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: In the AI era, the path to hi-tech jobs is less and less clear

Uriel Schachter

“Being a computer science student means feeling like the flood could come at any moment, and hoping you can make into the ark in time,” says Daniel, a second-year computer science student (who asks that we don’t reveal his full name). After six years of army service in a development role at Unit 8200 (an elite intelligence unit), several job offers awaited Daniel when he was discharged, but he chose to get a degree instead.

“I left the army with a really high level of knowledge. Friends from my team in the army are now earning 40,000 shekels a month (\$12,800) and I hope I won’t miss the party. I often worry I’m missing out on working at a time when I could earn a lot of money, before I’m no longer relevant,” he says.

Daniel’s 8200 military service gave him potential opportunities that other students don’t have, making his choice to study more difficult. But he is far from the only tech student worrying about whether he made the right choice. In February, between semesters, students typically apply for student jobs in high-tech companies while also taking their university exams.

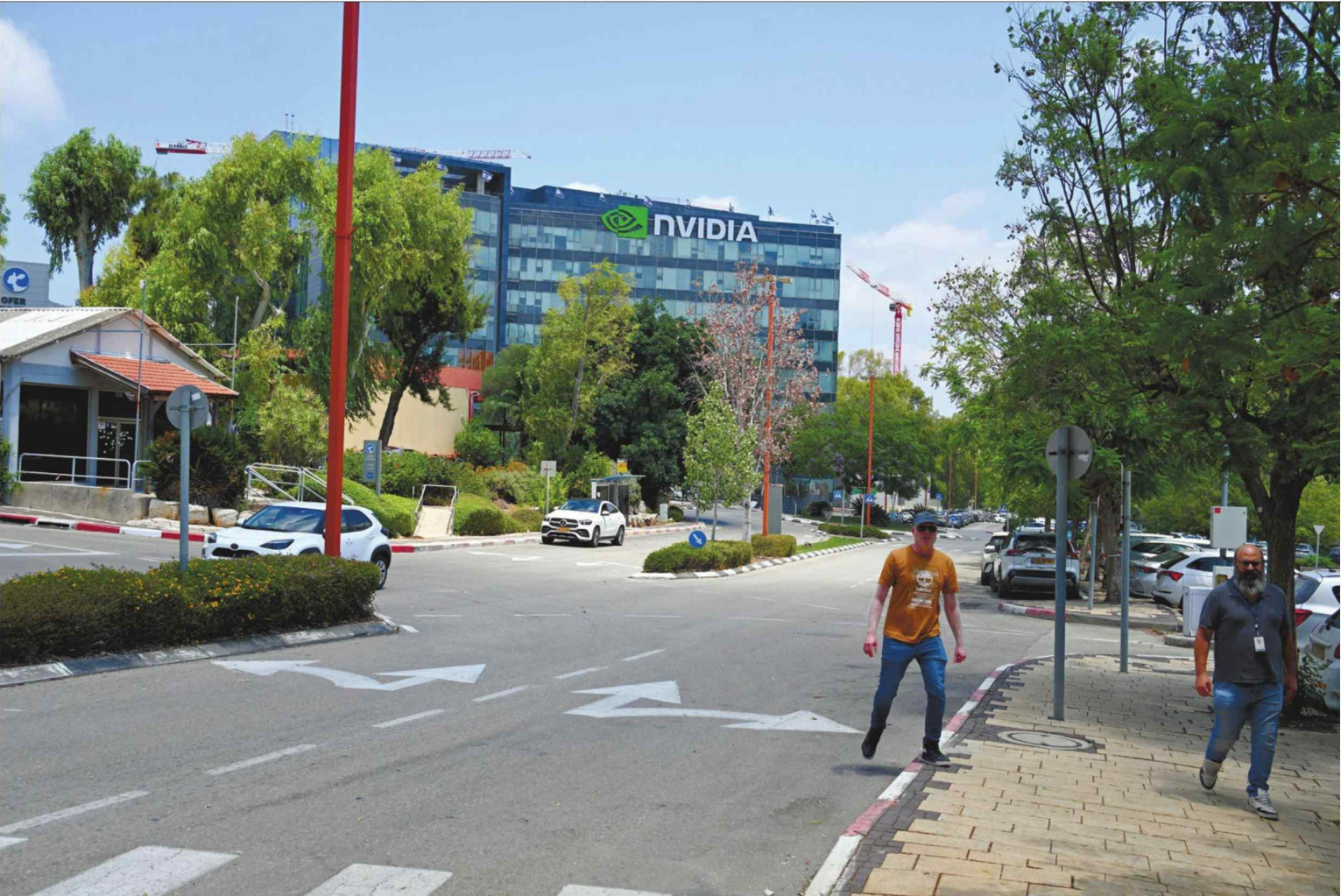
But this year, it’s not just exams and the cost of living that tech students have to worry about. The artificial intelligence cloud is hovering over them, threatening to make an increasing number of programming jobs superfluous.

“I was sure that at this stage of my studies I would have a student job to support myself,” says Yair, a third-year engineering student in one of the country’s large universities. “I don’t, so I’m living with my parents for the moment.”

Gilad, also a third-year engineering student, says he no longer believes that he’ll manage to find a student job before finishing his studies, and is afraid that he won’t find work in high-tech afterwards either, despite his high grades.

“I still don’t think it’s the end of the world, but I am very worried about the future,” he says, adding that most of the students around him are having difficulty finding student jobs, and the select few who do have grade averages of over 90, or secure their first jobs through family connections.

Gilad says that he’s managing meanwhile with the help of his partner’s salary.



Nvidia’s office in the Yokneam industrial zone.

Rami Shlush

In the AI era, the path to hi-tech jobs is less and less clear

‘Can I make money before I’m no longer relevant?’ For young Israelis, getting a STEM degree might now be the only way to get into high-tech – and if there are no jobs available, it could be a waste of time and money

He says that it’s easy to find work that isn’t related to the profession, but has decided that it wouldn’t be worth it for him. “With an engineering degree, you can only really work if you spread it out over another year or sacrifice your grades. These are worth doing for a job at [the software company] Nvidia, but not for work that won’t give me experience as an engineer,” he says.

A different reality

Industry sources confirm that there are fewer student jobs in tech companies than the number of computer science and engineering students, which has increased sharply in recent years. Students who are now in their third or fourth years started their studies around 2022, which was the

peak year for Israeli high-tech. The industry desperately needed workers and offered huge salaries and good conditions compared to the rest of the Israeli economy. Young people saw a good thing and registered en masse for tech studies. But since then things have changed.

“Today it’s more difficult to find a student job than two or three years ago,” says Dana Ron, the general manager at the job-seeking website Drushim. “AI introduced efficiency processes that eliminated some of the entry-level jobs, and the companies only need to hire senior roles. That pushes out a large number of developers – even senior ones, but certainly students – to development jobs in companies that aren’t classic high-tech firms.”

Ron says that about 75 percent of the development jobs for students on her website today are in companies that aren’t in the high-tech industry. “This generation of students thought that they would complete their degree and work in high-tech – they didn’t think they’d work in a bank. But students have to be open-minded and to understand that they have to look for other options,” she says.

Dr. Ayelet Ben-Ezer Gelbard, CEO and vice president of Reichman University, says the changes are reflected in the type of employers who show up to employment fairs on campus. “This year we saw fewer technology firms at the fair, mainly fewer software firms, but there was a respectable representation of defense companies, com-

puting hardware companies and even consulting companies.”

Ben-Ezer Gelbard says that part of the challenge for students comes from their consumption habits. Young people have become accustomed to expensive lifestyles including regular

entertainment, restaurants trips and trips abroad. All this increases the pressure to work while studying. “It’s good that the students work, and we also encourage them to spread out the degree if necessary. It’s important not only in order to enable them to live their lives as



Dr. Ayelet Gelbard Oz Schechter



Pazit Goldstein Aviv Lightricks

they wish, but also in order to acquire experience in the job market,” she says.

Diverse experiences

The challenges students now face are causing many to wonder whether the decision to study was the right one, especially for those who chose to study a tech subject at a demanding university. It’s hard to know what the job market will look like in a year from now – let alone in five years – and so starting a course that lasts several years seems crazy to some of them, certainly when most are several years older than their counterparts in Western countries, having completed military service before starting their studies.

But human resource directors of leading Israeli high-tech companies say that their companies actually encourage young people to acquire degrees. “It’s become increasingly difficult to acquire entry-level experience in the industry, and in my opinion it’s our mistake as an industry, and we’ll pay for it later,” admits Shani Nago-Michal, a senior HR director at the cyber company Axonius.

She says that “the absence of an academic degree is likely to be an obstacle at a certain stage. Even someone who works in a small Israeli startup with friends from the army can suddenly discover that Google or another global company is buying the company, and in order to advance in it they’ll need a degree.”

Pazit Goldstein Aviv, the talent acquisition director at the Jerusalem-based software company Lightricks, encourages young people to get university degrees. She says that Lightricks expects to recruit about 30 workers in student jobs in 2026, some of them undergraduate students and others graduate students. The company is planning to recruit another eight students for design roles.

“Students are dealing with a market that isn’t easy, but we tell young people to study for a degree,” says Goldstein Aviv. “In the end academia gives students more tools, even if you already know how to program. Anyone who wants to work at the forefront of technology has to take the difficult path. Maybe you’ll pay a price for that at first, but later on you’ll be compensated for it.”

Companies known for recruiting large numbers

of students compared to most high-tech firms say similar things. The defense company Elbit say they’ll recruit hundreds of students in 2026. At Nvidia, which plans to significantly increase its manpower in Israel, they say that – as opposed to trends in the industry – they are actually increasing the number of students they hire and employing them in the company’s offices in Be’er Sheva, Tel Aviv, Raanana, Yokne’am and Tel Hai to ensure that they can draw talent from all the main universities.

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Nvidia also says that a student’s grade average is far from the only thing that matters, and that they give preference to candidates who present varied experience, including voluntary activities, non-technological employment experience and military service in command and combat roles. Elbit and Nvidia claim that they rarely recruit candidates who have technological experience without a college degree.

Though tech companies are trying to encourage students not to give up on academic studies, some students are responding with considerable skepticism. “Why wouldn’t they encourage us to study?” said one. “In the end they’re not the ones taking the risk.”

But in the world of academia, they say believe students should look at things from a somewhat different perspective. “It’s important to learn the basic scientific disciplines, which in the end provide the infrastructure to understand how things are changing. Students have always asked why they’re studying linear algebra and how it’s relevant to being programmers,” says Prof. Shahar Kvatinisky, dean of the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. “Today it’s become basic knowledge in work with AI. Five years ago we couldn’t have imagined that.”