

# Ethiopian Israeli speaks for at-risk youth village

MOUNT CARMEL, Israel – Yemin Orde Youth Village, located on 77 acres atop Mount Carmel in northern Israel, is home, school and safe haven to 430 at-risk and immigrant youth from around the world.

One of its graduates, Roi Etenesh, was recently was inducted into the Israel Defense Forces as a naval engineering officer. He grew up in Ethiopia and made aliyah with his family when he was a teenager; tragically, both of his parents passed away shortly after arriving in Israel.

Roi will visit Boston next week to meet with local supporters of Yemin Orde Youth Village. He spoke with The Jewish Advocate from Israel.

The Jewish Advocate: Hi Roi. Thanks for taking the time to answer a few questions. How old are you? How long have you lived in Israel?

**Roi Etenesh:** I am 26. I made Aliyah in 2006 and have been living in Israel since.

**TJA:** What was it like to be alone in a new country so soon after immigrating? How did you get through what must have been very difficult times?

**Etenesh:** My father passed away in Ethiopia before I arrived in Israel. My mother passed away in Israel when I was 13 years old. It was very difficult for me to be alone. At the beginning, everything was new. It took time for me to come to terms with the fact that both my parents were gone. My older sister became my guardian and took care of all the children (I have six siblings who made aliyah with me, and we stayed



**Roi Etenesh**

together in an absorption center). She is five years older than me. A year later, I joined Yemin Orde.

**TJA:** Tell us about your life there, and the friends you made there.

**Etenesh:** When I joined Yemin Orde, I didn't care much about studying and didn't think much about the future. But I had an amazing informal educator who from the first day encouraged me that it didn't matter that I was a new immigrant, because if I worked hard I would see the results. She believed in me. So I started to invest my time in developing myself. I decided I would try to learn each subject at the highest level. Physics, mathematics, robotics.

And there were other experiences except studying. I joined a leadership six-week program for Israeli and American kids to travel together around the country. I was very active in tikkun olam activities – I volunteered in an old age home. I joined the choir in Yemin Orde and I took voice lessons. With the Yemin Orde choir, I also went to the States in 2010.

One of the moments I always cherish from Yemin Orde was of Kabbalat Shabbat, where we would meet to talk with the director of the village in front of the beautiful view, and he would talk to us about the weekly Torah portion and he made it relevant to us. That was empowering.

In Yemin Orde, I felt I belonged and was not alone. Yemin Orde is a magical place for me. The team was very dedicated I managed to establish my personality and shape my opinions. I made many friends in Yemin Orde with whom I am still in touch today. I feel I was very lucky to have joined the village, which was my home.

**TJA:** Why did you choose to study mechanical engineering at the Technion? Tell us about the Adventure Stretcher.

**Etenesh:** I am a very hands on person. At Yemin Orde, I was in the robotics program, where we built robots and joined the FIRST Robotics Competition in Israel. This experience made me realize how much I love the field of mechanical engineering. I chose to study at the Technion because it is considered the best institute for technology in Israel and I always strive for the best.

The Stretcher was my end-of-degree project during my fourth and last year at the Technion. We had to take what we learned in theory and make it into practice. United Hatzalah asked the Technion to help them find a solution for carrying stretchers quickly without tiring out those holding the patient. They gave their requirements and we delivered a product. My friend and I brainstormed a lot and tried to meet all the requirements.

**TJA:** You recently enlisted in the IDF as a naval engineering officer. Do you think you will make the military your career?

**Etenesh:** I am not sure yet. I envision my future as having the ability to help others, especially children. I hope with my mechanical engineering skills to start a company of my own, a start-up, and in the future to have enough resources to be able to really give back.



**Roi, (on the right) demonstrating the Adventure Stretcher.**

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