



# AFU WOFI

## 2013 Israel Mission Sourcebook

This book belongs to \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction to the Ambassadors For Unity Write on For Israel Cleveland (AFUWOFI) Mission**



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June 16-26, 2012

### Israel Mission Itinerary

During your 10 days in Israel, you will explore half the length and all the breadth of Modern Israel. You will come to know the topography and the history of this fascinating land. In the course of exploring its centrality to Judaism and Jewish History, you will also consider the issues that confront Israel in the start of the 21st century and meet some of the people who make up the mosaic of life in Israel today.

**The goals of this mission are to learn cultural, demographic and geographic facts along with the security challenges that face Israel. We will work on sharpening your Israel Content knowledge skills, and using this acquired knowledge as a resource for engagement activities on behalf of Israel.**

The itinerary is driven by the desire to see and experience as much as possible in the short time you have together in Israel. The mission staff will be available to you to help make this an enjoyable, as well as a meaningful and insightful experience.

The Israel content knowledge approach for the AFUWOFI Cleveland Israel Mission:

1. Geo-political knowledge: Experience and learn the demographic, historical, and geographic facts along with Israeli security challenges.
2. Culture knowledge: Experience the Israeli narrative (culture, High tech, the mosaic of Israeli people).
3. Mifgash: intimate (gathering, meetings) with Israeli teens at the Beit Shean/Emek Hamayanot Cleveland partnership.

### AFUWOFI Cleveland - Written Expectations

True to the mission of the AFUWOFI program, in Israel you will be expected to:

1. Listen to speakers and take brief notes about the most important points.
2. When possible, pose carefully worded questions to interview speakers: Ask yourself and the speakers, 'What is the relevance of this experience for Israel engagement?'
3. Interview other Israelis whom you may meet.
4. Then **WRITE** about the above in letters to the editor, longer op-eds and newspaper articles, blog entries and Facebook observations.
5. What you write will also be the basis of the magazine project to be completed during your second year. No one is exempt from these assignments.
6. Remember, your program is called also WRITE On for Israel for a reason. That's because **writing clearly and persuasively** is the desired end result after you listen, ask, observe and gather your thoughts. Sharpening these skills will serve you well in Israel, in college, and in life!



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## The Interview Process

- Your first job is do your homework about the person(s) you are interviewing. Learn a little about the group or denomination to which they belong. Write down some questions IN ADVANCE. Next, put them at ease by beginning with non-confrontational, non-threatening questions such as "Tell me something about yourself. Where were you born? Where did you grow up? What are your favorite memories of growing up?"
- If the interviewee seems relaxed at this point you might ask about unpleasant memories. If the answer is one, two or three words - "my first Hebrew teacher" - pursue the idea and ask what exactly was unpleasant about that teacher or experience.
- After you have gone through a few "softball" questions, you can begin with more in-depth questions. For example, you might ask an Ethiopian Jew whether or not he or she has ever experienced discrimination. If you get a one-word answer, DO NOT STOP THERE.
- If the interviewee says he or she did experience discrimination, ask for a specific example or two. If the example isn't clear to you, ask for further clarification. If the example is not a strong one, ask for a second or third example.
- If the interviewee says he or she did not experience discrimination, give an example that person might not have thought of like: Did you ever feel you lost out on a job, or an apartment you wanted to rent, because of your skin color? Did anyone ever call you a slang name or not invite you to join a sports team or a party because of your color?
- Ask the person if he (or she) could change one thing about the way he is looked at or treated, what would it be? Again, if you get a brief answer, ASK FOR MORE SPECIFICS!
- Always appear interested and engaged in your interviewee's answers. Nothing stifles open responses more than someone who seems bored or is just asking questions by rote! Listen carefully to answers given as these may suggest/lead to questions you hadn't thought of before.
- Finally, NEVER rely on your memory for the answers to questions you've asked. Always have a notebook and pen ready or some kind of tablet or recorder to get the answers down in the interviewee's own words!
- And get the CORRECT SPELLING of that person's name!



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## AFUWOFI Cleveland – Visual Storytelling Expectations

Your camera is your second tool to document your experience. Please use it as much as possible in a sensitive and thoughtful way:

1. Document the most important experiences.
2. Make sure that the situation background clues will be in each picture. This will add to a better visual storytelling image.
3. Remember that next year's AFUWOFI exhibit will document the life and experiences of Israeli teens. This exhibit will be based on **you taking high quality images** that document the Israeli teens' experiences.
4. Remember to take high quality images (not with a phone).
5. Please download your images to a portable hard drive (the mission staff will have it handy every day).

## Specific Assignments

1. Each day two or more AFUWOFI fellows, will be in charge of posting to the AFUWOFI Cleveland blog.
2. Each student is expected to take a few pictures that document the Israel teens' experiences. Preferably, these images will document the student's host friends from Beit Shean/Hemek Hamayanot.
3. Carry a notebook, paper and a camera to write down any memorable quotes or important lessons or facts learned that day. Each quote or fact learned must be accompanied by the name and identifying credential of the person making the statement.
4. We will then share these quotes and observations in our daily Reflection sessions.



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## AFUWOFI Cohort 1 – Year 2 Brit

Prior to our Israel Mission, please finish viewing the following films:

1. [Back and Forth](#) – The Bedouin
2. [The Kibbutz and Changes](#) – The Kibbutz and the changes
3. [November 08](#) – Israeli teens before, during and after the army

While watching the films write one or two sentences for each film summarizing the subject matter. Bring these brief summaries to Israel where we will be either talking with the filmmaker or visiting the places profiled in the film. They will be good "refreshers" for discussions on the trip.

All members of Cohort 1 are responsible for **3 activities during their senior year:**

**Magazine assignment** – All members of AFUWOFI Cohort 1 will submit an article for the AFUWOFI magazine based on the blogging assignments below. Specific focus for the blog will be determined through discussion with Cynthia Dettelbach and Jeffrey Schien

- Opening reflection: Lauren, Sarah and Eden
- Sunday, June 16 - Josh R.
- Monday, June 17 – Hannah B.
- Tuesday, June 18 – Jake, Ruthy, Eden, Tal
- Wednesday, June 19 – Josh F., Jessie, Lauren
- Thursday, June 20 – Ori, Ben
- Friday, June 21 – Hannah K., Gabe
- Saturday, June 22 – Tyler
- Sunday, June 23 – Arielle, Evan
- Monday, June 24 – Erick, Lucy, Rivka, Josh R.
- Tuesday, June 25 – Micah, Sarah P, Ari
- Wednesday, June 26 – Sarah S., Jake
- Closing reflection: Lauren, Sarah S. and Eden

**Advocacy trip** – choose one of the following and circle your preference:

- AIPAC Policy Conference (March 2-4, 2014 – AFUWOFI will pay airfare only)
- Jewish Federation of Cleveland Israel Advocacy Mission to Washington D.C. (~April, 2014)



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### Engagement Projects

Magazine	iDay (@Aroma Day) March 2014	Israel Youth Movements	Café and Learn – an Opportunities to teach about Israel	Political Advocacy December – January	Exhibit Preparation October – November 2013	Exhibit docents December – May 2014	Fuchs Mizrahi project
Eden	Hannah K	Jake	Lauren	Gabe	Ori	Josh R.	Fuchs Mizrahi Students
Lauren Kahn	Hannah B.	Jessie	Evan	Tal	Ruthy	Sarah P.	
Sarah S.	Erick	Ari	Ben	Evan		Eden	
	Josh F.	Tyler	Tal	Tyler		Lucy	
		Gabe		Micah			
				Sarah P			
				Ben			

**Meeting schedule for Year 2** – please note the following dates on your calendars for next year: Our first meeting will be **Sunday, August 25, 2013, from 1:00-5:00**. This will be a reunion and writing session. Additional meetings will be Sept 15 and Oct 13, 2013. All meetings will be 1:00-5:00. Additional meetings will be scheduled as needed for each Engagement Project.



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# Welcome to Israel



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## Excerpt from Herzl's *The Jewish State* (1896)

The Jewish question persists wherever Jews live in appreciable numbers. Wherever it does not exist, it is brought in together with Jewish immigrants. We are naturally drawn into those places where we are not persecuted, and our appearance there gives rise to persecution. This is the case, and will inevitably be so, everywhere, even in highly civilized countries—see, for instance, France—so long as the Jewish question is not solved on the political level. The unfortunate Jews are now carrying the seeds of anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America...

We have sincerely tried everywhere to merge with the national communities in which we live, seeking only to preserve the faith of our fathers. It is not permitted us. In vain are we loyal patriots, sometimes superloyal; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow citizens; in vain do we strive to enhance the fame of our native lands in the arts and sciences, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In our native lands where we have lived for centuries we are still decried as aliens, often by men whose ancestors had not yet come at a time when Jewish sighs had long been heard in the country. The majority decide who the “alien” is; this, and all else in the relations between peoples, is a matter of power. I do not surrender any part of our prescriptive right when I make this statement merely in my own name, as an individual. In the world as it now is and will probably remain, for an indefinite period, might takes precedence over right. It is without avail, therefore, for us to be loyal patriots, as were the Huguenots, who were forced to emigrate. If we were left in peace...

But I think we shall not be left in peace.



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## Prayer for the State of Israel

אָבִינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, צוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹאֲלוֹ, בְּרַךְ אֶת מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, רֵאשִׁית צְמִיחַת גְּאֻלְתֵּנוּ.  
 הִגְן עָלֶיךָ בְּאֲבֵרַת חֶסֶדְךָ, וּפְרַשׁ עָלֶיךָ סֶכֶת שְׁלוֹמְךָ, וְשַׁלַּח אֹרֶךְ וְאַמְתָּךְ לְרֵאשִׁיָּהּ, שְׂרֵיָהּ  
 וַיִּזְעָצֶיךָ, וְתִקְנֶם בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ. חִזַּק אֶת יְדֵי מַגְנֵי אֶרֶץ קְדְשֵׁנוּ, וְהַנְחִילֵם אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
 יְשׁוּעָה וְעֻטְרַת נְצֻחֹן תְּעַטְרֵם, וְנִתַּת שְׁלוֹם בְּאֶרֶץ וְשִׁמְחַת עוֹלָם לְיוֹשְׁבֶיהָ. וְאֶת אֲחֵינוּ כָּל  
 בְּיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל פְּקֹד-נָא בְּכָל אַרְצוֹת פְּזוּרֵיהֶם, וְתוֹלִיכֵם מִהֲרָה קוֹמְמִיּוֹת לְצִיּוֹן עִירְךָ  
 וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם מִשְׁכַּן שְׁמֶךָ, כְּכָתוּב בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עֲבָדְךָ: "אִם יִהְיֶה נִדְחָךְ בְּקִצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם,  
 מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֶךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֶךָ. וְהִבִּיאֶךָ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִרְשׁוּ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ  
 וִירְשָׁתָהּ, וְהִיטִבֶךָ וְהִרְבֶּךָ מֵאֲבוֹתֶיךָ" (דְּבָרִים ל, ד-ה). וַיַּחַד לִבְבֵּנוּ לְאַהֲבָה וּלְרֵאָה אֶת  
 שְׁמֶךָ, וְלִשְׁמֹר אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ. וְשַׁלַּח לָנוּ מִהֲרָה בֶן דָּוִד מְשִׁיחַ צְדָקָה, לְפָדוֹת מִחֲבֵי  
 קָץ יְשׁוּעָתְךָ. הוֹפֵעַ בְּהַדָּר גָּאוֹן עֲזָךְ עַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵּבֵל אֲרָצְךָ, וַיֹּאמֶר כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמָה בְּאָפוֹ:  
 "ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלֹךְ, וּמְלִכּוֹתוֹ בְּכָל מְשָׁלָה". אָמֵן סְלָה.

Our God in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, bless the State of Israel, the first manifestation of the approach of our redemption. Shield it with Your loving-kindness, envelop it in Your peace, and bestow Your light and truth upon its leaders, ministers, and advisors, and grace them with Your good counsel. Strengthen the hands of those who defend our holy land, grant them deliverance, and adorn them in a mantle of victory. Ordain peace in the land and grant its inhabitants eternal happiness. Lead them, swiftly and upright, to Your city Zion and to Jerusalem, the abode of Your Name, as is written in the Torah of Your servant Moses: "Even if your outcasts are at the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you, from there He will fetch you. And the Lord your God will bring you to the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will make you more prosperous and more numerous than your fathers." Draw our hearts together to revere and venerate Your name and to observe all the precepts of Your Torah, and send us quickly the Messiah son of David, agent of Your vindication, to redeem those who await Your deliverance. Manifest Yourself in the splendor of Your boldness before the eyes of all inhabitants of Your world, and may everyone endowed with a soul affirm that the Lord, God of Israel, is king and his dominion is absolute. Amen forevermore.

## Prayer for the IDF

מִי שֶׁבְּרַךְ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, הוּא יְבָרֵךְ אֶת חִיְלֵי צְבָא הַגְּנָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל,  
 הַעוֹמְדִים עַל מִשְׁמַר אֶרְצֵנוּ וְעָרֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִגְּבוּל הַלְּבָנוֹן וְעַד מִדְּבַר מִצְרַיִם וּמִן הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל  
 עַד לְבוֹא הָעֶרְבָה בַּיְבֻשָׁה בְּאוֹרֵי וּבָיִם. יְתֵן ה' אֶת אוֹיְבֵינוּ הַקָּמִים עָלֵינוּ נִגְפִים לְפָנֵיהֶם.  
 הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יִשְׁמַר וְיַצִּיל אֶת חִיְלֵינוּ מִכָּל צָרָה וְצוּקָה וּמִכָּל נֹגַע וּמַחֲלָה וְיִשְׁלַח  
 בְּרָכָה וְהַצְלָחָה בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם. יְדַבֵּר שׁוֹנְאֵינוּ תַּחְתִּיָּהֶם וַיַּעֲטֵרֵם בְּכֶתֶר יְשׁוּעָה  
 וּבְעֻטְרַת נְצֻחֹן. וַיְקַיֵּם בָּהֶם הַפְּתוּב: כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הֵהָלַךְ עִמָּכֶם לְהַלְחֵם לָכֶם עִם  
 אִיבֵיכֶם לְהוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם: וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן:

God Who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, -- may God bless the fighters of the Israel Defense Forces, who stand guard over our land and the cities of our God, from the border of the Lebanon to the desert of Egypt, and from the Great Sea unto the approach of the Aravah, on the land, in the air, and on the sea. May the Almighty cause the enemies who rise up against us to be struck down before them. May the Holy One, Blessed is God, preserve and rescue our fighters from every trouble and distress and from every plague and illness, and may He send blessing and success in their every endeavor.

May God lead our enemies under our soldiers' sway and may God grant them salvation and crown them with victory. And may there be fulfilled for them the verse: For it is the Lord your God, Who goes with you to battle your enemies for you to save you. Now let us respond: Amen.

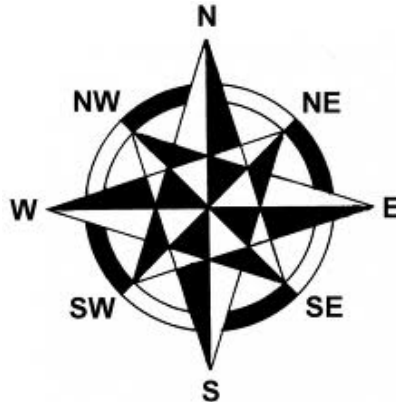
## The Story of the Compass



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“When I was a child I had a beloved uncle who brought gifts every time he visited. One day he gave me a little compass and taught me how to find the north. I took the compass with me everywhere I went, and the first thing I did was find out where the north was. In every place the needle showed the north. At school, in the playground, in my room, in Father’s store. On his next visit, my uncle asked me a riddle: If you stand right at the north pole, where will the needle point?”



His question stumped me, and he rejected every answer I could think of. Then he told me: There, in the north pole, the needle will go mad. It will point up, down, sideways, every which way. The compass is good for showing the north in every place on Earth except for the north itself.

That is what my uncle said. And the moral?

How easy was Zionism when all it consisted of was longings for Zion. In all the corners of the Diaspora, in Poland and Russia and Yemen and Morocco, the needle pointed the way, showed us what must be done. But from the moment we came here, to Zion, the needle went mad.”

(“The World A Moment Later” by Amir Gutfreund)



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## Poems by Yehuda Amichai

### Tourists

Visits of condolence is all we get from them.  
 They squat at the Holocaust Memorial,  
 They put on grave faces at the Wailing Wall  
 And they laugh behind heavy curtains  
 In their hotels.  
 They have their pictures taken  
 Together with our famous dead  
 At Rachel's Tomb and Herzl's Tomb  
 And on Ammunition Hill.  
 They weep over our sweet boys  
 And lust after our tough girls  
 And hang up their underwear  
 To dry quickly  
 In cool, blue bathrooms.

Once I sat on the steps by agate at David's Tower,  
 I placed my two heavy baskets at my side. A group of tourists  
 was standing around their guide and I became their target marker. "You see  
 that man with the baskets? Just right of his head there's an arch  
 from the Roman period. Just right of his head." "But he's moving, he's moving!"  
 I said to myself: redemption will come only if their guide tells them,  
 "You see that arch from the Roman period? It's not important: but next to it,  
 left and down a bit, there sits a man who's bought fruit and vegetables for his family."

### An Arab Shepherd Is Searching For His Goat On Mount Zion

An Arab shepherd is searching for his goat on Mount Zion  
 And on the opposite hill I am searching for my little boy.  
 An Arab shepherd and a Jewish father  
 Both in their temporary failure.  
 Our two voices met above  
 The Sultan's Pool in the valley between us.  
 Neither of us wants the boy or the goat  
 To get caught in the wheels  
 Of the "Had Gadya" machine.

Afterward we found them among the bushes,  
 And our voices came back inside us  
 Laughing and crying.

Searching for a goat or for a child has always been  
 The beginning of a new religion in these mountains.

### Wilde Peace

Not the peace of a cease-fire,



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not even the vision of the wolf and the lamb,  
but rather  
as in the heart when the excitement is over  
and you can talk only about a great weariness.  
I know that I know how to kill,  
that makes me an adult.  
And my son plays with a toy gun that knows  
how to open and close its eyes and say Mama.  
A peace  
without the big noise of beating swords into ploughshares,  
without words, without  
the thud of the heavy rubber stamp: let it be  
light, floating, like lazy white foam.  
A little rest for the wounds—  
who speaks of healing?  
(And the howl of the orphans is passed from one generation  
to the next, as in a relay race:  
the baton never falls.)  
  
Let it come  
like wildflowers,  
suddenly, because the field  
must have it: wild peace.



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➤ WHAT ENTANGLEMENT IN    ⚡  
THIS SMALL COUNTRY

What entanglement in this small country,  
What confusion! “The second son of the first husband  
Goes out to his third war, the Second Temple  
Of the first God gets destroyed every year.”  
My doctor treats the guts  
Of the cobbler who repairs the shoes of the man  
Who defended me in my fourth trial.  
In my comb strange hair, in my handkerchief strange sweat,  
Memories of others stick to me  
Like dogs to the smell,  
And I must drive them off  
Scolding, with a stick.

All are contaminated by each other,  
All touch each other,  
Leave fingerprints, and the Angel of Death  
Must be an expert detective  
To tell them apart.

I once knew a soldier who fell in the war,  
Three or four women mourned him:  
He loved me. I loved him.  
He was mine. I was his.

The Soltam Co. makes both pots and mortars  
And I do not make anything.



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## Obama and the failed quest for two states

### Mideast Matrix

#### Commentary and analysis on Middle East Politics

Posted by Jeremy Pressman

<http://mideastmatrix.wordpress.com/2012/07/24/541/>

Scott Wilson's [play-by-play](#) of the Obama administration's efforts to reach an Israeli-Palestinian agreement offered some useful evidence (and led to a huge twitter spat between [@PostScottWilson](#) and [@AliAbunimah](#), [@clayswisher](#), and [@MJayRosenberg](#)). But the article was not structured to list possible explanations for the failure to reach a two-state agreement since January 2009. I would group possible explanations into three categories:

#### 1. Tactical Blunders

As Wilson explains, President Obama's approach started with calls for an Israeli settlement freeze and "symbolic gestures" from Arab states. After months of footdragging, Benjamin Netanyahu eventually agreed to a partial freeze, but the Arab states never took action and Mahmoud Abbas rejected Israel's partial\*\* freeze. The PA refused to participate in talks for months. Yet Obama officials 1) accepted a partial freeze rather than the full freeze they initially sought 2) did not castigate the Arab states 3) did not heavily pressure the PA to come to the table despite the limitations of the freeze. [There is nothing new in pursuing a settlement freeze. Many other U.S. presidents, from Carter to George W. Bush, [have done so](#) as well.]

This, in turn, meant that Obama lost support in Congress. One reason Netanyahu agreed to a partial freeze was because, as Wilson notes, Israel's allies in Congress sided with Obama at first:

*"What [Netanyahu] received was a distinct surprise to him, which was unified support from many longtime friends of Israel for the president's policy," said former congressman Robert Wexler (D-Fla.).*

But when the Palestinian/Arab side did not respond to the freeze, Israel's Congressional allies changed their tune and Netanyahu had their support when the United States and Israel debated the idea of a second freeze (the first one expired in September 2010). Despite much talk about Obama's (and Rahm Emanuel's) "tough love" for Israel, the article left me wondering if they really thought through how tough they would need to be to move Israeli policy. Does tough but not too tough work? If not, maybe going down that path set the stage for failure.

Another aspect that we may hear more about over time is whether George Mitchell was the right person to lead the US effort. There are some strong hints he was not.



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Although these are largely tactical points, it does make me wonder about the overall U.S. strategy. Had they considered the many possible permutations, pathways, and obstacles? I do not see much evidence of that in the U.S. performance but whether that was a failure of planning or execution awaits further evidence.

### 2. There was no deal to be had

Local parties may have limited what the United States could accomplish even had there been a perfect diplomatic performance. I think it is very likely that the Netanyahu government did not support a two-state solution that would meet the minimum Palestinian requirements (meaning the Palestinian sovereign capital in East Jerusalem and Palestinian sovereignty in, say, 96% of the West Bank). Yes, Netanyahu [said](#) he supported a two-state solution, but he never spelled out in detail what he meant. The term “two-state solution” [means many different things](#) to different participants in the conflict.

On the Palestinian side, the Fatah-Hamas split endures. Abbas would cut a two-state deal, but how Hamas would react is a wildcard. Negotiating with a split Palestinian national movement is complicated. To give one example, one of the reasons the Abbas-Olmert talks in 2008 fell apart was because of Israel’s battle with Hamas in late 2008. The point here is that how the United States “managed” the issue – to use Wilson’s verb – might matter little in the face of unwilling participants.

### 3. Politics

Independent of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, politics mattered in two ways. First, Obama is the leader of the Democratic Party and Netanyahu is the leader of the Likud Party. One is left, one is right. Such partnerships are not impossible (see George W. Bush-Tony Blair), but perhaps Obama and Netanyahu’s different political perspectives colored their views of each other in a negative way.

At home, Obama’s popularity noticeably declined from his early 2009 high approval. Obama was a human president, not a rock star. Netanyahu could see the numbers. When coupled with the Congressional change of sentiment above, it created fertile ground for Netanyahu’s defiant tone toward Obama after the first partial freeze was finished.

This is not meant as an exhaustive list but rather a first effort to be more systematic. What would you add to the list? Do you see strong evidence for one explanation?

–

\*\*Among other things, the September 2009 Israeli settlement freeze did not address Israeli building in East Jerusalem. Wilson reports that after a March 2010 disagreement during Vice-President Biden’s visit to Israel, Secretary of State Clinton spoke to Netanyahu and Israel froze building in East Jerusalem as well.

## Trying to Revive Mideast Talks, Kerry Pushes Investment Plan for West Bank

### New York Times



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## Michael R. Gordon and Jodi Rudoren

DEAD SEA, Jordan — In an effort to revive the moribund peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, Secretary of State John Kerry announced a plan on Sunday to invest as much as \$4 billion to develop the economy of the West Bank.

Sketching out a vision of a transformed Middle East, Mr. Kerry said an infusion of private sector investments could increase the gross domestic product of the West Bank by 50 percent over three years and slash unemployment, which now hovers around 21 percent, by two-thirds.

In highlighting the plan at a conference here of the World Economic Forum, Mr. Kerry hoped to spur Israel and the Palestinians to begin talks on a comprehensive Middle East peace agreement amid concerns that the window for initiating negotiations may begin to close.

“Negotiations can’t succeed if you don’t negotiate,” Mr. Kerry said. “We are reaching a critical point.”

Mr. Kerry said that the investments under the plan would be made in the areas of tourism, light manufacturing, agriculture, construction, energy and technology. The idea would be to give the Palestinians an incentive to negotiate and to ensure that a Palestinian state in the West Bank would be viable.

Neither Mr. Kerry nor his aides provided any details on what specific projects were envisioned, who might invest and what modifications might be required in Israeli restrictions on the West Bank for the plan to work.

Reporters traveling with Mr. Kerry were told to direct their questions to the “quartet,” a Middle East peacemaking group whose experts devised much of the plan. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain serves as the Middle East envoy for the group, which is made up of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations.

A statement issued Sunday night by Mr. Blair’s office said the economic initiative was intended to parallel the political process and not replace it. Officials from the quartet are still consulting experts on the Palestinian economy and will provide details about specific options “in due course,” the statement said.

As Mr. Kerry has tried to set the stage for negotiations, Palestinian officials said he had asked them to hold off on seeking membership in international forums to underscore their claim to statehood, a request they said they would comply with only until June 7. The Israeli government, meanwhile, has quietly refrained from issuing bids for construction in West Bank settlements or from announcing major building projects.



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“Time is not on anyone’s side in this,” Mr. Kerry said. “And changes on the ground could rob all of us of the possibilities of peace.”

After his speech, Mr. Kerry went to a private dinner at which his economic initiative seemed sure to be discussed. The guests included Mr. Blair; Tim Collins, a wealthy financier whom State Department officials have described as one of the advocates of the initiative; and the foreign ministers from Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Kerry has noted that there are people in both the Israeli and the Palestinian camps who are skeptical of the peace process. Some of that skepticism was evident at the conference on Sunday.

President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority praised the business initiative while also noting that Palestinian youth had “started to lose their confidence in the two-state solution because what they see on the ground makes them truly have no hope.”

In a forceful and at times angry speech, Mr. Abbas assailed Israel for failing to release Palestinian prisoners as outlined in previous agreements and for refusing to discuss the issue of Palestinian refugees outside of negotiations.

President Shimon Peres of Israel, whose own speech to the meeting was largely a lofty discussion of the yearnings of a young generation, pleaded with Mr. Abbas to save such issues for the negotiating table.

“When I listen to the arguments on both sides, I could say, ‘Well, nothing can happen,’ ” Mr. Peres said, diverging from his prepared text to address his counterpart directly.

“All these differences, they are deep, they are moving, they are important,” Mr. Peres said to Mr. Abbas. “All of this should be really done around the table. Let’s sit together — you’ll be surprised how much can be achieved in open and direct and organized meetings.”

For all of those soothing words, Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, has questioned Mr. Peres’s ability to forge peace, noting his largely ceremonial role. “The only one who needs to be convinced, and I urge Mr. Peres to exert every possible effort to convince him, is the prime minister of Israel saying he accepts two states on 1967,” Mr. Erekat told reporters here Sunday. “He needs to say it.”

Before Mr. Kerry’s speech, a group of Israeli and Palestinian business moguls gave their own impassioned call for negotiations, saying that “the status quo, fraught with shattered hopes, is unsustainable and dangerous.”

The group, calling itself Breaking the Impasse, has met more than 20 times in the past year and includes about 300 executives of high-tech, construction, beverage and



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insurance companies, as well as banks, and many Palestinian investors from abroad. Representatives of the group said they met on Thursday with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and have also met with President Abbas.

Leaders of the group said at a news conference that they would leave the specifics of how to resolve the conflict to the politicians. But **Munib R. Masri**, a Palestinian billionaire who is one of the leaders of the effort, later told the conference that the two states should be drawn along the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as a shared capital — the standard line of the Palestinian leadership and a position Mr. Netanyahu was sure to reject.

“They call us the silent majority,” Mr. Masri, chairman of the Palestine Development and Investment Corporation, said at the news conference earlier. “We are not silent anymore. We are going to say our opinion in order to have a better life, for us and for our grandchildren in the future.”

Yossi Vardi, a venture capitalist considered a godfather of Israel’s high-tech sector, said with emotion that he had lived most of his 70 years “in the shadow of this conflict,” and warned, “The biggest risk is that we begin to treat it like a chronic disease, we begin to lose hope that it can be solved, though everybody agrees that it should be solved.”

Mr. Vardi told reporters: “Enough is enough. Too much tears were shed by mothers. You may call us naïve, you may ask us what is new, you may have lost hope. But we are cursed — we are going to continue to pursue it.”

## **Jordan: Arab Spring clears way for press freedoms**

### **Time of Israel**

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/jordan-arab-spring-clears-way-for-press-freedoms/>

Critics counter that Amman’s new media law penalizes violators, forcing journalists to practice self-censorship

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — The Arab Spring uprisings that toppled four Arab leaders have forced Mideast governments to allow more freedom of expression and of the press, Jordan’s prime minister said Monday, but critics charged that Jordan itself is not doing enough.

Abdullah Ensour told a meeting of the Vienna-based International Press Institute, “The past few years have been very crucial to our region, because the Arab Spring has opened new horizons and created more demands” for wider freedoms of expression and the press. Ensour said Jordan has “come a long way” in improving legislation governing press freedoms after many years of strict state censorship of media outlets.

“Obviously, we’re not yet where we want to be, but we are determined to continue,” he said.



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Jordanian participants at the conference complained that the country's media law, significantly restricting press freedoms by imposing harsh penalties on violators, forces journalists to practice self-censorship.

Nidal Mansour, head of the Amman-based Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists — IPI's hosting partner — said that the press law updated last year was designed to muzzle press freedom.

"The Press and Publication Law has been and continues to be a sword on the necks of all journalists in Jordan," he said. The law has been amended at least seven times in 10 years.

The latest legislation requires websites dealing with vaguely defined "press materials" to register with the Department of Press and Publication, once officially called the Censorship Department, and pay a fee of \$1,400 (1,000 Jordanian dinars). Websites are also required to appoint a Jordanian chief editor who would be held accountable for all online content, including comments posted by readers.

Under the law, the director of the Department of Press and Publication has the authority to block websites, including those originating from abroad, if they are deemed in violation of the law.

Since the Arab Spring uprisings, Jordan's government has appeared to ease restrictions on freedom of expression, opinion and assembly. It has allowed protests to take place without seeking prior permission from the government. However, other constraints remain, including a ban on criticizing the king in public, punishable by up to three years in jail. King Abdullah II holds final authority in most matters.

While the government approved a code of conduct several years ago with the intention of fostering a "free and independent media," journalists are still closely watched by intelligence agencies and often report harassment and threats. Bloggers have been arrested by Jordanian authorities, and as a result, many practice self-censorship. Last year, a private satellite TV station was closed after airing views critical of members of the royal family.

Ensur pledged more liberalization, noting that there are about 500 local news services online. He said two-thirds of the percent of the population can access the Internet, and local firms translate Web content into Arabic for the local audience.

He said Jordan ranks third in the Arab world in active users of social media networks. For example, two out of five Jordanians use Facebook, he said.

IPI's two-day annual World Congress meeting, which opened in Jordan on Monday, is discussing media freedom in the region following the Arab Spring, challenges covering the Syria civil war, reporting on religion, the role of women in the media, criminal defamation, Internet regulation and how media and governments can work together to fight corruption.



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## Explaining the Airstrikes

### The Economist

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/pomegranate/2013/05/israel-syria>

HOW long can Israel keep striking Syria and get away with it? Last January, Israel's war planes struck a missile convoy bound for Lebanon and over the weekend they hit targets around both Syria's command-and-control centre in Mount Qassioun, which looms over Damascus, and the headquarters of the fourth armoured division headed by President Bashar Assad's brother, Maher, on the road from the capital to Beirut. Israel's military establishment continues to insist that their targets remain missiles bound for Lebanon's most powerful military force, Hizbullah, not the Assad regime. Israel is only interested in protecting its own population from chemical weapons not Syria's, says Eyal Zisser, considered Israel's leading specialist on Syria. According to Israeli military analysts, Israel struck a batch of long-range accurate missiles, known as Fatah-100s, which Iran's government flew to Damascus last week and were then distributed at Syria's bases en route to Lebanon. Unlike the convoy of less powerful SA-17s, the Fatah-100s carry payloads of up to 500kg, have a range of 200 kilometres, and are propelled by solid not liquid fuel, making them far quicker to launch. The knock-on detonation of warheads and fuel, they say, accounts for the massive explosion—described by residents as an earthquake—that shook Damascus over the weekend. While Iran has struggled to transfer weaponry to Hizbullah via the Mediterranean Sea and Beirut airport, say Israeli military officials, Damascus airport has become its prime conduit. It is the price that Iran exacts for its military support, they add, which has recently helped the Assad regime gain ground in Syria's two-year civil war.

But while apparently driven by the operational calculations of its generals, Israel's repeated strikes on Damascus risk dragging the country into Syria's civil war. For over two years, Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, has studiously sought to steer clear of the Arab awakening, preferring a posture of splendid isolation. "We wish success to both sides," was how Amos Harel, the military correspondent of Haaretz, an Israeli daily newspaper, described Israel's approach of letting Syria's multiple forces debilitate and weaken each other. In an attempt to uphold the policy, Mr Netanyahu's officials played down the attack: he delayed his scheduled departure for an official visit to China by only two hours. Israel has further refused to officially claim responsibility for the attack. But as long as Israel's generals take advantage of Syria's chaos to eliminate the arsenals of its northern foes, there is a risk that Israel will become entangled. Syria's official media warned that Israel was now providing air cover for the rebels and had joined forces with al-Qaeda to spread terrorism across the region; all possibilities, said the Assad regime, were now on the table. Signs of nervousness inside Israel have grown more apparent: its generals have ordered two anti-missile Iron Dome batteries to the northern front. Having long sought to focus its energies on countering Iran's nuclear



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programme, Israel could yet find itself fighting a different war.

## Hagel: Israel, U.S. see same threat from Iran

USA TODAY

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/04/21/iran-israel-hagel-us/2100641/>

TEL AVIV -- Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel on Sunday stressed the U.S. commitment to Israel's defense against Iran as he embarked on week-long trip to the Middle East. Hagel's visit will highlight the proposed \$10 billion sale to Israel and Arab allies of sophisticated U.S. jets, missiles and radar meant to counter Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapon.

"The bottom line is that Iran is a threat, a real threat," Hagel told reporters traveling with him. "The United States' policy is very clear: The Iranians must be prevented from developing that capacity."

Hagel, whose confirmation as Defense secretary was held up in February by Republicans who accused him of not being staunch enough in his support of Israel, said military action against Iran can't be ruled out. However, he added that economic sanctions appear to have hurt Iran and there is still time to reach a political agreement with Iran to end its nuclear ambitions.

Israel, he said, has the right to defend itself and the weapons being offered, including refueling aircraft and missiles to attack air defenses, could be needed for an assault on Iran's nuclear facilities.

However, the U.S. remains concerned about the unintended consequences of a unilateral strike by Israel on Iran, according to a senior Pentagon official who was not authorized to speak on the record about the issue. It's unclear whether such an attack would be the final action needed to deal with Iran's nuclear program, the official said.

The sale of advanced weapons and Hagel's two-day visit should help ease Israeli concerns about its U.S. partner, said Aaron David Miller, vice president at the Woodrow Wilson Center and a former U.S. Middle East negotiator in Republican and Democratic administrations.

"The secretary of Defense reassures the Israelis by selling equipment they haven't been able to get in the past," Miller said.

Hagel also addressed the Boston Marathon bombings, saying he'd been reading intently about the capture of the second suspect Friday night. So far, there has been no indication that the suspects were part of a broader terrorist conspiracy, he said. "I have not seen any intelligence that would make such a link," Hagel said. "But as you know, all of the facts are not in."



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### Iran Nuclear Capability



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## A Worried Israel Prepares for War

New York Times

Shmuel Rosner

TEL AVIV — Six months ago, as rocket fire was falling on Tel Aviv, my six-year-old daughter had to pay her [first visit to a bomb shelter](#). On Monday, she had to pay her second and third visits.

On Sunday night, before she went to bed, we had reminded her that sirens would be going off the next day, and that she shouldn't be afraid of them. Yes, yes, she said, impatiently brushing us off; she knows it's a drill.

Along with all Israeli children, and the small part of the adult population willing to play a role, at 12:30 p.m. Monday she was duly marched by a teacher to the shelter. At 7:05 p.m. it was our turn as parents to run through the drill at home.

Such drills are not a novelty to Israelis, but the more a potential war seems imminent, the more sober they become. All day, radio announcers remind us: "In case of real emergency, another siren will be heard."

Indeed, in recent weeks there was hardly a day without someone discussing the possibility of real war. Israel, as the New York Times reported less than a week ago, is reluctantly being [dragged into](#) Syria's turmoil.

Israel's imperative is clear: to [prevent the transfer](#) of game-changing weaponry from getting into the wrong hands. It can't permit Syria to send chemical weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon, nor can it allow Syria to receive missiles or other weapons systems that will make it harder for Israel to defend itself against future aggression.

Earlier this month, Israeli warplanes [attacked](#) targets in Syria to prevent a delivery of Iranian missiles to Hezbollah. There were two Israeli airstrikes in [Syria](#) within two days — the second being the [third this year](#), after more than five years without Israeli attacks in Syria.

Given these recent Israeli strikes and [Israel's vows](#) to act "with determination" to achieve its goals, the escalation of [rhetorical threats](#) against Israel was probably unavoidable. There are [Syrian threats](#) to use missiles against Israel, and [Hezbollah](#) has warned that it may launch a "popular-resistance campaign" in the Golan Heights.

In turn, Israel has been making more of [its own threats](#). While Israeli leaders keep saying that they don't want any part in Syria's war — and there's no reason to [doubt their sincerity](#) — their message can be contradictory at times.



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“Israel wants to both eat a cake and keep it untouched,” said Professor [Eyal Zisser](#) of Tel Aviv University, Israel’s leading expert on Syria. The Israeli government, he added, wants to [attack Syrian installations and convoys](#) when it deems necessary, yet it also wants to prevent a war from breaking out.

As it tries to hold together a fragile peace, Israel has its citizens conduct drills and prepare for the worst. “These days a number of scenarios can lead to a surprise war,” the chief of the Israeli Air Force, Maj. Gen. Amir Eshel, declared a week ago. A “Somalization” of Syria — a scenario that both [Israeli](#) and [Arab](#) diplomats see as a real possibility — would present Israel with a whole new set of security challenges.

Israeli leaders should be telling the public the truth. Choosing to attack Syria is not opting for a good option over a bad one but rather picking a bad option — the risk of war — over another bad one — the risk of letting Israel’s enemies get new weaponry. “A severe case of brinkmanship is being played at the moment,” [said](#) a former U.N. peacekeeper in Lebanon. When such game is going on, a sudden state of war can hardly be considered a “surprise.”

## What Mideast Crisis? Israelis Have Moved On

### New York Times

#### Ethan Bronner

FOR years, conventional wisdom has held that as long as [Israel](#) faces the external challenge of Arab — especially [Palestinian](#) — hostility it will never come to terms with its internal divisions. The left has sometimes used it as an argument: we must make peace with the Palestinians so that we can set our house in order — write a constitution, figure out the public role of religion. Others have viewed the threat as almost a silver lining keeping the place together: differences among Israeli Jews (religious or secular, Ashkenazic or Sephardic) are so profound, the argument goes, that if the society ever manages to turn its attention inward, it might tear itself apart.

Back in Tel Aviv for a recent visit a year after ending my tour as Jerusalem bureau chief, I was struck by how antiquated that wisdom felt. At a fascinating and raucous wedding I attended and from numerous conversations with a range of Israelis, I came away with a very different impression. Few even talk about the Palestinians or the Arab world on their borders, despite the tumult and the renewed peace efforts by Secretary of State John Kerry, who has been visiting the region in recent days. Instead of focusing on what has long been seen as their central challenge — how to share this land with another nation — Israelis are largely ignoring it, insisting that the problem is both insoluble for now and less significant than the world thinks. We cannot fix it, many say, but we can manage it.

The wedding took place near Ben-Gurion airport, where a set of event halls has gone up in the past seven years, including elaborate structures with a distinct Oriental décor of glistening chandeliers, mirrored place mats and sky-high ceilings with shifting digital



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displays. The groom's grandparents emigrated from Yemen; the bride's came from Eastern Europe, an example of continuing and increasing intermarriage between Sephardim and Ashkenazim.

The music was almost entirely Middle Eastern in beat, some of it in Arabic, some of it religious. The hundreds on the dance floor, many staying until dawn singing along with arms gesticulating, came from across a range of political, geographic and religious spectra — from miniskirted to ultra-Orthodox modesty. Frumpy settlers in oversize skullcaps mingled with Tel Aviv metrosexuals in severe eyewear. Some women hugged you; others declined to shake your hand. Everyone was celebrating. No one, especially the Orthodox rabbi who presided over the ceremony, mentioned that the young couple had been living together for more than three years. Some talked politics with me. No one mentioned the Palestinians.

ISRAEL today offers a set of paradoxes: Jewish Israelis seem in some ways happier and more united than in the past, as if choosing not to solve their most difficult challenge has opened up a space for shalom bayit — peace at home. Yes, all those internal tensions still exist, but the shared belief that there is no solution to their biggest problem has forged an odd kind of solidarity.

Indeed, Israel has never been richer, safer, more culturally productive or more dynamic. Terrorism is on the wane. Yet the occupation grinds on next door with little attention to its consequences. Moreover, as the power balance has shifted from the European elite, Israel has never felt more Middle Eastern in its popular culture, music and public displays of religion. Yet it is increasingly cut off from its region, which despises it perhaps more than ever. Finally, while the secular bourgeoisie, represented by Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid Party, has forged an unexpected alliance with West Bank settlers, represented by Naftali Bennett's Habayit Hayehudi Party, aimed at reducing the political power of the ultra-Orthodox, alarm over the failure to address the Palestinian problem has grown in a surprising place — among some of the former princes of the Zionist right wing.

At a Jerusalem cafe one noon, Dan Meridor, the former Likud minister and son of right-wing Zionist aristocracy, could not stop talking about the Palestinians.

“It is a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads,” he said. “We are living on illusions. We must do everything we can on the ground to increase the separation between us and the Palestinians so that the idea of one state will go away. But we are doing nothing.”

Mr. Meridor, nursing an American coffee at the cafe near the house his parents bought many decades ago in the upscale Rehavia neighborhood, sounded like two other public figures from famous right-wing families — Ehud Olmert, the former prime minister, and Tzipi Livni, the justice minister and chief peace negotiator. Both have made a series of



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emotional speeches begging Israelis to take the Palestinian issue seriously. They are getting little traction.

The Israeli left is still there, of course, but in increasingly insignificant knots. Two Israeli friends in Jaffa, from which tens of thousands of Palestinians left or were driven out in 1948, have beautifully renovated a house, even preserving a pre-state lemon tree in the courtyard. They are friendly with the Arabs who live nearby. Their children refused military service in protest over the West Bank occupation. And on the outside of their house they have put up a plaque noting that until 1948 the structure was the home of the Khader family, a tiny homage to a destroyed world.

But the family is rare. Mr. Lapid, the rising star of Israeli politics, is a former television host who agrees that something must be done about the Palestinians. But in an interview he offers no specifics other than hoping Mr. Kerry will pressure them to return to the negotiating table under conditions they have long rejected. Mr. Lapid, who spoke in the outdoor section of his neighborhood cafe in north Tel Aviv on a fragrant spring afternoon, was relaxed and buff in his long-sleeved black T-shirt and black jeans. Well-off Tel Avivians at nearby tables argued into their iPhones. Mr. Lapid said Israel should not change its settlement policy to lure the Palestinians to negotiations, nor should any part of Jerusalem become the capital of the Palestinian state he says he longs for. He has not reached out to any Palestinian politicians nor spoken publicly on the issue. As finance minister, he is focused on closing the government's deficit.

Mr. Lapid may be a political novice but he knows the public mood. A former senior aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed, over a Jerusalem lunch of toasted bagels and salad, that most Israelis considered the peace process irrelevant because they believed that the Palestinians had no interest in a deal, especially in the current Middle Eastern context of rising Islamism. "Debating the peace process to most Israelis is the equivalent of debating the color of the shirt you will wear when landing on Mars," he said.

An afternoon in Ramallah revealed no stronger sense of urgency among Palestinians. But, unlike Israeli Jews, they are increasingly depressed and despondent over their quandary and dysfunctional leadership. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who showed real competence in his job but is resigning, says Palestinian leaders must acknowledge their failure to deliver on their promises and call new elections. That is not happening. He tells friends that if he believed Mr. Kerry's efforts had any chance of yielding results, he would not be quitting.

All of which suggests that, as has long been argued, there can be no Israeli-Palestinian peace deal so long as outsiders want it more than the parties themselves. Some have likened Israel to the deck of the Titanic. That may not be right, but you can't help wondering about that next iceberg.



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## Monday, June 17 (Arrival in Israel- 3:15pm)

### The First Day

- 5:30 Arrive to Kramim
- 6:00 Women in Israel (Hadar)
- 7:00 Dinner
- 8:00- 9:00 The Israeli society an update with ... - TBD
- 9:00- 10:00 pm reflection time

**Lunch:** Snack at the airport

**Dinner:** Gan Kramim hostel

**Overnight:** Gan Kramim hostel



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**Tuesday, June 18**

**Neither Jerusalem nor Tel Aviv but still Israel – a Visit to the South**

- 07:30 Breakfast at Gan Kramim hotel
- 08:00-09:00 The Negev Update with Dr. Guy Ben-Porat
- 09:00-9:30 a Tour of Ben Gurion University
- 10:00-12:00 Visit to the unrecognized Bedouin villages with Yasmin Al-Nagab
- 12:30-5:00 Security tour in Gaza border and a visit to Sderot with Kobi Marom
- 1:00 Cash Lunch at Sderot
- 5:00-6:30 Drive to Jerusalem
- 6:30 Dinner
- 8:00-9:00 !HaHaFuch Presents: HaHaFun at Beit Avichai
- 9:30 -10:15 - pm reflection time



**Lunch:** Cash lunch in Sderot

**Dinner:** Hotel

**Overnight:** Park hotel, Jerusalem



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**Dr Guy Ben-Porat** was born in Israel (1967), studied at Tel-Aviv University and Johns Hopkins University (Ph.D. in Political Science). In his first book *Global Liberalism, Local Populism; Peace and Conflict in Israel/Palestine and Northern Ireland* he explored the peace process in Israel and Northern Ireland. His latest book engages with processes and dilemmas of secularization in contemporary Israel. He is the father of two daughters and lives in Lehavim, in the south of Israel.



**Yasmin Al-Nagab** for the Health of Women and the Family was founded in 2007. The organization, which is community-based, grassroots, and non-governmental, was founded by a group of Bedouin Arab women with backgrounds in medicine, law, education, and welfare. Our mission is to empower and educate Bedouin Arab women on how to create social change that will impact the overall well Being of the Bedouin Arab population of the Negev. Knowledge is power, so we aim at making knowledge accessible. We use lobby and advocacy training programs to help Bedouin Arab women obtain the tools they need to fulfill their rights.



**Kobi Marom** - IDF career through the 2000 evacuation of Lebanon at rank of Colonel (Brigade Commander, Eastern Front, So. Lebanon, Hermon Brigade); supervised complex and varied combat units under conditions of normality, stress, uncertainty and change. Currently, Kobi is in the reserves, and is a business man in the tourism industry.



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**Hahafuch** is Israel's premier English-speaking comedy troupe. Our variety shows feature hilarious original sketches, videos, improv games, musical guests, interview segments, and more. Composed of *olim* (immigrants) from around the world, Hahafuch aims to present the lighter side of Israel and make our sometimes, ahem, challenging daily experience just a little bit funnier in the process. What do we say, "Israel is funny and if you don't think so then you haven't seen our show."

## The Negev

For many visitors, the Negev, the desert part of the trip, leaves the strongest impression of Israel. It does not have as many historical sites as Jerusalem or the Galilee, but it probably looks much more like the Israel many first timers expect to see, with vast empty spaces and camels and Bedouin on the horizon. The Negev has an important role in Israel's heritage and a chief role in the vision of the future.



The word Negev appears in the Bible and translates to "dry". The Biblical commentator Rashi explains "it is called Negev because at all times it is dry, there is no shade from trees and the sun is always shining and drying it out." Rashi was from France but as you travel through the Negev you will not need any commentators to describe the characteristics of the Negev. The modern Hebrew word for desert, midbar, means place of grazing. The Bedouin sheep and goats will also depict that aspect of the desert. Since the Negev is in the southern parts of the country, the word took on the meaning of "south" as well.

The Negev is the name of the southern "triangle" of the State of Israel. Its north and east borders are natural borders: the Arava rift valley in the west (which is also the border with Jordan) and the Beer Sheva valley in the north. The eastern border of the Negev-a straight line-is the Sinai peninsula and the international border of Egypt. There are no natural landmarks that delineate this border. The Negev highlands are made up of mountains between 600 and 1000 meters in height. The climate in the Negev is dry. 200mm of rain fall annually in the Beer Sheva area, 100mm in Mitzpeh Ramon, and only 25mm in Eilat. Even though rain is spares in the Negev, flash floods in the river beds are



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common in the winter months, but the rocky terrain doesn't allow for infiltration of the water. The Negev has unique geological formations such as the three Machteshim (craters), and has natural resources important for different industries.

The Negev holds an important role in Jewish history as well. Abraham, Isaac, and Yaakov lived in the Negev. King Solomon made a road that ran through the Negev, connecting Judeah to Eilat (Etzion Gever). Similar to today, this road connected the Jewish kingdom to the markets of the Far East. The scenery of the Negev was also the inspiration for some of the Psalms and for the words of the prophets. These deep roots led the Negev to be central in David Ben Gurion's Zionist vision of the development of the Negev.

Today the Negev is home to a wide variety of lifestyles. Beer Sheva is the capital of the Negev and has all the provisions of a modern city, such as a university, a hospital, a shopping mall, etc. The Negev is home to development towns, kibbutzim, moshavim, Bedouin towns and encampments, and the many hikers and nature lovers from all over the country that find inner peace in its wilderness.

## Sderot

Sderot (Hebrew: שדרות) is a western Negev city in the Southern District of Israel. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), at the end of 2006 the city had a total population of 19,300. The city has been an ongoing target of Qassam rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip. In March 2008, the mayor said the population had declined by 10%-15% as families left the city in desperation (aid organizations say the figure is closer to 25%). Many of the families that remain cannot afford to move out or are unable to sell their homes.



Sderot, less than a mile from Gaza, has been the target of Palestinian rocket attacks that have killed 13 residents, wounded hundreds, caused millions of dollars in damage, disrupted daily life and wreaked havoc on the local economy. According to MSNBC, "nearly everyone [has been] traumatized by the frequent sound of air-raid sirens and explosions of incoming projectiles". All local schools have been fortified. From mid-June 2007 to mid-February 2008, 771 rockets and 857 mortar bombs were fired at Sderot and the western Negev, an average of three or four each a day.



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**Wednesday, June 19**

**Jerusalem of Complexity - Part 1**

- 07:30 Breakfast: At the hotel
- 09:00-10:15 a tour of Southern Excavations and Davidson Center with Rabbi Michael Unterberg
- 10:30- 11:30 Visit to “Suspicious Objects” Exhibition at the David Tower
- 12:00-1:30 Emek Tzurim
- 1:30 Packed Lunch
- 2:30-4:30 Israel Museum - A visit to the Shrine of Books and King Herod’s exhibition
- 5:00- 7:00 Urban Kibbutz, Bet Israel and the its pre army program (plus packed Dinner)
- 7:30 - 8:15 Visit to the exhibit “Deep under the Land” – new interpretations of JNF old posters
- 8:30-10;00 Roy Edri – A Musical premier of his new CD Roots at Beit Avichai
- 10:30 - 11:30 Reflection in the hotel

**Lunch:** Packed Lunch

**Dinner:** Cash dinner

**Overnight:** Park hotel, Jerusalem



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## Jerusalem: Heart of Our Heart By Elie Wiesel

Jerusalem is above politics.

*Nobel Prize-winning author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel today took out a full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal, in the form an open letter to President Obama, with whom Wiesel visited the Buchenwald death camp last year. Here is the text of the letter.*

For Jerusalem

It was inevitable: Jerusalem once again is at the center of political debates and international storms. New and old tensions surface at a disturbing pace. Seventeen times destroyed and seventeen times rebuilt, it is still in the middle of diplomatic confrontations that could lead to armed conflict. Neither Athens nor Rome has aroused that many passions.

For me, the Jew that I am, Jerusalem is above politics. It is mentioned more than six hundred times in Scripture-and not a single time in the Koran. Its presence in Jewish history is overwhelming. There is no more moving prayer in Jewish history than the one expressing our yearning to return to Jerusalem. To many theologians, it IS Jewish



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history, to many poets, a source of inspiration. It belongs to the Jewish people and is much more than a city, it is what binds one Jew to another in a way that remains hard to explain. When a Jew visits Jerusalem for the first time, it is not the first time; it is a homecoming. The first song I heard was my mother's lullaby about and for Jerusalem. Its sadness and its joy are part of our collective memory.

When a Jew visits Jerusalem for the first time, it is a homecoming.

Since King David took Jerusalem as his capital, Jews have dwelled inside its walls with only two interruptions; when Roman invaders forbade them access to the city and again, when under Jordanian occupation. Jews, regardless of nationality, were refused entry into the old Jewish quarter to meditate and pray at the Wall, the last vestige of Solomon's temple. It is important to remember: had Jordan not joined Egypt and Syria in the 1967 war against Israel, the old city of Jerusalem would still be Arab. Clearly, while Jews were ready to die for Jerusalem they would not kill for Jerusalem.

Today, for the first time in history, Jews, Christians and Muslims all may freely worship at their shrines. And, contrary to certain media reports, Jews, Christians and Muslims ARE allowed to build their homes anywhere in the city. The anguish over Jerusalem is not about real estate but about memory.

What is the solution? Pressure will not produce a solution. Is there a solution? There must be, there will be. Why tackle the most complex and sensitive problem prematurely? Why not first take steps which will allow the Israeli and Palestinian communities to find ways to live together in an atmosphere of security. Why not leave the most difficult, the most sensitive issue, for such a time?

Jerusalem must remain the world's Jewish spiritual capital, not a symbol of anguish and bitterness, but a symbol of trust and hope. As the Hasidic master Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav said, "Everything in this world has a heart; the heart itself has its own heart."

Jerusalem is the heart of our heart, the soul of our soul.

## **For Jerusalem, a response to Elie Wiesel**

**The fact is and always will be that this city is holy to everyone - such is its blessing and its curse.**

By Yossi Sarid

For Jerusalem's sake I, like you, will not rest.

With great interest I read the beautiful open letter you penned to the U.S. president that appeared in the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and International Herald Tribune on Friday, and which will appear in the New York Times today. From it I learned that you know much about heavenly Jerusalem, but less so about its counterpart here on earth.



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An outsider reading your letter would probably have concluded that peace has already taken root in the City of Peace. He would learn that in Jerusalem, Jews, Christians and Muslims worship their gods unimpeded, that “all are allowed to build their homes anywhere in the city.”

Someone has deceived you, my dear friend. Not only may an Arab not build “anywhere,” but he may thank his god if he is not evicted from his home and thrown out onto the street with his family and property. Perhaps you’ve heard about Arab residents in Sheikh Jarrah, having lived there since 1948, who are again being uprooted and made refugees because certain Jews are chafing from Jerusalem’s space constraints.

Those same zealous Jews insist on inserting themselves like so many bones in the throats of Arab neighborhoods, purifying and Judaizing them with the help of rich American benefactors, several of whom you may know personally. Behind the scenes our prime minister and Jerusalem’s mayor are pulling the strings of this puppet show while in public deflecting responsibility for this lawlessness and greed. That is the real reason for the “new and old tensions surfacing at a disturbing pace” of which your warn in your letter.

For some reason your historical survey missed an event of the utmost importance, namely the destruction of the Temple. If we are already citing events that happened here 2,000 years ago, let us recall the Sicarii, who blinded by religious zeal murdered opponents within the Jewish community and brought on us the disaster of our 2,000-year exile. We have no choice, you and I, but to ask whether history is now repeating itself.

You, my dear friend, evoke the Jews’ biblical deed to Jerusalem, thereby imbuing our current conflict with messianic hues. As if our diplomatic quarrels weren’t enough, the worst of our enemies would be glad to dress this epic conflict in the garb of a holy war. We had better not join ranks with them, even if unintentionally.

The fact is and always will be that this city is holy to everyone - such is its blessing and its curse. That’s why the solution to the Jerusalem problem can’t wait for the end of the Middle East conflict as you suggest, because it will have no end if its resolution is postponed until “the Israeli and Palestinian communities find ways to live together in an atmosphere of security.”

“Jerusalem is above politics,” you write. It is unfortunate that a man of your standing must confuse fundamental issues and confound the reader. Is it not politics that deals with mankind’s weightiest issues, with matters of war and peace, life and death? And is life itself not holier than historical rights, than national and personal memory - holier even than Jerusalem? The living always take precedence over the dead, as must the present and future over the past.

There is nothing in our world “above politics.” Yes, politics creates problems, but only through it can those same problems be resolved.



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Barack Obama appears well aware of his obligations to try to resolve the world’s ills, particularly ours here. Why then undercut him and tie his hands? On the contrary, let’s allow him to use his clout to save us from ourselves, to help both bruised and battered nations and free them from their prison. Then he can push both sides to divide the city into two capitals - to give Jewish areas to the Jews and Arab areas to the Arabs - and assign the Holy Basin to an agreed-on international authority.

Only then can Jerusalem be maintained as “the world’s Jewish spiritual capital,” as you write. The Jewish spirit does not need Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, Abu Dis and Shoafat to fulfill God’s command to Abraham to “Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it.”

**The Davidson Center** offers a rare opportunity to explore and study the most significant archaeological site in this country by means of exhibitions and illustrations describing Jerusalem’s main episodes. The center serves as an extension of the Archaeological Park, highlighting its main features.



**Suspicious Objects Exhibit**, curated by industrial designer and senior lecturer at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Tal Gur, will present works by Israeli artists that all work today in consumer product design – and all of the works have been inspired by Jerusalem.



The exhibition features the work of designers inspired by the city of Jerusalem, works that have been exhibited in the past and those that were created specifically for this exhibition.

Suspicious Objects is located in the new exhibition room of the Tower of David, in the ancient Phasaël Tower built originally by King Herod over 2000 years ago. The view from the open window of the exhibition hall is that of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Western Wall and the Temple Mount – the very view that has inspired so many people for hundreds if not thousands of years, and still does today.



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**Emek Tzurim** - One of the more unusual and rewarding things that you can do in Jerusalem is to be an archaeologist for (part of) the day in Emek Zurim near Mount Scopus.

It is a really unusual activity that connects you with the real history of Jerusalem. It is suitable for all ages – even a three year old can have fun here – all you need is a healthy sense of curiosity about the past and a willingness to get a little dirty.



In 1996 a major building project was carried out (36m x 120m) on the Temple Mount to provide improved access. The work was done in the space of a few days and without the required archaeological supervision. (By law, archaeologists inspect building sites and have the legal right (that is exercised) to stop construction until proper excavations are carried out.)

The debris, containing important material from the Second Temple period and from later Muslim and Christian presence on the Temple Mount, was dumped at various locations. A large amount of the debris was saved and is now being painstakingly sorted. Of course, all the layers of history are mixed up, but by careful study and cross reference the team manages to date the material. They have made several fascinating finds including relics belonging to all three of the faiths, Roman gaming dice (from the garrison), Greek arrow heads, ancient seals, and over 6000 coins.

**Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey -**

Herod the Great ruled over Judea for 33 years and produced during that time a legacy of massive building projects that would transform the landscape of the ancient Land of Israel. In addition to his most renowned such achievement – the expansion and reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem – he also conceived and realized elaborate palaces, fortresses, public buildings, pagan temples, and even entire cities. King Herod's rise to power was tightly intertwined with the rise of the Roman Empire, whose culture he admired greatly. And while he was guided by his affinity for Roman customs and norms, he attempted nonetheless to attend to the needs of the Jewish citizenry of the region and to show respect for Jewish law, stimulating a notable chapter in the history of imperial relations that formed a bridge between Judea and the Roman world.



King Herod died in 4 BCE at his lavish Winter Palace in Jericho. His funeral procession set out from there for Herodium, on the fringe of the Judean Desert, where he was to be



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buried. Over time, extensive excavations at Herodium revealed a unique palace-fortress and leisure compound comprising gardens, pools, bathhouses, and residential and administrative buildings – yet no monumental tomb ever came to light. It was only in 2007, after a forty-year search, that archaeologist Ehud Netzer of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem finally discovered King Herod's resting place: a magnificent funerary complex and mausoleum facing Jerusalem, constructed by the king shortly before his death.

Herod the Great: The King's Final Journey seeks to illuminate Herod's story – his reign and his role in the history of the region – through a display of the archaeological remains of the architecture he created and the art and artifacts that surrounded his royal life. The centerpiece of the exhibition is a reconstruction of the king's circular burial chamber, and we feel proud to present the fruits of the meticulous labors of our restoration teams and privileged to be able to exhibit these important finds for the first time.

### **L'Hitraot by Rachel Shaw (May 23, 2013) – the last post from Israel Gap Year program**

Those of you who have heard or read anything I've written more formally than these blogs know that I like to begin with a story, and then I circle back to it at the end. If you dislike extended metaphors, I'm sorry, but stop reading. So here we go. In my first post, I quoted a Birthright counselor who I overheard almost two years ago - "If you want to kiss the ground, this is the place to do it. Just be careful of chewed gum and old cigarette butts."

This is a place to kiss the ground. I feel such a connection to Israel – old and new, cultural and religious, the place, the people. I'm scared of losing touch with that connection as I readjust to life in America. So many people have opened their homes to me, so sincerely, have told me to come back whenever I can. Friends, memories, experiences, my first year away from home. All reasons to love it here, so much.

The cigarette butts are not the problem. They can easily be picked up, swept away, thrown out. Taken care of quickly and thoroughly. New ones will reappear, but they can be dealt with in much the same way. And no amount of signage will ever stop stubborn Israelis from just throwing down the butts. Half the issues in Israel are those which can be easily explained. They're always on the surface, reappearing but dealt with.

The gum however, is much more difficult to clean up. Gum is the one thing we really dread on the dishes in the Yemin Orde kitchen, because it just doesn't come off. It stretches and bends and changes shape and stays right where it is.

I was in Jerusalem when sirens went off for the first time in twenty years. The role of women at the Kotel has been reconsidered, with violent results. I spent Shabbat in a settlement which, in a two-state solution, will most likely be given away, where someone standing at a bus stop was stabbed. Election results surprised everybody. There was rain in May.

The gum is the deeper-rooted issues. It is religious vs secular, religious vs religious. It is security fence vs apartheid wall. It is right vs left, Jewish vs Israeli, Israeli vs Palestinian.



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It is the issues without easy answers, those which can be glossed over or hidden, but aren't disappearing.

I've kept myself busy this week, and it really hasn't hit me yet that I'll be on a plane soon. On Monday, Masa had their closing ceremony. It was disappointing, with non-inspiring speakers (including Naftali Bennett, sparking a walk-out by a new left wing group). The performance at the end was amazing though - the Voca People, an a Capella group who performed what was closer to a show than a concert. It was also a chance to say goodbye to my Year Course friends who are living in Arad. I spent Tuesday in Jerusalem with friends, where I got another chance to walk around my favorite places one more time. It was a really nice, relaxing day, minus saying goodbye to some of my closest friends. Wednesday was packing and night school, and today I'm finishing up packing and just kind of killing time. The head of the kitchen invited us for dinner, which will be really nice.

As everyone shares their plans for Shabbat, as we get logistics for the sikkum during the last two days of Year Course, I've realized a bit that I'll have Shabbat dinner at home this week. That's tomorrow. It's unbelievable. September seems like 10 years ago, and also two days ago.

I have one request - please don't ask me what my favorite part of the year was. I keep getting hit with new waves of happy memories. Here are a few that just make me smile: the night I made a huge Shabbat dinner and we ate in the sukkah, when I felt so at home, so far away from home. The afternoon I got shawarma in the pouring rain, got soaking wet, just because I could. When I was walking home from the beach and given a lollipop by a stranger. A miserably tense, cold weekend, when my friends and I camped out on this gross beach at the Kineret, in the rain. Sitting in a tent, during a sandstorm, singing Disney and hearing strangers joining in. Countless walks, playgrounds, violent games of Junglespeed. Looking through old pictures the other day, I remembered that I got rolled up into a burrito. So many moments, most of which could have happened anywhere in the world. But they happened here. In Israel.

Here's the one thing that I've definitely learned this year: life isn't going to play out the way I see it at 18 years old.

I'm excited to be home, to see everyone and catch up. Saying goodbye to my friends is hard, especially because it's the first time in my life I've had such close friends in such far away places. But these are friends who I want to be caught up with in 50 years.

One of my friends really hates the word "goodbye." He says it's too final. So we opted for the Hebrew "I'hitraot" - until I see you again.

**Kibbutz Beit Yisrael and Kvutzat Reut** - Modern day pioneers of Jerusalem's inner city, the religious and secular members of the kibbutz live, work, and volunteer within the local community working towards a more pluralistic and just society in Israel's capital. In 1993, the urban Kibbutz Beit Yisrael settled in the heart of Jerusalem's impoverished



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Gilo Aleph housing project, where unemployment is disproportionately high – 65% of families receive welfare (as compared to the national average of 17%).

The members of the kibbutz founded the non-profit Kvutzat Reut organization as a vehicle to promote social change, respect, service, and tolerance in Israeli Society.

**Mechinat Beit Yisrael**

The Mechina is a tool for changing Israeli society, ensuring that tomorrow’s Jewish leaders are sensitive to Israel’s diversity and committed to bringing positive social change.



Created in 1997, Mechinat Beit Yisrael’s vision is to cultivate a generation of young religious and secular Israeli leavers who are united by the core values of the Jewish tradition. Our participants are 18 year-old secular and religious men and women, who take a year before their IDF service for intensive studies, volunteering and leadership development.

**Roy Edri** - After a long odyssey-during which he lived in the United States, collaborated with artists such as Eviatar Banai, Kobi Oz, and Subliminal, participated in The Voice, and accumulated 16 years of stage experience, primarily in the field of hip-hop-Roy Edri is bringing out a solo album that reflects his inner search and return to his roots.



The launch concert for Shorashim, like the album itself, features soul music with light touches of hip-hop and original texts inspired by Jewish sources. Songs with a purpose, in Hebrew and English.



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**Thursday, June 20**

## **Jerusalem of Complexity Part 2 and First Night in Beit Shean**

- 07:30 Breakfast At the hotel in Jerusalem
- 08:00-09:30 The PA update with Khaled Abu-Toameh\*
- 10:00-12:00 Visit to Gush Etzion with Rabbi Michael Unterberg
- 12:00-4:00- The separation wall, East Jerusalem tour (including Sheikh Jarrach) (starting at the tunnel road) with Yad Ben Tzvi including time for lunch
- 4:00-6:00 Drive to Beit Shean

### **The Mifgash**

- 6:00 - Friends meet Friends (opening activity)
- 7:00 Food, stories and culture – Preparing Dinner with Mevashlot
- 9:00 Welcoming Dinner
- 10:00 Home Hospitality

Lunch: Packed lunch

Dinner: Home hospitality in Beit Shean (**not included in the Price Proposal**)

**Overnight:** Home Hospitality, Staff at Beit Shean YH



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**Khaled Abu Toameh** (born 1963) is an Arab Israeli journalist, lecturer and documentary filmmaker, who has been writing on Arab affairs for three decades. Abu Toameh writes for the *Jerusalem Post* and for the New-York-based Gatestone Institute where he is also a senior advisor.<sup>[2]</sup> He is a producer and consultant for *NBC News* since 1989.



His articles have appeared in *U.S. News and World Report*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *World Tribune*, *Sunday Times*, *Daily Express*, the Palestinian daily *Al-Fajr* and other newspapers.

## Gush Etzion

Gush Etzion (bloc of Etzion) refers to a group of Jewish villages established from the 1920s south of Jerusalem on the northern part of Mount Hebron in the southern West Bank, and destroyed during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War: Kfar Etzion, Massu'ot, Ein Tzurim and Revadim. The first three were aligned with the religious orthodox, and Revadim was aligned with Hashomer Hatz'a'ir (Young guards). It also refers to the four Israeli settlements reestablished, following the 1967 Six-Day War and those settlements that have expanded the area of the Gush Etzion Block.



## The Civil War

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations approved the Partition Plan. The bloc fell within the area allotted to a proposed Arab state. The Haganah command decided not to evacuate the bloc. Arab hostilities began almost immediately, and travel to Jerusalem became exceedingly difficult. For five months the bloc was besieged, first by Arab irregulars, and then by the Jordanian Arab Legion. Throughout the winter hostilities intensified and several relief convoys from the Haganah in Jerusalem were destroyed in ambushes. For 47 days the armed conflict was intense. In January, the women and children were evacuated with British assistance. An emergency reinforcement convoy



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attempting to march to Gush Etzion under cover of darkness were discovered and killed. Despite some resupply flights by Piper Cubs out of Tel Aviv onto an improvised airfield, adequate supplies were not getting in.

On March 27, land communication with the Yishuv was severed completely when the Neve Daniel Convoy was forced to retreat back to Jerusalem. In the following months, Arab irregular forces continued small-scale attacks against the bloc, which the Haganah was able to effectively withstand. At times, the Haganah forces, commanded by Uzi Narkiss, ambushed Arab military convoys, (and, according to Morris also Arab civilian traffic and British military convoys) on the road between Jerusalem and Hebron. The defenders of Gush Etzion and the central command in Jerusalem mulled evacuation, but although they had very few arms, a decision was made to hold out due to their strategic location as the only Jewish-held position on Jerusalem's southern approach from Hebron.

On 12 May, the commander of Kfar Etzion requested from the Central Command in Jerusalem a permission to evacuate the kibbutz, but was told to stay. Later in the day, the Arabs captured the Russian Orthodox monastery, which the Haganah used as a perimeter fortress for the Kfar Etzion area, killing twenty-four of its thirty-two defenders. On May 13, a massive attack involving parts of two Arab Legion infantry companies, light artillery and local irregular support commenced from four directions. The kibbutz fell within a day, and the Arab forces massacred the entire population of Kfar Etzion, soldiers and civilians alike, the total number of killed during the final assault, following massacre and suicide was between 75 to 250. Only three men and one woman survived. The following day, the three other kibbutzim surrendered, on the day of the declaration of independence. The prisoners were taken as POW's by the Arab Legion and held in Jordan for a year before being released.

## Reestablishment

From 1949 until 1967 Gush Etzion was controlled by Jordan. During the interim, the survivors of Masu'ot Yitzhak, Ein Tzurim, and Revadim founded their communities anew in Israel to the west of the original sites. The survivors of Kfar Etzion ultimately founded Nir Etzion in the Mount Carmel area near Haifa.

During the Jordanian rule of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, all the buildings were destroyed and the thousands of trees planted in Gush Etzion were uprooted, save a very old one known as the "lone oak." For 19 years, some survivors would gather on the Israel-Jordan frontier and gaze at the tree in remembrance of what was.

As a result of the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel controlled the area of the former Etzion Bloc. A loose organisation of Bnei Akiva activists, who later coalesced into Gush Emunim, led by Chanan Porat, whose parents had been evacuated, petitioned Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to allow the reestablishment of Kfar Etzion. Since then, Gush Etzion has continued to expand. The settlement of Rosh Tzurim was founded on the former site of Ein Tzurim and Revadim, and Kfar Etzion's poultry houses have been built in the area of



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Massuot Yitzchak. Many other settlements and two municipalities have been founded in the area of historic Gush Etzion, and its name was taken for the greater Gush Etzion Regional Council. The Israeli population in the entire area approaches 50,000 residents.

## מִפְגָּשׁ Mifgásh

**Etymology** - From the root פ־ג־שׁ (p-g-sh).

**Noun** - מִפְגָּשׁ (mifgásh) m (plural indefinite form מִפְגָּשִׁים, singular construct form מִפְגָּשׁ- , plural construct form מִפְגָּשֵׁי-)

1. A gathering, meet-up, convention: a pre-planned meeting of members of an organization, party, movement, or the like.

פְּגִישָׁה (p'gishá) f (plural indefinite form פְּגִישוֹת, singular construct form פְּגִישָׁה- , plural construct form פְּגִישוֹת-)

1. A meeting: an instance of meeting.
2. Meeting: the act of meeting.

PGISHA, CHATZI PGISHA	MEETING, HALF A MEETING	פְּגִישָׁה, חֲצִי פְּגִישָׁה / רחל
<p>Pgisha, chatzi pgisha, mabat echad mahir, Kitei nivim stumim - ze dai Veshuv hetzif hakol, ve shuv hakol his'ir Mishbar ha'osher vehadvai.</p> <p>Af secher shichechah - baniti li magen Hinneh haya kelo haya. Ve'al birkai echra , al sfat agam so'en Lishtot mimmeno li rvayah</p>	<p>Meeting, half a meeting, a quick glance, pieces of vague phrases enough And again flooded, and again stormed all a heavy wave of happiness and distress.</p> <p>Even a dam of forgetting - I built a shield Here it is as it never was. And I will fall on my knees, on a roaring lake's shore, to drink my fill from it.</p>	<p>פְּגִישָׁה, חֲצִי פְּגִישָׁה, מִבַּט אֶחָד מֵהֵר, קִטְעֵי נִיבִים סְתוּמִים זֶה דַּי... וְשׁוּב הֲצִיף הַכֹּל, וְשׁוּב הַכֹּל הִסְעִיר מִשְׁבַּר הָאֲשֶׁר וְהִדְוִי.</p> <p>אֶף סֶכֶר שִׁכַּחַת בָּנִיתִי לִי מִגֶּן הִנֵּה הָיָה כֵּלֹא הָיָה. וְעַל בְּרִכְי אֶכְרַע עַל שְׂפַת אָגָם סוֹאֵן לִשְׁתּוֹת מִמֶּנּוּ לְרִוְיָה! תל אביב, 13.4.25</p>



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### The Beit-Shean-Valley of Springs-Cleveland Partnership

The Beit-Shean-Valley of Springs-Cleveland Partnership is one of the veteran Partnerships in the unique Partnerships initiative of the Jewish Agency, to build connections between Israel communities and Jewish communities around the world. It begun its way in 1995 and has been a platform for initiative promotion, community development and various kinds of connections building between Beit Shean, Valley of Springs and Cleveland ever since. Every activity emphasizes using empowering cooperation, and creates interpersonal and inter-community relationships which affect different aspects of life – whether it is community pride and responsibility or Jewish and Zionist identity – of all the participants and their various social circles.



The Partnership is being lead by a steering committee, combined of municipalities representatives and volunteers, residents of the region’s community and Cleveland.

As part of the Strategic Planning Process, which took place in 2011-2012, it has been decided that the Partnership will focus on three main fields: education, community development and tourism. This will be done through the two unique tools of the Partnership: voluntarism and the connection to the Jewish Community in Cleveland.

**The Region** - Beit Shean is a city in the North district of Israel, which has played an important role historically due to its geographical location at the junction of the Jordan River Valley and Jezreel Valley. More about the history of Beit Shean...



Mayor of Beit Shean is Jacky Levy. Beit She’an was the hometown and political power base of his father, David Levy, a prominent figure in Israeli politics. About 18,000 people live in the municipality.



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Valley of Springs is a regional council in northern Israel that encompasses most of the settlements in the Beit Shean Valley. Each Kibbutz and Moshav has a fascinating history.

Mayor of Valley of Springs Regional Council is Yoram Karin. About 13,000 people live in the sixteen Kibbutzim and six Moshavim located in its municipal territory.

*Tourists from all over the world and Israel arrive to Beit Shean, to tour the impressive dig site and learn about 5,000 years of history. And there's more to see and taste in the region – parks and springs; delicious meals on the home hospitality project; unique agricultural farms and sites, such as Eden farm or Bio Bee; beautiful private gardens and collections; fascinating people who tell the stories of the region and its history; etc.*

*Transportation:* The main means of transport in Beit She'an is the bus, and the city is served by the Egged buses for long-distance (bus 961 to and from Jerusalem) and Kavim for short-distances (411 and 412 to and from Afula).



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### The Fish and the Bear

ALL CREATURES LIVE IN WATER. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEA CREATURES AND LAND CREATURES IS THAT LAND ANIMALS DRAW THE WATER INTO THEMSELVES.”

(RABBI ADIN STEINSALTZ, 1994 JERUSALEM LECTURE)

#### The Fish

WHAT IS JEWISH LIFE LIKE WHEN LIKE THE FISH JUDAISM IS THE SEA THAT SURROUNDS US?



#### The Bear

WHAT IS JEWISH LIFE LIKE WHEN LIKE THE BEAR WE HAVE TO “HUNT” FOR JEWISH FOOD, WATER AND SUSTENANCE?



### The Amphibious Jew



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**Friday, June, 21**

### **Mifgash Second Day**

- 8:45 Reflection
- 10:00- 12:30 Kibbutz: Past, Present and Future (Kibbutz Tirat Tzvi)
- 12:30-1:15 Lunch
- 1:15- 3:30 Preparation for Shabbat (Kibbutz Ma'ale Gilboa)
- 3:30-4:00 Reflection
- 4:00 Home Hospitality
- 7:00 Shabbat with Host families

**Overnight:** Home Hospitality, Staff at Beit Shean YH

**Saturday (Shabbat), June 22**

### **Mifgash 3 Day**

- Shabbat with Host Family
- 4:00 Mifgashim Limudiim (learning with families)
- 8:30 Motzaei Shabbat
- 9:00-1:00 Masa Leili (walk at night)
- 2:00- Program on Shabbat?

**Lunch:** home hospitality, **Dinner:** home hospitality

**Overnight:** Home Hospitality, Staff at Beit Shean YH



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### What is a kibbutz?

A kibbutz (communal settlement) is a shared community where people live and work together for everyone’s mutual benefit.

The first kibbutz, Degania, was founded by a group of a dozen, young pioneers in 1910, along the banks of the Sea of Galilee. Since then, 273 kibbutzim have spread across the face of the country and, to a certain extent, have defined its borders. From the beginning, kibbutzniks (kibbutz members) viewed themselves as endowed with a sense of duty, serving as a pillar of strength for Zionism. The members lived under extreme conditions, while tilling the soil, drying the swamplands, and building a settlement.



Kibbutzniks have served as leaders in national undertakings, including areas such as: youth instruction and guidance, assisting in the absorption of new immigrants, and most notable, service in the different branches of the armed forces – with a high percentage of volunteers serving in prestigious units. Kibbutzniks have also excelled in creative, cultural innovation, combining Jewish tradition with a new, original perspective enhanced by the unique traits and “aroma” of the Land of Israel.

### Why was the first kibbutz established? What happened in the Jewish world that led to the establishment of the kibbutz (as a social community)?

Kibbutzim were established in the early 20th century for two specific reasons:

A) Establishing communal or collective agricultural settlements built on land that had been purchased by the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet Le-Yisrael) would enable young Jewish pioneers (chalutzim) who did not possess enough capital to purchase land on their own, to take an ownership stake in the fruits of their own labor and realize the Zionist vision of working the soil of Eretz Yisrael with their own sweat and toil.

B) The communal model which became the basis for both large and small kibbutzim reflected an attempt to put into practice the social and political ideals for a modern society that had become increasingly popular among young Zionists in Eastern Europe. But rather than engaging in violent revolution on a massive scale, idealistic chalutzim felt they could establish model societies on a smaller scale that would serve as the vanguard for a free and independent modern Jewish existence in the land of Israel, based on true equality among a community of workers.

### What are the changes in the kibbutz today?

During the economic crisis that hampered the Israeli economy during the 1980’s, many kibbutzim were deeply affected. Kibbutzim also faced a demographic crisis, as many



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members left the community. New winds began to blow within the kibbutz courtyard. Many kibbutzim began to privatize consumer items and services, and adopted a graded salary scale according to the position and the type of employment.

Today there are two primary types of kibbutzim – cooperative and “renewed” – and they have redefined levels of collectivity and equality to meet their desires. Another form of kibbutz life is exemplified by four “Urban Kibbutzim”, based on collectivity and thriving in deprived and underprivileged city neighborhoods.



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**Sunday, June 23**

## Israel's Northern Borders

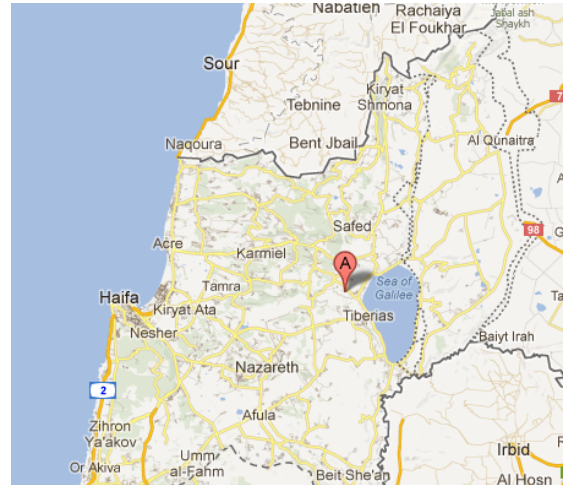
- Breakfast: Host families
- 9:00-10:00 – Reflection
- 10:00-11:00 Traveling to the northern border
- 11:00-3:00 Tour of the northern borders with Kobi Merom including time for lunch

## Mifgash Day 4

- 4:30 Giving back to the community (community event)
- 7:30 Home Hospitality Dinner
- 9:00 Final Party
- 11:00 Home Hospitality

Lunch: Packed lunch, Dinner: Home Hospitality

**Overnight:** Home Hospitality, Staff at Beit Shean YH



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## The Galilee

Mountains, fertile valleys, water sources, olive trees, and green landscapes, make up the scenery of the Galil, the northern part of Israel. It is traditionally divided into two geographical units: The Upper Galil and the Lower Galil with the Bet Hakerem valley running between them. In the Lower Galil, the mountain peaks reach a maximum height of 600 meters (1968 ft). The Upper Galil has peaks reaching double that height with the tallest mountain, Mount Meron, measuring 1200m (3937 ft). The region borders the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Jordan Valley to the east. The northern part of the Galil borders Lebanon and the southern part runs along the Jezereel Valley.

Humans have settled in the Galil since prehistoric times. The Galil has always been a prominent stage for Jewish history, at times even more than Jerusalem. When Jews were exiled from Jerusalem and its environs at various times in the past, Jewish settlements flourished in the Gall. Jews settled in the Galil ever since the conquest of the Land of Israel by the twelve tribes in the days of Joshua and the Judges. Important Biblical battles were fought in the Galil, such as the battle of Deborah and Barak against Siserah, the battle of Gideon against the Midianites, and the fateful battle of King Saul against the Philistines in which he was killed. After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jewish governing body, the Sanhedrin, moved its center to the Galil. During the Arab and Crusader periods, the pulse of the Jewish world moved to Babylon and Jewish settlements dwindled. Only small communities of Jews existed in and around Zefat and Tiberias. Only in the 16th century, after the Spanish inquisition and subsequent expulsion, did Jews come back to Eretz Yisrael. Many settled in Zefat, making the city and the Galil as a whole a Jewish center once again. It is no wonder that the settlers of the First Aliyah in 1882 chose to live in the Galil, establishing Rosh Pina (the corner stone). It was also in the Galil that the first Kibbutz, Degania, was established in 1910 and the first Moshav, Nahalal, founded by pioneers of the Second Aliyah, is also located here. Even today the Galil remains the home of the pioneering spirit and new settlements are continually forming.

In the Galil you will meet diverse types of people such as Hassidim and Kabbalists in Zefat, secular farmers on different kibbutzim, new immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union in the development towns of Kiryat Shemona and Carmiel, as well as Sabras whose families originate from the four corners of the world. Christianity was born in the Galil and the many Christian holy sites attract thousands of pilgrims every year. Christian and Muslim Arab villages dot the Galil. Other minorities also live in the Galil-the Druze and Bahai, both breakaway religions from Islam, settled in the mountains in order to escape the scrutinizing eyes of Muslim rulers.



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## The Golan Heights

The Golan Heights is a high basalt plateau in the northeastern corner of Israel. It was formed millions of years ago by erupting volcanoes, whose extinct cones, such as Mt. Bental, still line its eastern rim. Beneath its otherwise mostly flat rocky landscape are huge bodies of ground water (aquifers) which fill up from cold wet winters and melting snow from neighboring Mt. Hermon. This is the source of the regions numerous perennial streams and beautiful waterfalls, such as Yehudiya, Zavitan, and Devora, which flow into the Sea of Galilee and Jordan River. In addition to being attractive hiking and swimming spots, these waters provide Israel with 30% of its fresh drinking water.

The Golan Heights, (or Ramat Hagolan as it is called in Hebrew), has been inhabited since prehistoric times. In the Bible, it is referred to by several different names: Golan, Horon, and Bashan. Sometimes people say the “dolmens”

(the giant stone ‘tables’) scattered about the region are the furniture of Og, King of Bashan, who the Bible claims was a giant. During the Second Temple period, the Golan Heights had a large Jewish population and it was a center of olive oil production. In 66 CE when the Great Revolt against Rome began, the Roman army placed an emphasis on conquering major Jewish centers in the Golan Heights in order to sever the link between the Jews of Eretz Yisrael and their brethren in the Diaspora. A particularly fierce battle was fought at Gamla, which became known as the “Masada of the North”.

Jewish life in the Golan Heights didn’t end with the destruction of Gamla. In the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, the Golan’s Jewish communities flourished, as attested to by the numerous ancient synagogues discovered throughout the region. The “Talmudic Village” and basalt stone synagogue in Katzrin are particularly fine examples of the rich Jewish material culture at this time.

Over the past 30 years, the Golan has been a source of contention between Israel and Syria. Prior to 1967, the Golan was in Syrian territory. The Syrian army took advantage of its dominant elevation over farms and villages “below” in Israel to shell and snipe at them on a regular basis. Numerous casualties were inflicted on the Israeli civilian population. Many children in the kibbutzim below the Heights spent virtually every night

Israeli Settlements in the Golan Heights, February 1992



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of their childhood in bomb shelters. On one occasion, the Syrians even tried to divert the headwaters of the Jordan River at the Banias in order to deprive Israel of its main source of fresh drinking water.

This changed in June 1967. In a series of lightning strikes over 2 days, Israel captured the Golan Heights during the Six Day War. This began a new period in the history of the region. In the wake of the soldiers came civilians who began exploring the region as hikers, scientists, and archaeologists. Soon kibbutzim, moshavim, and other settlements began to appear, as a new generation of Israeli pioneers began to follow in the footsteps of their ancient and modern forefathers.

The peace of the region was shattered once again on Yom Kippur 1973. A column of Syrian tanks tried to break through the Israeli lines at Kuneitra and several other points. In the course of 3 days of intense fighting in Emek Habacha (the Valley of Tears) a small number of Israeli tank soldiers defeated a far superior Syrian force in numbers and sophistication of equipment. By the time a cease-fire was declared, the Israeli army was "banging on the door to Damascus". Today there are 30 Jewish settlements in the Golan and over 18,000 residents.



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## Monday, June 24

### On the way to Tel Aviv

- 7:00 Breakfast: Host families
- 8:00-9:00 Reflection
- 09:00-11:00 Visit the Ethiopian community in Beit Shean
- 11:00-12:00 Drive to Camp 80 military base
- 12:00-1:30 Visit to Camp 80 military base
- 1:30-2:30 Packed Lunch
- 2:30-3:00 Drive to Jasar a Zarka
- 3:00-6:30 A Visit to Jasar a Zarka, Arab Village, including dinner on the Mediterranean beach
- 6:30-8:00 - Drive to Tel Aviv
- 9:00-10:00 - Reflection in Tel Aviv hotel

Lunch: Packed Lunch

Dinner: With Arab residents of Jasar a Zarka

**Overnight:** Sea net, Tel Aviv



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### A Simple interview by Len Lyons



Seated in the rabbinical office of Bet Shemesh, **Kess Hadane** is seated between two of his sons in a warm family portrait. This iconic moment drew us deeply into a poignant social and religious reality. **Kess Hadane**, once in charge of twenty-five synagogues in the large Jewish town of Ambover, does not have access to an Ethiopian synagogue for his own Sabbath worship. Instead, he assists the rabbi of a local Israeli synagogue and prays Israeli-style. Yet his children thrive in the Promised Land, distinguishing themselves in pursuits denied to the older generation. Emanuel (on left) is a captain in the army, and **Rabbi Yosef**, educated in the rabbinical school of Turin, Italy, during the 1970s, is the chief rabbi of the Ethiopian Jewish community in Israel. We had scheduled the interview only with **Kess Hadane** and **Rabbi Yosef**. Captain Emanuel was a surprise and welcome visitor, but without permission ahead of time from the Army Spokesperson's Office, we could not interview him.

When we came to Israel, the rabbinate told us that there are a few things we "forgot," that we didn't have a chance to learn in Ethiopia. We didn't like that way of talking to us. I don't feel that I have to add anything to my Jewish practice. . . . There is not even one Ethiopian synagogue in Bet Shemesh, where there are more than a hundred families.  
**- Kess Hadane**

What I believe is that our coming to Israel in Operation Moses and Operation Solomon are miracles. For us to come out of Sudan [in 1984], which had no formal relationship to Israel, was a miracle. For us to come out of Ethiopia during the cruel regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam [in 1991], was also a big miracle, like the parting of the Red Sea. In that operation, Israel brought more than 14,000 people from Ethiopia in only thirty-six hours.



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Every single person had food to eat and a place to sleep. There were people here in Israel to help every one of them. This was our exodus. This is what I teach at our family's Passover. So I say, after Hashem did such a miracle for us, what is our obligation, how do we thank God for this miracle? What is our obligation to Israel, after what Israel did for us?

### - Rabbi Yosef: Hadane

In the 1960s, Yosef Hadane, the son of a respected religious leader, was a teenager with an aptitude for learning. At the time, some of the most advanced thinkers in the Beta Israel community, such as Yona Bogale and Shmuel Beri, were attempting to connect their own tradition with rabbinic Judaism. Thus the talented Yosef was selected to attend rabbinical school in Turin, Italy. Because his father, **Kess Hadane**, was open-minded and trusted the people who were taking his son from Ethiopia, he sent Yosef with his blessings. Yosef's mission was to become a rabbi and return to Ethiopia to teach the Beta Israel community how the rest of the Jewish world practices. But by the time he graduated with a rabbinical degree, civil war had broken out in Ethiopia. The Marxists were poised to overthrow Emperor Haile Selassie, and it was unsafe for Yosef to return. He was advised to go to Israel instead, and so he immigrated in 1972, when there were perhaps a few dozen Ethiopian Jews in Israel.

He has been a fortuitous choice to represent rabbinic Judaism to the incoming Beta Israel. He is not only a religious scholar, but also an affable communicator, fluent in five languages, and politically astute. Over the next twenty years, **Rabbi Yosef** facilitated the aliyah of thousands of Ethiopian Jews, including his father and their extended family in 1985, and he helped create some of the unifying aspects of Ethiopian Jewish life in Israel, such as the annual Sigd festival in Jerusalem. In 1992, the rabbinate appointed **Rabbi Yosef** to be chief rabbi of the Ethiopian community. His role is both powerful and subtle. The burden of official work is enormous. For example, he must approve every marriage involving an Ethiopian bride and groom to ensure their Jewish identity and that they are not related. More broadly, **Rabbi Yosef** needs to help the community transition to the inevitable future while respecting and including the past he shares with them. His original mission as a rabbinical student in Italy is being fulfilled, but in Israel rather than in Ethiopia.

**Rabbi Yosef, do you feel now that the relationship between the rabbinate and the kessim is a healthy one?**

**Rabbi Yosef:**

There is a big gap between the kessim and the rabbinate, very little communication. Some kessim cooperate with the rabbinate and are willing to learn more about Judaism



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than they had a chance to learn in Ethiopia. But I cannot say all the kessim accept halacha [rabbinic Jewish law]. My father, though, has always been willing to learn more and to be in touch with everyone.

**Kess Hadane, what do you do for religious observance without an Ethiopian synagogue? What do you do on Shabbat?**

**Kess Hadane:** I go to the Israeli synagogue and we pray in Hebrew, not Ge'ez. I was a respected religious leader and in charge of twenty-five synagogues in Ambover. Here I am only allowed to assist a rabbi in one synagogue. There is not even an Ethiopian synagogue in Bet Shemesh, where there are more than a hundred families.

**Rabbi Yosef, why is there is no Ethiopian synagogue for your father or the families in Bet Shemesh?**

**Rabbi Yosef:** As the chief rabbi of Ethiopian Jews, I believe there must be synagogues for the Ethiopians, just as there are for the Yemenites, the Ashkenazim, and so on. If they do not have their own synagogues, then not all the people will go to pray. They will not participate because they don't understand Hebrew well enough, and for them to go and sit and not understand for several hours is very disappointing. In Bet Shemesh, I tried to get the mayor to give his full support to the community, but he will not. In Ashkelon, there are three Ethiopian synagogues. In Ramle, there are also three.

**What does the mayor say is the reason he does not approve?**

**Rabbi Yosef:** I don't know exactly why. I spoke with the chief rabbi of Bet Shemesh about this, and we decided to meet the mayor together and listen to his reasons. But still, I really don't know why.

**Kess Hadane, what was Fasika [Passover] like in your village in Ethiopia?**

**Kess Hadane:** The synagogue was close to my house and all the people would come there to celebrate together. We would eat together, sing, pray, and celebrate. It was something we all did as a community. We had our own Book of Pesach, which explains the Passover story from the Torah, but we did not have the Hagaddah.

**Rabbi Yosef:** What I recall is that we would pray in the synagogue, and afterwards they would bless and eat the matzah. The family would make matzah, or we would get it from Israel. Before we received matzah from Israel, the Ethiopian Jews practiced animal sacrifice. They would slaughter a sheep. But in Ambover they stopped this in the mid-1900s due to the influence of Dr. Jacques Faitlovich, who taught that we were forbidden to sacrifice outside of the Temple. The Jews of Ambover stopped this practice, but



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elsewhere in the villages around Ethiopia the sacrifices of sheep continued [into the 1970s in some villages].

**Kess Hadane, how do you observe Pesach in your family now that you are in Israel? Are you all together for one seder [Passover meal]?**

**Kess Hadane:** Yes, I have several sons here, and we all prepare Pesach for the extended family, which, if you include everyone, even the little children, is more than 200 people.

**Rabbi Yosef:** My father and I both lead the Seder. We all organize the food and reserve the hall. My father does the Ethiopian prayers in Ge'ez and I use the Hagaddah. We explain to everyone who is there about the Exodus from Egypt. In the next afternoon, we gather again until Ma'ariv [evening prayers] and we learn. The adults and children ask whatever they want to about the story.

**I would like to ask both of you if you are comfortable with the decision of the government to accept the Falas Mura into Israel as Jews.**

**Kess Hadane:** I want them to come, but the people who organized the compound in Addis Ababa have brought in some who are not Jews. They did not always know who was Jewish. That was a problem. We want our people to come, but I think there are some who go through the conversion ceremony and still don't follow Judaism when they finish.

**Rabbi Yosef:** Those who came from the Jewish tribe, the Beta Israel, should come even if they were living a different lifestyle [as Christians]. Even though most of them are descended from Jewish families, they should do the conversion ceremony because they have been living as Christians. Of course, if there is intermarriage with Christians, then the Christian must do the full conversion. You see, Yisrael al-fa pisha ka ta yisrael: "Even if you sin, Jewish people are still Jewish." That's what we decided.

Once they come to Israel, we have to help them no matter who they are. The problem is that the government hears that some people come here who are not Jewish, so they bring only a few hundred a month. If the government was convinced that all of them are from Jewish families, I think they would bring them at a faster rate.

**What is the process now for the Falas Mura to be recognized as Jews?**

**Rabbi Yosef:** It is called Return to Judaism. They study Judaism and Hebrew, they go to the mikveh [ritual bath], and the men are circumcised if necessary. If they are already



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circumcised, it was not necessarily done by Jews in a way that is correct, so they have to do it symbolically by taking a drop of blood. The studying and Return to Judaism process takes one year.

### **What is the process for an Ethiopian couple to get approval for a Jewish marriage?**

**Rabbi Yosef:** I have to confirm that the individuals are Jewish and that they are not related by blood as cousins. To do that, I research their family tree seven generations back. I start with where they were born. From knowing where they were born, I can tell almost 90 percent of what I need to know. Then I ask the parents, uncles, cousins, and the neighbors. Sometimes it's clear, or I already know them because I did the tree for another family member. Other times it takes a long time. I keep my own list. The difficulty with Ethiopian Jews is that it was an oral culture and there were no written documents. There are about 250 to 300 marriages a year that come through my office, but couples can go to their local rabbinical offices too. But these also come to me for approval.

### **Do you ever refuse a couple?**

**Rabbi Yosef:** Yes, I do. When this happens, they are upset and angry. If I tell them it's because one of them is not Jewish, they have to convert. Whether they do is up to them. Otherwise, I cannot approve it. Then they cannot have a Jewish wedding in Israel.

### **Kess Hadane, how has the meaning of the Sigd festival changed now that you are in Israel?.**

**Kess Hadane:** The meaning that it had in Ethiopia was to make it possible for us to return to Jerusalem. We are still not in the Temple, so we are now praying to rebuild the Temple and also praying for a greater acceptance of our people in Israel. There is an additional purpose now? a competition for status among the Ethiopians who speak at the observance.

### **Rabbi Yosef, in the future do you think the Ethiopian practice of Judaism will disappear?**

**Rabbi Yosef:** We came to Israel because we are Jews; we believe in one God, the same as all other Jews. Israel is for all of us. We all have to go in the same direction, with the same beliefs. There must be as many rabbis as possible from our own community, and we have to be represented in every field, every kind of job. We must see ourselves as equal to everyone else. This is the only way we will have real integration.



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## Programs with the Education Corps of the Israel Defense Forces Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Education Corps

Cleveland's partnership with the Israel Defense Forces has bettered the lives of more than 9,000 disadvantaged soldiers at the Havat HaShomer army base through a program of computer training, health and self-esteem empowerment, and educational and vocational preparation.

In Israel, there is a strong correlation between military service and success in careers and society. Participation in the Army can be a significant channel for upward mobility while exclusion can impede opportunity and reinforce previous failures. The Israel Defense Force's Havat HaShomer army base makes a special effort to recruit disadvantaged youth and provide them with extra training, remedial education and on-going assistance so they can succeed in the army and significantly enhance their future prospects.

In 1999, the Jewish Federation of Cleveland partnered with the Education Corps of the Israel Defense Forces to help close the social and educational gap for soldiers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Remarkably, this initiative marked the first time that a division of the Israel Defense Forces partnered with a community outside Israel to address a vital concern within Israeli society.

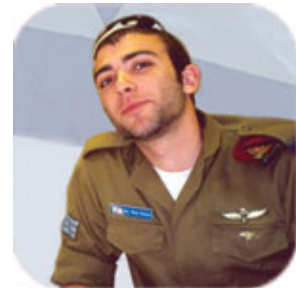
### Providing Second Chances for Bright Futures

How does an infant born in Cleveland, Ohio, become a commander in an elite brigade of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)? For Beni Simon, the road was rocky, but it led to satisfying heights.

When he was eight months old, Beni's family made aliyah. Immersed in Israeli life, yet possessing a strong identification with his American roots, Beni wasn't sure who he really was or where he was going. An undistinguished school career, during which he admits he "never did any work and in fact got to the point of not knowing how to learn," set him on the journey for a lifetime of failure.

Success as an adult in Israeli society is dependent on successful army service. When the IDF recruiter told him that he lacked the usual indicators necessary to be accepted by the army, Beni thought he was through. Fortunately, though, Beni qualified for the Federation supported MAKAM program designed for at-risk youth.

At the end of his first day of basic training at Havat HaShomer, the base that houses the MAKAM program, Beni told his commanding officer, "I made a big mistake. I have spent so many years trying to ignore any kind of authority. I'll never make it in the army." His commander, specially trained to work with at-risk soldiers, listened to Beni as he explained his concerns. "She was non-judgmental. Her compassion, patience, understanding, and acceptance made a difference," says Beni. "For the first time in my life I decided I was going to be successful. I was going to make sure that I became a good soldier."



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Previously hidden by an adolescent attitude were the intelligence and energy that Beni drew upon. He forged ahead and earned the "Outstanding Soldier" award at his base. Beni is now a commander in the intelligence platoon of a paratrooper brigade. "I'm so lucky there was a MAKAM program. They understood me and knew what to do," says Beni. "Thank you for making it possible."

### **Camp Dotan (a.k.a. Camp 80) (מחנה 80) (Mahane Shmonim)**

Tironut (Hebrew: טירונות) is the Hebrew name for the recruit training of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In the IDF, recruit training comes in many difficulty levels, each corps or major unit having their own training program. After the tironut, a recruit is certified as a rifleman of a level that depends on the training program - starting with Rifleman 01 and up. Rifleman 01 is mostly reserved for disabled recruits, such as the deaf, while regular training ranges from Rifleman 02 and up.



All non-combat recruits are certified with Rifleman 02, while combat recruits must at least complete the Rifleman 03 basic training. All recruits in the IDF basic training wear the general all-army khaki beret and get their corps beret upon completion, in a ceremony where the recruits swear in to the IDF. Infantry units and some others such as military police swear in at the Western Wall.

### **Rifleman 02**

- Knowledge of the M16 assault rifle (theory and practical).
- Ability to hit targets with the M16 assault rifle (out of at least fifteen bullets).
- Knowledge of the standard IDF communications equipment (theory and practical).
- Knowledge of first aid (theory).
- Knowledge of how to protect oneself against chemical and biological weapons/hazards (theory and practical).



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## Israeli Arabs

### Ethnic and religious groupings

In 2006, the official number of Arab residents in Israel - including East Jerusalem permanent residents many of whom are not citizens - was 1,413,500 people, about 20% of Israel's population. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (May 2003), Muslims, including Bedouins, make up 82% of the entire Arab population in Israel, with around 9% Druze, and 9% Christians.

The national language and mother tongue of Arab citizens, including the Druze, is Arabic and the colloquial spoken language is of the Palestinian Arabic dialect. Knowledge and command of Modern Standard Arabic varies.

### Muslims

Outside of the Bedouin population, traditionally settled communities of Muslim Arabs comprise about 70% of the Arab population in Israel.



Muslims in Israel have the highest birthrate of any group: 4.0 children per woman, as opposed to 2.7 for Jewish Israelis, a natural reproduction rate of 3% compared to 1.5%. Around 25% of the children in Israel today were born to Muslim parents. The Muslim population is mostly young: 42% of Muslims are children under the age of 15, compared with 26% of the Jewish population. The median age of Muslim Israelis is 18, while the median age of Jewish Israelis is 30. The percentage of people over 65 is less than 3% for Muslims, compared with 12% for the Jewish population. According to forecasts, the Muslim population will grow to over 2,000,000 people, or 24-26% of the population within the next 15 years. They will also comprise 85% of the Arab population in Israeli in 2020 (Up 3% from 2005). (See the section on Demographics below for more on this issue.)

### Bedouin

According to the Foreign Affairs Minister of Israel, 110,000 Bedouins live in the Negev, 50,000 in the Galilee and 10,000 in the central region of Israel.

The term "Bedouin" ("Badawi" in Arabic) defines a range of nomadic desert-dwelling ethnic groups spanning from the western Sahara desert to the Najd desert including one of its arms, the Negev ("Naqab" in Arabic). Through the latter half



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of the 19th century, the traditionally pastoral nomadic Bedouin in Palestine began transitioning to a semi-nomadic pastoral agricultural community, with an emphasis on agricultural production and the privatization of tribal lands.

Prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948, there were an estimated 65,000-90,000 Bedouin living in the Negev. The 11,000 who remained were relocated by the Israeli government in the 1950s and 1960s to an area called the siyag (“enclosure” or, “fence”) made up of relatively infertile land in the northeastern Negev comprising 10% of the Negev desert. Negev Bedouins, like the rest of the Arab population in Israel, lived under military rule up to 1966, after which restrictions were lifted and they were free to move outside the siyag as well. However, even after 1966 they were not free to reside outside of the siyag; they came to reside within 2% of the Negev and never returned to their former range. Seven government-built townships were established in the siyag area where roughly half of Israel’s Bedouin population live today, centered around the largest legal Bedouin locality in Israel, Rahat. The Israeli government encourages Bedouin to settle as permanent residents in these development towns, but the other half of the Negev Bedouin population continues to live in 45 “unrecognized villages,” some of which pre-date the existence of Israel. These villages do not appear on any commercial maps, and are denied basic services like water, electricity and schools. It is forbidden by the Israeli authorities for the residents of these villages to build permanent structures, though many do, risking fines and home demolition.

## Druze

The Druze are members of a sect residing in many countries, although predominantly in mountainous regions in Israel, Lebanon and Syria. Druze in Israel live mainly in the north, notably in Carmel City, near Haifa. There are also Druze localities in the Golan Heights, such as Majdal Shams, which were captured in 1967 from Syria and annexed to Israel in 1981.

It is in keeping with Druze religious practice to always serve the country in which they live. So while the Druze population in Israel are Arabic speakers like their counterparts in Syria and Lebanon, they often consider themselves Israeli and unlike the Arab Muslims and Arab Christians in Israel they rarely identify themselves as Palestinians. As early as 1939, the leadership of one Druze village formally allied itself with pre-Israeli militias, like the Haganah. A separate “Israeli Druze” identity was encouraged by the Israeli government who formally recognized the Druze religious community as independent of the Muslim religious community in Israeli law as early as 1957.

The Druze are defined as a distinct ethnic group in the Israeli Ministry of Interior’s census registration. While the Israeli education system is basically divided into Hebrew and Arabic speaking schools, the Druze have autonomy within the Arabic speaking branch.



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The Druze of British Mandate Palestine showed little interest in Arab nationalism that was on the rise in the 20th century, and did not take part in the early Arab-Jewish skirmishes of the era either. By 1948, many young Druze volunteered for the Israeli army and actively fought on their side. Unlike their Christian and Muslim counterparts, no Druze villages were destroyed in the 1948 war and no Druze left their settlements permanently. Unlike most other Arab citizens of Israel, right-wing Israeli political parties have appealed to many Druze.



Ayoob Kara, for example, represented the conservative Likud in the Knesset, and other parties such as Shas and Yisrael Beiteinu have likewise attracted Druze voters. Currently, a Druze MK, Majalli Wahabi of the centrist Kadima, as Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, is next in line to the acting presidency.

### Christians

Christian Arabs comprise about 9% of the Arab population in Israel, and approximately 70% reside in the North District (Israel) in the towns of Jish, Eilabun, Kafr Yasif, Kafr Kanna, I'billin, Shefa-'Amr and many reside in Nazareth. Several other villages, including a number of Druze villages such as Hurfeish, Maghar, are inhabited by Christian Arabs. Nazareth has the largest Christian Arab population. There are 117,000 or more Christian Arabs in Israel. Christian Arabs have been prominent in Arab political parties in Israel and these leaders have included



Archbishop George Hakim, Emile Toma, Tawfik Toubi, Emile Habibi and Azmi Bishara.

Notable Christian religious figures in Israel include the Melkite Archbishops of the Galilee Elias Chacour and Boutros Mouallem, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Sabbah, and Munib Younan of the Lutheran Church of Palestine and Jordan.



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The only non-Jewish Arab judge to receive a permanent appointment to preside over Israel's Supreme Court is a Christian Arab, Salim Jubran.

**Self-identification**

The relationship of Arab citizens to the State of Israel is often fraught with tension and can be regarded in the context of relations between minority populations and state authorities elsewhere in the world. Arab citizens consider themselves to be an indigenous people, though this has been disputed by some pro-Israel advocates, like Joan Peters in her book From Time Immemorial. The tension between their Palestinian Arab national identity and their identity as citizens of Israel was famously described by an Arab public figure as, "My state is at war with my nation".

According to the 2008 National Resilience Survey, conducted by Tel Aviv University, 43% of Muslims refer to themselves as "Palestinian-Arabs"; only 15% defined themselves as "Arab- Israelis" and four percent of those surveyed said they considered themselves "Muslim-Israelis". According to the same survey, 24% of Christians in Israel said they defined themselves as "Arab-Palestinians", 24% referred to themselves as "Arab-Israelis" and an equal number of respondents said they considered themselves "Christian-Israelis". In 2008 more than 94% of Druze youngsters classified themselves as "Druze-Israelis" in the religious and national context. (The Ynet article reporting the findings does not mention self-identification as "Arab citizens of Israel" or "Palestinian citizens of Israel" as an option.)

**Military conscription**

Muslims are not required to serve in the Israeli military, and outside the Bedouin community, very few (around 120 a year) volunteer. Until 2000, each year between 5%-10% of the Bedouin population of draft age volunteered for the Israeli army, and Bedouin were well-known for their unique status as volunteers. The legendary Israeli soldier, Amos Yarkoni, first commander of the Shaked Reconnaissance Battalion in the Givati Brigade, was a Bedouin (born Abd el-Majid Hidr). Today the number of Bedouin in the army may be less than 1%. A 2003 report stated that willingness among Bedouin to serve in the army had drastically dropped in recent years, as the Israeli government has failed to fulfill promises of equal service provision to Bedouin citizens. However, a 2009 article in Haaretz stated that volunteer recruitment for a crack elite Bedouin army unit rose threefold.

IDF figures indicate that in 2002 and 2003, Christians represented 0.1 percent of all recruits. In 2004, the number of recruits had doubled. Altogether, in 2003, the percentage of Christians serving had grown by 16 percent over the year 2000. The IDF does not publish figures on the exact number of recruits by religious denomination, and it is estimated that merely a few dozen Christians currently serve in the IDF.

Druze are required to serve in the IDF in accordance with an agreement between their local religious leaders and the Israeli government in 1956. Opposition to the decision among the Druze populace was evident immediately, but was unsuccessful in reversing the decision. It is estimated that 85% of Druze men in Israel serve in the army. In recent



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years, a growing minority from within the Druze community have denounced this mandatory enrollment, and refused to serve. In 2001, Said Nafa, who identifies as a Palestinian Druze and serves as the head of the Balad party's national council, founded the "Pact of Free Druze", an organization that aims "to stop the conscription of the Druze and claims the community is an inalienable part of the Arabs in Israel and the Palestinian nation at large."

### **Demographics**

Arab citizens of Israel form a majority of the population (52%) in Israel's Northern District and about 50% of the Arab population lives in 114 different localities throughout Israel. In total there are 122 primarily if not entirely Arab localities in Israel, 89 of them having populations over two thousand. The seven townships as well as the Abu Basma Regional Council that have been constructed by the government for the Bedouin population of the Negev, are the only Arab localities to have been established since 1948, with the aim of relocating the Arab Bedouin citizens (see above section on Bedouin).

46% of the country's Arabs (622,400 people) live in predominantly-Arab communities in the north. Nazareth is the largest Arab city, with a population of 65,000, roughly 40,000 of whom are Muslim. Shefa-'Amr has a population of approximately 32,000 and the city is mixed with sizable populations of Muslims, Christians and Druze.

Jerusalem, a mixed city, has the largest overall Arab population. Jerusalem housed 209,000 Arabs in 2000 and they make up some 33% of the city's residents and together with the local council of Abu Ghosh, some 19% of the country's entire Arab population.

14% of Arab citizens live in the Haifa District predominantly in the Wadi Ara region. Here is the largest Muslim city, Umm al-Fahm, with a population of 43,000. Baqa-Jatt and Carmel City are the two second largest Arab population centers in the district. The city of Haifa has an Arab population of 9%, much of it in the Wadi Nisnas neighborhood.

10% of the country's Arab population resides in the Center District of Israel, primarily the cities of Tayibe, Tira, and Qalansawe as well as the mixed cities of Lod and Ramla which have mainly Jewish populations.

Of the remaining 11%, 10% live in Bedouin communities in the northwestern Negev Desert. The Bedouin city of Rahat is the only Arab city in the South District and it is the third largest Arab city in Israel.

The remaining 1% of the country's Arab population lives in cities that are almost entirely Jewish such as, Nazaret Illit with an Arab population of 9% and Tel Aviv-Yafo, 4%.

In February 2008, the government announced that the first new Arab city would be constructed in Israel. According to Haaretz, "[s]ince the establishment of the State of Israel, not a single new Arab settlement has been established, with the exception of permanent housing projects for Bedouins in the Negev."



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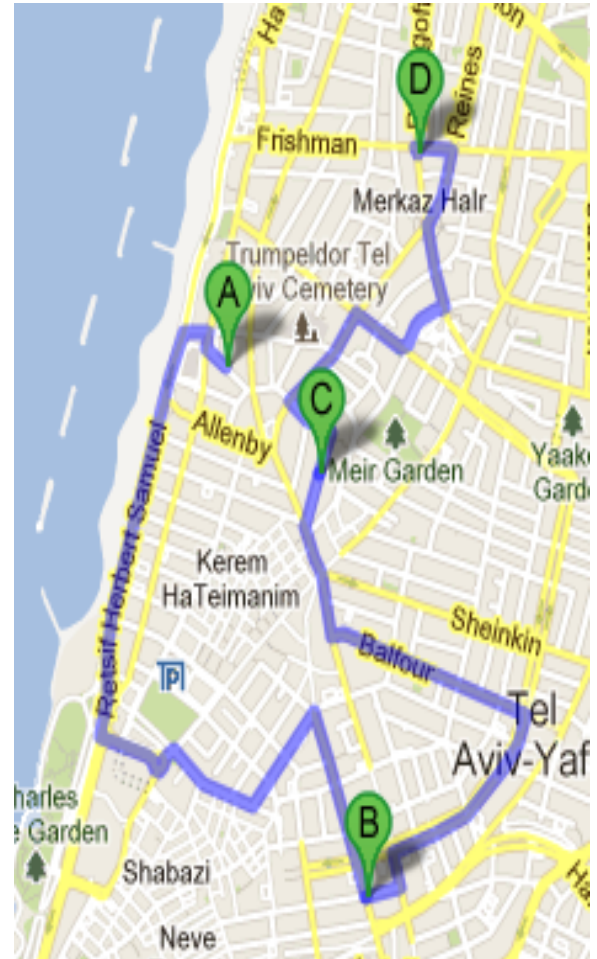
**Tuesday, June 25**

**Tel Aviv- The city that never sleeps**

- 7:30 Breakfast: Sea net, Tel Aviv
- 09:00-12:00 TBA
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch at Nahlat Binyamin (cash lunch)
- 3:00-4:30 Beit Reuven with Dafna Lahav
- 5:00- 7:00 Bina Bashchuna (Refugees and foreign workers in Tel Aviv)
- 7:30-8:30 – Dinner
- 8:30-10:00 – Graffiti Tour in Tel Aviv with artist Rami Meiri
- 11:00-11:30 Reflection at the hotel

Lunch: Cash lunch – in Tel Aviv, Dinner: Dinner at the hotel

**Overnight:** Sea net, Tel Aviv



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## Tel Aviv History

Considering its size and importance today, it comes as a surprise that Tel Aviv was nothing but a sand dune 100 years ago. Tel Aviv actually began as a suburb of Jaffa, the adjoining city with which it melded in 1950. Jaffa (meaning “beautiful”) is an ancient venerable town which is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. According to Jewish tradition, Jaffa was established after the Flood by Noah’s son Japheth, from whom the town took its name, Jonah it is said, was swallowed by a whale after he left the port of Jaffa, and Peter performed the Miracle of Tabitha here. In Greek mythology, Andromeda was chained to a rock in Jaffa port.

First inhabited 4,000 years ago, Jaffa was once a Philistine town. Later King Solomon used the port to bring cedars from Lebanon which were used for the great Temple in Jerusalem. Though King Herod built Caesarea to replace Jaffa as his main port, Jaffa became important again under Moslem and Crusader rule. The town then declined until the 19th, when it began to grow in size and influence. So crowded did Jaffa become that a group of Jews decided to leave Jaffa’s lively, noisy and dirty environs to create a garden suburb which would become Tel Aviv. They bought uninhabited sand dunes north of Jaffa, formed an association called “Achuzat Bayit” and divided property into parcels of land by drawing lots.

The romantic name Tel Aviv (“Hill of Spring”) was chosen for the new community in 1910 partly because of its associations with rebirth and revitalization, and partly because it recalled the vision of Ezekiel. In the biblical Tel Aviv of Babylon, the exiled prophet saw the vision of animated dry bones, which drew him back to Israel. Yet another association is that Theodor Herzl’s visionary book *Altneuland*. Tel Aviv is the free Hebrew translation of that title.

It is amusing today to think that Tel Aviv’s founders once banned commercial enterprise in the city. That ban, of course, did not last long; after the First World War (during which the settlers of Tel Aviv were dispersed), the town took enormous commercial strides. In 1921 it became a separated township and the first modern Jewish city in the world. By 1924 Tel Aviv had a respectable population of 35,000 which was to grow to over 200,000 by 1948.

Tel Aviv’s most significant moment in modern history came when David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, in the home of Mayor Meir Dizengoff. Since the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin in 1995 at Kikar Malchei Yisrael, this central Tel Aviv Square, which has been renamed Rabin Square, has become a pilgrimage site.

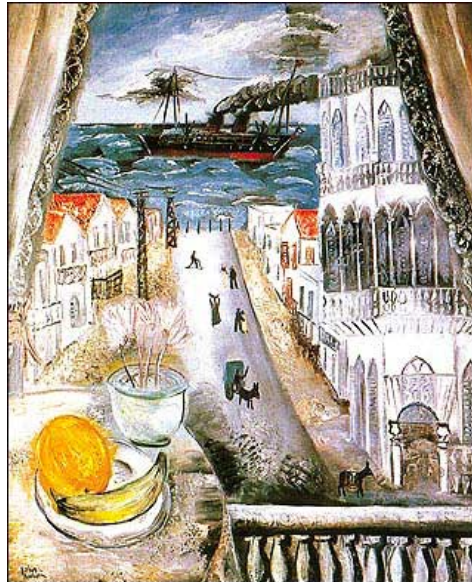


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**The Rubin Museum** is an artist-house-museum in the historical heart of Tel Aviv, formerly the home of the painter Reuven Rubin, where he resided with his family and worked from 1946 until his death in 1974. Constructed in 1930, the house on 14 Bialik St. opened to the public as a museum in 1983. A choice selection from the Museum's permanent collection of Reuven Rubin's paintings has been on display, replaced periodically by guest exhibitions focusing on the early period of Israeli art. There are 4 floors in the Museum: the new children's workshop is located on the basement level, opening to the backyard. The street level floor houses the main gallery, as well as the entry hall and the Museum's shop. An additional gallery is located on the second floor, where the visitor will also find the library and reading room. Rubin's own studio, preserved as it was in his life time is located on the third floor. This floor also houses a biographical display of photos, documents and sketches unfolding Rubin's life-story, intertwined as it was with the local artistic and cultural scene.



## African migrants celebrate freedom at 'Refugee Seder'

By Ben Hartman

Jerusalem Post

Around 500 African migrants broke unleavened bread with Israeli friends and volunteers at an early Pessah Seder held in south Tel Aviv's Levinsky Park on Thursday night. Migrants from across Africa were given copies of an alternative Haggada in English and Hebrew, and were led through a brief version of the Seder, including the eating of salty greens and matza.



A group of elementary school-aged migrants sang "Ma Nishtanah," while student volunteers scurried around serving schnitzel and rice.



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This year's event, titled "From Slavery to Freedom," was the fourth such Seder held near the Tel Aviv bus station.

Thursday's crowd was significantly larger than last year's, which was held closer to Pessah, causing complications for attendees.

One organizer said that many of the migrants who were invited last year were not able to come because they were busy cleaning Israeli homes for Pessah.

More than a dozen NGOs helped put on the event, including Amnesty Israel, the Hotline for Migrant Workers, the UN Refugee Agency, the Bina Center for Jewish Identity and Hebrew Culture, and the African Refugee Development Center. Organizers were also given a boost by the Levinsky Park Library, which supplied electricity free of charge for the evening.

There was a festive air to the event, which took place a day after antimigrant activists held a protest in south Tel Aviv calling on the government to act against the rising number of illegal immigrants.

A four-piece band played folk and rock music early in the evening, but was later upstaged by a young African man singing a heartfelt (if slightly mangled) rendition of Justin Bieber's hit "Baby."

A number of migrants spoke of a growing fear that anti-migrant sentiment would become violent, including Oscar Olivier of Congo. "Recently it's gotten worse. Someday someone will take the message of these rallies in a brutal way and something bad will happen, it won't stay perfect forever," he said.

Olivier, who has lived in Israel for 16 years, added that bringing his seven-year-old daughter Esther was important partly because "just yesterday there was a rally against foreigners.

Just yesterday you had Jews talking about wanting to chase away foreigners, and today you have Jews welcoming us. It completes the picture."

Like many others at the Seder, Guy Joseph, a 23-year-old Darfurian who arrived in Israel three years ago, expressed a rather general understanding of the meaning of Pessah.

"I understand that freedom and being free is a good thing. It's also good that we all get to sit together here, as children of the same God."

Tal Shaked, deputy head of Bina, said the motivation for holding the Seder was "found in the basic idea behind Pessah night, that is that we remember that we were also foreigners in the Land of Egypt."

Shaked said that the event "shows solidarity with migrants who experienced themselves an exodus from Egypt," adding that "it comes from a very Jewish place, and we believe it's part of our Jewish morals to recognize that what happened to us in the past happens to other people in the world."

Daoud, a Darfurian in his mid-20s, said that as a Muslim and a foreigner in Israel, participating in a Jewish ritual observance was "very nice, we sit together understanding each other, and who we are.



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He spoke about his family left behind in Darfur, and the way that Israeli soldiers saved him after he crossed from Egypt. “Now we are rejoicing and eating together, and the future will be better,” Daoud said.

**Rami Meiri** is considered to be one of the most prominent mural artists in the world today. He is known for his murals on buildings which are scattered in different cities in Israel. His outstanding paintings often blur the boundaries between reality and illusion.



He graduated from the Avni Institute of Art in 1982 and painted his first mural on Gordon Beach in Tel Aviv in 1980. This was one of the first murals painted in the city. His art has evolved and has become an important part of the cultural mosaic of Tel Aviv.

Meiri’s paintings can be found all over Israel on industrial, educational and cultural buildings, as well on the sea promenade, kiosks and strategic high street locations. He also paints in private houses.

Over the years Meiri’s work has spread internationally, including Europe, USA, India, China, Brazil and Argentina. He continues to paint with the vitality and totality which has earned him admiration by his peers and the public over the years. He refuses to use aerosols as he considers it unfriendly to the environment.



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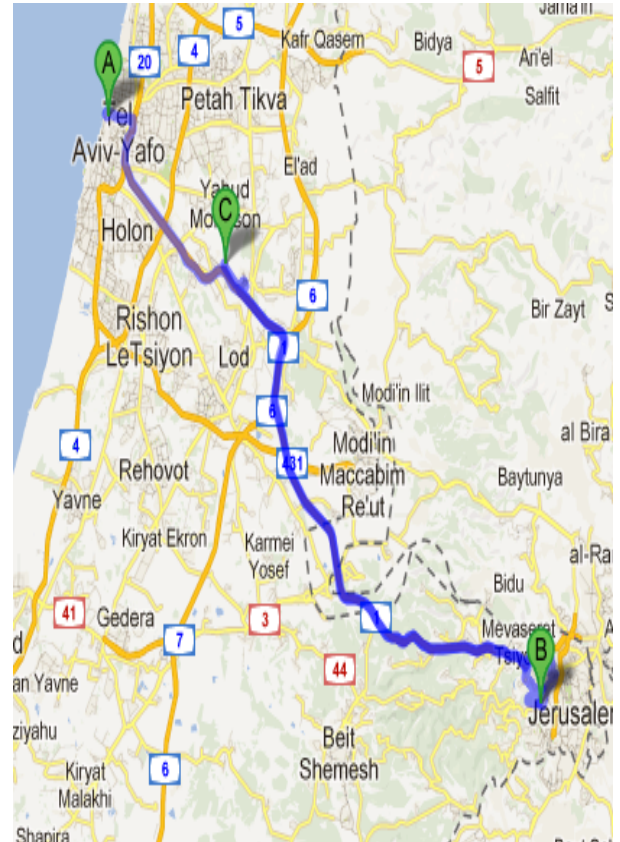




**Wednesday, June 26**

**Shoah to tekumah – the justification, right and challenges of Jewish sovereignty**

- 07:00 Breakfast: Sea net, Tel Aviv
- 08:30 Travel to Jerusalem
- 10:00-1:00 Visit to Yad Vashem (Two tours)
- 1:00-1:45 First Summary (in front of Hertzel Grave)
- 1:45- 3:00 Drive to Tel Aviv (with Packed Lunch)
- 3:00- 4:00 Middle East Security debrief with Sheldon Shulman
- 4:30-6:30 Photography session (Israeli Teens) - TBD
- 6:30 Final dinner at Kafe Yafo
- 8:15 Depart for airport



Lunch: Packed lunch, **Dinner:** Final dinner, Kafe Yafo

Departure on US 797 26JUN2013 TLV1130P PHL 500A



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**Sheldon Shulman** has held senior positions in the Government of Israel, at the Foreign Ministry and as the Director of a Department in the Prime Minister's Office. In the IDF, he served as Assistant Advisor to the Prime Minister on Countering Terrorism for several years, and he continues to serve as a reserve officer. He has been involved in the peace process and with US-Israeli relations, and he has also taught International Law at Tel Aviv University's Law Faculty. Over the years, he has briefed senior members of US administrations, Congress, military and the intelligence community. He was the partner of former US Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge, and was the CEO of two Israeli technology companies, and is an Advisor on international security affairs to a US-based global financial institution, as well as serving as an Advisor to the technology transfer company of one of Israel's major universities.



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## If This is Our Future

Daniel Gordis

<http://danielgordis.org/2010/05/07/if-this-is-our-future/>

Imagine this, if you can. A prestigious university in the United States, with deep roots in the American Jewish community, invites Israel's ambassador to deliver its annual commencement address. But instead of expressing pride in the choice of speaker and in the country that he represents, the university's students, many of them Jewish, protest. They don't want to hear from the ambassador. (See this Facebook page.) He's a "divisive" figure, the student newspaper argues, and the students deserved better.

Tragically, of course, there's nothing hypothetical about the scenario. Brandeis University recently decided to award honorary degrees to Michael Oren, Dennis Ross and Paul Simon, among others, at its May 23 commencement, and Ambassador Oren, an extraordinary orator among his many other qualities, was invited to deliver the commencement address.

But the days in which Jewish students on an American campus would have been thrilled to have the Israeli ambassador honored by their school are apparently long since gone. Brandeis's student newspaper, The Justice (how's that for irony?), deplored the choice, writing that "Mr. Oren is a divisive and inappropriate choice for keynote speaker at commencement, and we disapprove of the university's decision to grant someone of his polarity on this campus that honor."

The ambassador is a polarizing figure? Why is that? Because, the editorial continues, "the Israeli- Palestinian conflict is a hotly contested political issue, one that inspires students with serious positions on the topic to fervently defend and promote their views."

This is where we are today. For many young American Jews, the only association they have with Israel is the conflict with the Palestinians. Israel is the country that oppresses Palestinians, and nothing more.

No longer is Israel the country that managed to forge a future for the Jewish people when it was left in tatters after the Holocaust. Israel is not, in their minds, the country that gave refuge to hundreds of thousands of Jews expelled from North Africa when they had nowhere else to go, granting them all citizenship, in a policy dramatically different from the cynical decisions of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan to turn their Palestinian refugees into pawns in what they (correctly) assumed would be a lengthy battle with Israel.

Israel is not proof that one can create an impressively functioning democracy even when an enormous portion of its citizens hail from countries in which they had no experience with democratic institutions. Israel is not the country in which, despite all its imperfections, Beduin women train to become physicians, and Arab citizens are routinely awarded PhDs from the country's top universities. Israel is not the country in which the



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classic and long-neglected language of the Jews has been revived, and which produces world class literature and authors routinely nominated for Nobel Prizes.

Nor is Israel the place where Jewish cultural creativity is exploding with newfound energy, as the search for new conceptions of what Jewishness might mean in the 21st century are explored with unparalleled intensity, particularly among some of the country's most thoughtful young people. No longer is Israel understood to be the very country that created the sense of security and belonging that American Jews – and these very students – now take completely for granted.

No, Israel is none of those things. For many young American Jews, it is only the country of roadblocks and genocide, of a relentless war waged against the Palestinians for no apparent reason. For everyone knows that Palestinians are anxious to recognize Israel and to live side-by-side with a Jewish democracy. That, of course, is why Hamas still openly declares its commitment to Israel's annihilation, and that is why Hizbullah has, according to US Defense Secretary Robert Gates, accumulated "more missiles than most governments in the world."

None of this is to suggest that Israel is blameless in the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, or that the present government has a plan for ending it. Those are entirely different matters. The point is that even if these students hold Israel partially (or even largely) accountable for the intractable conflict with the Palestinians, even if one believes that it should have conducted Operation Cast Lead differently, or even if one disapproves of its policies in the West Bank, for example, it is a devastatingly sad day for world Jewry when those issues are the only ones that one associates with Israel, when mere mention of the Jewish state evokes not the least bit of pride from students graduating from a prestigious institution long associated with the very best of American Jewish life.

WHAT WOULD have happened had Brandeis invited President Barack Obama to deliver the commencement address? Obama is, after all, not exactly a non-divisive figure. He is president of a country at war in Iraq and in Afghanistan, places in which (a small number of) American troops have committed their share of atrocities, a country in which civil rights issues are still far from resolved, in which the bounty of America is still far beyond the reach of millions of its citizens.

One suspects that the students would have been thrilled to hear Obama, despite the fact that many do not agree with his policies. They would have been honored to host him despite the fact that some must be disappointed that he has not lived up to his campaign promise to call the Turkish treatment of the Armenians a "genocide," despite the fact that he is intent on pursuing the war in Afghanistan, to which many of the students must certainly be opposed. They would have been delighted by Obama's presence because even if they disagree with some of his views or some of America's actions, they understand that the US is more than Obama, and more than this war or that policy. And they are, quite rightly, enormously proud of what America stands for and what it has accomplished.



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But that kind of instinctive pride in the Jewish state is, sadly, a vestige of days gone by, even for many American Jews.

Reading some of the reactions to Oren's invitation, one is struck by an astounding simplicity, and frankly, an utter lack of courage to stand firm against the tidal wave of unbridled hostility toward Israel.

Jeremy Sherer, president of the Brandeis J Street U Chapter, wrote to The Justice, "I am... bothered [by the invitation to Oren] because I disagree with his politics." That's what education is now producing – people who want to hear only those with whom they agree? "I'm not exactly thrilled," Sherer wrote, "that a representative of the current right-wing Israeli government will be delivering the keynote address at my commencement."

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, of course, is now busy fending off members of his coalition who are far to the right of him, like Moshe Feiglin and Avigdor Lieberman, and whether or not one takes him at his word, he is the first head of the Likud to endorse a two-state solution, no small matter for those who know the history of the Likud. But Sherer makes no mention of that complicating data, for it doesn't fit his overarching conception of the intrinsic evil of Israel's "right-wing" government (of which the Labor Party is also – inconveniently for Sherer – a member).

The president of the Brandeis J Street U Chapter, who writes that he's of "Israeli heritage" (whatever that means), did not see fit to say a single positive word about Israel. Not one. One wonders what the "pro-Israel" part of J-Street's "pro-Israel, pro-Peace" tag line means to Sherer.

Ironically, though, some of the attempts to defend the invitation to Oren were no less distressing. A student representative to the Board of Trustees writes in a disappointingly anemic piece to the The Justice that Oren "is being invited for his academic achievements, not his political ones," and then launches into a recitation of Oren's many academic accomplishments.

Here, too, however, not a single positive word about Israel, or of the honor that having not only a world-class historian, but also its representative to the US, might be for the university. That sort of pride appears nowhere in The Justice's editorial, the J-Street representative's piece or the op-ed defending the invitation. For too many American Jewish undergraduates, it's simply no longer part of their vocabulary.

Imagine that Sherer had written something like this: "I disagree passionately with Israel's policies regarding the Palestinians, and welcome President Obama's new pressure on Israel to bring the conflict to a close. But as a Jew who understands that despite my disagreement with Israel's policies, the Jewish state is key to the Jewish revival of which my entire generation is a beneficiary, I honor Ambassador Oren for his service to a country of which I am deeply proud in many ways, and I look forward to welcoming him to campus."



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Or if the pro-Oren op-ed had said, “There is a radical disconnect between our generation and today’s Israeli government. Many members of my generation believe that Mr. Netanyahu and his government either do not know how to speak to us, or are uninterested in doing so. Ambassador Oren’s appearance on campus is a perfect opportunity for the Israeli government to address us and our concerns; I urge our campus to listen carefully to what may well be a watershed address at this critical period in Israel’s history and in the relationship between Israel and the future leadership of American Jewry.”

Imagine. But nothing of that sort got said.

Indeed, the seeming refusal of any of the student articles to say even one positive thing about the Jewish state was all the more galling given other events that took place across the globe on the very same week that the Oren controversy was unfolding. At the University of Manchester, pro-Palestinian protesters tried to attack Israel’s deputy ambassador to the UK, some holding Palestinian flags up to the windows of her car and others climbing on the hood and trying to smash the windshield. In Berlin, a Danish street art duo known as “Surrend” blanketed several neighborhoods with maps of the Middle East in which the State of Israel had been removed, with the term “Final Solution” at the top. The Scottish Labor Federation reaffirmed its support for a boycott of Israel, and the student government at the University of California, Berkeley fell just one single vote short in a bid to override a veto against a divestment bill; a similar bill was also debated at UC San Diego.

None of the writers to The Justice felt that they had to distance themselves from those views, even as they critiqued or supported the invitation to Ambassador Oren.

The student-thugs at UC Irvine, who disrupted Oren’s speech on campus in February, have won. They have set the standard for how one treats any mention of Israel on any campus. Israel is nothing but a legitimate whipping post even at institutions of higher learning, and sane discussion of its rights and wrongs need not be defended, even in communities ostensibly committed to civil and intelligent discourse.

Tragically, even these students at Brandeis, one of the great institutions of American Jewish life, had nothing terribly different to say to the world. Theirs are only more tepid versions of the delegitimization now spreading across the international community like wildfire.

One shudders to imagine a future in which they might be our leaders.



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**Thursday, June 27**

**Return to Cleveland**

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*All speakers and activities are subject to final confirmation*



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