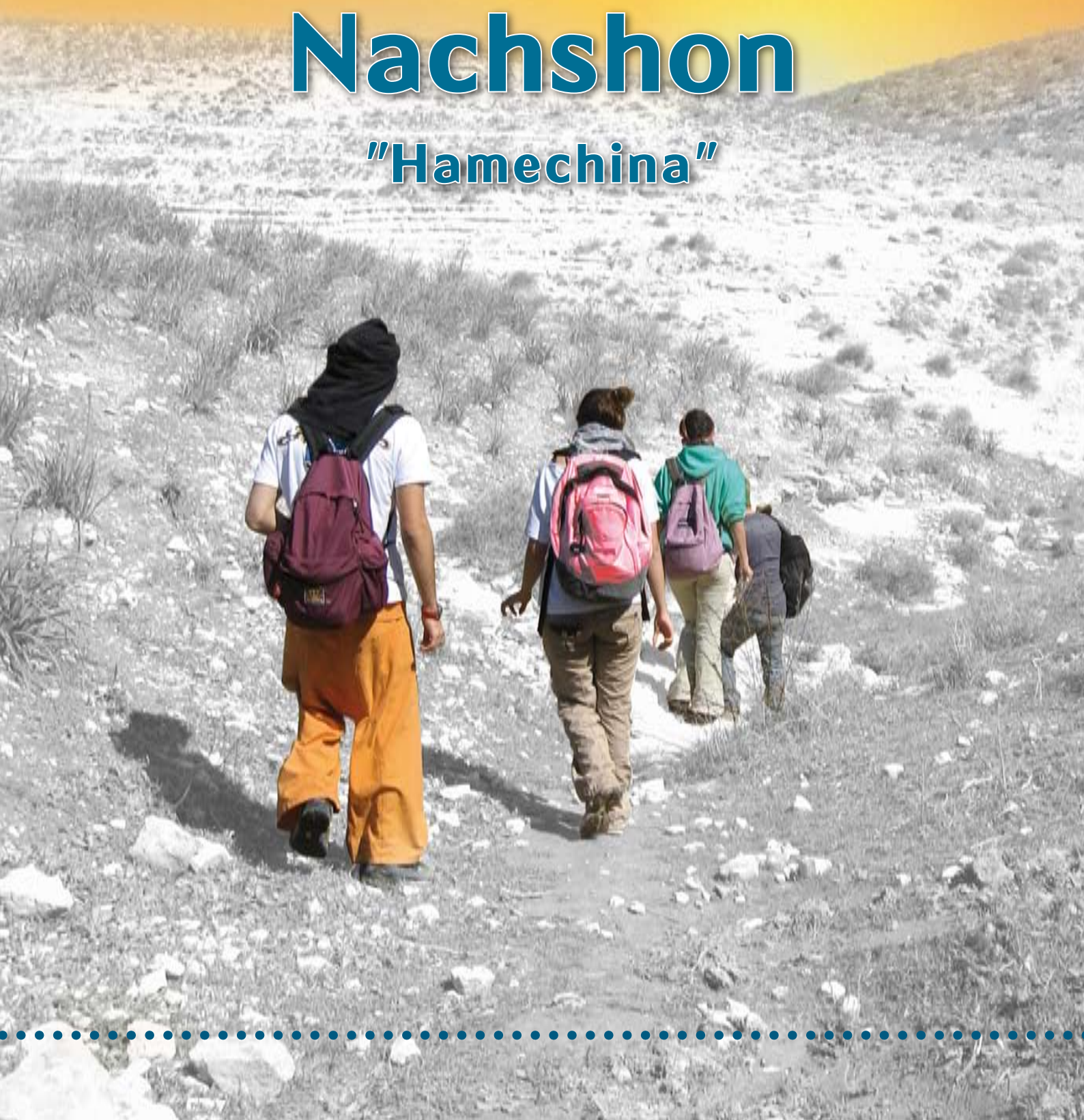




**The Israeli Educational
Institute for Social Leadership**

Nachshon

"Hamechina"



Friendship • Zionism • Leadership •
Helping Others • Democracy • Care •
Recruitment • Field Trips • Pluralism
• IDF Preparation • Jewish Identity •
Group Life • Volunteering • Time Slots •
Battle Heritage • OUT Week • Applicants
• Giving • Joint Piloting • Gatherings

**“And whilst they were standing
and taking advice from one
another, Nachshon, son of
Aminadav, took the first step and
plunged into the water”.**

(The Book of Legends)

Survival Journey • Social Action •
Excursions • First Aid • Navigation
• Paired Study • Responsibility •
Personal Example • Land of Israel • IN
Week • Teams • Initiative • Grand Tour •
Physical Fitness • Assembly • Tolerance
• Education • Active Citizenship
Community • Realization • Development



Nachshon NPO (Amuta) is an apolitical group of private individuals who have undertaken the mission to create an educational institute for promoting social leadership based upon values, care and commitment for the future of the Israeli society. The founding members of **Nachshon** can contently note that their vision is being realized in front of their very eyes: the operation of **Nachshon** and the engagement of new students each and every year maintain the vitality, creativity and innovation necessary for leadership oriented education among youths.

This booklet will guide you through the educational process and empowering experience that is **Nachshon**.

Danny Limor,
Chairman

Nachshon was the first Israeli social leadership preparatory program (Mechina). It created, and continues to nurture, a new kind of young leadership in the Israeli society. Its graduates, male and female, secular and religious, coming from varied backgrounds, come out of the educational process with a solid Jewish-Israeli identity, instilled with values and a sense of mission. They seek to influence their society in accordance with their individual tendencies. The graduates of **Nachshon** strive, in their unique and individual ways, to improve their society and environment. School headmasters, teachers, military officers and commanders, instructors and counselors, political, social or environmental activists, artists - these are just a few examples of graduates' involvement. Doing so, they express the way of **Nachshon**: Taking responsibility while maintaining an approach based on values.

The experience of **Nachshon** combines a multidisciplinary learning program with community social action, excursions and field trips throughout the country, physical and mental preparation for a meaningful military service in the IDF, the nurturing of a solid Jewish-Israeli identity and empowerment of the individual and group. The educational process is accompanied by a large and diverse team of teachers, counselors and both regular and guest lecturers, and is managed by professional educational academics, with instructional and military-command experience. The success of **Nachshon** is evident not only by the hundreds of graduates who accompany the Mechina years after graduating, but also by more than 15 similar programs that were established following **Nachshon**, on the basis of its educational philosophy.

Nachshon will continue in the future to carry the flag of education for solidarity, care, tolerance, democracy and the taking of responsibility for a better Israeli society.

Ze'ev Nativ,
Headmaster

Gilad Olshtein,
Educational Director



The Israeli Educational Institute for Social Leadership Nachshon – “Hamechina”

About Nachshon

Nachshon was established in 1997 in order to promote a social change by nurturing social leadership based on values among high school graduates from all groups and sectors of the Israeli society. **Nachshon** was the first Mechina open to the general public, and encouraged the establishment of more open Mechinot, alongside the longstanding religious Mechinot. **Nachshon** is recognized and supported by the Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Defense, and is also supported by funds and private donors.

Every year, a group of socially aware high school graduates, who care for the future of the Israeli society, arrive at **Nachshon**. These youngsters dedicate 10 months before their military service to an exploration of their selves and their Israeli society and country. In the process, they are instilled with the ability and desire to lead, change, educate and influence. The strengthening of their pluralistic-Jewish and Israeli identity, alongside the development of leadership skills, also promote their ability to function as civilians who are responsible, involved, caring and committed to the improvement of the Israeli society and all of its components.

My experience of Nachshon cannot be explained in words, and still continues to be a part of me. I will always want to go back to the landscapes, the topics and mostly my friends, from whom I've learned such a great deal.

Shaul, class of 2004

Leadership as a Way of Life

We at **Nachshon** see leadership not only as the ability to guide and manage a group of people in an authoritative and decisive manner, but also by individual and social conduct, by taking responsibility, by setting an example for others, and more. The students of **Nachshon** go through an educational process, which instills leadership as a way of life. This process is composed of three layers:

- A multidisciplinary learning program
- Social action in the community
- Individual and group development

Nachshon is proud to be the first Mechina to enable high school graduates from North America to participate, via the Masa Israel Journey project.

*Don't walk in front of me;
I may not follow.
Don't walk behind me;
I may not lead.
Just walk beside me
and be my friend.*

Albert Camus





The Multidisciplinary Learning Program

The educational experience of **Nachshon** exposes the students to many different fields of knowledge, in discussions and lectures, in excursions and trips, and in experiential learning. Among our studied topics: education, philosophy, politics, current affairs, communication, economics, Bible, Israeli culture and more.

Special emphasis is given to five topics:

Leadership

**Zionism and the
Jewish People
in Israel and the
Diaspora**

**Jewish
Identity**

**Israeli Country
and Society**

**Preparation
for IDF Service**





*I learned to appreciate how important learning is, and boy, I learned a whole lot at **Nachshon**...*

I've been told that a person should never stop learning. Today, I understand the meaning of that saying.

Gal, Class of 2004

Leadership

In classes and workshops dedicated to leadership, our students learn how to take responsibility and increase their influence on their surroundings. Through experiential learning, students become skilled at assertive and attentive group instruction, public speaking and effective inter-personal communication. Also, students experience leading projects in various topics regarding national, cultural, educational, social or other issues.

In the leadership classes I came to realize that if I want something to happen, it depends only on me... When I decided that something was important enough, and when I believed in myself, I found myself able to unite people around me for a mutual cause...

Orit, Class of 2001

Zionism and the Jewish People in Israel and the Diaspora

The story of the Jewish people is introduced with the history of the Israelites. It then continues with learning about Jewish life in the Diaspora and the establishment of the Zionist movement and its revolutionary importance in setting the foundations for a Jewish state. Through discussions, lectures, movies and excursions the students come to realize that the Zionist enterprise is still vital. These studies strengthen the students' sense of belonging to the State of Israel and to the Jewish nation.



Jewish Identity

Many of our students deal with the meaning of their Jewish identity for the first time at **Nachshon**. Topics from the Halacha alongside issues of daily life in Israel are discussed weekly with intellectuals, rabbis, teachers and counsellors. Periodically, students go out and meet religious and orthodox groups. This strengthens their tolerance and acceptance of others. The students learn pluralistically about the different groups and movements of the Jewish religion, discover the complexity of the Jewish world and are encouraged to develop an independent viewpoint. As a result, the Jewish identity of the individual and group is consolidated and empowered.



Israeli Country and Society

Learning at **Nachshon** is not confined to the classroom, but also happens outdoors. During the year, field trips and excursions take place throughout Israel, including challenging journeys on foot. The students themselves, guided by the staff, organize the trips, from determining destination and course, to shaping the programming and logistical aspects. In the process, the students acquire a vast knowledge of the country and come to know the different groups which compose the Israeli society. Every visit is an opportunity to meet the local population and to learn about their lifestyles, customs and opinions. The students of **Nachshon** also take the opportunity to perform social action volunteering activities in the communities and with the local populations.

During our excursions we learned about groups of people who are different from us. We didn't just hear others describe the Bedouins in the Galilee. We went there and met them...

But most importantly - thanks to our visit to a Yeshiva in Jerusalem, I came to know the mentality and lifestyle of those who have chosen to live a religious life.

For the first time in my life, I prayed in a synagogue and discovered the unique atmosphere of Shabbat.

Keren, Class of 2002



Preparation for IDF Service

Recognizing the importance of a meaningful military service, the students of **Nachshon** undergo preparation for the IDF in several levels:

- Physical and practical preparation: physical training, challenging journeys, navigation studies, Gadna military experience.
- Informative preparation: the students learn about the IDF and the different positions and roles available in their military service. They meet with **Nachshon** graduates who discuss military service in the light of the values and the way of **Nachshon**. Also, students learn about Israeli battle heritage, visit IDF bases, meet with soldiers and commanders and more.
- Mental preparation: during the ten months of **Nachshon**, students get accustomed to being away from their homes and regular environments. In addition, various **Nachshon** experiences are an opportunity to cope with situations in the field and the outdoors, stress and other physical and mental challenges, all in the supportive environment of friends and staff.

As a natural outcome, our graduates reach their military draft more prepared, mature and fit for the IDF service. They are more motivated to serve in general and specifically in meaningful and influential roles such as officers, commanders, instructors and educators.



*Before **Nachshon**, every time I thought of the military service, I got the feeling that maybe I should move to another country. But when I was drafted I came with an entirely different feeling. I arrived at the IDF with a strong sense of mission that told me: "If you won't defend us, who will?"*

Noam, Class of 2002



Social Action in the Community

We at **Nachshon** see great importance in participating in community social service. Every week, our students perform volunteer work, either in one of the communities in the vicinity of **Nachshon's** residence or in sporadic social action operations during our trips and excursions.

Examples of long-term projects:

- The students of **Nachshon** regularly **instruct, guide and tutor** weak populations in the vicinity of **Nachshon**. Among them are children of Ethiopian origin, underprivileged children, Bedouin youths and children with special needs.
- Every year, **Nachshon** students organize and instruct a **holiday camp** for a week, during school vacation, for dozens of underprivileged children.
- As part of an **active citizenship** project, students exhibit initiative and involvement working with local and national authorities in order to improve different aspects of daily life in Israel. Through the years, **Nachshon** students have influenced the curriculum in Israeli schools, improved accessibility to public buildings, advocated on behalf of hearing impaired citizens for translations in the media and more.

Examples of volunteer work during trips and excursions:

- Performing activity days in absorption centers
- Volunteering for people in need
- Activities in senior citizens' homes
- Visiting hospitals

The experience of planning and performing different social action activities instills care and social awareness and strengthens the students' confidence as individuals and as a group.



*I was not sure whether the year at **Nachshon** would enable me to give to the community. Today, I am certain that I made the right choice. Since **Nachshon** I have been involved in organizing, planning and conducting many kinds of meaningful community projects. The power of group social action, during **Nachshon** and after, is an amazing force which accompanies me each and every day.*

Lior, Class of 2002





Individual and Group Development

While living in a group, students go through a process of self examination which leads to the consolidation of an individual and group identity, based on values and morality.

Staff members accompany this process with great sensitivity, and help the students to develop qualities of self consciousness, tolerance, attentiveness, acceptance of others and the ability to receive and provide feedback.

Individual Development

Life at **Nachshon** is hectic and intensive, and provides an opportunity for the students to take responsibility and experience self-management in the face of various challenges. Students experience planning and hosting of discussions and lectures, and building and managing of the weekly curriculum. Also, each student continuously examines his or her self in the light of new worlds of culture and knowledge and in the light of the constant interaction with peers and staff.

This individual process empowers the student and contributes to the consolidation of an identity based on values. The student develops self confidence, curiosity, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, care and modesty. In addition, the student's sense self achievement and the commitment to improve his or her environment are intensified.

Group Development

The life of the group, with all the rules and principles on which it is based, is shaped by the students themselves. Students experience **joint piloting** of a mini-society while practicing consideration, reciprocal influence, interpersonal communication and team work.

The joint piloting of **Nachshon** is carried out by teams of students, responsible for the different fields of activity: educational programming, social activities, trips and excursions, community work and more. Discussions and decisions about daily life in the group are conducted democratically by all students.

Life in a diverse and heterogeneous group promotes social awareness and openness and a different, more accepting view of others.

*The graduates told us about their "development" at **Nachshon**, and how profound it was for them. So I waited to develop in some way. I waited and waited, and suddenly realized, that something very profound had happened to me too. I felt how my struggle with myself, whether to do something or to give up, was moving towards the positive end, of empowerment and belief that I am indeed capable.*

Shay-Li, Class of 2004

*As soon as the question "What kind of person do I wish to be?" arises, it accompanies us as graduates for years after **Nachshon**, and sets a standard of values, against which we examine ourselves time and again. I feel that my character today is much the product of **Nachshon**. I intend to pay off this debt by continuing my actions for the benefit of the Israeli society, and I'm sure I'm not the only one.*

Michal, Class of 2002

*Anywhere I arrive in Israel, I can find hospitality with one of my friends from **Nachshon**.*

Shalva, Class of 2002

Living in a group taught me how to convince others to agree with my opinion, but also what it feels like when that opinion is disregarded. I learned how to work as part of a team, even when I'm not the leader, and when necessary – how to take things into my own hands. I've also come to realize that there are other people whose passion to change and influence is no less than mine.

Nimrod, Class of 2004



Can Anyone Come to Nachshon?

One of our guiding principles at **Nachshon** is the heterogeneity of its participants. **Nachshon** is open to all high school graduates, male and female, provided that they show interest in its topics, genuine intent to take part in the educational process and care for the future of the Israeli society. Also, in all matters concerning behavioral practices in relation to religious issues, **Nachshon** acts as any public-national body, such as the IDF.

The students' families are involved in the educational process and participate in its funding; However, in order to provide accessibility to all groups and sectors that compose the Israeli society, we are willing to provide financial aid for students who can't afford to pay tuition, so that economic status will not constitute a consideration or obstacle on the part of individuals eager to participate. In fact, approximately a quarter of the students each year come from low socioeconomic status.

Nachshon sees great importance in the participation of immigrants (Olim) from the former Soviet Union and from Ethiopia, and also collaborates with the Masa Israel Journey project in providing an opportunity for North American high school graduates to join the Mechina: an all-Israeli program, in Israel, with Israelis.

In addition, **Nachshon** insists on accepting individuals who are in a low level of readiness (physical, mental or emotional) for adult civilian life and/or military service. This is done in order to empower these youths and develop their confidence in their ability to serve in the IDF and to become active, productive members of the Israeli society. Their very presence at **Nachshon** poses an individual and social challenge for the students and places both individual and group, as early as during their period at the Mechina, in demanding situations of the sort they will have to face in the future.

We believe that the openness, tolerance, pluralism and heterogeneity help to bridge the different gaps that are expressed in the Israeli society and to bring its constituents closer to each other.

*You may ask – so why **Nachshon**, why not other programs?*

*There are a lot of wonderful programs, some of which I have even attended, but there is something special about **Nachshon** that makes no pretension to being an elitist meeting place. On the contrary: the doors are open to whoever wants to be part of this experience, and the sole condition is willingness.*

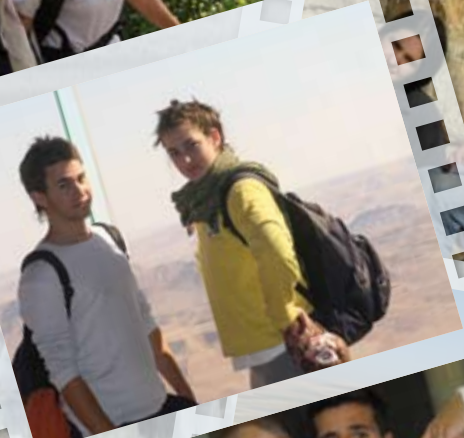
This way, every year creates its diverse company of friends: natives and newcomers, Druse, settlers, religious, secular, left-winged, right-winged – from every part of society.

Galit, Class of 2003





... מתוך שהיו עומדים
והטליון עצה אלו ואלו,
היו נחשון מן עמינרב
וירד לים תחילה..."





Nachshon Graduates

The experience and the way of **Nachshon** are not over at the end of the year. **Nachshon** graduates come to visit, meet the students, accompany us on our trips and lead field and navigation activities. These encounters enable the students to examine how the world of values and learning of **Nachshon** affects adult civilians' coping with Israeli reality, in the military service and following it. Also, **Nachshon** graduates of different years meet together and initiate various activities: lectures, social service projects, seminars and more.

Working for a Good Society

In 2006, a group of **Nachshon** graduates established the Hevra Tova (Good Society) organization, thanks to the support of the UJA-Federation of New York. Hevra Tova promotes volunteering and social involvement in Israel, and enables **Nachshon** graduates to participate in a variety of social action activities together with graduates of other Mechinot, students and thousands of other caring young Israelis. These young adults meet and conduct social initiatives for the benefit of those in need, throughout the country.

Hevra Tova's website is visited by thousands of people each month, who are exposed to dozens of opportunities for variegated social service activities - in different times, in many places and in a wide range of topics and fields. Hevra Tova works in collaboration with dozens of social organizations in Israel, to make the social world more accessible and create a new kind of volunteering - flexible volunteering, exciting and comfortable, that is adapted to the availability and interests of its clientele, and therefore possible and relevant for each and every one.

*We always used to ask ourselves, how do we know that **Nachshon** really works? What happens once this amazing year is over?*

*I've taken part in several circles of social activism since **Nachshon**, met quite a few graduates, and together we cooperated and produced wonderful things.*

I was particularly happy to find out that we still carry the same baggage, that causes each and every graduate, myself included, to become involved in the main intersections of the social world, but to do things a little differently, with that added value that you just don't find in other people.

Asaf, Counselor, Classes 2000-2002



Two Graduates, Two Stories

“Even when meeting a General, I mention being a Nachshon graduate”

Shmuel Ezra, a graduate of the (first) **Nachshon** class of 1998, is a Major in the IDF who also attends government studies at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzlyia. At the age of eight, he made Aliyah from Ethiopia. He first heard of **Nachshon** while studying at Yemin Orde Youth Village:

“I felt like I needed something before the army, something more than just school. I saw a leaflet of **Nachshon** and immediately connected. When I came to **Nachshon**, I felt at home very quickly”.

What made you feel so connected?

“The ideology, the Zionism, the way of life - but the most meaningful experience for me was the company. When you’re living with a bunch of good people, who believe in giving it all for the benefit of society, you learn from them and grow with them. This is also true for the staff. I was greatly influenced by Ze’evik (**Nachshon** Headmaster). My entire leadership philosophy derives from his teachings”.



How did Nachshon influence your military service?

“I was first recruited to an elite unit. But at **Nachshon** we constantly talked about our ability to influence others. That’s why I chose to serve as an officer in the battalions, and not in the elite units. I knew that was the place where I could influence and educate more. I bring the spirit of **Nachshon** to everywhere I go - not just to my soldiers. Even when I meet a General, I mention being a **Nachshon** graduate. I’m proud of it”.

Why is it important that people continue to come to Nachshon?

“Without a doubt, **Nachshon** is a worthwhile investment, for the entire society. Even after ten years, I feel that this place empowers the people who are interested and committed to serving and shaping our country and community”.

“Nachshon caused a 180 degree transformation in my life”

Na’ama Nissan, graduate of the class of 2001, studies social work at Tel-Chai Academic College. At spring 2007, she headed the students’ strike at her college.

Na’ama recalls where it all began: “I sometimes say that I owe my life to **Nachshon**. I came to **Nachshon** after a confusing period, and **Nachshon** made me realize who Na’ama really is. This process, that began at **Nachshon** and brought so much out of me, was very meaningful and actually continues even today”.

How do you feel Nachshon has influenced you since graduating?

“In many ways, **Nachshon** caused a 180 degree transformation in my life. I discovered my sense of leadership, and that contributed a lot to my self confidence. At the same time, my will to serve the Israeli society developed a lot”.

“I went to officer school and served in field positions, I became a very involved go-getter, I lead



the students’ strike at my college - this all started with the first activity at **Nachshon**”.

Why do you think it is important that people continue to come to Nachshon?

“Nowhere else can you learn the values, the knowledge and the tools acquired at **Nachshon**. That’s why it’s important, before taking the plunge into the IDF and the ‘real life’, to come here and examine who you are, where you are going and what you want to achieve. **Nachshon** is an amazing experience that gave me the opportunity to go through this process, acquire these tools and fulfill my potential”.



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Nachshon NPO (Amuta) holds all necessary certificates for receiving tax deductible donations:

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In the US, via P. E. F. Israel Endowment Funds, Inc.
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