

What has



done for you?

Aleph Godol, my Brother Alephs,

What *hasn't* it?

I'll quickly skim over the simple stuff, the stuff that everyone goes through. I'll skip over what I was like when I joined, because I frankly do not remember. I'll skip over the confidence it's given me, the enjoyment I've taken from it, and the friends I've made. I won't talk about the driving sense of purpose, or the real desire and passion to help that I haven't felt for anything else before. I don't need to say how AZA and the experiences I've had in it have shaped my personality, my humor, my outlooks. I'll gloss over how much I'll miss it. Maybe I'll get back to these things later. Maybe I won't.

Instead, I'll talk about other, more specific and probably more interesting things I've gotten and learned from this organization. Some of them you may find useful. For instance, never fire a BB-gun at a rounded metal surface from close range. Never overestimate how much Tiger-Balm you can take. Never fall asleep first. Never scratch your backside when you're floating in the Dead Sea. If you're ever at Camp Perlman, never go in the Coffee House. Never turn down an opportunity to go cubing. Always watch for rocks when going mudding. Always freeze ketchup on everyone you can. Always remember that "hella" is a word given to us by G-d. Always bring an extra towel because if you don't need it, someone else will. Always clean up; everyone will appreciate you. Always, always help a friend in need. And, most important of all, always be fraternal, whatever that means to you.

The beautiful thing about AZA is that, at its best, it's an ideal world. It's ideal because – in the context of the organization – you can do whatever you want, and as long as it's not against the real world law, there are seemingly no consequences. You can act however you'd like to act, you can participate however much you feel like participating, and you can do absolutely everything for your chapter, region, and order, or you can do nothing at all. It's beautiful because in a world where you can do whatever you'd like, it's difficult to do anything *wrong*. In fact, there are only two situations in AZA, that I can conceive, in which you are wrong:

If you have made a commitment, people are counting on you, and you don't come through for no other reason but not having tried hard enough, you are indubitably wrong. In fact, you should be ashamed of yourself. You're in luck, however, because Alephs are a forgiving crowd, and you will be given the opportunity to prove yourself again.

The second way to be wrong is by far more common. If you have the will and determination to complete a goal but are simply not succeeding no matter how hard you try, you are doing something wrong my friend. However, you too are in luck, because any number of experienced Alephs and advisors are here to help you out, and put you back on top.

And that is it. Even if you're wrong, you have a chance to redeem yourself. Even if you fail, you have chance to succeed. Even if you're bald, you have a chance to grow hair. The Aleph Zadik Aleph truly is a perfect world. On the surface.

Not being wrong isn't the same as being right. In fact, it's quite different. If Alephs were right all the time, then AZA would be the biggest powerhouse the world has ever seen. It would be sponsoring athletes and space shuttles, giving full college scholarships and airing its own TV channel (ATV: Aleph Television). Yes, if Alephs were always right I'd be too busy counting money and helping coordinate the next convention on the moon (the moon!) to even write what you're reading.

But if Alephs aren't wrong, and Alephs aren't right, then what are they? Chances are, they just are. They're just there. They just do whatever they want to do, which may or may not be for the better of the organization. Being "right" in the AZA context means doing something that benefits everyone, not just yourself or your own gratification. Being wrong means doing something that detriments others' enjoyment or even your own. Being there means doing neither, and AZA stagnates. And you know what happens when a world, even one as beautiful as AZA, stagnates? It falls into the sun.

That's something people don't seem to remember. If you don't work on your homework, your school doesn't close. If you don't look at the stars, they don't disappear. But if you don't go to AZA, and if you don't push your chapter and make it work, then it will simply cease to be. For some, this is motivation enough to do the right things. For others, it is not. It's not that they don't care about the organization at all; it's not that they don't think it was good for them and could be good for others; it's just that putting in the effort doesn't seem to yield gratification for them. And like I said before, there's nothing wrong with that, and if you don't care enough about AZA to want it to continue, then you should admit that to yourself, no guilt involved.

We're all human, and there's a strong desire in everyone to "look out for number one," and think of your own self-interest. This might serve you well in life, and it might

not. It really depends on what your self-interests are. For a saintly few – and both you and I have met and are friends with people like this – it gives them endless gratification to help others, maybe to help AZA, and mostly to make brighter whatever and whomever they come in contact with. But for a majority, we do what is conveniently right. We help those who need help to avoid feeling bad about ourselves, we ignore what can be ignored so we can pursue other diversions until the situation worsens, and we try to be the best people we can be without really trying to be the best people we can be. That may seem harsh, but it's often the truth between our spurts of rectitude. Once you realize the way you are – saintly, normal, or (but hopefully not) pure evil – you can decide what to do. Maybe you want to change, but more likely, you want to apply all of your good tendencies toward causes that really matter to you. Maybe AZA is one of them.

BYYO has done so much for me. It has given me joy, courage, confidence, friendship, comfort, skills(z), stress, relief, accomplishment, and a healthy dose of realism. It has shown me what I'm capable of and what the people around me are capable of. It has let me see that much of the time, 10% of the people really do 90% of the work, but at least if you ask 90% of the people, they'll tell you how much they appreciate it. It has proven to me time and time again that creativity, determination, desire, and maybe a little help is all I will ever need to get something done

I would really like to end this on a hopeful note. Even if the region or the whole order is stagnating, I would really like to say that above all AZA has given me hope that there will always be people to fight for what they believe in, and to save the order from the brink of destruction. That's very romantic and all, but if I say I believe it, then you might believe it too, and that would be a bad thing. You would believe it and think to yourself, "Good, someone will fix this." But, I'm not talking about some nameless, faceless force. I'm not talking about a prospective or a group of alephs that will join some time in the future. They don't exist. So if you don't save AZA, who will?

Fraternally Submitted,
Aleph Boaz Avital