

# BUILDING FUTURE **LEADERSHIP**

MARCH 6-11, 2011 ■ JERUSALEM

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הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל  
Jewish Agency for Israel

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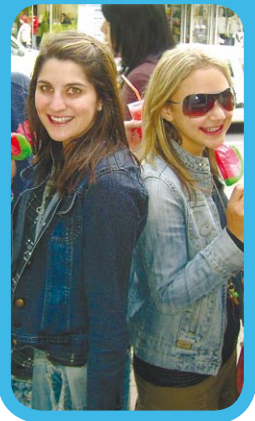
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Contents

<b>A life-long leader</b> Interview with Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency	06
<b>A meaningful experience</b> Interview with Ayelet Shilo-Tamir, CEO of Masa Israel, and Aaron Abramovich, Chair of Masa Israel	08
<b>Big man on campus</b> Hillel President Wayne Firestone	12
<b>Jewish leadership 101</b> Building Future Leadership Alumni: Jordana Gilman	14
<b>Rapping it up</b> Building Future Leadership Alumni: Matt Bar	16
<b>Putting skills to good use</b> Building Future Leadership Alumni: Elana Weil	18
<b>Being a Jew in the FSU</b> Building Future Leadership Alumni: Alexander "Jonathan" Kravchenko	20
<b>Creating the connection</b> Arlene Kaufman, International Co-Chair of the Masa Israel Committee of the Jewish Agency	22
<b>The beginning of a new era</b> Alisa Rubin Kurshan, Senior Vice President of the UJA-Federation of New York for Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources	24
<b>Tikkun olam vs. Jews first</b> What should be the priorities of Jewish philanthropy?	26
<b>Daily schedule</b> of the Building Future Leadership Program, March 6-11, 2011, Jerusalem	28



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# BUILDING FUTURE LEADERSHIP

MARCH 6-11, 2011 ■ JERUSALEM

## Welcome to the Building Future Leadership Program

You've already made one of the greatest decisions of your life. You've chosen to spend an extended period of time in Israel. And while at first you might have stumbled on the Hebrew or mistaken 10 agorot for 10 shekalim, you're now easing your way into Israeli life and becoming a confident member of the Masa Israel Community.

Through the Masa Israel Community's seminars, lectures, concerts and meet ups, you've had the opportunity to meet others from all over the world who have also made the decision to spend a significant amount of time in Israel. Like you, they have planted their feet in Israel to experience daily life and contribute to their Jewish homeland. Like you, they are partners in our collective Jewish future and leaders of their Jewish peers.

Now, we want to help you sharpen your already burgeoning leadership skills. The intensive Building Future Leadership Program will give you the tools to channel your Israel experience by inspiring change, educating others, and launching your own creative initiatives in your communities back home.

This week, get ready to join together with your Jewish peers from all over the world for discussions and workshops, brainstorming sessions and more. Some of the events to look forward to include discussions about issues critical to the Jewish people, entrepreneurship training, networking skill building sessions and meetings with social activists and community leaders.

You will learn about organizations back home and on campus that are actively seeking Masa Israel participants like you to fill leadership positions. By applying the tools and skills you will gain during this intensive week, you will not only become a more confident advocate for Israel and the Jewish people, but you will be able to make a real difference in your communities back home.

Get ready to be inspired, to think seriously about the kind of impact you want to make, and to realize that your dreams are well within your reach.

We can't wait to take part in this exciting journey with you!

The Masa Israel Team



הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל  
Jewish Agency for Israel



ראש הממשלה  
Prime Minister



February 16, 2011

## Dear Building Future Leadership Participants,

I welcome you to Israel and congratulate you on taking part in this important and remarkable program.

The Government of Israel is a proud partner of Masa. The time you spend here studying and volunteering is one which will help shape your lives for years to come by strengthening your Jewish identity and affinity with the State of Israel.

As participants in the Building Future Leadership Program, the flagship of Masa, I am certain that whether or not you decide to make Aliyah, as I would hope, you are destined to become part of the future Jewish leadership and help in building the future of the Jewish State.

I wish you a successful and interesting program.

Sincerely,  
Benjamin Netanyahu



# A life-long leader

Natan Sharansky, the Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel, has been at the forefront of Jewish activism throughout his fascinating life. He shared with us some words of wisdom about the secrets of leadership and the state of the Jewish world today ■ Rebecca Kopans

When it was founded 81 years ago by David Ben-Gurion, the Jewish Agency's original mission was to mobilize world Jewry around Zionist ideals and to save Jews from countries where they were being oppressed and their lives were in danger. In the decades that followed, the Jewish Agency saved some three million Jews, bringing them to the Jewish homeland.

Today, says Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky, priorities have shifted. "There are still Jews living in danger in countries such as Tunisia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan and others. We are watching very closely the 1,200 Jews in Tunisia, 12,000 in Venezuela, 1,200 in Kyrgyzstan, 12,000 in Turkey and especially the 22,000 Jews still living in Iran who are potentially in danger," he asserts. "However, now 94% of Diaspora Jews live in the free world and the challenge is to save them from assimilation."

## Reconnecting to one's identity

Sharansky views the main goal today as "connecting, inspiring and empowering" Jews around the world in order to strengthen their Jewish identity. "Young Jews in countries such as the US often have had no connection to Judaism since their Bar Mitzvah," he says. Thanks to Taglit-Birthright Israel's ten-day trips to Israel which are offered to all young Jews, many people who had no previous connection to their heritage decide to take advantage of the free trips and find that it is often a life-changing experience. "What happens in

ten days? They discover that they have a history, that Israel is a very interesting experiment, and they want to be a part of it – part of the Jewish people," explains Sharansky.

A similar phenomenon is taking place in the Former Soviet Union, where "assimilated Jewish children of assimilated parents and assimilated grandparents" attend Jewish summer camps where they are exposed to their Jewish identity for the first time and become



Sharansky arrives in Israel after being released from the Soviet prison 25 years ago

curious. Suddenly they want to learn more about who they are.

Sharansky believes that this is where Masa is so important. It harnesses the enthusiasm that has been sparked by short-term experiences such as Birthright and summer camps and allows young Jews to come to Israel for longer periods of time on a program which ex-



Natan Sharansky with Masa participants

actly suits their interests and needs. "Israel is a great source of reconnecting to one's history and mutual identity," he believes. "A long-term trip to Israel through Masa is a unique opportunity to help these young Jews become leaders in their communities."

In Germany, for example, there are approximately 200,000 Jews, mostly immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, scattered among 170 different communities – with no leadership and no sense of identity. "The challenge," says Sharansky, "is how quickly we can build potential leaders for communities such as those in Germany. Masa is a powerful tool for preparing them for leadership. It connects an Israel experience with Jewish education."

## Defending Israel

Although some people believe that exposure to anti-Semitic and anti-Israel attitudes has the effect of strengthening one's sense of Jewish identity, Sharansky does not agree. "Today the process of the demonization of Israel causes embarrassment," he claims. Young people don't have the education necessary to defend Israel effectively and many prefer to just keep quiet. They need to be better informed about the facts in order to know how to stand up against anti-Israel rhetoric.

**To be a leader you have to have opinions which are independent of the majority and you have to be ready to defend your opinion, otherwise you won't succeed**

On American university campuses, where anti-Israel sentiments are increasingly widespread, Masa alumni have become important soldiers on the battlefield and Sharansky has been instrumental in promoting Israel Fellows and special programs with Hillel in order to challenge Israel bashers on campuses. In fact, when he became Chairman of the Jewish Agency less than two years ago, Israel advocacy programs existed on 17 American campuses. Today the number is 40 and Sharansky hopes to reach 100 colleges and universities in the near future.

As for aliya, Sharansky says that it has increased in recent years, especially from France, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa and Australia, but today "people make aliya by free choice," not in order to be physically saved. Many of them first made a short trip and then a long trip before deciding to move to Israel, he notes. The Jewish Agency used to separate between three separate spheres, each with its own efforts and budget: aliya, Jewish education and helping Israel. Now they are all treated as part of the same entity, where everyone can find his or

## AN ACTIVIST SINCE BIRTH

Natan Sharansky has always been a leader. As a child growing up in the Soviet Union, he was a chess prodigy. Later he stood out as a human rights activist and one of the most courageous leaders of the Jewish dissident movement, which ultimately led to his arrest on charges of treason and his imprisonment in a harsh prison camp in Siberia. During his nine years as a prisoner of Zion under brutal conditions, his wife Avital stepped on to the world stage, bravely and tirelessly campaigning for his release by appealing to world leaders and generating intense international pressure. As a result, Sharansky became a worldwide symbol for human rights. Avital's efforts were finally rewarded in 1986, when Sharansky was expelled from the Soviet Union as part of a prisoner exchange and immediately made aliya.

Not one to rest for long, Sharansky continued to be a leading social activist after arriving in Israel, remaining at the forefront of the struggle for opening the gates of the Soviet Union. After the Communist regime fell and Jews were finally allowed to leave, he focused his energy on improving the absorption process for the almost one million new immigrants who arrived in Israel from the Former Soviet Union.

In 1995 he founded a political party, Yisrael BaAliya, dedicated to supporting new immigrants, and was elected to the Knesset. He went on to serve in several key government positions, including Minister of Industry and Trade, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Housing and Deputy Prime Minister. He resigned from the government in 2005 over his opposition to the Gaza disengagement plan. In 2009 he was appointed to his current position as Chairman of the Jewish Agency.

her place. "There is only one goal – strengthening our Jewish family," affirms Sharansky.

## The struggle to empower Jews

When asked which characteristics are important for leaders, Sharansky's immediate reply is ambition. "I had ambition to be the best chess player. When, at the age of 14, I saw that I wasn't, I moved to physics. Later I decided to be the best political prisoner," he jokes. He also points out that leaders should be independent thinkers. "You have to have opinions which are independent of the majority and you have to be ready to defend your opinion,

otherwise you won't succeed," he says.

Sharansky certainly never hesitated to stand up for his beliefs. In the 1970's, he became the official spokesman for two Soviet dissident movements at the same time: one was the Jewish Refusenik movement – the term used for Jews who wanted to emigrate for religious and Zionist reasons – and the other was the more universal Moscow Helsinki Group, aimed to promote human rights in the Soviet Union. Sharansky calls Andrei Sakharov, the non-Jewish Nobel Peace Prize winner who was a famous human rights activist and a leader of the Moscow Helsinki Group, his "rabbi."

According to Sharansky, the fact that he was so active in these two important movements is the reason that his case was special and that he became one of the best known Soviet dissidents. That and the fact that "the KGB completely underestimated my wife," he jokes. Sharansky also advised aspiring leaders not to be in a hurry to join the establishment. Rather, one should challenge the establishment until it accepts you, after which you should let the establishment take credit for all your hard work.

Sharansky has implemented this strategy at different times in his life. For example, after he was released from the Siberian gulag, he continued to apply his leadership skills to fight for the fall of the Iron Curtain. In 1987 he spent three months in the US with his wife and newborn daughter, traveling all over to organize a demonstration in Washington DC planned to coincide with the day of Soviet President Gorbachev's first visit to the US capital. He dreamed of bringing hundreds of thousands of people to Washington but was told that he was "crazy and irresponsible" because no more than 17,000 Jews would come to DC in December. Even though the whole Jewish establishment was originally against his plan, they eventually relented and a whopping 250,000 people came to the rally from all over the US. The event was influential in pressuring the Soviet Union to ease its restrictions on emigration.

All of Sharansky's leadership roles were about the same issue – the struggle to empower Jews and to make them proud of being a part of the Jewish people. To be a Jewish leader, he concludes, "you have to feel very strongly about the importance of your identity." Natan Sharansky has made it very clear that he certainly does feel strongly about his identity and that is precisely the secret of his triumphs over a lifetime of challenges. ■



Leadership is the ability to consider all sides of an issue while maintaining your core values and ultimately making decisions for the well-being of everyone under your guidance.



Lillian Aulds, 28, Virginia, Building Future Leadership participant, Masa Israel program: Neve Yerushalayim



# A MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE

“The best way to engage someone in Jewish issues is by giving them a meaningful experience that they will cherish for the rest of their life. The best time to do that is when they are young, when they are more sensitive and are freer to take the time off to live in Israel,” says Aaron Abramovich, Chair of Masa Israel ■ Gaya Polat



Ayelet Shiloh-Tamir,  
CEO of Masa Israel



Aaron Abramovich,  
Chair of Masa Israel

“Those who come here on a Masa program already have that feeling of commitment and are searching for meaning,” agrees Ayelet Shiloh-Tamir, Masa Israel’s CEO. “And we hope to give them a meaningful experience that they will always remember.”

## Becoming leaders

Recognizing the growing need to train and develop the cadre of the future, Masa Israel has begun recently to focus more on enhancing the relationship with its graduates and encouraging them to take on leadership roles after returning to their home countries. “We already have brought to Israel the *crème de la crème* of their age group for a significant amount of time. Those who come here are already more socially engaged; they are looking for ways to enhance their experience, and are interested in other issues aside from themselves. It will be a waste not to use it,” reckons Shiloh-Tamir.

As a result, Masa Israel offers the Building Future Leadership Program to a select group of Masa participants who have been identified as potential future community leaders and activists. “We want to give them tools in order for them to become social leaders, social entrepreneurs, and to be socially engaged. We want them to be able to form a network of future leaders, and to expand their knowledge

on topics and things that they find relevant,” explains Shiloh-Tamir.

“This brings us back to Masa Israel’s original goal,” Abramovich adds, “to increase the commitment and identification of Diaspora Jews to Israel by providing a meaningful experience here in Israel. We understood that in order to achieve that goal, we need also to focus on helping those participants develop tools that will aid them when they return to their communities.” As a result, all Masa participants are encouraged to apply to the Building Future Leadership seminar. “Those who are selected are those in whom we see a spark, that certain drive or enthusiasm, and a commitment to becoming leaders in their communities,” maintains Abramovich.

## Tools for community engagement

The current one-week seminar attempts to provide the participants with actual tools. There are workshops that focus on Jewish

education, important issues in the Jewish world, how to confront various challenges (for example on college campuses), Israel advocacy, and more. Organizers also expose seminar participants to actual project development experience. Participants are divided into small groups according to mutual interest and are required to prepare business plans for their personal projects.

“The Building Future Leadership seminar is project oriented – we want to take them to the next level,” elaborates Shiloh-Tamir. “Our idea is to step up to the next level, where they go back to their communities and they need the tools for community building and engaging. We want to enrich their personal capabilities and show them the different options, give them ideas.”

Abramovich adds: “If we’ll check in twenty years, I’m sure that we will find that those who participated in the current Building Future Leadership program will be

the leaders of the Jewish world in every field. The youth that attends is already much more engaged.”

The idea that Masa participants in general, and Building Future Leadership participants in particular, will become influential in the Jewish world is not far-fetched – it is pretty much the reality anyway. A recent survey conducted among Masa graduates found that 46% of past participants said that “they had given serious thought to pursuing a Jewish professional career in the past year.” Furthermore, even when they return to their respective communities, Masa graduates remain attuned to Israel and Judaism. For example, 86% visited websites related to Israel (compared to 49% of graduates of short-term programs such as Taglit-Birthright Israel); 94% listened to Israeli music (compared to 50%); 80% attended classes, lectures or study groups related to Israel (as opposed to 27% of those who came on short programs); and 61% regularly read

**Ayelet Shiloh-Tamir: “More and more post-college graduates are deciding that instead of settling on a low-paying job, or remaining unemployed, it’s better for them to come to Israel for an internship or professional development program”**



A Masa Post College  
Leadership group





To me, being a leader means guiding others toward a common goal, showing the way by example, and creating an environment in which your 'followers' feel actively involved in the task at hand.



*Sydney Orenstein, 18, California, Building Future Leadership participant, Masa Israel program: Aardvark*



We understood that we also need to focus on helping participants develop tools that will aid them when they return to their communities," says Aaron Abramovich

Israeli newspapers on the Internet (compared to a mere 13% of short-term program alumni). In terms of actual political involvement, 53% participated in political activity having to do with Israel, compared to only 17% of those who came to Israel on programs such as Taglit-Birthright Israel.

#### A stronger connection

Masa Israel participants come from a varied background. Some have had a rich Jewish upbringing – most of these grew up in Orthodox circles, some come from a moderate Jewish upbringing (both parents are Jewish but they went to a public school for example), and some – around 30% of the participants – come with relatively little Jewish background. Most of those in the last group join a Masa program

after visiting Israel on a ten-day Birthright trip.

Surprisingly, the largest increase in Masa participants in recent years came from post-college graduates with little previous affiliation. Indeed, the recent economic depression has led to an increase in the number of post-college participants who seek to come to Israel. "More and more post-college graduates are deciding that instead of settling on a low-paying job, or remaining unemployed, it's better for them to come to Israel for an internship or professional development program. We put them in a top-notch place that is relevant to their field of work, whether it's the high-tech sector, the civil service, the art world or whatever. That way, they come here and gain an important experience that greatly enhances their CV and allows them to find a better job placement when they return home," explains Shiloh-Tamir.

This change is extremely important in her eyes. "It means that these days those who come to Israel on Masa do so not only because of Zionism, but for a wide variety of reasons, including practical reasons of self-promotion," she says. "This provides us with a great opportunity in terms of enhancing and strengthening the connection and identification with Israel and Judaism."

Regardless of the different backgrounds, there is no doubt that for the young Jewish adults who decide to come to Israel on a long-term program, Masa provides an experience that greatly boosts Jewish identity and commitment to the Jewish world. The study mentioned above also found that the impact of a Masa program is profound in all areas of Israeli and Jewish engagement. Even more so, a Masa program enables those with relatively little Jewish upbringing to "close the gap" vis-a-vis those who grew up in a fully Jewish environment.

#### Part of growing up

After participating in a Masa program, there appears to be little difference in the level of attachment and identification with



#### ABOUT MASA ISRAEL

■ Masa Israel, a joint program of the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Government of Israel, is the leading organization that brings to Israel young Jews for a significant experience lasting at least one semester and up to one year. Since its inception in 2003, more than 55,000 young Jews from around the world have come to Israel through Masa to experience living in Israel.

■ This year, more than 10,000 young adults arrived in the country from all over the world, participating in over 180 different programs offering community service, internships and academic opportunities. The menu of Masa programs is designed so that everyone can find the one that best suits their needs and interests. There are programs in literally every field and in every leading institution, university, industry and sector, ranging from professional internships and academic studies to programs in the arts and community volunteering.

■ Masa Israel's programs cater to three different target groups. Some are intended for high-school graduates looking for a meaningful "Gap Year" experience, some are designed for college students interested in spending a semester or year studying in Israel, and others are aimed at post-college graduates who wish to come here for either an internship or professional development. The programs are designed as a win-win situation – to increase their personal attachment and identification with the Jewish people and with Israel while enriching their lives on a personal level.

Judaism and Israel among participants with "rich" Jewish backgrounds and those with limited Jewish backgrounds. All participants show high levels of attachment, identification and commitment to Israel and Jewish issues in all parameters. For example, 53% of non-Orthodox Masa participants said that it is important to date Jews and 71% said that it's important to in-marry. In fact, 63% claim that they only dated Jews in the past year. The percentage of Orthodox Masa participants who say it's important to date Jews and in-marry is even higher – above 90%.

Despite the fact that the number of participants has grown steadily since 2003, Shiloh-Tamir says that there is still more work to do. "Our long-term goal is that a significant stay here in Israel through a Masa program will become the norm. We hope that in the future it will become part of the growing up process of Diaspora Jews – that around one in five will come here." To achieve that goal, Masa Israel exerts continuous efforts to enlarge and expand the wide variety of programs it offers.

We can hope that in the future young Jews from around the world will naturally come to Israel for a significant amount of time, in much the same vein that so many young Israelis travel to South America or India. ■





# Big man on campus

Hillel President Wayne Firestone believes that the student years are the best period of time to connect people to Jewish life. That's why – on campuses throughout the US and many other countries – Hillel actively engages Jewish students, encouraging them to explore their identity and their relationship with Israel ■ Liza Rosenberg

“The student years are what developmental psychologists refer to as the ‘Odyssey’ years, where youth are searching for and processing their identities. It’s a period of enthusiasm, interest and curiosity,” says Hillel President Wayne Firestone. “This is one of the best periods of engagement for the Jewish community. We need to figure out how to connect the dots between these experiences and when they become leaders,” he adds. The challenge is how to “introduce them as potential leaders in Jewish organizations once they leave college.”

On the national level, and increasingly on the global level, Firestone is seeing student leaders emerging as community leaders, whether as volunteers or as professionals. In addition, Firestone and his colleagues see volunteer leadership coming not only from Hillel, but from other groups as well.

Firestone took his first trip to Israel at the end of high school, and then, as he puts it, he just kept coming back. He spent his Junior Year and a semester of law school at Tel Aviv University, and then returned after practicing law for a while. “There was nothing left to do but move back and make aliyah,” says Firestone with a smile.

He lived in Israel for more than eight years and returned to the United States in 2002, working for Hillel ever since. He joined the organization as executive director of Hillel’s Israel on Campus Coalition, which allowed him to travel around to different campuses and learn about student life. Other positions he’s held in the organization include staff director of Hillel’s Strategic Planning Committee and executive vice president for the US operations, before becoming President.

Firestone began his relationship with Hillel during his student years at the University of Miami. “While in college, Hillel whet my appetite for examining both my Israel identity

and my Jewish identity,” he recalls. “These two issues were intertwined, but also very distinct from one another.” Firestone wanted to learn more about Jewish history, Jewish thought and Jewish practice and became a Judaic studies major. Says Firestone, “I wanted to explore both modern and ancient Israel, as they are woven together.”

## The Masa connection

When Firestone talks about students choosing to come to Israel, he again refers to the “Odyssey” period. “Students are running away from home, in a sense. Odysseus learned during his travels that he did want to return home. These students are ‘escaping’. They are traveling to Israel and discovering at least one aspect of home, *davka* by leaving their physical homes. They’re discovering roots, a narrative, a story; they’re discovering

a connection to the people of Israel as well as to the land of Israel,” he says. “That is a very powerful thing.”

As part of its ongoing commitment to Israel, Hillel created the Masa Israel Engagement Internship. There are currently 50 Masa Israel Engagement Interns on 48 campuses across the US and Canada, and each intern is supervised by a local staff member. Each intern is expected to cultivate relationships with the aim of connecting peers to relevant Jewish opportunities, and specifically to identify potential Masa Israel program participants. When these students return to their home communities, they are trained as part of a student leadership cadre in the summer, in order to begin to share their stories and act as role models and peer ambassadors.

This aspect of the program mirrors Firestone’s own experience that the enrichment one gets on an Israel trip is not merely the “wow” factor, as he puts it, of going away for a semester to Paris or Rome. “Students are going to enjoy wherever they go for study abroad programs,” he says. “The Israel experience is less about taking a semester or a year off, and more about the beginning or the continuing of a much longer journey of Jewish identity and connection to the State of Israel. We at Hillel view students as our most invested stakeholders – not just to give them more stuff, but also to help them give back to their peers in a way that the staff perhaps cannot.”

Speaking enthusiastically, Firestone recalls two Masa interns. One was Russian born, grew up in the US and studied at Brooklyn College. The other was born and raised in Russia, studied at Brandeis, and is now impacting on the development of Hillel in Moscow. “They are coming and going in different directions, and each in her own way has changed through her experiences, becoming global leaders regardless of where they live and who they interact with, drawing on their experiences and then



Wayne Firestone,  
President of Hillel

Each social network is different, and what’s going to have the most powerful effect is the fact that they themselves are investing their time, creativity and own signature on each of these stories. This is what has really resonated with this generation.”

## Hillel around the world

Today, there are operating Hillels throughout the Former Soviet Union, as well as in Latin America, Israel, the United Kingdom and Australia, and the organization is thinking about how to leverage its global network, not only in places where it already operates, but also to benefit Jewish students in their global thinking and travels. “More and more, Hillel will be perceived not merely as the place where we have a physical building or an active student group, but also where we connect Jewish students on their physical and spiritual journeys, as well as in other ways,” remarks Firestone.

Hillel operations differ around the world. In Israel, Hillel primarily serves native Israelis, and the language of communication is Hebrew. The nature of activities is different, and students are older than their North American counterparts. In other regions, students are in school for a longer period of time, so the blending of young adults and students is more profound outside the US. And even within the US there is diversity. According to Firestone, “the character of a local Hillel is reflective of the prevailing university environment.”

In the FSU, people who were disconnected for years – and in many cases didn’t even realize they were Jewish – are beginning to recapture and re-explore their Jewish roots. In Latin America, which is one of the most Zionist-oriented regions in the Hillel network, the influence of being exposed to different kinds of pluralistic Jewish expressions is starting to be seen. “What we see emerging is not a homogenization; it’s probably going to look more like a Moroccan *cholent*,” says Firestone with a grin. “It’s going to be very distinctive. You may not know exactly what you’re eating or where it comes from, but it is very flavorful.” ■

applying that knowledge. I see this as the kind of experience where Masa will continue to have a unique impact.”

“When I think specifically about the 140 students participating in Masa’s Building Future Leadership seminar returning home and entering college for the first time, when I think about them focusing their attention on the impact they can have on their campuses, I think about a peer network that can reach thousands, if not tens of thousands,” he adds. “These students probably represent between 75 and 100 different universities. The prospect of bringing them together when they’re in Israel and not just giving them the pep rally, but also the tools to begin to share their stories with their own peer networks is really phenomenal.”

Hillel tries to help these returning Building Future Leadership students identify an additional 60 people in their social networks whom they can connect with personally – “not over Facebook,” says Firestone, “but to actually sit down and have coffee with them, to invite them to activities; to get together with a few others and share experiences.” He adds, “If you take those 140 and multiply by 60, you can really see over the course of the year geographically, not just the breadth of those contacts, but also the depth. This is a generation that acutely knows how to network and bring in their social networks, and part of what we’re trying to do is help them have both the confidence and the skills to share their experiences in a way that is very individualized.



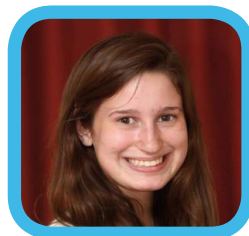
I would like to learn more about current social justice issues and how to become a more effective leader. I would like to learn more about communicating effectively with different groups of people.



Adina Weinberg, 18, Texas, Building Future Leadership participant, Masa Israel program: Aardvark



# Jewish leadership 101



Between high school and college, Jordana Gilman spent a year on Masa Israel's Nativ program, which aims to inspire the Conservative Jewish leaders of tomorrow. She also participated on the Building Future Leadership program. Now she is a leading Jewish activist and Israel advocate at Cornell University, with lots of ideas for involving her fellow Jewish students ■ Natalie Page

Masa Israel's Building Future Leadership program is especially designed to strengthen the leadership skills of young adults who have expressed an interest in assuming active roles in their communities. And it is exactly this intention that prompted Jordana Gilman from upstate New York to join the Building Future Leadership program during her Masa Israel experience on Nativ. "I decided to do the program because I always planned on being a Jewish leader on campus," explains Jordana. "It was always something that I expected to do, and I thought that the seminars would give me good skills to use and would prepare me to take on a leadership role at Cornell University."

Though she did not quite know what to expect going in, Jordana was pleased to find the program to be both challenging and inspiring. "The workshops took a creative approach to practicing public speaking and exploring our own identities. The tours of Jerusalem were to the same famous places but with new and interesting stories and facts. We talked about college, heroes and vision, and I left the program with some solid, realistic, ready-for-action program plans and college level leadership techniques. We also learned a lot about how to advocate for Israel and what to do if there are anti-Israel sentiments on our campus, and we got pretty close as a group as well. By the time Havdalah came around on our second weekend together, we knew that we had experienced something very unique and meaningful, and we were better people because of it," she says.

Jordana was particularly inspired by the guest speakers. "We had great speakers come talk to us, including Gil Troy, a professor from



McGill University in Canada, Neil Lazarus, and Jessica Kosmin, who talked about her experiences advocating for Israel on her campus in England. I feel it helped me channel my leadership skills."

One of Jordana's more memorable Building Future Leadership moments was when she and her peers were sent to the market in Jerusalem to collect food donations for needy families. "On the ride to the market, I was nervous; soliciting really isn't my thing, especially with a language barrier. Twenty minutes into volunteering, however, my arms were heavy with bags of fruit and vegetables, and I was beaming at my partner. It felt amaz-

ing. That's not to say it wasn't hard, because some people said no and some people could hardly help themselves, and that was difficult to see."

The program also afforded Jordana the opportunity to assess the needs of the college she was to attend and to design a program she could carry out on campus. "I created a program that brings together Greek life and Jews in fun celebrations with a little bit of education to make Judaism visible and comfortable, and I hope to implement it this spring," she notes.

## Action on campus

Three months after completing her Masa Israel program, 20-year-old Jordana joined the student body of Cornell University as a pre-med student, and it was not long thereafter that she started making use of her newly gained leadership skills. On entering Cornell University's Olin Library, Jordana noticed that while the Gaza Strip appeared on the library's world map, Israel did not. Displeased with the blatant omission, she took initiative and raised the issue with the maps librarian, and a few days later Israel was added to the map. Needless to say, Jordana was very pleased with the outcome. "Israel is now on the map, in the same font as other countries, and it looks very nice sitting there along the Mediterranean with a little chunk cut out here and there for the future Palestinian state," she remarks.

Jordana has also taken on a leading role in opposing the rhetoric of anti-Israel speakers who give lectures at Cornell by writing letters of response to the editor of Cornell University's newspaper, among other means. Wishing to actively influence Jewish life on campus, Jordana joined the Cornell Hillel



Far left: At the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem. Left: Volunteering with special needs children at the Shalva pool in Jerusalem.

Board and was elected in December 2010 to the Chair of Jewish Education and Culture. As such, she is in charge of interfaith programming and Jewish cultural events.

"I just took on the role of Board Member, and I hope that by the end of this semester some of my programs will have really taken off and I will have brought meaningful Jewish experiences to more people," says Jordana. "The position is the perfect mix of religion and fun that will allow me to create innovative programs and collaborate with other areas of the Hillel Board. It also lends itself well to collaboration with groups outside of the Jewish community at Cornell."

Jordana is excited about her newly assumed role, and has already begun planning the Hillel cultural events that will mark Holocaust Remembrance Day. "My vision for this day includes a daytime event that focuses on the global issues involving Yom HaShoah, specifically human rights abuses in other countries today. We could team up with human rights groups on campus for a public display of solidarity on Ho Plaza. Then later, the program would have a more personal aspect. We are going to be the last generation to hear a Holocaust survivor speak, so I think it is imperative that we invite a survivor for a discussion. The night will conclude with Yizkor candles and a short non-denominational prayer."

## A formidable vision

According to Jordana, the biggest challenge she is facing as a member of the Hillel

If I wouldn't have had the training from Building Future Leadership, I wouldn't have written letters to the campus newspaper and wouldn't have just walked into someone's office and said, 'hey, Israel is not on the map, you have to fix that'

Board at Cornell University is that the great number of Jews on campus, approximately 3,000, has led many to feel that they do not need to participate in Jewish programming in order to have a Jewish experience on campus. "We really want to bring people to our programs and events, so our challenge is to be really engaging and to create conditions that do draw those people in even though they do not feel like they need to go," she explains.

Another issue that she intends to address is the ongoing undertone of anti-Israel sentiment on campus. "It is all very intellectual, speaker based; there are no big protests or people setting up walls, but every so often, once every six weeks, there is a speaker who is anti-Israel or a book that is advertised that is anti-Israel. The students are mostly politically apathetic, but there is a small group of very political students that cause the problems," she notes.

Jordana's leadership vision when it comes to Cornell University is a formidable one: "I want to make Cornell a model university for how students deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We, as students, are not going to help Bibi [Netanyahu] and Mahmoud [Abbas] reach a peace agreement. There are lots of smart people working on that already. What we can do is influence our own and other campuses to focus on our shared goal of peace. This message will resonate well with students and improve how people see Israel."

For those planning on assuming a similar leadership role on campus, Jordana recommends to get involved right from the beginning. "Students typically get caught up in other things and form relationships early on in the year, and if you don't get involved right away you might feel that it isn't your community and that you are not welcome, so I say – just jump right in and start building your community right from the start. That is something that really helped me."

## Amazing experience

While Jordana has always been highly involved in her Jewish community, particularly in the United Synagogue Youth (USY), she recognizes the great impact that her year in Israel has had on her leadership role at Cornell. "I think that I always had it inside me, but Masa and Building Future Leadership gave me the confidence to go for it while I am at college. If I wouldn't have had that training, I wouldn't have written letters to the campus newspaper and wouldn't have just walked into someone's office and said, 'hey, Israel is not on the map, you have to fix that.' And I would have waited another year to get really involved in the Hillel Board, so Masa definitely stepped things up for me. It was a catalyst."

"Building Future Leadership in particular was really helpful. It prepared me for college in a way that I wouldn't have been had I gone straight from high school to college without having the training and workshops to improve my leadership skills," she concludes. "I am really happy I did it. It was an amazing experience for me." ■



# Rapping it up



Hip hop is the most popular genre of music in the world right now, so if you can rap well you can get kids to pay greater attention, explains Matt Bar of Bible Raps, who uses rap to make Jewish texts come alive and be relevant ■ Natalie Page

“When is the Circumcision song coming out? It’s one of my favorites!”; “that rap you guys did today was sick, especially the first one”; “the rap we made is a big hit in our grade!” These are just some of the comments posted on the Bible Raps Project’s Facebook page, statements that speak volumes about the effect that Matt Bar’s Bible Raps has on young Jews in the US.

Bible Raps, however, is not your run-of-the-mill hip hop. Its songs explore themes such as Cain and Abel, the Exodus from Egypt, David and Goliath and the story of Hannukah. The project’s aim is to use hip hop and rap as an educational vehicle for making Jewish tradition more appealing and accessible.

## Turning a dream into reality

The man behind the Bible Raps Project is artist Matt Bar, 31, whose music has been featured on MTV’s “The Real World” and NBC’s “Hip Hop Nation Notes from the Underground.” Matt’s Bible Raps idea came out of his experience teaching Hebrew school. He experimented with presenting Jewish texts as hip hop and rap songs, and received enthusiastic responses from his students.

Realizing that he stumbled upon a great way of combining his love of music with his passion for Judaism and education, Matt decided to turn his idea into a career. He spent the next two years doing just that, and it was at this stage that Masa Israel helped shape him as a leader within the Jewish community.

In 2007, after completing a six-week fellowship at the PresenTense Institute in Jerusalem,

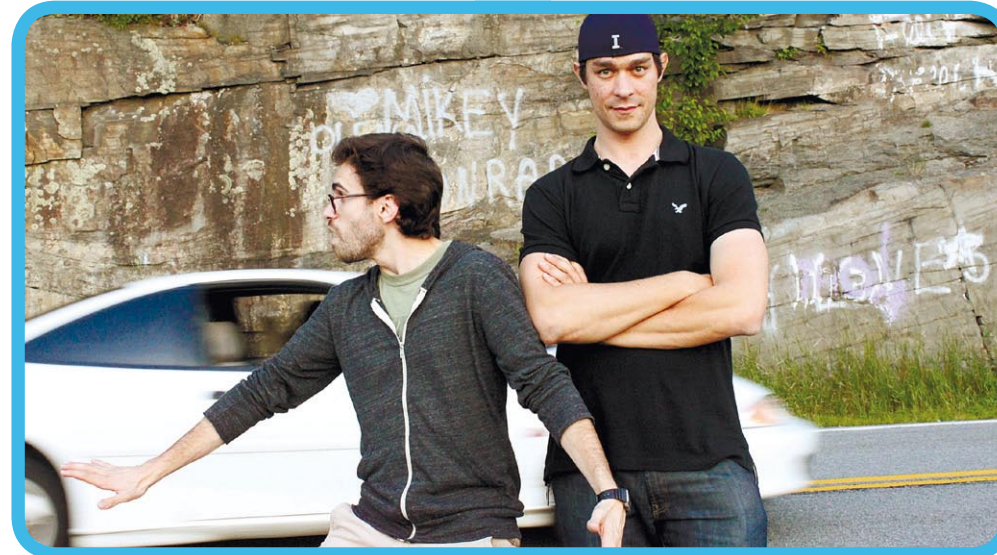
an incubator for Jewish innovation, where he honed his entrepreneurial and business skills, he felt that something was still missing. “At this point the Bible Raps initiative had some legs, but in order to really give it flesh, I needed to learn Torah,” explains Matt.

This realization prompted him to join Masa Israel’s Pardes Year Program. Based in Jerusalem, Pardes is designed to empower students to connect with their Jewish identity by developing the skills to understand classical Jewish sources. Pardes was a transforma-

After each rap, I teach what the song is about and what commentators have said. I use the raps as a jumping-off point for deeper conversation on Judaism and textual tradition.

tive experience for Matt: “The foundations for Bible Raps were set by Pardes. It really opened up to me how awesome the textual history of Judaism is. It colored, changed and oriented my career from that point on with respect to how I approach the Torah and Jewish education. It was also where I met Yael Krieger, who ended up being the project’s educational director for a year.”

Participating in a Masa Israel’s Building Future Leadership program was the next logi-



cal step. “It was nice to meet people in their twenties from all over the world with similar passions who were trying to make things happen,” he notes. “There were a lot of workshops and training by experts about the things that entrepreneurs need to do and about the nonprofit world. I also made a lot of contacts in Israel through Building Future Leadership, which have been helpful in my career, because I like to come to Israel for a month or two every year to learn Torah, and these contacts led to gigs during my subsequent trips to Israel.”

It was the final presentation that solidified all that Matt had learned during the program. “All the training that we had done regarding how to do a pitch, how to engage an audience, how to network, came together in the presentation and talking to people afterwards. It was a good experience, and people from different organizations got to hear about my project.”

Matt credits Building Future Leadership with sharpening his skills as an entrepreneur, which helped him better negotiate the busi-



ness world upon his return to the US to formally set up his nonprofit project.

## Dynamic workshops

Matt tours the US, performing with his creative director and musical producer, Ori Salzberg. “After each rap, I teach what the song is about and what commentators have said, or how I view it. I try to make it into a conversation, so that it will be a combination of learning and entertainment. I use the raps as a source like any educator uses sources, and I use my raps as a jumping-off point for deeper conversation on Judaism and textual tradition.”

The two musicians also conduct workshops, 115 to date, applying the typical *beit midrash* style of learning where participants study a Jewish text together. The group then splits up, some working with Matt on writing a rap about the text they studied, others preparing a “beat” (i.e., background music) with Ori, and others, at times, are given the opportunity to film footage for a music video. The group then recon-

venes to record the rap song over the prepared beat. At the end of the workshop, each student receives a CD of their rap and a recording of their live performance or music video.

A follow-up on workshop participants a year later yielded positive results. “We saw that the kids who had gone through this process not only remembered what the lesson was about, but they had also memorized the song’s verses,” comments Matt. “They were studying their Hebrew school notes or Torah lesson outside of class every time they revisited the video or song on their iPod – it was reinforcing the lesson that was taught.”

Matt stresses that combining the Bible Raps workshops with new media creates a powerful new platform for discussing Jewish themes: “The workshop participants are of all ages and from every denomination on the spectrum. When you put their raps up on our website, all these people of different ages and denominations are able to have a dialogue about the Torah, which doesn’t happen very often.” He adds that “it’s a very dynamic pedagogical workshop, and somebody needs to jump on it and fund the project because this is the pedagogy of 21st century education.”

The Bible Raps Project also offers a curriculum tool kit, which is currently being used in over 150 classrooms in 20 cities and six countries. There are even eight year-round Bible Raps classes in session. The tool kit, which Matt developed during his time at Pardes, turns his raps into a comprehensive curriculum resource for educators, helping them improve the way they teach Torah in their classroom.

Matt explains that “the songs are consciously incorporating the texts and the commentators of the past. If the students like the song [taught in class], then you can pretty much teach any Midrash or any of these commentators that are incorporated in the song and teach about them or Jewish values. The idea is not to replace the tradition of Jewish learning, but to make the avenue to Jewish learning more accessible and wider.”

Matt believes that his hard work is paying off and that he is indeed succeeding in igniting his audiences’ interest in Jewish religion and heritage, particularly the younger generation. “They are thirsting for a connection to their tradition, but it is hard for them to figure out exactly what Judaism is. There have been nume-

## THE SILENCE

Let me talk about the silence, even though Papa held his heart tweek his eyelids, talkin’ ‘bout the stars are my kids, but a birth on earth is needed to supply it, up to Moriah with a knife and some dry twigs, ‘where’s the sacrifice?’ he said god will provide it, but I got a feeling that I’m it, could this be a trick cause a joke brings Isaac, Papa got a vibe and I stand right beside it, something ain’t right there’s a fire inside it, the dawn is red I no longer see violet, the stars are aligned and the sign is violence – silence.

**Chorus:** One day, you’ll see, like the sand surrounding the sea Like the stars light up eternity, such a people will come from your seed Have faith, in me, Like the dust between wandering feet Like the hope that prayers aren’t dreams Such a people will come from your seed.

He put the wood on my back, I looked him in the eyes thought that he would look mad, but looked back with ease in his eyes and on top of all that, his look was so fat, couldn’t cut it with a knife, guess I’ll put it like that, cause he put it like that, we got to the top and my hands were strapped, and my feet were bound, yeah, Papa kept his stare no didn’t look round, with his hand in the air and the knife coming down, but the stare that we shared was the jewel in the crown of my soul so my heart no it didn’t even pound, no sound, just silence.

They say the days of creation, took up the time of 1,000 generations, I don’t think that they playin’, suspended in space is the mist of amazement and though the blade was blazin’, the sun was undone and there was a million days in, a moment of particular engagement I heard the silence sayin’ I will put my faith in a man, Amen.

the first thing in Judaism that I like or feel connected to. It makes them happy, because it is in them; they just need to find the right vessel or mode of incubating their Jewish spirit, which is difficult for them to find. We provide them with that vessel in the form of hip hop, which is their language, so it speaks to them and brings Judaism down to earth for them.” ■

Matt Bar is performing for Building Future Leadership participants on March 10th. For more information about Bible Raps, go to [www.biblerapsnation.com](http://www.biblerapsnation.com).



# Putting skills to good use



Elana Weil participated on the Building Future Leadership program while spending a semester at Haifa University through Masa Israel. Upon returning to the University of Arizona, she became a leading Israel advocate on campus and now encourages other students to come to Israel on Masa programs ■ Natalie Page

A defining encounter in Elana Weil's life took place during her sophomore year at the University of Arizona. "A group from 'Students for Justice in Palestine' put up a huge 'apartheid wall.' On it they posted horrific pictures and statistics taken completely out of context, and they were also handing out propaganda fliers with distorted facts. There was also a free-speech wall with quotes such as 'Die Zionist pigs' and 'Israel will not be forever,' things that upset me to the core. I tried to engage in conversation, explaining that I was offended by what they were doing. Their group leader responded by throwing out all these facts at me, and I just could not compete with him because I was not trained in Israel advocacy."

Feeling helpless and frustrated at not being able to properly respond, Elana realized that she had to better prepare herself to handle such events, which she felt were increasing in scope all across the US and around the world.

## The path to leadership

It was during her spring semester abroad at Haifa University the following year that Elana was able to acquire the Israel advocacy tools she desired. As part of her Masa Israel study abroad program, Elana was offered the unique opportunity to take part in the Israel advocacy track of the Building Future Leadership program, in which select Masa Israel participants receive Jewish leadership training. Elana notes that "when the Masa Israel representative came to talk with us at the University of Haifa about Building Future Leadership, I was so excited; I knew it was my golden opportunity."

And her expectations were indeed fulfilled. "The program was amazing. I met students

from various Masa Israel programs and we got to speak with Israeli dignitaries and go on tours to key strategic areas. I was trained well in Israel advocacy; we received an intensive course on the history of the conflict, guided by some great thinkers."

"One of the most important things that I learned, which I still use today, is that there are some people that you should not waste your energy on, such as the gentleman I was speaking to [from Students for Justice in Palestine] who was trying to demonize Israel," says Elana. "We are not out there to try and convince people who are already anti-Israel. Our goal is to convey the truth about what is going on to people who are uneducated on this matter so that they will not be influenced by the lies that are being spread about Israel. Thanks to the Building Future Leadership program, I am now more knowledgeable than most college students on campus about this issue, so that makes me the go-to person for a lot of people who do not know."



Building Future Leadership did not only improve Elana's ability to defend Israel; it also helped sharpen her leadership skills through practical workshops on public speaking, event planning, networking and grassroots support building. "It really inspired me and made me feel that I can make a difference when I got back to campus. It strengthened my desire to be a leader," she notes.

Elana, who was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay area, had already visited Israel on three short-term programs prior to her study abroad experience, each exposing her to new aspects of Israel and Judaism and making her reevaluate her Jewish identity. It was the Masa Israel program and her Building Future Leadership experience, however, that was the most significant in cementing her passion for Israel and enhancing her leadership skills and knowledge.

For Elana, leadership means having a vision. She explains that "every Jewish leader has their own passion that they care about and they do well. For me, it is to get more young Jewish adults to become more passionate about the Jewish people, their Judaism, and Zionism and Israel. It means educating them and making the Jewish people stronger. And it also means being a good listener, understanding people, working hard, having a vision and working toward that vision."

## Turning theory into practice

Elana is a prime example of how to put newly acquired leadership skills to good use. Upon returning from her Masa Israel study abroad program last August, she became a Masa engagement intern at her university, in addition to undertaking a Hillel Fellowship



Lower left: Volunteering during the recent GA in New Orleans. Left: After running the 10-km. Dead Sea Race. Below: On a field trip to the Golan Heights

Elana offers the new round of participants the following advice: "Try to get as much out of the program as possible. Don't be afraid to ask questions. During the program, think about how you are going to use this incredible experience once you get back to the US or wherever you are from, because this is really an amazing training program that can give you the tools to do a lot of great things when you get back from your Masa program."

"Israel is facing a critical time right now and I feel that especially the young Jewish people have to be connected to Israel," stresses Elana. "We need to do everything to ensure that we combat this hatred that is being spread, because Israel has the right to exist. It is our home, and it is a scary time out in the world right now for Israel, and we need all the people we can get."

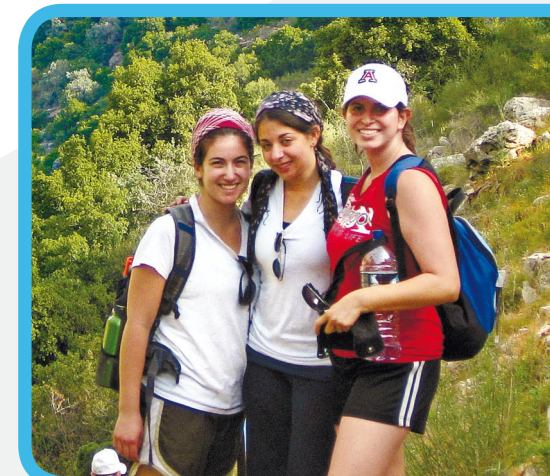
**Thanks to Building Future Leadership, I am now more knowledgeable than most college students on campus about Israel, so that makes me the go-to person for a lot of people who do not know**

Agency, who was interested to learn about the key issues for Jewish college students on campus and the considerations that are keeping more students from coming to Israel. Elana has also recently attended a Saban Leadership Seminar, organized by AIPAC, and a Young Zionist Leadership conference, held in Miami, through Hagshama.

## Don't be afraid to ask questions

For Elana, the best reward is the impact she is having on young Jewish adults at her college. In one such case, she managed to sway a student who was not at all involved in Judaism on campus to visit Israel. "He was graduating in December, applying for grad school in the fall, and looking for jobs," she recalls. "I just kept on meeting and talking with him and he ended up deciding to go on the Masa program Career Israel. I feel like I really made a difference for him, because now he is going to have an incredible experience that he never thought he would have, interning at a company in Israel."

After making good use of the knowledge gained during Building Future Leadership,



Now nearing her graduation with a double major in psychology and Judaic studies and a business minor, the 22-year-old is seriously considering turning her desire to support Israel into a professional career. She notes that "while I love psychology, it is not as much of a passion for me as Israel is, and I feel that I can use so much of what I have learned in psychology to help Israel in the future. If I don't end up getting into a career relating to Israel, I am positive that I will make time to do things on the side and remain involved." It seems that Elana Weil has a long leadership path ahead of her. ■



# Being a Jew in the FSU



Alexander “Jonathan” Kravchenko smiles frequently as he recalls his time spent in Israel as a Masa participant. He has no doubt that his experience on Masa shaped his life in terms of both his profession and his involvement in Odessa’s Jewish community ■ Liza Rosenberg

The 29-year-old from Odessa, Ukraine came to Israel with Masa at the end of 2006 to study business administration and English, joined by participants from all over the Former Soviet Union. Most were from Russia and Ukraine, while others were from places like Moldova, Georgia and Belarus.

“I had an electronics degree and had never done anything related to business before, but I was interested in studying business administration,” says Jonathan. “Masa not only offered me an opportunity to do just that; it also provided an exciting, comprehensive program that allowed me to study in Israel and learn about aspects of Israeli society that I hadn’t gotten to know on previous visits.”

## Getting to know Israel

After spending the first month of the program improving his Hebrew in an ulpan, Jonathan spent the next four months taking a mix of business and English courses, as well as touring the country, honing his leadership skills and having what he fondly refers to as his “Israeli experience,” which included an amazing two-week stint volunteering at an army base near Tel Aviv, a weekend spent living with host families in Rosh Ha’ayin’s Reform community and a group activity planting saplings in the Carmel on Tu Bishvat, “where the big fire was,” he says with a rueful smile. “It was a mitzvah for us to plant those trees in Israel, and it was very important to me to be able to do this,” he added.

Jonathan and his fellow Masa participants lived in a hotel in Jerusalem’s Malcha neighborhood, studying at the Malcha

Technological Garden branch of Israel’s Open University during the week and enjoying a variety of activities and programs over the weekends. “Our weekend activities were just as important as our regular programming and played an integral role in our overall experience,” he stresses. “It gave us an opportunity to spend time getting to know the country and its people better.”

Living in Jerusalem added immeasurably to his Israeli experience, as he took advantage of the city’s various social and cultural offerings, including Jerusalem’s infamous “Hamshushalayim” festival, which offers ei-

**Masa pushed me to consider moving in a direction that I hadn’t previously considered – entering the business world and taking on leadership and management roles**

ther free or discounted entry at cultural and touristic venues throughout the city over three successive weekends at year’s end. “It was a wonderful experience,” notes Jonathan. “Thanks to Masa’s staff, we received all the information we needed about the museums, transportation and so on. I was able to visit all of the museums for free, museums I

might not otherwise have had an opportunity to discover on my own,” he added.

## Changing direction

Prior to participating in Masa, Jonathan worked as a counselor for the Jewish Agency from 1999 through 2006. Since the Jewish Agency is one of several organizations promoting Masa in Ukraine – along with Nativ and Hillel – it’s not surprising that he decided to participate in Masa. “Since I was working for the Jewish Agency in Odessa at the time, I was already familiar with Masa and the different study options that were available. The business administration track seemed like a good idea,” he says. “I liked what the program had to offer on a number of different levels.”

Upon completing the program, Jonathan received a certificate that highlighted his excellent grades. He notes that he had the best grades in his group, even though there were other participants who had previously taken business courses or received degrees in related subjects in their home countries. “Masa gave me the tools to look at and think about things differently. The things I learned during the course of the program – both in my studies and through other Masa activities – definitely helped me out professionally after I returned to Ukraine,” he says.

Today, Kravchenko works as a manager in a company that sells electronic goods. He works at the wholesale end



Left: A kiddush with the local Jewish community. Below: Odessa, Ukraine.

Jewish Agency activities. Today, as a Masa graduate, he is more involved in community activities that he discovered during the program, and less involved with the activities run by the Jewish Agency.

These days, as a husband and father of two children, Jonathan considers himself to be more active in the community. Jewish holidays are very important to him; he goes to the synagogue every year on Yom Kippur, and carefully observes the traditions of holidays like Yom Kippur and Passover. “My colleagues weren’t used to people celebrating holidays from other religions,” he remarks. “I explained to them that as a Jew, there are certain holidays when I won’t be coming into work. They don’t have a problem with that,” he notes.

of the business, specializing in the sale of laptop computers and desktop monitors to stores and businesses across southern Ukraine. In addition, he was also responsible for developing the infrastructure for this aspect of the business, and has played a key role in the company’s high monthly sales.

Says Jonathan, “Masa provided me with the opportunity to discover that business administration is easier than I thought it would be, and pushed me to consider moving in a direction that I hadn’t previously considered – entering the business world and taking on leadership and management roles. The knowledge I gained from my business administration studies during Masa definitely helped me to reach my current position.”

Jonathan is still involved with Masa, and is happy to visit other cities and towns to present and promote the program, taking time off from work as necessary in order to do so. As a program graduate, he is sometimes called upon by Masa organizers to attend functions in cities like Kiev, talking to prospective program applicants and enthusiastically sharing his experiences. He recently participated in a tour around the Former Soviet Union with other Masa graduates, visiting big cities throughout the region with the express purpose of promoting Masa.

## The Jewish connection

Kravchenko was 14 when he made his first trip to Israel, and continued to make periodic trips for two to four weeks at a time to visit relatives living in the country. He began learning Hebrew 13 years ago, improving his language skills while working for the Jewish Agency in Odessa and then honing them even

more during his five-month stint in Israel on Masa. Today, he is virtually fluent.

He always felt like he was part of Odessa’s Jewish community, but was not such an active member in his youth. While working for the Jewish Agency, he was active primarily in

## UKRAINE’S JEWISH COMMUNITY

A few years ago the Ukrainian Jewish population was estimated at 215,000-220,000 people, with approximately 400,000 meeting the qualifications for immigration to Israel under the state’s Law of Return. However, a survey conducted in 2005 by the Jewish Agency’s Jewish People Policy Planning Institution found that there were only approximately 84,000 Jews in Ukraine, but the accuracy of this number is questionable because many Ukrainian Jews are not prepared to officially admit to being Jewish. Less than 15% of Ukrainian Jewish children attend Jewish day schools, and approximately 80% marry out of the faith. Despite these figures, Ukraine continues to have one of the world’s largest Jewish communities. Ukraine’s Jewish community is actually comprised of many smaller communities, including Chabad, Hasidic Jews, Reform Jews and others. Each group has its own distinct characteristics, and the degree of connection to Israel varies, with some groups being more connected and other groups having little to no connection. The Jewish Agency is one of many organizations operating in the area to promote Jewish and Israeli issues.



For the Kravchenkos, it was very important to both of them that their children attend Jewish day schools. Their daughter is in second grade at a local secular Jewish school, and their son will go to the same school once he finishes pre-school. “We definitely wanted a school that was connected to Judaism, but didn’t want the school to be too religious,” says Jonathan. “At this school, the children learn regular subjects such as mathematics, and they also learn Hebrew.”

Kravchenko is still in contact with several other program participants from his group, though these connections are kept up solely via the Internet because these friends are primarily in Russia and Israel. “Some of them,” he notes, “have even made aliyah.” ■



# Creating the connection

Three decades is a lengthy period of time to dedicate to Jewish leadership. But firsthand experience has shown Arlene Kaufman, the international co-chair of the Masa Israel Committee of the Jewish Agency, just how important it is to nurture the young generation and to convince them to take up the mantle of Jewish leadership ■ Akin Ajayi

“I first became involved because an older woman, a woman whom I liked, invited me to join a committee,” Arlene Kaufman explains. “I didn’t ask. I was invited. And this was a problem in the past; if you were not in a certain track, people were not necessarily helpful in encouraging you to explore what Judaism actually meant.”

There is a lesson to be learnt from this, she continues: “If one is young and has the passion, but not the confidence to explore that passion, I don’t think that the Jewish community has been welcoming in the past.” In this anecdote lies an invaluable clue about how best to energize the young Jewish generation to tackle both the challenges facing Diaspora communities and the increasingly fragile connection with Israel in the 21st century.

Kaufman, the international co-chair of the Masa Israel Committee of the Jewish Agency and on the Boards of the JDC and the Birthright Israel Foundation, has a long and distinguished history of service to Jewish communities. A past president of the Palm Beach County Federation, she has also served as the chair of Project Interchange, an institute of the American Jewish Committee that organizes short trips to Israel for influential non-Jews. In short, she has made a life’s work of ensuring strength and continuity in the American Jewish community.

## Providing the tools

Kaufman understands intimately the importance of long-term initiatives that bring young



Jews closer to Israel and to Jewish causes. “We’ve known for a long time that they engender a true Zionist zeal,” she observes. This is the case, in her opinion, regardless of the social or religious orientation of the program in question. “Of course, there have been programs like Otzma that have been around for years, that have been able to create even in the non-observant a love of Israel and a love of their people,” she says.

What was lacking up to now, in her estimation, was an authentic plurality in the scope of this approach. “It’s brilliant that the Jewish Agency thought of expanding the program, of

bringing Jews from all over the world who are interested in Israel to Israel.”

Masa’s work has been instrumental in this respect, serving as an umbrella for more than 180 work, study and volunteer programs in Israel for Jewish young people. Ranging from ecological activism to facilitating bilateral and consortia relationships between American and Israeli universities, it has been influential in strengthening Jewish identity and connection to Israel.

Kaufman, however, notes that while the content of the programs is clearly important, the first priority lies in creating the connection in the first place. “What we hope to do is to give them (the young people) the tools to turn their dreams and aspirations to practical use – the tools and the contacts,” she says.

## The need for action

The opportunities engendered by engaging directly with Israel – in Israel – are the first step in building a solid foundation for re-energizing the next generation, says Kaufman. “What is hoped is that when they return to their homelands, whether in the United States or South America or Russia or wherever, that they will have the networking contacts and the confidence to become a part of their community, and to serve their community productively,” she adds.

It is fair to observe that there has been a sense of foreboding concerning the attitude of young Jews towards community life for some time. Tangible connections between



Young American Jews on a Masa Young Judeaea program in Israel

young Jews and Israel have become less obvious, even at times strained, in recent years. However, these concerns have built up to almost crisis point in recent years, and Kaufman advocates the need for drastic action.

“The emotional and psychological engagement is waning, along with our memory of the Holocaust,” she suggests. The dissipation of this sense of identity is not merely the consequence of a capacity to put behind the terrible memories of 60 odd years ago; the real fear is that this apathy will extend beyond the internal strength of Jewish communities in the Diaspora, to a fundamental schism between the Diaspora and Israel itself.

“There are no real feelings about why the state of Israel is important,” Kaufman says. “In the years before 9/11, there were even arguments that the Anti-Defamation League was no longer relevant. But now, this generation is beginning to feel real anti-Semitism for the first time. We feel in danger, given what is going on in the world, and this is something that is mirrored in a real sense of the fragility of Israel itself.”

## Generation gap

While she is careful to note that she is speaking specifically about the American Jewish community, Kaufman pinpoints the beginning of this change to the generation behind her, those now in their mid-forties and older. Precisely because this cohort never felt discriminated against or threatened because of their Jewish identity, the importance of community life was no longer a priority. “Identity was fading, and people of this generation did not know or care about Jewish identity,” she

What is hoped is that when they return to their homelands, whether in the US or South America or Russia or wherever, that they will have the networking contacts and the confidence to become a part of their community, and to serve their communities productively

## SERVICE TO US JEWRY

Arlene Kaufman has served in numerous capacities at the national level in the Jewish communal world, and has long worked in service to Jewish continuity and international issues. She is chair of the United Jewish Communities (UJC) Israel and Overseas Pillar, co-chairs the Post Birthright Israel Committee and has co-chaired the UJC 2001 General Assembly, the Prime Minister’s Mission and Israel at 50. Kaufman is a member of the board of directors and the executive board of the Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County, Florida. Additionally, she is a key funder of Birthright Israel post-trip programming and is a former national missions chair for United Jewish Appeal. She has served on The Jewish Agency board of governors, and the boards of the American Joint Distribution Committee and the American Jewish Committee.

notes. “They did not care about Israel; it was just a place where Jews lived. For those who did understand, the connection was strong; but for those who didn’t, the connection was less strong.”

Regarding this generational gap, Kaufman acknowledges that what has been lost cannot be regained. “If you look at Jewish community activism, you will see that many of the major donors are in their 50s and older. There is a whole missing generation.” But far more important is ensuring that the tide is reversed before it becomes too late. “That is why Masa and Birthright are so important,” she affirms.

It is one thing to facilitate opportunities for young Jews to strengthen their identity, of course, but quite another to ensure that this new found energy is directed productively. Kaufman strongly believes that it is for each generation to seek for themselves how best to be of service, rather than to have themselves dictated to by their forebears. “They have to figure it out for themselves,” she says. “When they return from Israel, in all likelihood their local communities will not know what to do with them.” It is, she suggests, for them to determine how best they can serve. “They have to shape their own destinies.”

This brings to mind another traditional tension, one of differing objectives and viewpoints between different generation groups. Kaufman is refreshingly candid on this point. Differences of opinion are natural, she opines; what is important is the underlying intent. “Masa will help them to take up this slack. Perhaps it will not be as we might have anticipated, but that’s OK. The important thing is to ensure that there is ultimately continuity.” ■



I think what separates successful leaders from the rest, is how well they listen to those they want to help, and how they respond once they understand the needs of the community.



Alex Kadis, 23, Ohio, Building Future Leadership participant, Masa Israel program: Otzma



# The beginning of a new era

Alisa Rubin Kurshan, a Jewish educator by training, is the Senior Vice President of the UJA-Federation of New York for Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources. She believes that American Jews must strengthen their Jewish identity by reinforcing their connection to Israel through both trips and education ■ Gaya Polat

The list of programs that the New York Jewish Federation supports is enormous – both locally and in Israel. As befits New York, the list is very diverse and includes religious organizations, synagogues, cultural groups, day schools, summer camps, economic relief programs, psychological services and much more. Some of the Federation’s newest projects include a new initiative to support Jewish families hit by the economic downturn, the Israeli Trauma Coalition, The Jewish Healing and Hospice Alliance, and Eden Village Camp – a new Jewish summer camp in upstate New York that mixes environmental consciousness with Jewish values.

## Positive experiences

Kurshan explains that the driving logic behind the decision-making process for allocating funds is a firm belief in quality and access. The key to improving, increasing and sustaining Jewish identity is through enhancing the quality of Jewish programs. “If somebody has a quality Jewish experience, they feel more connected. When they have a positive experience, they feel more connected. And if they

feel more connected, they will be leaders. It is about helping them feel more connected across both time and space. By time I mean to their Jewish history and to contemporary Jewish issues, and by space I mean both to other Jews and to Israel,” she says.

The Federation is also committed to providing diverse options. That is why the New York Federation supports a wide variety of different Jewish programs: Jewish day schools, summer camps, synagogues, cultural events and groups, and so on. “Not everyone will want to study in a yeshiva, but for those who do, we need to provide them with a quality program for it. Not everyone will want to take a year to go to Israel to explore their professional career options, but again, if they do, they should have quality options to do so,” she explains.

The Federation also strives to increase access to Jewish programs and events. “Access plays a crucial role,” says Kurshan. “Essentially, if we provide quality programs and wide access, people feel connected. That means they’ll be committed and may become leaders. We have trouble defining what leader-

ship is exactly, but we do know that the first thing that we need is to help people feel connected – and that’s done by diverse and accessible quality programs.”

## Long-term visits


The need to support quality and meaningful experiences leads Kurshan to firmly believe in the importance of Masa and other long-term programs in Israel. “I will be very clear about this; I think that every visit to Israel, especially a long-term visit, is very important in order to increase one’s commitment and Jewish identity.

A long-term visit allows you to encounter Israeli society, meet people, learn the language, experience Israeli culture and ask tough questions. Basically, it gives you the chance to

truly engage in Israel’s society in a meaningful way. It’s not just a tour; it’s so much more than that. In fact, I think that the importance of short-term visits such as Birthright is that they encourage the second longer, more meaningful visit to Israel,” she says firmly.

It’s not surprising then, that the New York Federation allocates significant funding for scholarships to those who want to spend time in Israel – at every level. “Every trip is important, whether it’s a gap year program or a trip by a Jewish day school. Every trip is important for Jewish identity. It’s good that there is a wide variety of options for those who want to come and that they have opportunities to decide how they want to experience it. Some prefer after high school, some prefer to improve their professional standing, some to study. Each one of those options is positive. And every trip is important,” Kurshan notes.

Kurshan says that the understanding that long-term visits to Israel are important is supported by evidence. “We see the data coming to us from field research. We see who comes back and who is involved. There’s just no doubt that long-term visits to Israel are important at every age. I’ll give you an example:

 Kurshan recognizes that there are several important challenges currently facing American Jews, specifically the growing assimilation and the weakening commitment to Israel and Judaism

a couple of weeks ago, we had a committee meeting here of highly distinguished Jewish leaders – lawyers, Wall Street folks, entrepreneurs, bankers – and from this group, five out of eight had spent a significant duration in Israel. One of them during his speech specifically mentioned his trip to Israel as dramatically changing his life, connecting him to his Jewish roots and helping him become a better banker.”

The impact that a Masa program can have is also seen in other ways, Kurshan says. “Recently we’ve had more and more people who come to us and say, ‘look, I’ve been on

Birthright, or Masa, and it changed my life. Now I would like to work in the Jewish community. Or, if they’re employers who are hiring, they would like to hire people who’ve also done that. In that regard, and due to the increasing amount of people going to Israel through Masa, I think it is the beginning of a new era, that more young people are starting to take control of their Jewish identity.”

## Educating about Israel

This change is crucial in Kurshan’s eyes. She recognizes that there are several important challenges currently facing American Jews, specifically the growing assimilation and the weakening commitment to Israel and Judaism.

“I think that the relationship between North American Jews and Israel is not that easy, or trivial. It is not at all a given,” she asserts. “It is something that we must work on. We need to work hard to forge those relations. I think that we American Jews don’t appreciate enough how much we need Israel, and how important it is to us. I think that there is a lack of sufficient knowledge about Israel here in North America, even in our own institutions, so that many people are hearing around those who challenge the legitimacy of the Jewish state, without having enough knowledge and history, without knowing enough about the other side of the debate to understand the ramifications.”

In light of this situation, Kurshan believes that emphasizing Israel in the American Jewish education system should be a top priority, but she makes a distinction between Israeli *hasbara* and Israeli knowledge. “We definitely need to work on our Israeli knowledge. However,” she adds, “I also think that Israelis don’t always appreciate us enough, and how much they need us. But I think that the Israeli government’s recent decision to help subsidize Masa is a step in the right direction.” ■



Alisa Rubin Kurshan



A leader is someone who can take charge in difficult, or not so difficult, circumstances, remains positive, can see the big picture of their actions as well as the end goal, and has the ability to communicate well with people they are working with.



Whitney Frost, 22, Virginia, Building Future Leadership participant, Masa Israel program: Otzma



# Tikkun olam vs. Jews first

As Jews, where should our priorities lie? Should we focus our resources on supporting fellow co-religionists who are in need? Or should we adopt a more universal approach, reaching out to all those who are in distress regardless of their religion and nationality? ■ Rebecca Kopans

The tension between the Talmudic imperative of “*aniyei ircha kodmim*” (your town’s poor come first) and the call to do “*tikkun olam bemalchut shadai*” (repair the world under God’s sovereignty) is increasingly the subject of an ongoing debate among Jewish leaders. The “universalists” believe that, as Jews, it is our duty and moral responsibility to extend a helping hand to all those who are in need of our assistance around the world, no matter what their religion may be. We must make every effort to reach out to them through financial support, philanthropic projects or hands-on volunteer work. According to these *tikkun olam* devotees, Jewish individuals and organizations should come to the aid of hungry children in Africa, earthquake survivors in Haiti and flood victims in New Orleans or Bangladesh.

On the other hand, “particularists” claim that the foremost priority of the Jewish establishment should be to help fellow Jews. According to this view, there are plenty of Jews and Jewish institutions in distress – some of them in our own communities – and Jews should first of all take care of their own people before seeking to help poor and needy non-Jews on the other side of the world or even in their own city.

## Darfur and Haiti

Many proponents of universalism (or “*tikkun olam*” – repairing the world) believe that Jews have a moral duty towards the non-Jewish world. Elana Maryles Sztokman, a writer, educator and researcher, says that “social ills such as poverty and homelessness, as well as global crises such as the recent genocide in

Darfur, challenge the Jewish community to stand up and assist fellow human beings. The Jewish heritage is in fact replete with mandates to convey compassion towards non-Jews as an expression of the Jewish People’s mission from God.” She believes that “the essence of Jewish culture and tradition is a universal ethic of care and compassion.”

Many advocates of *tikkun olam* say that when Jews help non-Jews, they’re actually strengthening their own Jewish identity. Indeed, many Jews today do not feel a very strong connection to their heritage, and they



A food line in Haiti after the earthquake

frequently care much more about the plight of needy Haitians or Somalians than they do about elderly Holocaust survivors in the Bronx or underprivileged children in Israeli development towns. Rachel Liel, the Executive Director of the New Israel Fund in Israel, maintains that Jewish funders are channeling more resources to non-Jewish causes because the Jewish establishment is “striving to harness the idealism of young Jews by provid-

ing opportunities for them, as Jews and with Jews, to engage in universal social action.” *Tikkun olam* is therefore a “promising and Jewish way to keep disaffected young Jews from opting out of Jewish life,” she asserts. In other words, if Jews become involved in *tikkun olam* through a Jewish organization, that is actually a great way to draw them closer to the Jewish world and, indirectly, to their dormant Jewish identity.

Ruth W. Messinger is the president of American Jewish World Service (AJWS), an international human rights organization that works to alleviate poverty, hunger and disease in the developing world. In her opinion, “when individuals commit themselves to justice, *tzedakah* and compassionate action globally; and when they are given the framework for understanding these endeavors as part of their essential obligation as Jews, something else happens as well. The satisfaction of *mitzvah* is contagious. And thus do compassionate global works expand the soul, deepen one’s sense of responsibility and bring into sharper focus the Divinity resident within the world. Such are the ingredients for binding people to their fellow humans and fellow Jews alike.”

Ari Hart, co-founder of Uri L’Tzedek: Orthodox Social Justice, summarizes this universalist view succinctly: “actions which appear to be thoroughly ‘non-Jewish’ can be sources of tremendous Jewish import, meaning and connection to Jewish Peoplehood,” he says.

## Israeli philanthropy

In arguing for the legitimization of their priorities, universalists can point to the highly

An entire set of organizations under Jewish auspices now seeks to rally Jews to help everyone except their own co-religionists

lauded and impressive philanthropic missions carried out by the state of Israel on numerous occasions. Despite the fact that Israel is a country with more than enough problems of its own, the government rarely misses an opportunity to offer assistance to other countries.

After having provided emergency aid to disaster victims in Argentina, Armenia, Russia, Rwanda, Bosnia and other nations, a permanent humanitarian and emergency aid unit was established in 1995 by Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Israel Defense Forces. Since then, the unit has carried out operations in Kenya, Albania, Macedonia, Mexico, Afghanistan, Poland, Congo, Vietnam and many other countries. Following the terrible earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, the Israeli rescue team was the first to set up a field hospital and received international recognition for its extraordinarily professional and successful efforts treating the victims.

Israeli hospitals, doctors and medical organizations are also actively engaged in philanthropic projects having to do with providing free medical services to the world’s most needy. Israeli eye surgeons regularly volunteer to travel to remote Third World locations

Preparing food packages in Israel prior to the Passover holiday



Alon Ron



My idea of leadership is being committed to change and gaining support by both acting and speaking.

Alexis Wojtowicz, 18, New Jersey, Building Future Leadership participant, Young Judaea

to operate on the local population. Another program brings children with heart defects from poor countries – some of which are officially at war with Israel – to an Israeli hospital for complicated life-saving procedures. And there are many more examples.

Although it would be cynical to accuse the Israeli government of undertaking these philanthropic missions purely for public relations purposes, let’s not be naïve. Israel’s image around the world could certainly use some polishing and there is no doubt that a bit of positive publicity is always beneficial for Israel. Indeed, each Haitian child and Cambodian heart patient treated by an Israeli medical team will most likely think twice before adopting an anti-Israel political view.

## Aiding fellow Jews

Despite the trendiness of *tikkun olam* as the politically correct catchphrase in many Jewish circles these days, not everyone agrees with this set of priorities. After all, it is estimated that there are nearly 350,000 poor and near-poor Jews in the New York area alone, while in the Former Soviet Union there are hundreds of thousands of Jews in critical need of help, representing enormous humanitarian challenges in terms of basic welfare and sustainability.

However, according to Jack Wertheimer, professor of American Jewish History at the Jewish Theological Seminary, surveys prove that big Jewish givers channel the bulk of their philanthropic giving to nonsectarian causes – such as universities, museums and hospitals – and only a small percentage to aid fellow Jews. Why has this universalist approach become the most common model of philanthropy, especially among the more liberal and progressive American Jews? Why can’t this interest in repairing the world be extended to aiding fellow Jews?

According to Wertheimer, proponents of *tikkun olam* express great confidence in the sufficiency of resources in the Jewish community to address all needs – but that

assumption is incorrect. Another rationalization claims that young Jews do not want to be bothered with their fellow Jews. “If we are to attract anyone outside the committed core, they argue, programs must direct young Jews to nonsectarian causes, bearing out the truth of Cynthia Ozick’s dead-on observation that ‘universalism is the parochialism of the Jews,’” explains Wertheimer, adding that, as a result of these erroneous notions, “an entire set of organizations under Jewish auspices now seeks to rally Jews to help everyone except their own co-religionists.”

Wertheimer suggests that philanthropists could create a Jewish Service Corps with the mission of sending volunteers to Jewish communities in the United States and around the world where poverty, inadequate Jewish education and social problems exist. After working in a service program aiding Jews in the Former Soviet Union, a volunteer expressed amazement that in all her years in a Jewish day school, she had never heard about poor Jews who require help. With some knowledge, idealistic young Jews will discover that they do not have to trek around the globe to find human beings living in poverty; all they have to do is look in their own communities to find Jews trying to make ends meet and who could benefit from their help.

## Balancing the responsibility

Of course there is no clear answer to the question of how enlightened Jews in the 21st century should contend with the issue of dividing the *tzedaka* pie. Dr. Shlomi Ravid, an expert on Jewish Peoplehood and editor of the Peoplehood Papers, describes the dilemma of having to “balance the responsibility for one’s own with the need to address the pain of others in remote places of the world.”

Ravid accurately points out that “the challenge is not to rule that needy Jews are not really the responsibility of Jews, or that *tikkun olam* is but a trend for ‘spoiled wealthy Jews.’ The challenge is to address both demands and do it in accordance with a Jewish sense of justice.” ■





## SKILL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

### ■ Community Innovation

**Learn to use social media to move people and change the world (PresenTense)**

Envisioning a brighter future together! As young professionals, your network is growing and you are equipped to be a leader. This track will give you the tools you need to take an active role in building the Jewish community of the future. Optimized for post-college participants.

### ■ Campus Entrepreneurship

**How you can transform your campus using cutting-edge tools (PresenTense)**

Mobilize and unite: the power of collective action. As you enter the exciting years of college life, how do you take advantage of the tools you have on campus? This track will give you the resources necessary to organize a community around Jewish values and the causes you are most passionate about. Optimized for gap year students.

### ■ Key Skills for Entrepreneurship

**Learn business tools to help you launch the start-up you've dreamed about launching (PresenTense)**

Implement your vision and impact your community. Have an idea? Passionate about social change? Want to make a difference? This track will give you the introduction to actualize your vision of an empowered Jewish community. Optimized for aspiring social entrepreneurs.

### ■ Interpersonal Communication

**Public Speaking, Persuasion and Conveying a Message (Debate Team)**

Interpersonal communication skills and the ability to deliver a message effectively have never been more crucial – all the more so for those holding positions of leadership. The objective of this course is to substantially enhance the participant's communication skills as well as their understanding of the "Black Box" of interpersonal communication and persuasion. The training will consist of various learning units of Persuasion Techniques, Message Delivery and Public Speaking. These techniques have been in use all over the world for decades, in the political, business and academic arenas. Training will include hands-on practicing of the tools taught, using simulations of real life scenarios. Optimized for gap year students and post-college participants.

### ■ From Vision to Reality

**How to Create an Effective Project Using Management Approach Techniques (Debate Team)**

During this training seminar, a set of insights and tools will be presented and taught – all relating to management approaches. The training will be conducted at a fast pace, and will include individual and group simulations alongside highly interactive presentations – all meant to facilitate practical internalization of the material and insights presented. A first draft outline of the participant's vision and an initial outline of milestones, identified during this session, will be a take-away resource. Optimized for gap year students and post-college participants.

## BUILDING FUTURE LEADERSHIP

MARCH 6 - 11, 2011  
JERUSALEM, JUDAEAN YOUTH HOSTEL

### SUNDAY, MARCH 6TH

- 9:00-12:00 Arrival Judaeon Youth Hostel
- 12:00-14:00 Registration and Lunch
- 14:00-14:45 Meeting in sub groups and check in to rooms
- 14:45-15:15 Opening Remarks: Ayelet Shiloh-Tamir, CEO, Masa Israel; Avi Steinberg, Education Director, Masa Israel
- 15:15-16:15 The 5-Legged Table – Jewish Identity in the 21st Century  
Avraham Infeld, President Emeritus of Hillel International. Avraham Infeld is the founder and director of a succession of innovative educational institutions, and serves as President Emeritus of Hillel International. Mr. Infeld was the first Director of Taglit-Birthright Israel and led the planning process for this innovative and transformative program.
- 16:15-16:45 Break and Mincha
- 16:45-17:45 Group activities
- 17:45-18:30 Transformational Leadership, in groups
- 18:30-19:45 Free time to prepare for gala
- 19:45-20:30 Depart for Gala
- 20:30-23:00 Evening Gala, Ramat Rachel Hotel. In the presence of:  
Mr. Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency  
Mr. Zvi Hauser, Cabinet Secretary  
Mr. Aaron Abramovich, Chair of Masa Israel Journey  
Ms. Ayelet Shiloh-Tamir, CEO of Masa Israel
- 23:00 Depart Ramat Rachel Hotel and return to youth hostel

### MONDAY, MARCH 7TH

- 7:15-8:00 Optional morning activities/ services: Orthodox service, Egalitarian service, Yoga, Text study, Morning exercise
- 7:30-8:45 Breakfast
- 9:00-9:30 Depart for Yad Vashem
- 9:30-12:30 Yad Vashem  
The Masa Israel and Yad Vashem joint initiative aims to empower leaders on Masa Israel programs in order to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive in their native communities. The Day Seminar will focus on the topic of "Leadership during the Holocaust and its Ramifications on Young Leadership Today." Groups will attend lectures by experts and conduct comprehensive tours of the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum, the Learning Center and the wider Yad Vashem campus. Throughout the day, Masa Israel leaders will be involved in discussions about Leadership during the Holocaust, and how the actions of those leaders can positively impact young Jewish leadership today.
- 12:30-13:00 Return to Judaeon Youth Hostel
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch
- 14:00-15:00 Group discussions
- 15:00-16:00 Break and Mincha
- 16:00-19:00 Skill Development Workshops (Pre-assigned, see description at left)
- 19:00-19:45 Dinner
- 19:45-20:30 Break and Ma'ariv
- 20:30-22:00 Open Space with ROI

Open Space Technology is a meeting style that allows you to determine the agenda by identifying the topics that are most important to you for discussion. Used by thousands of organizations across the world, Open Space puts the content and the management of group discussions directly into the hands of the participants in a dynamic and engaging fashion.

- 22:00-23:00 Optional: What's Next? Opportunities with Masa Israel in North America (Room D)

Learn how to tell your story, get inside information about internships on campus, and discover ways in which to bring your Masa Israel experience back to your home community!



### TUESDAY, MARCH 8TH

- 7:30-8:00 Optional: Services / Morning activities
- 7:30-8:45 Breakfast
- 9:00-14:00 Special Interest Day (Pre-assigned):  
■ Israel Engagement (Makom)  
What happens when the dream of Zion becomes reality? What does it mean to be at home and to make a home? How do we build Israel engagement that is about embracing Israel's successes, contending with Israel's challenges, and exploring Israel's place in our own Jewish lives? How does the educational work at Makom open up possibilities for a new conversation about engaging Israel in Jewish communities around the world? Participants will explore these questions through Israeli film and music (Tomer Heyman's 'Black Over White,' The Idan Reichel Project).
- Hasbara / Israel Advocacy (ICC & Kol Voice Seminars)  
Why is it necessary for young leaders to be involved and care? What does being pro-Israel mean and how can we be involved in a meaningful and proactive way? The aim of this training is to bring participants up to speed on the key issues in Israel and the Middle East today, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and negotiations, Iran, protests across the Middle East, Gaza and more. The session will focus on what the big issues are and how we talk about them as pro-Israel activists. Emphasis includes: why it is important to be engaged, the big debates around how to do activism today (using case studies such as AIPAC vs. JStreet in the US and speeches from the Herzliya Conference this year) and the Seven Principles of Israel Advocacy. Exercises and simulations will benefit participants and allow them to develop their creative thinking and help frame their involvement in pro-Israel activism.
- Social Justice and Tikkun Olam (Bema'aglei Tzedek)  
What does it mean to be a social activist – from theory to practice? Join Bema'aglei Tzedek ("Circles of Justice"), an Israeli social change organization, as we explore this definition together. Meet with leading Israeli social justice activists, get a taste of the critical work being done by Bema'aglei Tzedek, experience first hand handicap-accessibility and workers' rights successes, as well as the relevance of these contemporary issues to Jewish values and tradition.
- Jewish Peoplehood (Partnerships Division)  
How do we come together from different countries, backgrounds and social classes to focus on our common shared Jewish values and identity? Partnership 2000 invites you to a half day of unique engagement with locals from our Mate Yehuda-Beit Shemesh-Washington-South Africa P2K region in Israel. See first-hand the school twinning program between 10 different schools from 3 continents. Later on enjoy a "City Quest" in downtown Beit Shemesh where you will get to know first-hand the locals questing for the Jewish value of "Kol Israel Chaverim" – finding common traditions between the two sides of the ocean.
- 14:30-17:30 Free time. Optional: Visit to the Israel Museum
- 18:00-19:00 Dinner and Ma'ariv
- 19:00-20:15 Group discussions
- 20:30-22:00 Young Leaders Panel  
Meet young Israeli entrepreneurs and change makers: Aharon Horwitz – Co-Director PresenTense Group, Ofir Fisher – Co-Founder of the OR Movement, Pnina Gaday – Director of Hillel at Tel Aviv University, and an IDF officer.
- 22:00 Optional: Israeli dancing (Rikudey Am)



# Daily Schedule



## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9TH

### Gap Year participants

- **6:30-7:00** Optional Services
- **7:00** Leave for Neot Kedumim
- **8:00-13:00** Activities at Neot Kedumim (ODT)

Neot Kedumim, The Center for Leadership and Team Building, specializes in Outdoor Training (ODT) activities. The center integrates the subjects of leadership, management, team work and organizational behavior to the richness of Israel's nature and to Jewish content and resources. These activities create situations in which the participants are asked to prove leadership skills, motivate others, manage projects, plan, activate teams and solve problems, all while being efficient, effective and creative. The Masa Israel Seminar in Neot Kedumim will take you on a personal journey to the leader within.

- **13:00-13:45** BBQ at Neot Kedumim
- **13:45-15:00** Depart Neot Kedumim. Break and Mincha
- **15:00-18:00** Skill Development Workshops (see page 28)
- **18:15-19:15** Group discussions
- **19:15-20:15** Dinner and Ma'ariv
- **20:30** Optional: Karaoke, Benji Lovitt – Standup Comedy: Life in Israel, Mijal Ben Dori – Israeli music workshop

### Post College participants

- **7:00-7:30** Optional: Services / Morning activities
- **7:30-8:45** Breakfast
- **9:00-10:00** Vision and Venture

Before a social entrepreneur can go out and launch a venture that changes the world, he or she needs to identify what in the world is broken, and then how the world will look like once it is fixed, and why the venture they're proposing will make that shift happen. Visioning, when structured correctly, can be a very powerful process that will set up the rest of the venture.

- **10:15-11:45** Tools in Israel Advocacy
- Deepening your independent analytical abilities regarding current conflict related issues in a way that will also allow you to deal with future issues that might be new to the conflict, but that nevertheless contain fundamental elements which are inherently dealt with by the Seven Principles of Israel Advocacy. The principles will enable the activists who learn to use them effectively to take on any anti-Israeli natured question.

- **12:00-13:00** Breakout Session by Country: France – Ariel Kendel, North America – Prof Gil Troy, FSU – Shlomo Neeman, Europe – Noga Oz, Latin America – Jack Drassinower

- **13:00-15:00** Lunch, Break and Mincha
- **15:00-18:00** Skill Development Workshops (see page 28)
- **18:00-19:00** Dinner and Ma'ariv
- **19:00-20:00** Group discussions
- **20:30** Optional: Karaoke, Benji Lovitt – Standup Comedy: Life in Israel, Mijal Ben Dori – Israeli music workshop

## THURSDAY, MARCH 10TH

### Gap Year participants

- **7:30-8:45** Optional: Services / Morning activities
- **7:30-8:45** Breakfast
- **9:00-10:15** North America – Campus activism (Hillel staff), Australia – Yigal Sela
- **10:15-11:15** Vision and Venture

Before a social entrepreneur can go out and launch a venture that changes the world, he or she needs to identify what in the world is broken, and then how the world will look once it is fixed, and why the venture they're proposing will make that shift happen. Visioning, when structured correctly, can be a very powerful process that will set up the rest of the venture.

- **11:30-13:00** Tools in Israel Advocacy
- Deepening your independent analytical abilities regarding current conflict related issues in a way that will also allow you to deal with future issues that might be new to the conflict, but that nevertheless contain fundamental elements which are inherently dealt with by the Seven Principles of Israel Advocacy. The principles will enable the activists who learn to use them effectively to take on any anti-Israeli natured question.

- **13:00-15:00** Lunch, Break and Mincha
- **15:00-18:00** Skill Development Workshops (see page 28)
- **18:00-18:45** Dinner
- **19:00-21:00** Closing session in groups
- **21:00-21:30** Break (Ma'ariv)
- **21:30-23:00** Bible Raps: Special performance by Matt Bar

Matt Bar is the founder and creator of Bible Raps. Mr. Bar's music has been featured on MTV's "The Real World" and NBC's "Hip Hop Nation Notes from the Underground." He has opened for Grammy winning group Outkast as well as Jurassic 5 and Matisyahu. He has released 3 albums selling over 5,000 units.

### Post College participants

- **6:30-7:00** Optional Services
  - **7:00** Leave for Neot Kedumim
  - **8:00-13:00** Activities at Neot Kedumim (ODT)
- Neot Kedumim, The Center for Leadership and Team Building, specializes in Outdoor Training (ODT) activities. The center integrates the subjects of leadership, management, team work and organizational behavior to the richness of Israel's nature and to Jewish content and resources. These activities create situations in which the participants are asked to prove leadership skills, motivate others, manage projects, plan, activate teams and solve problems, all while being efficient, effective and creative. The Masa Israel Seminar in Neot Kedumim will take you on a personal journey to the leader within.

- **13:00-13:45** BBQ at Neot Kedumim
- **13:45-15:00** Depart Neot Kedumim, Break and Mincha
- **15:00-18:00** Skill Development Workshops (see page 28)
- **18:00-18:45** Break (Ma'ariv)
- **18:45-19:30** Dinner
- **19:30-21:30** Closing session in groups
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## FRIDAY, MARCH 11TH

- **7:30-8:00** Optional Services / Morning activities
- **7:30-8:45** Breakfast
- **8:45-9:15** Bags on buses
- **9:15-10:15** Graduation Ceremony: Closing Remarks  
Graduation Diploma  
Signing of the Charter
- **10:15** Goodbye and Shabbat Shalom!





# Thank You

Masa Israel would like to thank the following programs for taking part in the Building Future Leadership program:

- Aardvark
- Aish HaTorah
- Ariel University Center of Samaria
- Bar-Ilan Israel Experience
- Because We Care
- B'erot Bat Ayin
- Ben Gurion University of the Negev
- Career Israel
- Conservative Yeshiva
- Green Apprenticeship
- Habonim Dror
- Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- IDC Herzliya
- Israel By Choice
- Israel Government Fellows
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- Lej Leja
- Life: Social Justice Fellowship in Israel and India
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- Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi
- Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim
- Young Doctors
- Young Judaea Year Course

Masa Israel would like to thank the following organizations for their involvement in the Building Future Leadership program:



## The American Society for Yad Vashem

Founded in 1981 by a group of Holocaust survivors, and spearheaded by Eli Zborowski, the American Society for Yad Vashem works in partnership with Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem to support their efforts in the areas of commemoration, education, research, capital improvement and special projects.



## Avi Chai

B'Yachad ("Together") is a major new initiative generously supported by the Avi Chai Foundation to train North Americans who are enrolled in long-term programs in Israel to become more effective informal educators in residential camps, thereby strengthening the Israel education program in camp as well as the ties between the shlichim and North American staff.



## Bema'aglei Tzedek

Bema'aglei Tzedek ("Circles of Justice"), founded in 2004 by a group of young social entrepreneurs, uses education and social action to create a more just Israeli society inspired by the Jewish values of Tzedek and Tikkun Olam.



## The Center for Leadership and Team Building in Neot Kedumim

The Center for Leadership is located in Neot Kedumim, the Biblical Landscape reserve, near Ben Shemen. Activities integrate subjects of leadership, management, team work and organizational behavior with insights and content of Israeli nature and Jewish resources. The special scenery of Neot Kedumim reflects the nature during the days of the Bible.



## Debate

Debate aims to become the world's leading solution provider for organizations and individuals who wish to develop and enhance their interpersonal communications and managerial capabilities by means of combining frontal training and consulting with e-learning and technological applications.



## Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life

The largest Jewish campus organization in the world, Hillel provides opportunities for Jewish students at more than 500 colleges and universities to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity through its global network of regional centers, campus Foundations and Hillel student organizations. Hillel is working to provoke a renaissance of Jewish life. **Strategic partner**



## The Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC)

The ICC works to empower the network of national Israel supporters to engage leaders at colleges and universities around issues affecting Israel and to create a pro-Israel climate on campus. The ICC offers information, resources, training and leadership opportunities to students, campus professionals and other supporters of Israel on campus.



## Jewish Agency for Israel

For over 80 years, the Jewish Agency has served as the link between the Jewish people and Israel, working to ensure the future of a connected, committed, global Jewish People with a strong Israel at its center. The Jewish Agency is redirecting its primary focus toward the challenge of strengthening the Jewish identity of young Jews in both the Diaspora and Israel.

**Special thanks to: P2K - Partnership Division; Fund Raising Department; Education Department: FSU Division, French-Speaking & Mediterranean Basin Countries Desk**



## The Jewish Federations of North America

The Federation movement represents 157 Jewish Federations and 400 independent Jewish communities. Collectively among the top 10 charities on the continent, it protects and enhances the well-being of Jews worldwide through the values of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), *tzedakah* (charity and social justice) and Torah (Jewish learning). **Strategic partner**



## Keren HaYesod

Working with the Jewish Agency and the Government of Israel, Keren HaYesod is committed to advancing Israel's top national and social priorities through three principal areas: aliya and absorption, strengthening Israeli society and Jewish Zionist Education for young Diaspora Jews.



## Kol Voice

Kol Voice Seminars works to strengthen identity and improve the standard of activism across the Jewish world. Founded on the belief that active engagement with the complex issues affecting Jews and Israel today create confident Jewish activists and stronger Jewish communities, Kol Voice brings together some of the best young speakers and facilitators in Israel to provide top quality tailor made sessions for every group.



## Makom

Makom believes that Jewish commitment is sparked by embracing the vibrant complexity of Israel and the Jewish People. Makom empowers Jewish educators, rabbis, arts and community leaders to develop deep, sophisticated and honest programming. Makom will work with anyone who is eager to hug and wrestle with Israel and the Jewish People.



## NU Campaign

Taken from the Hebrew slang word "nu" which means "c'mon" and begs a response, NU Campaign clothing promotes and supports important global and Israeli causes and stories through art, pop-culture and fashion. The "inside story" behind each design provides a platform for Israel education and engagement initiatives. From its social action hub and store in Jerusalem, NU partners with Jewish students, communities and organizations worldwide.



## PresenTense

PresenTense enables Jewish young adults to develop new ideas into ventures that engage, leverage and inspire the Jewish People. PresenTense builds a supportive community which inspires creativity, stimulating new ideas and solutions for challenges facing the Jewish People and the world. Those willing to take the risk to translate an idea into reality are supported and trained to become pioneers – social entrepreneurs with a cause.



## ROI

ROI is a global community of young Jewish leaders that was created by Lynn Schusterman. ROI's objective is to cultivate a prestigious international network of young Jewish leaders in their 20s and 30s who are at the forefront of local, global and virtual initiatives that offer innovative and diverse paths for connecting to Jewish life.



The International School for Holocaust Studies

## Yad Vashem

Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies has years of experience teaching students and educators how to grapple with the difficult issues raised by the Shoah. The School engages in innovative formal and informal educational initiatives worldwide, connecting people from different cultures, languages and religions. The School develops new educational materials, leads teacher-training seminars and hosts workshops for students and soldiers, all reflecting the newest research and providing pioneering educational programs.



## The Office of the Prime Minister

The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for coordinating the work of all governmental ministry offices, and assisting the Prime Minister in his daily work. Its responsibilities include formulating the Israeli cabinet's policy and managing foreign diplomatic relations with other countries. It is also in charge of other governmental bodies under the Prime Minister's responsibilities.



THE BUILDING FUTURE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM WAS MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO:

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Center for Leadership, Neot Kedumim





**500** participants  
**20** home countries  
**One week** in Jerusalem  
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for a lifetime

Masa Israel Journey welcomes  
500 Masa Israel program participants  
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- ✓ Building Future Leadership is an intensive, one-week professional conference for exceptional Masa Israel program participants from around the world. Building Future Leadership participants have been selected from over 10,000 Masa Israel program participants in Israel this year.
- ✓ Building Future Leadership is a unique opportunity for Masa Israel program participants to enrich their Israel experience and to return to their home communities with tools to be ambassadors for Israel around the world