



Beating the Odds



photos by Dennis Zinn

"Never, even in my wildest dreams, did I ever believe that I would be involved in hi-tech," said Bar Horowitz, a first-year Computer Science student in Arad.

Bar, who is an Arad resident, completed her two-year army service as a weapons instructor and then started working hard to save money for an extended trip abroad. Academic studies were the furthest thing from her mind when her mother suggested that she attend a meeting where they would be talking about a new educational project that was being set up in their city.

"I was not very keen to go to the meeting because I had been working very long shifts at the Telma food company in order to make as much money as I could in as short a time as possible. I also thought that a computer science course would be too difficult for me. But even so, I went to the meeting"





Why did you go?

"My mother nudged me. She had heard about it from a friend who works in the community center where the project was to take place. She told Mom that she thought it would be really worthwhile. So to cut a long story short, the meeting was a life-changing experience for me."

In what way?

"At the meeting I heard about the KKL-JNF Tech-Red Bynet venture, in which they would be creating a campus at the Arad community center to train people like me to work in hi-tech under the auspices of the Open University. They would not only teach us, but also provide us with employment after graduation. All our expenses would be paid for, we would be provided with a monthly stipend, and we would be paid extra for the work we were required to do as part of our training for Rad Bynet. These are conditions that one could only dream of."

So financial incentives played a big part in your decision to cancel the trip and join the course?

I am the second child of a working-class family of five children. As much as they would like to help us with higher education, my parents simply do not have the money to spare. Financially, it would have been very difficult for me to study anywhere else. I was not even sure that I would ever begin studying for a university degree. In addition, there were no real admission requirements besides having to successfully negotiate the preparatory course designed to bring candidates up to par in mathematics and English. I received good grades in my matriculation exams, but my major was in theater studies. Mathematics and hi-tech were beyond the horizon for me. Even so, I managed to get accepted to the course, and now here I am, about to complete the first year of my computer science degree! This experience has given me loads of confidence. Never in my wildest dreams did I believe I would be involved in hi-tech. Now I feel that if I make the effort, I can really achieve a lot."





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Do you know why KKL-JNF created this venture?

We learned about the plans to settle some one million new people in the Negev over the next twenty years and to turn the Negev into a hi-tech hub. At the same time, they are taking steps to try and prevent local youngsters from leaving. I must say that as far as I am concerned, the fact that this course is taking place in Arad, and that I will later be able to find suitable employment in my hometown, is wonderful. My older sister moved to the center of the country to find work and she is not happy there. She keeps coming back. Here in Arad, we have space, we have peace and quiet, and most importantly, all our family is here. Nobody really wants to leave. If this project succeeds, it will be immensely beneficial for the entire country. Just think what a relief it will be for Tel Aviv, a city that is so crowded and short of living space.

