthodox community for the University of Michigan Hillel. In Toronto, Rabbi Anstandig served as Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash of Beit Midrash Zichron Dov for two years, and continues as part of Shaarei Shomayim's clergy. Rabbi Anstandig and his wife Sarit have three children, Batya, Aryeh and Shira.



RABBI NISSAN APPLEBAUM

Judaic Studies

Rabbi Nissan Applebaum grew up in Winnipeg. He received semicha from Rabbi E. Wolfe z"l, Rosh Kollel Dirshu. After living in Israel for twenty years, he returned to Canada and has since been inspiring young minds in our community. Rabbi Applebaum taught at TanenbaumCHAT for nine years and at Or Chaim for 12 years as Mashgiach Ruchani. He is thrilled to have returned to Or Chaim for a new generation of students to experience his warmth, enthusiasm for learning and sharp sense of humour.



MR. EZER DIENA

Judaic Studies, Science, and Mathematics

A local Torontonian, Mr. Ezer Diena attended Ner Yisrael Yeshiva for high school, and studied in Israel for two years at Yeshivas Toras Moshe under Rabbi Michel Shurkin, a premier student of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. Mr. Diena returned to Toronto to study at York University, where he received his B.Sc. (Honours Chemistry) and B.Ed., and obtained OCT certification to teach Math and Science at the high school level. Upon graduation, while teaching part-time at Yeshivat Or Chaim, Mr. Diena joined Beit Midrash Zichron Dov, where he served as an avreich, as well as BAYT, where he served as Rabbinic Assistant. He is married to Thornhill native Chaya (Benmergui), and they have a daughter, Hudi, and son, Zev.





MRS. SARA ERLICH

Ivrit

Mrs. Sara Erlich graduated from Telma Yelin School with a degree in Musical Studies, and obtained her bachelor's degree in Hebrew Literature and Philosophy from Tel Aviv University after completing her military service. Prior to working at Bnei Akiva Schools, Mrs. Erlich taught literature and language to Grades 7–10 in Israel. Mrs. Erlich has been teaching Ivrit at Bnei Akiva Schools since 2006. Over the past few years, Mrs. Erlich has further developed the Ivrit curriculum. Mrs. Erlich has a great passion and devotion for the Hebrew language which she enjoys passing on to her pupils, emphasizing the language to be a fundamental requirement at Bnei Akiva Schools. She has had many students contact her from Israel thanking her for the level of Hebrew mastery that she has been able to instill.



RABBI MOSHE LEXIER

Judaic Studies

Rabbi Moshe Lexier received his semicha from the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem, where he studied for ten years. While in Israel he taught at yeshivot and utilized his musical talents to build a popular musical minyan in Givat HaMivtar. Most recently Rabbi Lexier worked in Detroit, where he worked in outreach, led choirs and established a day kollel for retirees. He now returns to his hometown with his wife and family, and looks forward to building personal connections and elevating the Yeshiva with his warmth, energy and a special musical flavour.



RABBI SHLOMO MANDEL

Judaic Studies

Rabbi Shlomo Mandel joined the Judaic Studies faculty in 2021. In addition to his teaching duties, Rabbi Mandel is Director of NCSY Canada's Jewish Student Union, overseeing the organization's public-school programming, having previously served as City Director for NCSY Toronto. Rabbi Mandel also teaches classes for NCSY's Torah High program and is Rabbi of 147 Elder Street, a local Jewish senior care residence. He completed his undergraduate degree in 2016, graduating summa cum laude from Touro University. Rabbi Mandel received his rabbinic ordination from the Orthodox Union in 2019 and most recently, in March 2021, received his MBA from the Quantic School of Business & Technology.

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At Or Chaim, there are myriads of learning opportunities for anyone and everyone. Whether that is learning at lunch or even after school hours, there are so many possibilities for spiritual growth and connection to the incredible rebbeim that make this place home.

AVI MARKUS (GRADE 12)



RABBI YEHUDA MANN
Rosh Beit Midrash, Beit Midrash Zichron Dov, and Judaic Studies

Rabbi Yehuda Mann grew up in Ra'anana, Israel. As a youth he was a counselor in Bnei Akiva and a volunteer at the Loewenstein Hospital where he taught and arranged chavrutot for rehabilitating patients. After high school he learned at Jerusalem's Chevron Yeshiva under the guidance of some of the greatest Torah scholars of our time, and received the highest level of ordination given in Israel – "Rav Ha'ir" (City Rabbi). Rabbi Mann completed the seven-year dayyanut (rabbinical judge) program at the Harry Fischel Institute and has recently been interning in Gittin at the Jerusalem Beth Din, and in monetary law at the distinguished Beth Din of Rabbi Asher Weiss. Before coming to Toronto, Rabbi Mann served as rabbi of the Achdut Yisrael synagogue in Jerusalem, taught in several yeshivot and delivered seven weekly classes, including one on Israel radio. Rabbi Mann is married to Shulamit, a banker and finance advisor; together they have 4 adorable children. Rabbi Mann serves as the Rosh Beit Midrash of the Beit Midrash Zichron Dov, and as Assistant Rabbi at the Clanton Park Synaoguge.



RABBI NOAH SONENBERG

Dean, Beit Midrash Zichron Dov, and Judaic Studies

Rabbi Noah Sonenberg has been teaching Limudei Kodesh at Bnei Akiva Schools since 2003. Rabbi Sonenberg was an administrator at the school from 2017 until 2023, when he took the position of Dean of Beit Midrash Zichron Dov. He is an alumnus of Yeshivat Bircas Hatorah in Israel, where he studied upon earning his Bachelor of Science in Biology with a focus on genetics from York University. Rabbi Sonenberg is passionate about learning and teaching Gemara, and expanding students' ability to engage with the text independently. Along with a number of courses in educational philosophy and leadership that he has taken in the US and Israel, Rabbi Sonenberg is a current participant in the Lifnei v'Lifnim program, an educational methodology designed to create community and build deep connections to Jewish texts. He is also a member of the Rabbi Sacks Legacy cohort which works to bring Rabbi Sacks' unique perspective to school curricula. Rabbi Sonenberg is married to Mrs. Rifka Sonenberg, a yoetzet halacha and Director of the Canadian Yoatzot Initiative, who also teaches at Ulpanat Orot. Together they have three children, two of whom live in Israel.



RABBI JEFF TURTEL

Judaic Studies

Born and raised in Toronto, Rabbi Jeff Turtel has been involved, formally and informally, in Jewish education for over two decades. Prior to joining BAS, he taught Talmud and Torah Shebe'al Peh at TanenbaumCHAT, where he served as Department Head and developed curricula. Post-high school, Rabbi Turtel studied for several years at Yeshivat Sha'alvim in Israel and upon his return to Canada, he attended the University of Toronto, specializing in Computer Science and Economics. After working as head computer programmer for a prominent investment firm, Rabbi Turtel decided to follow his passion for Torah learning and went to study at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (the yeshiva arm of Yeshiva University). At YU, he received semicha and completed a Masters degree in Education. Currently, in addition to teaching high school, Rabbi Turtel delivers community shiurim and runs an investment firm, BEMCO Financial Services Ltd. Rabbi Turtel and his wife, Orly (Karoly '00) have five children, Kobi, Ahuva, David, Rachella and Elisha. Rabbi Turtel is excited to be part of the Yeshivat Or Chaim team where he enjoys sharing his love for Torah and Judaism.

GENERAL STUDIES FACULTY



MRS. RACHEL BELZBERG Science and Mathematics

Mrs. Rachel Belzberg has been teaching Science and Math at Bnei Akiva Schools since 2011. After earning an Honours Bachelors of Science from York University, she went on to complete a Masters of Science in Education. Outside of the classroom, Mrs. Belzberg enjoys cooking and various outdoor activities. Mrs. Belzberg's calm and caring nature combine with her high expectations to help students achieve success in the classroom and after high school.



MRS. MONICA CHOCRON Science

Mrs. Monica Chocron earned a summa cum laude Licentiate of Education degree from the University Andres Bello (Caracas, Venezuela) with a specialization in Physics and Mathematics. For the first 14 years of her teaching career, Mrs. Chocron taught at the Colegio Moral y Luces Herzl-Bialik in Caracas (where she studied) teaching in the classroom and working as the Physics Department Chair. She received a special recognition for uninterrupted service and a prize for excellent teacher's performance given by Keren Chinuch Caracas. In 2002, she and her family moved to Canada, and she worked for seven years at Associated Hebrew Schools. Since 2009, Mrs. Chocron has been teaching Science, Physics, and Mathematics at both Yeshivat Or Chaim and Ulpanat Orot. Over the past five years, her Physics students won the Weizmann Safe Competition in Canada three times and competed in the finals in Israel.



RABBI AKIVA DANZINGER Technology and Director of Educational Development

Rabbi Akiva Danzinger was raised in both Israel and Toronto. He attended yeshivot in France, Israel, and the United States. He received his rabbinical ordination in Venice, Italy. Rabbi Danzinger has a Masters of Education from Brandeis University and is a Legacy Heritage Teacher Leader Fellow. He has taught a range of Judaic subjects in a number of Toronto Jewish day schools, including The Toronto Heschel School, Associated Hebrew Schools and TanenbaumCHAT. Rabbi Danzinger promotes the advantages of a chevrutastyle of learning and is passionate about fostering his students' higher-order and critical thinking. When not analyzing arcane Jewish legal responsa of contemporary rabbinic sages, Rabbi Danzinger enjoys camping, scuba-diving and horseback riding. He lives in Toronto with his wife and their three children.

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The teachers in Or Chaim facilitate learning in their classroom and a school atmosphere of growth and comfort. Our classes are warm, inviting, and well-structured, thanks to our caring teachers. Or Chaim truly is a family and our second home!

JACOB KESLASSY ('18)



MRS. NADIA GLICK
Mathematics Department Head and Social Sciences

Mrs. Nadia Glick studied Mathematics and Business at the University of Western Ontario and later pursued a teaching degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Prior to joining Bnei Akiva Schools, she taught a variety of Math, Business and Science courses at TanenbaumCHAT and Associated Hebrew Schools. Mrs. Glick aims to create a classroom that is inclusive, well-structured and inviting. She likes to challenge her students to their full potential and aims to meet the needs of various types of learners.



MRS. TAMARA GRUNBERGER
Mathematics

Mrs. Tamara Grunberger has worked for 20 years as a school director, principal, educator and mentor for teachers and school leaders. She holds an M.S. Ed in Curriculum and Assessment, and additional certifications in leadership and education. In recent years, Tamara has worked with a variety of institutions offering school and educational consulting services in the areas of improvement, teaching and learning, mentoring and curriculum development. She began her career teaching Mathematics to Middle and High School students and has continued to do so throughout. Tamara's core belief that drives her work in education, is that students are the centre of the educational process and have incredible potential. She looks forward to empowering her students as she returns to BAS.



MRS. NICKY KAGAN English Department Head

Originally from South Africa, Mrs. Nicky Kagan has lived in Toronto for over 30 years. She has taught at Yeshivat Or Chaim since 1999, and held an administrative role from September, 2006 until June, 2019. Mrs. Kagan has principal certification and guidance qualifications. In 2006, she received a Teacher of Excellence Award. In previous years, she has also taught History, coordinated the Model UN team and overseen the yearbook committee. We are thrilled to continue to have Mrs. Kagan's legendary teaching impacting students at Or Chaim in the classroom after her retirement from administration.



RABBI YOSEF KURTZSocial Sciences and Director of Israel Guidance

Rabbi Yosef Kurtz is a graduate of Yeshivat Or Chaim and has been teaching at Bnei Akiva Schools since 2015. After graduating from Yeshivat Or Chaim, Rabbi Kurtz studied at Yeshivat Hakotel for two years and completed his degree at York University. While at York, he discovered his passion for Jewish education and began working with NCSY Canada. Previously, Rabbi Kurtz taught Jewish Philosophy, Religious Studies and Jewish Ethics at Torah High. While working for NCSY, he completed an MBA at the Schulich School of Business, specializing in Marketing and Finance. In addition to teaching and managing religious programming at UO, Rabbi Kurtz supervises the school's JUMP team and oversees Israel Guidance at both schools. Rabbi Kurtz lives in Toronto with his wife Stephanie and daughters.



MS. SARAH LATOWSKYStudent Support

Ms. Sarah Latowsky has held various roles as an educator, including classroom teacher, private tutor, and executive functioning coach. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from McGill University and earned her Master of Arts in Child Study and Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Ms. Latowsky believes that all students can be successful and enjoys working alongside the team of incredible educators at Or Chaim.



DR. SHLOMIT LEVYScience

Dr. Shlomit Levy has taught Science at BAS since 2008 and has passionately engaged in science education for the last twenty years. Prior to her move to Toronto, she taught Pathology and Anatomy in the New York/American Program at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine in Tel Aviv University. Dr. Levy received her B.Sc. with honours from Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Honours M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Anatomy and Pathology from Tel Aviv University, M.B.A. with distinction from Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, and authored articles in peer reviewed journals. During her postdoctoral studies at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital, she was the recipient of the Samuel Lunenfeld Award and The Kidney Foundation Award. Dr. Levy aims to inspire the next generation of scientists by making science exciting, relevant and fun.



MRS. NAOMI LIDSKY
English and Learning Strategies

Born and raised in Toronto, Mrs. Naomi Lidsky is an alumna of Ulpana, and studied at York University before earning her Masters of Teaching from OISE at the University of Toronto. For 13 years prior to joining Bnei Akiva Schools, Naomi worked as a special education teacher, as well as a learning support coordinator and advisor. When she is not teaching, she is busy taking care of her amazing and energetic children, and volunteering in the community.



MRS. ROCHELLE LIPSON
Art

Mrs. Rochelle Lipson has been teaching Visual Arts at Bnei Akiva Schools since 2007. She received her Specialized Honours Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from York University. Mrs. Lipson has also taught various courses at Eitz Chaim Schools. She initiated and has continued to organize the BAS Celebration of the Arts since 2009. Mrs. Lipson has also overseen joint creative projects with other schools. She continues to educate herself and works with various art media in order to grow artistically and pass that knowledge and creativity on to her students.



MRS. YAEL LIPSON

History Department Head and Coordinator of Educational Development and Coaching

Mrs. Yael Lipson has been working in education since 2013. Born and raised in Toronto, she is a product of the Jewish Day School system, and is passionate about the continuity of Jewish education and community. Yael graduated summa cum laude from York University with an Hons. B.A. in History. She then received her Bachelor of Education from OISE, University of Toronto. She has been teaching subjects ranging from English to Jewish History in the Jewish Day School system. Mrs. Lipson and her husband Michael ('08), have four children.



DR. JANNA NADLER *English*

Dr. Janna Nadler teaches English at Bnei Akiva Schools and is also the Staff Yearbook Advisor. She has a Ph.D. in English from McMaster University and a B.Ed., Honours B.A., and M.A. from York University; all degrees were supported by merit-based scholarships. Before teaching at Bnei Akiva Schools, Dr. Nadler taught Canadian Literature and Children's Literature at McMaster University and the University of Toronto. Dr. Nadler is also a well-known speaker and book reviewer for book club groups throughout the GTA. She is the creator/director of Book Clubs by Janna (www.bookclubsbyjanna.com). Dr. Nadler and her husband, Michael, have three children, Maya, Jordan and Aliza.



MR. EFI PALVANOVScience Department Head

Mr. Efi Palvanov studied Biology and Chemistry at York University, earned his Bachelor of Education at the University of Toronto, and learned at Aish HaTorah Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Before joining Bnei Akiva Schools, Mr. Palvanov taught at Ner Israel Yeshiva of Toronto for seven years and was the head of its science department. Mr. Palvanov is also a curriculum developer and has built a number of unique high school courses in science, philosophy, history, and Jewish studies. He is the author of several books and two popular blogs. Mr. Palvanov has a passion for Jewish mysticism and for adventure. He has traveled extensively around the world and has served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

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Or Chaim has been a part of me for as long as I remember, whether it's my school or shul, Or Chaim is a place I call home; it's a place that develops a sense of family that cannot be found anywhere else.

YOAV SHUMACHER ('14)



MR. TANI REISS Social Worker

Mr. Tani Reiss is a Yeshivat Or Chaim alumnus. He received his MSW from the Wurzweiler School of Social Work. After graduating from Yeshivat Or Chaim, he served as a Combat Engineer in the IDF, then returned to Toronto to complete his degree in Psychology at the University of Toronto. He comes to the school with more than 10 years of social service and youth work experience, including youth justice, complex mental health and behaviour management, and developmental programming experience across multiple provincial sectors. Mr. Reiss believes strongly that every individual is unique, with their own strengths and weaknesses, and is dedicated to working with our youth in all their diversity.



MRS. ARLENE RIPSMAN *Mathematics and Coding*

Since 2007 Mrs. Arlene Ripsman has been a member of the faculty at Ulpana and Or Chaim, where she teaches Mathematics and Computer Science. Mrs. Ripsman earned her Honours B.Sc. in Mathematics and Statistics from the University of Toronto. Prior to joining Bnei Akiva Schools, she worked for an actuarial consulting firm for seven years before returning to university to study Computer Science. Mrs. Ripsman received her Honours B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Computer Science from York University. Over the course of her academic career, Mrs. Ripsman had an opportunity to teach at both the University of Toronto and York University. It was through these activities that Mrs. Ripsman discovered her passion for teaching. She brings this passion for teaching to her day-to-day responsibilities at Bnei Akiva Schools.



MS. ESTHER RUTLEDGE
Mathematics

Ms. Esther Rutledge has been working in the field of formal and informal education for the last 18 years. She taught in various private high schools and in administrative roles with NCSY and Torah High. She has a B.Ed and Masters in Education and has decided to return to the classroom to bring the joy of learning math to students. In her spare time she enjoys spending time with family, reading and going on vacations. She is a mother of four children, three boys and a girl.



MR. ERIC SALTSMAN
Social Sciences and Director of Educational Technology and Advancement

Mr. Eric Saltsman has an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Studies and Classics from Dalhousie University and a Master of Teaching degree from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at U of T. Mr. Saltsman's approach to education is centred around demonstrating how subject matter can be used in real-world application and he constantly finds ways to appeal to the interests of his students. He believes that the age-old adage, "you learn something new every day" is a remarkable understatement. Since joining in 2016, Mr. Saltsman has enjoyed exploring the nuances of the English language with the bright young minds at Bnei Akiya Schools.



MS. SARENA SILVER
Mathematics and Social Sciences

Ms. Sarena Silver has been working in education since 2005. She was raised in Ottawa, and before moving to Toronto in 2007, she lived in Montreal and Vancouver, where she received her BSc from McGill University and her BEd from the University of British Columbia. Ms. Silver has been teaching Math and French throughout her teaching career in Vancouver and Toronto. When not at work, she likes spending time with her puppy and enjoying the outdoors.



MR. GORD SKAROTTHealth, Physical Education, and Athletic Director

Mr. Gord Skarott has been a Physical Education teacher and Athletic Director at Or Chaim since 2002. A graduate of Brock University, Mr. Skarott emphasizes fitness and exercise in his classes and his personal life. He has worked as a personal trainer and regularly competes in long distance endurance events such as marathons and triathlons, including three Ironman events. Mr. Skarott takes his enthusiasm and love of physical activity into each class and finds new ways for his students to have fun while being active. He is also involved in extra-curricular activities, acting as the coach of Or Chaim's cross country running team, soccer team in each of the last 12 years and has added tennis and flag football when our schedule has allowed. He enjoys being a positive element in his students' day and hopes the skills they learn in his class will stay with them into adulthood.



MS. LEORA STERLINSocial Sciences

Ms. Leora Sterlin is a trained lawyer who received her law degree from the University of Western Ontario, and her Masters of Law from the London School of Economics. In 2002 she switched careers and went to York University to complete a Bachelors of Education. She taught at Bialik Hebrew Day School for many years, and then in 2012 combined her passion for law and for teaching, and moved to teach law at Tanenbaum-CHAT. Ms. Sterlin has been teaching at Bnei Akiva Schools since 2016.

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Yeshivat Or Chaim has truly helped me become the person I am today. Be it the spontaneous tisches, the incredible classes and teachers, or just the friendly, warm, welcoming environment, I feel that Or Chaim 100% provides the environment and tools necessary to achieve not during your time there, but also in secondary learning, and eventually life.

CHAIM STRAUS ('22)



MR. MICHAEL TEVERSHAM Social Sciences

Since 2003, Mr. Michael Teversham has been sharing his knowledge and sense of humour with students at both Yeshivat Or Chaim and Ulpanat Orot, teaching History and other Social Sciences. Educated at the University of Toronto, the University of Southern California and State University of New York, Mr. T enjoyed a screenwriting career prior to teaching, working on a variety of television shows now only found on YouTube or in Germany. Mr. T strives to instill a love of learning in his students, improve their verbal and written skills and make the classroom experience as fun as it can be. When not in the classroom, the girls enjoy discussing current events with him in the hallway, and the boys enjoy playing basketball intramurals alongside Mr. T.



MRS. KENDRA THOMPSON
Mathematics and Social Sciences

After 13 years physically teaching at Bnei Akiva Schools, Mrs. Thompson continues as an online instructor after returning home to New Brunswick. Prior to joining Bnei Akiva Schools in 2006, Mrs. Thompson taught for eight years in the middle school at Netivot HaTorah and one year in New Brunswick. While at Bnei Akiva Schools, Mrs. Thompson taught a variety of subjects including English, Math, Drama and History. She has a B.A. and B.Ed. with honours from the University of New Brunswick, an Honours Specialist qualification in history from OISE and an Intermediate Math qualification from York University. Mrs. Thompson created a girls' running team at Ulpanat Orot that competed in the 5K Hannukah Hustle in Hamilton and the Sporting Life 10K in Toronto.



MS. SARAH ZAHAVI *Media Arts and Graphic Designer*

An Ulpana graduate, Ms. Sarah Zahavi is excited to be back at Bnei Akiva Schools teaching Arts and as the school's graphic designer. She has a Bachelor of Technology from Toronto Metropolitan University, with a concentration in Publishing and a minor in Communication Design. In addition to teaching at Ulpana, Ms. Zahavi is a design associate for The Canadian Jewish News and an amateur gardener and sourdough baker.





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