

For International Program head at Jerusalem College of Technology, students are 'heroes'

From the US to Israel, and from the synagogue to the college campus, one thing has remained constant for Rabbi Elie Mischel: his students.

Tags: In The Headlines, Spotlight, Jerusalem College Of Technology, College

Contact Editor Sponsored Content , Dec 01 , 2021 1:02 PM



Jerusalem College Of Technology

J.C.T.

Jerusalem College of Technology's (JCT) International Program in English recently appointed Rabbi Mischel, a beloved rabbi from Livingston, N.J., as its new head. Rabbi Mischel made aliyah (immigrated to Israel - ed.) with his wife and four children this past August, fulfilling a lifelong dream of becoming an Israeli citizen and moving to Israel.

"I learned so much from my congregants, many of whom grew up without any Jewish education but then worked incredibly hard to become knowledgeable Jews later in life. These people were my heroes, and a source of constant inspiration for me," Rabbi Mischel says.

"Now, at JCT, I have the opportunity to work with incredible young men and women who have made the idealistic decision to attend college in Israel. They have chosen to study far from their families because they believe that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people. So many of our students go on to make enormous contributions to Israel's economy and the IDF. Although the students are half my age, they are truly my heroes. I feel blessed to have the opportunity to help them succeed."

JCT's International Program — which is hosting an online open house on December 12 — offers students who are not fluent in Hebrew the viable opportunity to live and study Torah

in Israel while pursuing a prestigious academic degree in computer sciences or business administration. The program's comprehensive double curriculum combines high-level academic studies, enriching Jewish studies, and practical professional training.

In his interview with *Arutz Sheva*, Rabbi Mischel discusses the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, trends in higher education, and the future of the International Program.

Q: How has COVID-19 changed the landscape for the International Program?

A: "COVID was challenging for students everywhere, as students were forced to spend long hours by themselves in front of their computers on Zoom. But the travel restrictions that were set up in response to the pandemic created additional challenges for international students, many of whom were unable to come to Israel to attend classes. We had to find flexible ways for our international students to participate in their classes. Our international students participated in classes via Zoom, and we recorded classes for those in different time zones around the world. Our professors worked hard to be available for the students."

Q: What trends in higher education on a global scale, and specifically in Israeli higher education, have most significantly affected the direction of the International Program?

A: "The Israeli economy is booming — led, of course, by Israel's extraordinary tech sector. But the incredible growth of Israel's tech industry has highlighted a significant problem: a severe shortage of skilled tech employees. At JCT, our goal is not simply to provide our students with a strong theoretical grounding in computer science and business, but also to help our students develop the practical skills they will need to succeed in the workplace."

"One of our key goals at JCT's International Program is to help our students access our extraordinary extracurricular programs that can help them launch their careers in the tech and business sectors. Our international students participate in JCT's annual Hackathon, an incredible event in which students compete for 48 hours straight, creating technological solutions for challenges facing companies and organizations. Our students also join the LevTech Entrepreneurship Center, where they learn how to build teams, think innovatively, and create products. In today's world, succeeding in the classroom is only the start of a successful education; it's critical that our students learn how to apply their knowledge in the real world."

Q: How specifically do you see the International Program expanding and evolving during the next five years?

A: "The extraordinary cost of attending college in the United States and many other countries is only increasing, and so many Jewish families are interested in exploring alternative options. Due to government subsidies, tuition at JCT is about \$4,000 per year, a tiny fraction of the cost of college in other countries. At the same time, aliyah rates are increasing, as more and more Jews are choosing to build their future in Israel. Many of these new immigrants are looking for high-quality college programs in English, as well as a religious environment and the opportunity to continue studying Torah while in college. Our International Program is the ideal option for many of these students, and so we expect interest in our program to grow significantly. We also hope to offer additional degrees in English and increase the number of English-language programs and activities on campus."