JOSEPH KUSHNER HEBREW ACADEMY
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INSPIRING EXCELLENCE

SEED SPEAKER YAAKOV GUTTMAN INSPIRES STUDENTS WITH HIS MESSAGE OF DETERMINATION

RKYHS heard an inspiring message from Yaakov Guttman as this week's SEED speaker. Yaakov Guttman, 29, has given his all for Israel as a firefighter. Born and raised in Bergenfield, New Jersey, Guttman grew up on stories of his maternal grandfather, who was a decorated gunner pilot for England in World War II and then went on to serve in Israel's Haganah.

From a young age Guttman wanted to serve in the military, and always thought he would be a US Navy Seal. However, on a gap year in Israel, to "connect to my land and invest in Judaism." Guttman joined the Israel Defense Forces in the Nahal Haredi unit, where he became a sharpshooter and a Krav Maga instructor, one of the first in his unit to do so.

Guttman returned to the States and joined the FDNY. When he was called back to Israel for reserve duty he decided to stay. "I had such a strong passion for my land and country, and knew that I needed to come home," says Guttman. Becoming a firefighter had been Guttman's dream for a number of years and he worked and networked single-mindedly toward this goal.

Yaakov's story is even more remarkable. He came to the Sinai program at JKHA when he was 10 years old. Yaakov rose to overcome personal adversity as well as significant learning disabilities graduating Sinai with the JKHA class of 1999.

Yaakov's journey is a testament to the power of grit and determination. Yaakov told the RKYHS students, to believe in themselves. Don't let anybody tell you what you can't do and don't be afraid to fail. He motivated students to go find their path.