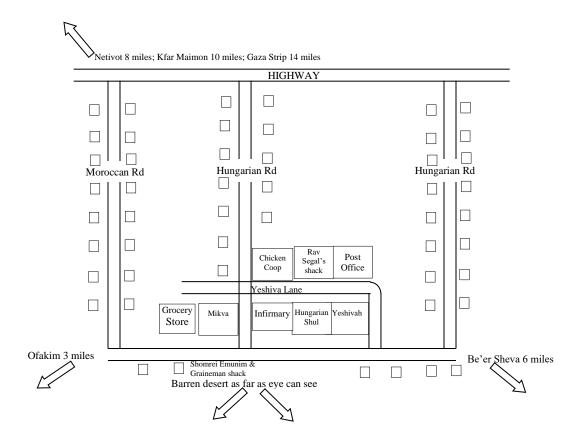
#### LIFE IN YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970 page 1 of 18

I studied in Yeshivat Tifrach for one year, in ~1970, and frequently visited there during the year I studied at Yeshivat Ofakim in ~1971. The following are my memories of it, which might have become distorted over the past 53 years. My Tifrach Yeshivah friend, Shimon Hillel, recently jogged my memory on some of the details. As I remember:

Yeshivat Tifrach was located in Moshav Tifrach. Moshav Tifrach was founded in 1950 with about 100 immigrant farming families living in 100 shacks. Each shack was built of concrete block covered with stucco. Each shack was 45 sq meters (450 sq ft) in area, with only a bedroom, a living room and a tiny kitchen. The kitchen had a cold-water spigot, and no means for hot water. The shacks were originally built with outhouses in the back, but by 1970 all the families, except for one, had replaced them with an indoor toilet. Each shack was built on a 20 dunam (5 acre) strip of land, of which about 17 dunam was used for farming. The moshav had a social hall, about 70ft x 70ft. Mail was not delivered to each home. Instead, each family picked up their mail at the communal post office shack. The moshav's city hall, grocery store and mikvah were also each in a shack.

Since its founding in 1950, the residents were gradually moving away. By 1967, only about 60 families remained. That left 40 abandoned shacks and an underused social hall. So the moshav residents voted to invite Rav Yaakov Friedman's small yeshiva, located in Kfar Maimon, to move to their yeshivah. Rav Yakov Friedman invited another small yeshivah, run by Rav Zvi Friedman and Rav Dan Segal, located first in Netanya, to join him. Both yeshivas moved to Moshav Tifrach in 1967.

#### MAP OF TIFRACH (not to scale)



# LIFE IN YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970 page 2 of 18

As shown in the drawing above, Moshav Tifrach was bordered on the north by an east-west highway. Moshav Tifrach had only four roads, none of which had a name. They included one 4000-ft-long east-west road that was south of the highway, and three north-south roads that extended 2000 ft from the east-west road to the highway. The moshav's perimeter was 3 miles around (which I jogged almost daily), and encompassed ½ square mile. About 40 Hungarian families lived on the east and center roads. And about 20 Moroccan families lived on the west road. The Hungarian families spoke Hungarian or Yiddish amongst themselves. I remember that one Hungarian farmer's wife spoke only Hungarian and Yiddish, and could not speak Hebrew. The Moroccans (even their teenagers) spoke Arabic between themselves, and were also fluent in French.

Tifrach had street lights that turned off at about 10:00 pm. After that, while walking on the road at night, the only light came from the moon. And on moonless nights, it was so dark that you could not see your hand even a foot in front of you, much less the road you were walking on. On those nights, when walking to my shack from the bais medrash, I would find my way by feeling the contour of the pavement under my feet.

Rav Yaakov Friedman was the rosh yeshivah and also the lowest shiur's rebbe. He had previously been a rebbe in Merkaz Harav Kook Yeshiva before founding the yeshiva in Netanya.

Rav Dan Segal was the mashgiach and also the middle shiur's rebbe.

Rav Zvi Friedman was the highest shiur's rebbe.

Rabbi Obermeister taught the baalei teshuvahs and was also the yeshivah's administrator.

In 1971, Rav Boruch Heksher, who was a twin married to an American twin, joined the staff. His American wife, Chavi, was a twin too.

The yeshivah had about 60 regular yeshivah students ("bachurim") ages 14-22, and about 15 kollelniks ages 24-28. Each kollel family lived in an abandoned shack. The bachurim lived in about 7 other shacks, each with about 5 beds per shack. Most bachurims' shacks had a toilet and sink, some had a shower, and none had hot water. Some had out-of-use outhouses. Tuition for non-Israeli students was \$40/month, which paid for room and board. Each student supplied his own linen and washed his own clothes.

Since there were no hot showers in the shacks, we all showered in the mikvah shack. The mikvah shack, built 20 years earlier, had a women's section with its own entrance and mikvah pool, and a men's section with its own entrance and mikvah pool. The men's section had no electric lighting. When going to the mikvah at night, we took candles and matches to illuminate the mikvah. There was an overhead shower. But it had no drain. In place of a drain, the floor was sloped to guide the shower water into a groove in the floor which led to a hole in the external wall. The shower water drained out of that hole, and vermin from the desert could enter the mikvah through that hole. One night, when a yeshivah boy was alone in the mikvah pool, he felt something touching him. He looked down and saw it was a frog swimming in the mikvah pool.

The social hall building had a single large banquet hall. The moshav assigned it to the yeshivah. A thick curtain was hung across the banquet hall's entire width. The bais medrash was on one side of the curtain, and the cafeteria on the other. The bais medrash was full of wood benches and shtenders. The cafeteria had about 8 picnic tables. The social hall (serving as the bais medrash and cafeteria) had no furnace (or any means for heating the air) or air conditioner. But it did have a unit that supposedly cooled the air by spraying a water mist into the air.

In the summer, the weather was dangerously hot, with very low humidity. During the hottest days, a person could actually die of exposure if walking in the sun without a head covering for over 30 minutes. Drenched clothes would dry in the open air within 10 minutes. It rained only for about 2 weeks a year. Nevertheless, I never saw an air conditioner on any home or building in the moshav.

When standing on the east-west road and looking south, all you saw was a vast empty desert, with nothing but a few trees visible for miles around. Some of us would hike through the barren parched desert, where we passed dry ravines and saw some small wild flowers. While hiking in the desert, the silence was shocking. Except for a periodic passing plane, there was nothing in the desert that would make noise, such as the rustling of trees or grass, since there were no trees or grass.

# LIFE IN YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970 page 3 of 18

There were about 4 wells scattered over the desert. Each was 100-150 feet deep, and lined with a wall of bricks for the first 50 feet and solid rock for the remainder. One well was surrounded by 1-foot-high wall of stone, and the others were not surrounded by anything, so that a hiker not paying attention could fall in.

In the middle of nowhere in the desert, there was an abandoned large house made of stone, with a stairway that led to its flat roof. It had the same motif as Squires Castle in Cleveland. It was known as "Bayit Haturky" ("Turkish house"). Also in the middle of nowhere in the desert was a bridge spanning a valley between two hills, even though there was no road in sight. It was known as "Gesher Haturkey" ("Turkish Bridge"), and was probably built in the early 1900s in anticipation for a road that was never built. While I attended Yeshivat Ofakim, the government built a tall water-tower on the outskirts of Ofakim. Just after the water-tower was just completed, over the weekend when its entrance was left unlocked, about 20 non-religious Ofakim teenagers and I entered the tower's ground-level entrance and ascended its internal spiral staircase, all the way up its 165 stairs, to its roof and walked about the top of its roof, from which we could see for miles. Boy was that frightening! Photos of this Bayit HaTurky and Gesher HaTurkyare and the water tower are shown below.

Also in the middle of nowhere in the desert was a cave in the side of a hill. It had an entrance about 10 feet high and wide, and had a chamber that was about 50 feet in diameter and about 20 feet high. The cave was abandoned during most of the year. But for about 3 weeks a year, a Bedouin lived in it along with his wife, mother and some of his pack animals. Mrs. Pacifi (pronounced Pacheefichee, who was married to the Italian dean of Ofakim's yeshivah ketana) told me she was hiking in the desert with her 3 year old son and met the Bedouin and his mother. The Bedouin mother gave dried dates to Rebbetsin Pacifici's 3-year old son. The Bedouin told the rebbetsin "I live like a nomad year-round, with no permanent home. However, I am relatively well-to-do, and own more animals than these that I brought with me to this cave this season. I could afford to buy a real house. But I live in tents and caves out of respect to my mother. She says 'my parents lived in tents and caves; their parents lived in tents and caves; so we will live in tents and caves."

On one hike, I was standing on the top of a gulley looking down into it, and saw an Arab bedouin teenage boy walking through the in the gulley. We chatted. He said he was on his way from his parent's tent encampment through the desert to his uncle's tent encampment. I asked where his family found water to drink in the desert. He answered that his family now-a-days brings jugs to the Jewish moshavs and fills them from spigots. But before the moshavs were built, they would fill their jugs from temporary streams that would form after a rain.

From the east-west road of Tifrach, you could barely see the city of Ofakim, about 3 miles away. I walked from Tifrach to Ofakim often, straight across the desert. You could also see the city Beersheva about 6 miles away. I walked to Beersheva a couple times, straight across the desert, twice. I also walked to Netivot, 7 miles straight across a variety of terrains (including desert and fields and forest). During that hike, I saw two Bedouin women running after the sheep (like a sheep dog does to keep sheep in line), one of them while carrying a child on one shoulder - what stamina they had!

Bochurim in Tifrach Yeshivah could be found learning in the bais medrash at all times of day and night. I sometimes learned in the bais medrash with my friends all through the afternoon and night until about an hour before sun up, and then walked in the dark to the mikvah with my friends (with candles in hand), and then returned to the bais medrash where we would start davening shacharis about 20 minutes before sun up so that we'd reach Shmoneh Esrai at sunrise. Then we'd return to our shack to sleep for about 4 hours, and then start the cycle over again.

One time, at about 4:00am in the morning, when about five of us students were learning in the bais medrash, Rav Dan Segal came in and asked us to dance. We got out of our seats and sang and danced in a ring, each boy grasping his neighbor's arm. Rav Segal's arm was so thin that my fingers were able to stretch almost fully around it, (with my thumb almost touching the tip of my other fingers). Rav Segal gradually increased the tempo to a point that we could no longer keep up, and we ran out of breath before he did. And then he left and returned to his shack.

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Each bed consisted of a simple metal frame and a straw-filled mattress. There was no washer or dryer available to the students, so I washed all my clothes in a bucket. Four of the students cleaned up a long-abandoned chicken coop, moved their beds into it, and claimed it as their dorm room. The chicken coop was about 400 square feet in area and 6 feet high, with a concrete floor, and empty except for a cold-water spigot.

The Hungarian parents were generally about 40-70 years old. Only about three of their male children lived on the moshav. Their younger generation had moved away from the moshav. The Hungarians spoke to each other in Hungarian. The grocery store was owned and run by two Hungarian brothers last name Friedman. That store sold the Hungarian newspaper Sziget. The Hungarian families had their own small Hungarian shul, with a Hungarian rabbi. The shul had a womens section. The shul had no bathroom; it instead had an outhouse (which was a hut that is sized and shaped like a small closet, that has a hole in its floor above a pit dug in the ground).

The Moroccan couples were about 30-50 years old and had many children who lived on the moshav. Their children spoke Hebrew and Arabic between themselves. One of the Moroccan couples had 12 children, and their whole family lived in the 3-room train-style shack. The Moroccans had their own shul.

The four roads of the moshav had no name. And the homes had no address numbers.

One of the Hungarian men lived by himself. He was divorced, and his adult daughter moved away. He had a vineyard and made his own wine. He would invite yeshivah boys to his home on Shabbos to share his wine and shmooze. He was proud to be the only moshav member not to have installed an indoor bathroom. He was proud to be tough enough to still use an outhouse, and proud to have been handy enough to upgrade it by installing a comfortable toilet seat on top of the hole in the floor.

Another one of the Hungarian men was Mr. Zitron. He was the only moshav resident who still used a horse to plow his field. He was a scrubby man, and learned Gemara by himself every evening in the bais medrash.

Rabbi Yakov Friedman's wife Leah had a Masters Degree in statistics and was a professor of statistics at Ben Gurion University in Ber Sheva. Rabbi Yakov Friedman had two boys, 8 year old Zvi (Tzviki) and 5 year old Rafi, and a 4 year old daughter Michal. 8-year old Zvi had an amazing memory for Tanach. I used to test him by reading a pasuk I picked at random from any book of Tanach; and he would tell me the name of the book, the perek number, an approximation of the pasuk number, and an approximation of the total number of pasukim in that perek. I once asked him what his secret is for memorizing. He said "I don't know. I started learning how to read at the age of 3. I started learning Tanach at the age of 5. And by now, at the age of 8, I read Tanach three times over, and it just sticks in my mind."

Another brilliant student was Chaim Sofer, who was about 19 years old. His grandfather was the famous Sfardi posek Chaim Sofer who wrote *Kaf Hachaim*, which is like *Mishnah Brurah*, but for Sfardim. A year later, Yakov Sofer's brilliant 16 year old brother, Moshe Sofer, joined the yeshivah.

The famous posek Rabbi Chaim Graniman (the Chazon Ish's nephew, who lived in Bnei Brak) would vacation in Tifrach for a few weeks each year. I was told he had 18 children. I don't know where he davened during those times, since I don't remember him davening in Tifrach's bais medrash.

Similarly, the admor of Shomrei Emunim (whose shul is in Mai Sharim) would vacation in Tifrach for a few weeks each year. He learned of our moshav because one of his Chasidim was a Tifrach farmer. I don't know where he davened during his visits, since I don't remember him davening in Tifrach's bais medrash either.

Rav Piltz lived in Jerusalem and was associated with Rabbi Yakov Friedman. I understand Rav Piltz recently moved permanently to Tifrach and took over as rosh yeshivah.

Rav Dan Segal was mashgiach and also taught one of the shiurim. He lived in an apartment in Bnei Brak where his wife was the principal of a Bais Yakov girl school. He would commute, by living in a two-room shack in Tifrach during the weekdays and returning to his home in Bnei Brak for Shabos. He would take about two hours to daven Shacharis, of which about Shmoneh Esrai took almost an hour. He davened in the bais medrash half the time and in his shack half the time. However, when he led the service ("davened for the amud"), he davened much quicker than anyone else. He was sickly thin. He would eat his meals in the shack. He often sang songs in his shack for a few hours at a time, often at midnight, that could be heard from the road

#### LIFE IN YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970 page 5 of 18

outside. One time, my friend Larry Siegel was passing Rav Segal's shack at midnight and heard Rav Segal singing. Larry taped it on his tape recorder from outside the shack. Jerry let me copy the recording onto my own tape recorder.

One interesting person was Kalman Zeines, from Flatbush. He was an amazingly skilled photographer. He once captured a photo of Rabbi Katzenelenbogen (the rosh yeshivah of the Neturai Kartah yeshivah) that was so perfect that it looked as though Rabbi Katzenelenbogen posed for it even though Rabbi Katzenelenbogen would never let his photo be taken.

Another interesting person was Yosef Mizrachi. He was a 17 year old high school drop-out from Buenos Aires who had weird but one of the smartest students in the yeshivah. One time, when the Rav Yakov Friedman was giving a class, Yosef Mizrachi contradicted the Rosh Yeshivah's interpretation of the Gemara. After a brief interchange between the two, Rav Friedman said to us "He's right. And the point that he found I erred in was the basis for the rest of my whole lecture. So the lecture is over."

I knew of only one telephone existing in the entire moshav. It was privately owned by the Gansfried farmer family (phone number 05793096). No pay phones existed on the moshav. If someone needed to use a phone, you asked to use the Gansfrieds' phone and later reimburse the Gansfrieds for the minutes used. I also never saw a television or air conditioner or furnace on the entire moshav. And for sure there were none in the students' living quarters.

Yeshivat Tifrach was a **yeshivah gedolah**, in that even for the lowest level class, each student arrived in class already knowing the Gemara, Rashi and Tosfos, and the rebbe merely tied that in with Rishonim and Acharonim. The only exception (to it being a yeshivah gedola is that it had a beginner's class, taught by Rabbi Obermeister), in which students were taught the *pashut pshat* of the Gemara. All classes were taught in Hebrew. As with Israel's universities and working sector in those days, the weekend consisted only of Saturday; Sunday was as much a weekday (in terms of classes and work) as Monday.

In 1971, Tifrach built its first-and-only dormatory. (shown in photo below) The dorm was made of vertical prefab concrete slabs that were screwed together and erected on a horizontal concrete slab base, which was a common building configuration in Israel in those days. The dorm was 1-story, comprised of 5 rooms in a row. The middle room was a bathroom (with toilets & sink & shower), with 2 dorm rooms to its left and 2 dorm rooms to its right. Each dorm room had a sink and held 4 beds for 4 students. Like all other student-living facilities in Tifrach, this dorm had no heat or air conditioning.

Until 1970, there was a government-funded elementary school located next to the yeshivah, attended by only a few dozen moshav children. But Rav Yakov Friedman's children were home schooled, informally tutored by Rabbi Obermeister and Shimon Hillel and others. In 1970, Tifrach Yeshivah opened a tiny cheder for children of the yeshivah families to attend.

About 3 miles west of Tifrach was the city of Ofakim. It had about 10,000 residents, mainly new immigrants from Arab countries. Ofakim had a yeshivah ketana comprised of 27 students, ages 11-15, from Arabic-speaking sefardi immigrant families. The yeshivah ketana's classes consisted of 8 hours/day of religious subjects, and only 1 hour/week of math, and perhaps some geography. The yeshivah ketana's only teacher was its rosh yeshivah, Rabbi Pacifici from Italy. His family consisted of him and his wife & 7 children. They recently immigrated from Gibraltor and spoke English with an English accent. The yeshivah ketana was housed in a new 3 story school building that was located in the middle of the desert, about 8 minutes walk across the desert from the outskirts of the city of Ofakim. The Pacifici family lived in a suite in the yeshivah building itself. The Pacificis mst have been lonely, since they stayed in the yeshivah building year-round, even when the students left on vacation leaving the building abandoned, and the nearest adults (in Ofakim) lived across the desert 8 minutes away from the yeshivah building.

#### MEMORIES OF TIFRACH'S KOLLEL LEVISON FAMILY

Yehuda Levison joined Tifrach's Kollel in 1971, along with his wife Rivka and children Adonili, Leah, Elisheva and Avraham.

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Rivka Levison, nee Vleeschhouwer, was born in 1939 in Amsterdam Holland. In autobiographical video ("Rivka's Prayer" The Story of Holocaust Survivor Rivka Levison (yadvashem.org), Rivka recounts how her family survived the holocaust. For 3 years, her family found different strategies to avoid deportation from Amsterdam to death camps, and for the next 2 years, Rivka lived as a foster child with a Catholic unmarried woman who passed Rivka off as a Catholic orphan. In 1958, Rivka immigrated to Israel at the age 19. She worked as a teacher in Ofakim. She later married (photo below) Yehuda Levison who, like her, was born in Holland.

During the first years of their marriage, the Levisons lived in Bnai Brak, where Yehuda worked as an accountant. In 1971, they became a Kollel family in Tifrach, where they lived in one of the 2-room shacks. In 1972, Yehuda became headmaster of Tifrach's tiny cheder that Rav Yakov Friedman opened the previous year (as described above). By now, 53 years later in 2024, that cheder has grown to 250 students, and Mr. Levison is still its headmaster.

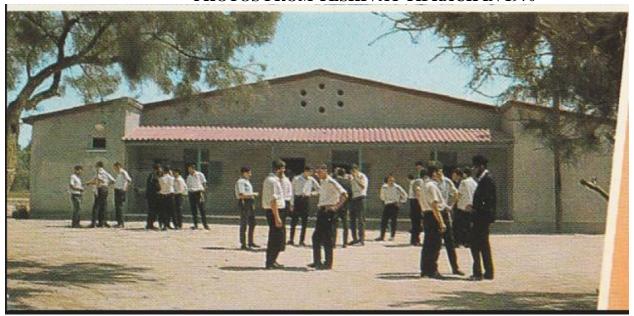
The Levisons continued living in that 1-bedroom shack until 1981, when they moved into a 3-bedroom apartment (of a 4-suite apartment house that was built long after I left Tifrach).

Mrs. Levison recently told me that she remembers the farmer family that owned the sole telephone in Tifrach (which I described above). She recounted that people used to queue up outside to use that farmer's phone in his house, so the farmer re-mounted his phone to the outside of his house for people to use outside.

Mrs. Levison recounted that Tifrach's roads continued for decades to have no street-names assigned to them. The roads were assigned street-names several years ago, in response to an episode in which an ambulance was unable to find the home it was searching for because the homes in Tifrach had no addresses at that time.

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### PHOTOS FROM YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970



Front of the building that housed Tifrach's bais medrash and kitchen and cafeteria



Tifrach's bais medrash

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Rabbi Yaakov Friedman in 1970 (Tifrach's Rosh Yeshiva and founder)



Rabbi Zvi Friedman in 1970 (vice rosh yeshiva and founder)



Rav Dan Segal (mashgiach in 1970) photos taken in 2013 and 2022

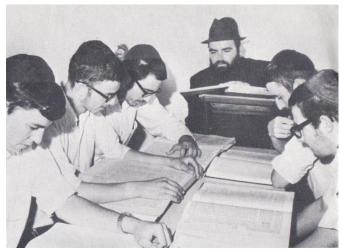


Rabbi Piltz in 2015 (Tifrach's rosh yeshivah after Rabbi Yakov Friedman

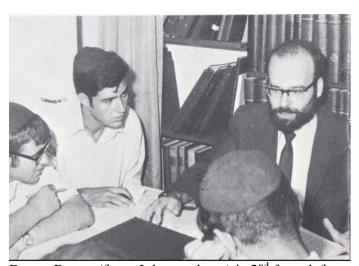
# LIFE IN YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970 page 9 of 18



A kollelnik; whose name I think was Yehuda Arazi



L-to-R are Doron Rosen(from Johannesburg), who?, Yitzchak Lemberger, Rabbi Obermeister, Chaim Fuchler (from England), Mitchell Rose (me, from Cleveland)



Doron Rosen (from Johannesburg) is 2<sup>nd</sup> from left
Teacher is Rabbi Boruch Heksher, who joined Tifrach in Feb. 1971. (He now-a-days lives in Sanhedria)

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Shimon Hillel (when still a yeshivah bachur) teaching cheder.

The boy with glasses speaking is Zviki Friedman (age 8).

I believe the boy next to him, staring at the photographer, is his younger brother Rafi (age 6)

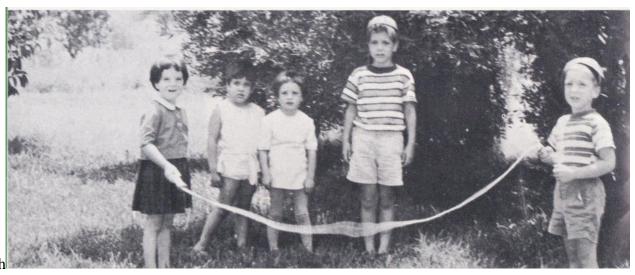


Yitzchak Lemberger (standing)



Tifrach's cafeteria (Boy in middle of photo is Doron Rosen from Johannesburg)

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(I forget who these kids were)



Moshav Tifrach's Hungarian rabbi, teaching the Hungarian farmers.

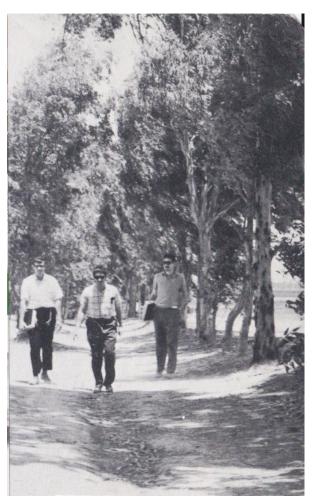
I believe the 2 bearded men (at opposite sides of the table) are Hungarian Friedman brothers that ran the grocery store. One of them because Shimon Hillel's father-in-law.



One of the farmers. I believe his name was Friedman or Finkelshtein. Rabbi Yakov Friedman hitched a ride on this tractor to the yeshivah building.



View of the farm plots.



3 students. The one on the left might be me (Mitchell). The one in the middle was an American whose name I forget.

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Photos of RavYakovFriedman & his wife Leah . (photos I snipped from an article in a kfar magazine in 1970 that interviewed them



My yeshivah buddy Doron Rosen from Johannesburg (photo I took in 1970 on our hike near Gesher Achziv)



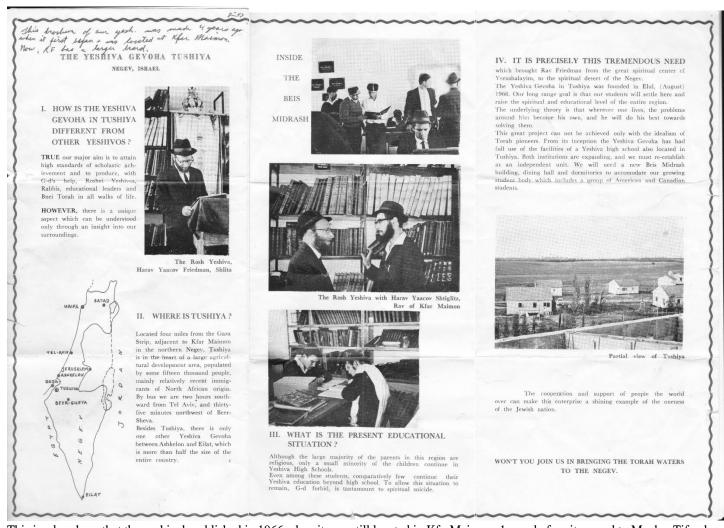
Photo of me, Mitchell (aka Henoch) Rose, in 1971 standing in front of the newly-built prefab dorm

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#### LIFE IN YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970

Annual Budget	,	הוצאות שומפות
(Israel Lirot)		(בלירות ישראליות)
Kitchen Expenditure	96,000.00	החזקת מטבח
Administration	28.000.00	הוצאות מנהלה
Electricity and water	18,000.00	חשמל ומים
Kollel Division	54,000.00	כולל אברכים
Others	18,000.00	הוצאות אחרות
Total	214,000.00	ס״ה
Income		הכנסות
Government and		מוסדות ממשלתיים
Foundations	78,900.00	וציבוריים
Tuition, room and board	34,500.00	השתתפות תלמידים
Total	113,400.00	ס״ה
שנת תשל"ב	הוצאות בניה ל	
360.000 ל״יי	חדרים	בניין פנימיה 24
לבניין_	קרו	
55.000.−	הלואות	
″ 50 <b>.</b> 000.—	מענקים	r.e.
″ 105.000.—	ס״ה	גרפיקה: ג'.ליברמן

Yeshivat Tifrach's annual budget. ~\$61K/yr, incl. expenses for food, utilities, kollel, etc.



This is a brochure that the yeshivah published in 1966 when it was still located in KfarMaimon, 1 year before it moved to MoshavTifrach

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# THE FOLLOWING PHOTOS WERE NOT TAKEN IN ~1970 WHEN I LIVED IN TIFRACH THEY WERE INSTEAD SNIPPED IN 2024 FROM GOOGLEMAPS



Shack that Rav Dan Segal lived in during the work week (copied from google.com/maps)



Post office shack (copied from google.com/maps)



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2 views of chicken coop (on right side of photo) that some bochurim dormed in. which is in the backyard of a shack (on left side of photo) located on center road (copied from google.com/maps)



Typical house on center road (copied from google.com/maps)



Tifrach's Grocery Store, which as the only store in Tifrach) (copied from google.com/maps)

# LIFE IN YESHIVAT TIFRACH IN 1970 page 17 of 18



Shack next door to the shack that I lived in (copied from google.com/maps)



Medical Clinic (It was the only new (i.e., non-shack) structure in Tifrach) (copied from google.com/maps)

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Bayit HaTurky in the middle of the desert between Tifrach & Ofakim and the water tower built at the outskirts of Ofakim while I attended Yeshivat Ofakim both photos copied from website

https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=ofakim&title=Special:MediaSearch&go=Go&type=image



Gesher Ha<br/>Turky in the middle of the desert between Tifrach & Ofakim photo copied from<br/>  $\,$ 

 $website \underline{https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=ofakim\&title=Special:MediaSearch\&go=Go\&type=image=Special:MediaSearch\&go=Go@type=image=Special:MediaSearch\&go=Go@type=image=Special:MediaSearch\&go=Go@type=image=Special:Med$