



**WORLD ZIONIST  
ORGANIZATION  
DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

**SUBMITTED TO THE ZIONIST  
GENERAL COUNCIL XXXVIII/4**



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## Message from the Chairman of the WZO

Greetings, esteemed friends and members of the Zionist General Council,

The heinous terrorist attack of October 7th was the most pivotal turning point the Jewish people have known since the establishment of the State of Israel.

The atrocities committed, including the murder of people in their beds, burning of families in their homes, beheadings, incidents of rape, amputations, abuse of the elderly and infants, and the mass abduction of hundreds into Gaza City – these events have seen little or no acknowledgement from leaders and countries.

The fact that they have ignored them in the best case or support the events in the worst case, is appalling.

In the aftermath of the war that was thrust upon us as a result of that attack, we have been witnessing a surge in violence against Diaspora Jewry, relentless incitement in the media and a sharp increase of hundreds of percent in incidents of antisemitism worldwide. The war declared on the seventh of October is targeted not only against the State of Israel, but against the entire Jewish people.

The members of the Zionist General Council, the successors of the fathers of Zionism, bear great responsibility in the leadership of the Jewish people. Especially at this critical juncture, this leadership is responsible for navigating the path and fortifying the resilience of the Jewish people.

Communities from all around the world are watching us, the leaders of the Zionist movement, in anticipation of unity of the ranks, the immediate release of all the hostages, the recovery of the wounded and the overwhelming victory of the IDF and the security forces in this battle for our home.

In convening the XXXVIII/4 session of the Zionist General Council,

I would like to extend a prayer for the speedy return of the hostages, and the strength of the citizens of the State of Israel, the brave soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces, our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora and you, members of the Zionist General Council and representatives of the Zionist world, during this most difficult and challenging period.

I am confident that this session will present a united front in the World Zionist Organization's activities, a resounding message of unity, strength and hope.

The State of Israel was and forever will be the national home of every Jew.

We are one people. Together, and only together, will we prevail.

Yours,

Yaakov Hagoel

Chairman of the World Zionist Organization

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# Message from the Chairwoman of the Zionist General Council

Dear Friends,

On October 7, Hamas declared war on the Jewish people – no less!

The events of that Shabbat are beyond comprehension. No one could have imagined such depths of cruelty and evil. Almost no one, in their darkest dreams, could have foreseen an onslaught so large and so meticulously planned, within our home, our fortress.

Everything we thought and knew up until that day, everything we believed, was suddenly put to the test. The contract between the citizens and their state – the understanding that the state would always be there to protect them, at all places and at all times – was breached. The world's strongest army simply wasn't there. Our most basic premises were shaken. Truths revealed themselves as fragile.

But matters did not end there. The horrific occurrences in Israel deeply affected the Jews of the Diaspora. They sparked a huge global upsurge of hatred toward Jews everywhere. Environments that had seemed safe and protected became threatening or even dangerous. A formidable wave of antisemitism, the likes of which has not been seen since the 1940s inundated nearly every place on the planet where a Jewish community was located.

But this was also the Jewish people's finest hour. Israelis and Jews worldwide united in the face of these challenges. We rediscovered the power of unity, of joining hands.

Many, many people have mobilized to assist the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who were forced from their communities in one fell swoop – some after having lost their homes and their families. Many, many people have opened their hearts and their wallets, and mobilized to do whatever necessary to meet the needs of our dear soldiers. To pamper them.

We all hope and pray for the hostages' return home.

And above all, we have seen with painful and frightening clarity that the threat is to our home. And we must fight together for the Jewish people's right to be a free people in our land! A struggle that we mistakenly thought had ended. But reality has shown us that it has not, and that we have a long way to go.

Today we are gathered in Jerusalem, Israel's (eternal) capital, for Zionist General Council 38/4, in order to think about "the day after."

About the challenges faced by the Zionist movement, in Israel and abroad;

About our concern for our brothers in the Diaspora who face difficult situations on a daily basis, some of them mortally dangerous. About our concern for our soldiers at the front, who are risking their lives and sacrificing their well-being and even their existence for us. About our concern for Israeli society, which faces major challenges on many different fronts.

This is the place where we can pave the way for the necessary efforts, and remind ourselves and the entire world that Israel is our home. And that we're not leaving here for anywhere else!

And that whenever things are hardest, all Jews everywhere should know that their home is here. And that our arms and our hearts are wide open.

For in the end – and also from the outset – "All Jews are responsible for one another!"

Be strong and of good courage – chazak ve'amatz!

Helena Glaser

Chair of the Zionist General Council

# THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Department Head: Gael Grunewald | Department Director: Rotem Yehoshua

## About the Department

The World Zionist Organization's Department of Education was founded in February 2016 with the aim of promoting Jewish-Zionist education in the Diaspora.

The Department of Education's vision is that of ensuring the future and the uniqueness of the Jewish people by promoting Jewish, Hebrew, and Zionist education, by connecting Jews to Israel, enriching and strengthening Jewish identity, and fostering Jewish spiritual and cultural values. The Department of Education focuses its efforts within the broad but clearly-defined sphere of formal educational frameworks across the Jewish world.

The Department of Education realizes its vision by reinforcing the most important resource available to schools – their teaching staffs.

The Department of Education aims to address one of the biggest problems in the Jewish-education world: a shortage of good teachers.

We are addressing this problem on two planes: staff reinforcement in the form of teacher emissaries from Israel, and professional development for local personnel.

With regard to the teacher emissaries: each year the Department of Education trains 100 new teacher emissaries and sends them around the world. The teacher emissaries work in Jewish schools in the Diaspora. Their teaching experience and, in particular, their values and sense of mission, ensure that their unique contribution to the schools goes far beyond their role as subject teachers in the fields of Judaism and Hebrew language.

The emissaries successfully convey contemporary Israel to students, thereby fortifying the students' Jewish identity, and serving as a bridge between the entire school community and Israel. As of November 2023, there are 262 teacher emissaries (an increase of 100 emissaries since the last report) on 5 continents and 30 countries.

We are proud to note that the number of schools requesting Israeli emissaries is growing from year to year.

The fact that we are reaching more schools in new places around the world is the result of long-term, dedicated professional effort on the part of our staff to guide and support the emissaries and the schools.

With regard to the professional development of local teachers: we are in constant contact with the schools, mapping their needs and addressing them accordingly.

In 2022-23 we held several continuing education programs, to serve needs that arose from the educational field.

We plan to continue with this and to create strategic collaborations with leading organizations in the Jewish education world, in order to meet the need for teachers and for teacher training.

The Department of Education staff currently consists of 9 employees: the Department director, the director of the Unit for Teaching Emissaries, 4 coordinators who manage school portfolios and guide emissaries, a finance officer, an office manager, and an assistant to the Department head.

\*Roi Abecassis was appointed to head the Department of Education, as of January 1, 2024.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

Over the course of the year, 3 professional conferences are held around the world for the Department's teacher emissaries. They aim to build continent-wide emissary communities, and offer professional tools for Hebrew language, Judaism, and Israel instruction.

### Emissaries to Europe conference:

January 2022, held in Paris. Fifteen emissaries from across Europe attended.

After a year of coping with the global pandemic, the Department succeeded in bringing emissaries from across Europe together for meaningful interaction. We discussed the pre-COVID educational mission, offered tools for meaningful classroom learning, and deepened relationships within the European emissary community.

### Emissaries to Latin America conference:

May 2022, held in Cancún, Mexico. 20 teachers attended.

### A local school principals' conference

was held as well, with 50 principals attending. The encounter between the emissaries and the principals generated fascinating discussions and collaborations, as well as an understanding of the needs and educational tasks facing the Latin American Jewish world.

### Continuing education for local teachers in Mexico City

May 2022: For the first time, the Education Department gathered 30 teachers from Jewish schools across Mexico City for two days of study and interpersonal encounters. Teachers from eight different schools attended and took part in workshops on teaching Israel, Hebrew, and Judaism. Opportunities for inter-school cooperation were created.



In July 2022, a **continuing education program for teachers of EJM School** in Paris. The program was the first in a continuing education program for teachers in Israel, and was offered jointly with United. 15 teachers came to the program to learn about Israel, visit schools with unique instructional methods, and become acquainted with Israeli educational methods in Hebrew language and Israel studies.

**Teacher emissary training** is held prior to departure for shlichut.

In July 2022 the training course lasted 5 days and was attended by 100 new emissaries. During the training days, the emissaries learn about the Diaspora world, connect to their roots, and acquire an array of skills that help them in their overseas shlichut mission.



In July 2022 an **education conference for Latin American teachers was held in Argentina**. For three days, 1200 teachers from across the continent gathered for continuing professional education and for inter-community interaction. The big Buenos Aires teacher conference has become an annual tradition in which hundreds of teachers from across the continent participate. The conference features a variety of workshops and draws the finest local teachers and moderators, as well as selected Israeli lecturers. This conference was attended by Rabbi Shai Piron and others.





**A US teacher emissaries conference** was held in December 2022 in New Jersey. 150 teacher emissaries came for three days of learning, intensive experience, and a professional tour of colleges in New York. The shlichim discussed the educational challenges faced by schools in the 21st century. They were provided with skills to enrich their educational toolbox, deepened their understanding of the American Jewish world, and emerged strengthened for intensive and highly important activity.



**A conference in France for emissaries to Europe,** including continuing education for local teachers, was held in January 2023 in Paris. 50 participants attended the 3-day event. The shlichim came for the conference and met with Department staff for three days of professional enrichment, in which they deepened their understanding of the pupils' needs and of the emissary's unique role within the system. They also met with local school principals and teachers in France, and learned about a variety of interesting educational approaches.



**The emissaries conference with continuing education for South American school principals** was held in March 2023 in Buenos Aires over a 3-day period, with 50 participating emissaries and principals.



**An evening of recognition for returning emissaries** was held in November 2022 in Ramat Gan, with 60 attendees. After emissaries complete their shlichut, they return to Israel and strive to enrich Israeli schools and communities with the experience they gained on shlichut. During the evening, the emissaries processed their shlichut experience and return to Israel with Playback Theatre. They enjoyed an evening of interpersonal activities, processing and wrapping up the shlichut experience.



Participation in the **Prisma Conference** January 2023, Denver, Colorado. 3 days of instruction and content, with the participation of 2000 teachers and principals.



**Summer 2023 emissary training** took place in July for 5 days in Jerusalem, with the participation of 100 new emissaries. After the summer training, the prospective emissaries become official emissaries and are prepared for their departure. During the week, they learn how to cope with the various situations they will encounter, get to know their partners on the shlichut journey, and deepen their understanding of the Zionist challenge that awaits them.

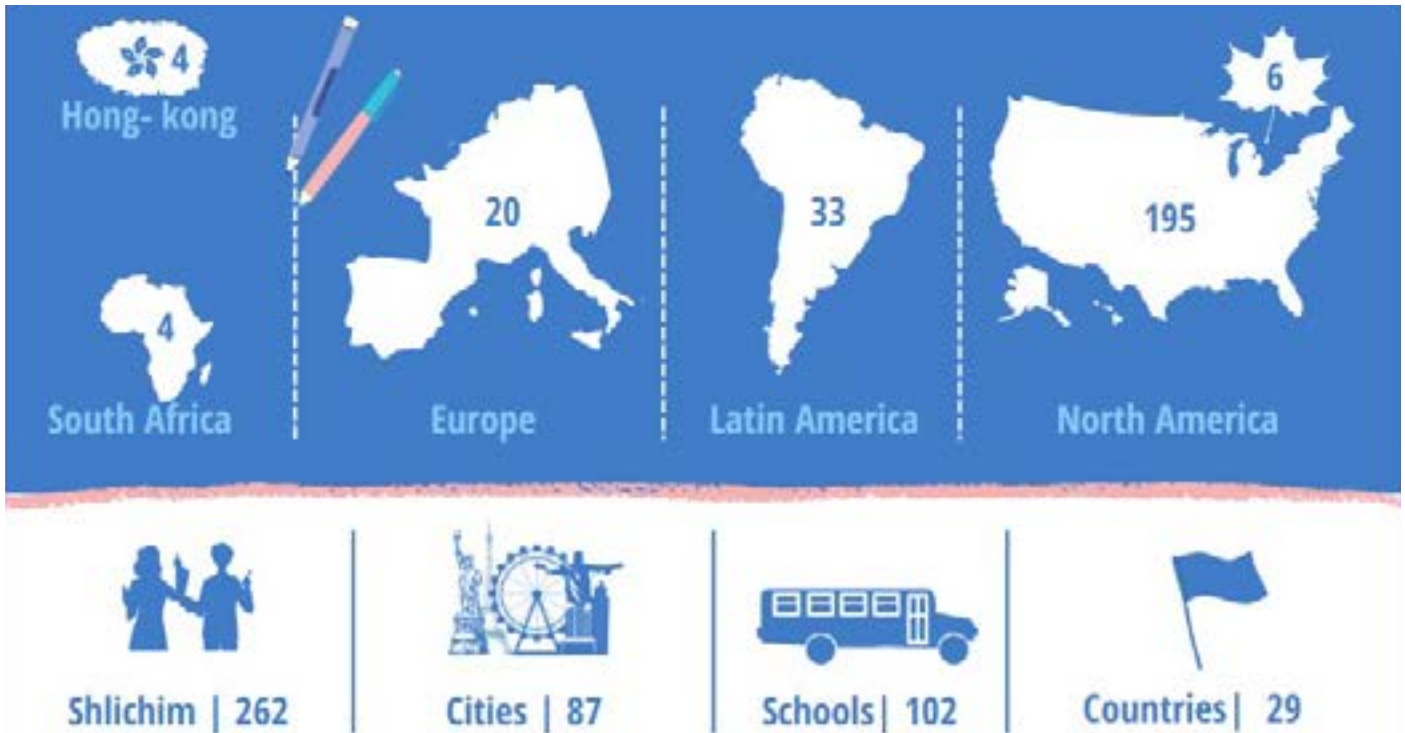


### **Seeing the shlichim off at Ben-Gurion Airport:**

The teacher emissaries embark on their educational mission after a lengthy process of screening, interviews, and training. They receive close supervision from Department of Education staff, with details large and small taken into account. During the summer, Department of Education staff traveled to bid the emissaries farewell at the airport, and to wish them success on the educational-shlichut journey that awaits them.



## Graphs and statistics, 2023 delegation:



## Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

October 7th plunged us, and the entire Jewish people, into a state of shock and deep distress. Within two days, our departmental role became very clear.

Some 50 teacher emissaries around the world received the "Tzav 8" military call-up and began returning to Israel for reserve duty. We mobilized to arrange hard-to-obtain flight tickets, and stayed in close contact with the families who remained abroad.

At present, we are in touch with families in which the spouse was called up, while maintaining constant contact with our soldiers on the front lines.

The Department staff is working closely with the reservists' wives to address their needs. There are weekly support meetings with spiritual figures, and we are in continuous contact with the school principals in order to provide guidance and mediate the situation. The wives have received care packages, and the emissaries who returned to Israel for reserve duty are also receiving packages from us, along with services provided for their families who have remained on shlichut abroad.

The needs of the 200 emissaries who have remained on shlichut are also being addressed, both through personal contact on the part of the emissary coordinators, and through weekly Zoom meetings. In these meetings we have dealt with emotional issues and provided tools for Israel advocacy, educational tools for coping with the difficult situation, and more.

We have also offered continued training for school principals, in which we have talked about educational opportunities in wartime and opened up several channels for contact with evacuated schools. Contact has been established between Israeli pupils and pupils around the world.

During these months, we have received and passed on letters of encouragement to soldiers.

We ran a 4-session Israel advocacy course for high school students around the world, offering knowledge and tools for public diplomacy. The course was a success, establishing relationships and producing worthwhile products based on collaboration between high school students from Israel and abroad.

# DEPARTMENT FOR ISRAEL & HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION WORLDWIDE

Department Head: Gil Segal | Department Director: Sarit Handknopf

## About the Department

The Department for Israel and Holocaust Commemoration Worldwide was founded as part of the effort to foster Jewish-Zionist identity among Israelis and Jewish communities around the world.

Accordingly, the Department strives for Zionist hagshama or "realization" by promoting Jewish-Israeli education and fostering spiritual and cultural values that help ensure Jewish and Zionist continuity. The Department plays an active role in addressing the vital need to preserve and shape the historical memory of the Holocaust and of Holocaust heroism in Israel and across the globe.

The Department seeks to position the World Zionist Organization as an international umbrella organization for furthering Jewish-Israeli identity and for shaping the historical memory of the Holocaust and Holocaust heroism. The aim is to ensure that the disaster that the Nazis and their accomplices brought upon the Jewish people, and the heroic deeds and revolts that took place in those times, remain part of our collective memory in Israel and abroad. The Department encourages initiatives that promote a model society and help strengthen social resilience and civil society in Israel. The Department also advances leadership and civic/community engagement and works to strengthen Jewish-Israeli identity, to assist disadvantaged populations, and to integrate people with disabilities. Under the Department's auspices, and as part of the Department, the Zionist Council is involved in a variety of initiatives in the spheres of education and social entrepreneurship.

**It should be noted that, in the wake of the October 7th events, the Department mobilized for major initiatives to assist soldiers, the Home Front, and people with disabilities.**

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Milestones – program for entrepreneurship in the periphery

Collaboration with the Unistream organization. Program participants develop projects pertaining to challenges faced by Israel and Zionism, with an emphasis on the challenges of 2030 faced by the State of Israel and Zionism worldwide.



### Israeli and overseas camp – Hallelujah

The Hallelujah program's Israeli and overseas summer camp is the highlight of the annual youth leadership program in the rural segment of the kibbutz movement, in cooperation with the regional councils.

This was the third year that the Department took part in training educational staff for the summer camps, in which hundreds of teens from across the globe participate.



### Cycling the path of Gino Bartali

The Department collaborated with the Bartali – Youth in Movement organization and participated in its end-of-year event, along with 250 at-risk youth from Israeli boarding schools. The participants cycled in the Jerusalem hills, visiting the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem along the way; a moving final ceremony was held at Mount Herzl. Present at the ceremony were granddaughters of Gino Bartali, who came especially from Italy for the event.



### Bishvil Yisrael project of Heroes for Life

The Heroes for Life organization, in cooperation with the Department, operated the Bishvil Yisrael project, in which mechina (pre-military academy) students volunteered for a month in Ashkelon, providing personal scholastic mentoring to children, and renovating homes in the afternoon hours.



### WAY conference, Costa Rica

Leadership in action – building a democratic future.

A conference in cooperation with the Department for Pioneering Youth and Dor Hemshech, on the theme of democratic and pluralistic values. The conference aimed to create a forum for local youth movement leaders in Central America, with an emphasis on Zionist values and on strengthening the relationship between the Diaspora Jewish communities and Israel.



### Zionism Quiz

The 10th Zionism and Heritage Quiz



### Conference for mayors and local authority heads

The traditional conference of mayors and local authority heads was held on the theme of 75 years of Israeli independence, with the participation of 85 mayors/local authority heads.



### Renewed Memory

An educational program for young people, in which participants create short videos for dissemination on social media.



### Film production – Sally Bein's Children

Production of a documentary film on an educational institution for Jewish children with special needs that operated in Germany before and during the Holocaust.



### One Group – One People

Project in cooperation with the Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball club and the Center for Jewish Impact, in which joint events were held with the European Jewish communities, alongside the Maccabi Tel Aviv EuroLeague games in several selected cities.



### International Holocaust Survivor Day

An international day of recognition for Holocaust survivors – a salute to Holocaust survivors alive today, in recognition of their courage and their contribution to the countries where they live.



### Service year trip to Poland

This is the second year that Tzameret garin service-year teens went on an intense, moving, and important trip to Poland.



### Remembrance Ambassadors

Joint project with Heroes for Life: Backpackers volunteer in local communities during their big post-army trip abroad. They hold Zikaron BaSalon evenings, thereby helping transmit and preserve the memory of the Holocaust among communities around the world.



### Holocaust Memorial Ceremony at Yad Mordechai

The traditional Yad Mordechai ceremony, in cooperation with the Department for Social Activism.



### Renewed Yom HaShoah Soundtrack

Joint project with Zikaron BaSalon and the Galgalatz radio station, calling upon well-known Israeli artists to shape the soundtrack of remembrance: to write, play, and sing the next chapter in the history of Holocaust remembrance.



## Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

### Activity on behalf of Holocaust survivors

Joint project with Zikaron BaSalon, in which volunteers come to the homes of hundreds of Holocaust survivors on weekends to visit and help them pass the time pleasantly. Little moments of light!



### Educational activity for Gaza Perimeter children

Joint project with Heroes for Life, in which alumni of the organization go daily to the hotels and run "experiential" school activities for children evacuated from the Gaza Perimeter, tailored to their curricula.



### Activity on behalf of Gaza Perimeter children

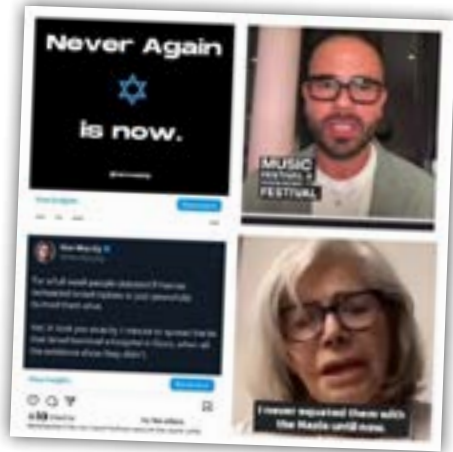
We arranged for displaced young basketball fans to meet with a scout for one of the NBA's biggest and most successful basketball teams. The scout gave a brief talk and explained his work to the children, who received a variety of souvenirs from foreign basketball teams.





### Israel advocacy activity

The Department, via the Tel Aviv Institute, engages in global Israel advocacy activity on social media (TikTok, Instagram, Twitter/X, etc.). The Institute works with a hundred or so Jewish media influencers from around the world (mainly the US and UK), and helps them write pro-Israel messages and content.



### Warm Embrace for IDF Soldiers

Joint project with the Department for Social Activism and Tikkun Olam: mobile showers transported to staging areas in the north and the south, providing soldiers, some of whom may not have showered for over a month, with hot showers, clean towels, new underwear, and even haircuts for those who need them.



### Exhibit for the Hostages

The Department mounted an exhibit in Hostages Square featuring works by Israeli artists that chillingly convey the collective pain Israelis feel over the hundred and forty Israelis currently held in Hamas captivity.



### Recreational and enrichment activity for people with disabilities

A joint project with the Israel Association of Community Centers to offer recreational and enrichment activities to evacuees with disabilities who are staying in hotels and whose needs are not being specifically addressed. These displaced persons span the age spectrum and have a wide variety of disabilities. (The project was launched because the daily routine of these people with disabilities was disrupted. Social clubs, employment, education, and the like are not currently being provided.)

### The Resilience Project

A joint initiative with Bartali – Youth in Movement. Community cycling centers are currently being established for Gaza Perimeter youth, to bolster their resilience and coping ability in this difficult period, and to create an element of routine within their provisional reality.

# THE DEPARTMENT OF ORGANIZATION AND ISRAELIS ABROAD

Department Head: Gusti Yehoshua-Braverman | Department Director: Yaniv Nachmias

## About the Department

The wide-ranging activity of the Department of Organization and Israelis Abroad can be divided into four pillars:



## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

At the 38th Zionist Congress it was decided for the first time in our national institutional history to establish a department responsible for fostering ties with the communities of Israelis in the Diaspora. To precisely tailor its work plan, the Department launched a research project in cooperation with the Hebrew University, aiming to map the presence of Israelis abroad, quantitatively and qualitatively, so as to deepen our understanding of their preferences, needs, attitudes, and more.

The results of the study have influenced the Department's work, planning, development and actions.

One fact that emerged from the study is that only half of the study subjects belong to/are active in some way in the Jewish and/or Israeli community. In order to better understand the implications of this fact and to proceed accordingly, the Department has taken a number of actions. One was to send

### **Delegations of "Israeli influencers" to the Israeli communities abroad.**

The Department sent delegations of "influencers" from different sectors of Israeli society to get to know the Israeli communities abroad, with the aim of raising awareness of their existence, understanding their specific needs, and jointly determining a course of action.

Two delegations were sent in the past two years, one to New York (photo at right) in December 2021, and the other to London in November 2022 (photo at left).



## Israeli communities in the Diaspora – congresses by to continent – developing and fortifying Israeli leadership

In addition to the delegations, and in response to the study findings, the Department is providing guidance to the young Israeli communities abroad and helping them establish communal institutions. Over the past two years we have held two regional conferences for leaders of the North American and European communities.



(European conference – November 2021)



(North American conference – December 2021)

## Batei Am across the Globe

Another finding of the study was that Israelis in the Diaspora profoundly desire for the younger generation to retain Hebrew and to maintain their connection to Israel (who as the years pass lose their attachment to Israel and their command of the language).

For this purpose (though not exclusively so), the Department is establishing and operating batei am – “people’s houses” or community centers in locations around the world. There are two models: educational batei am that provide Hebrew instructional framework to children ages 4-10, and cultural batei am that essentially serve as community centers where a variety of cultural activities are offered and where celebrations of Jewish holidays and festivals are held for all ages. At present, there are educational batei am in London, Budapest, and Barcelona, and cultural batei am in Prague, Amsterdam, and Stockholm. There are also batei am that combine education and culture, such as the new one in Halifax-Atlantic, Canada. In the pipeline are additional batei am in Madrid, Lisbon, Athens, Vancouver, and New York.



(Regular activity in the educational beit ha’am in Barcelona)



(Kabalat Shabbat in cultural beit ha’am in Prague)

## Connecting Israeli communities with the local Jewish communities

One of the challenges we face is that of fostering ties between the Israeli and the local communities; in most places there is no connection.

Little by little, through judicious and creative effort, we are starting to hold joint events, in the hope of generating closer and broader cooperation in additional areas and in other countries.



(Stockholm, the Jewish and Israeli communities celebrate Israel Independence Day together)

The Department develops and produces creative, high-quality educational materials in honor of Jewish holidays and remembrance days. Department representatives abroad bring these materials to community leaders and help them plan and hold holiday events.

Over the past two years we have developed materials for Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, Hanukkah, Tu B'Shvat, Purim, Pesach, and Tisha B'Av.



To obtain these materials, contact: [Liorczf@gmail.com](mailto:Liorczf@gmail.com)

In honor of Yom HaZikaron, Memorial Day for Israel's Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Hostile Acts, we held Running in their Memory and Talking Remembrance events in several different countries. In both 2021 and 2022 we produced impressive shows at Petah Tikva Cultural Hall – The Heart Is Still There.



One special program operated for Israelis by the Department is the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program. Halifax-Atlantic, Canada was the site of one such program this past year. It was the first time that Israeli children of bar/bat mitzvah age were able to take part in a year-long program in an egalitarian, Hebrew-language format.



In honor of Israel's 75th Independence Day, we produced an exhibition in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, We Hereby Declare, with a set of iconic photos that convey Israeli history in a nutshell. The exhibition was an outstanding success and was displayed in hundreds of Jewish centers around the world. Those interested in the exhibition (in different languages) may contact: [Liorczf@gmail.com](mailto:Liorczf@gmail.com)

## Zionist Federations

The Department is responsible for the Zionist federations around the world; it guides them in their work, advises them, holds continent-specific seminars, develops programs, and provides budgeting and supervision.

In advance of the 39th Congress, the Department will be in direct contact with the federations in order to coordinate and supervise the process of selecting delegates and submitting resolution proposals.

Over the past two years, we have held two conferences by continent for federation heads. The first was held in Budapest in November 2021. The second was held in Buenos Aires in March 2022, with the participation of 50 senior staff from across Latin America, with the aim of bolstering the federations' status and cultivating leadership.



(Buenos Aires – Latin America)



(Budapest – Europe)

Over its years of existence, the Department has established a tradition of **iVision Innovation conferences**, held jointly with the Zionist federations twice a year in different countries. The conferences deal with Israeli innovation throughout Zionist history. Over the past two years, iVision Innovation conferences have been held in four countries: Denmark (March 2022), Bulgaria (July 2022), Canada (December 2022), and South Africa (September 2023).

Another longstanding Department activity conducted under the auspices of the federations is the Jerusalem Prize presentation ceremony. **The Jerusalem Prize** is awarded to major non-Jewish public figures with a long history of working for the good of the Jewish communities in their countries, and of fighting (sometimes in confrontation with truly hostile governments) for Israel's good name. In the past two years, 12 Jerusalem Prizes have been awarded: late 2021 – in Venezuela; 2022 – in Mexico, Bulgaria, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Denmark; and 2023 – in Columbia, Costa Rica, Denmark, and the Czech Republic.



(Photo: iVision Denmark 2022)



(Photo: the current President of Uruguay, Luis Lacalle Pou, Jerusalem Prize recipient, September 2022).

### Leadership missions – Leadership with an Eye to the Future

The Department continues to organize Leadership with an Eye to the Future missions. A Leadership with an Eye to the Future trip is a special program held in Europe that traces milestones in the life of the visionary of the Jewish state, Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl. The uniqueness of these missions lies in the way they link past and future. The dive into the past and the authentic experience of the trip itself propel the participants toward the future and enable them, together, to build a Zionist vision for Israel's coming decades.



### Leadership missions with the IDF

In September 2022 the Department sent a first delegation of IDF officers.

Two additional programs were supposed to be launched in October 2023, one an IDF-wide program and the other intended for education officers, but they were cancelled due to the security situation.

### Parents and friends missions – Habonim-Dror

One delegation went to Paris, while another went from Frankfurt to Amsterdam in May 2023.

### Hallelujah missions with educators and regional authority heads

departed in October 2021 for Budapest and Vienna (photo at left), and in December from Sofia to Romania.

A women's leadership mission, From Esther to Esther, embarked in March 2023 for Macedonia and included a memorial ceremony at the Bitola cemetery, where the entire Jewish community was annihilated during the Holocaust



### The Bialik Institute

The Bialik Institute continues to publish the finest in Hebrew literature, old and new, along with monumental translations of world classics and the poetry of Uri Zvi Grinberg. During the report period, we published over 15 books of Israeli poetry, numerous works of philosophy and scholarly research, books in the Dorot series of Jewish classics from all generations, and exemplary translations of world literature.

The Bialik Institute continues to publish books of poetry and literary criticism in its "young" series.

The Institute works in cooperation with other institutes to publish and disseminate books. Its partners include Ben-Gurion University, the Zionist Council, the Jabotinsky Institute and the Menachem Begin Heritage Center, Yad Tabenkin, the Academy of the Hebrew Language and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Confucius Institute at Tel Aviv University, and Moreshet – The Mordechai Anielewicz International Center for Holocaust Documentation, Research, and Education.

Despite facing very challenging structural developments and changes in state budgeting, the Bialik Institute continues to increase its sales annually and to distribute its unique publications in Israel and abroad to an enthusiastic and highly-educated readership. During the period in question, the Bialik Institute printed 150 titles (new and reprints) – a very high number for such a small press.



## Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

As soon as the war broke out, the Department launched a number of special projects to meet needs arising from the new and difficult situation. One of the first projects was a series of **Gaza Perimeter Zoom meetings** meant to address emotional difficulties on the ground, with the aid of relevant professionals.

In order to address Israelis' sense of isolation abroad and their desire to gather together, we launched a large-scale joint kabbalat Shabbat project – **Shabbat Achdut** (unity). Over the course of many weeks, 200 organizations joined the initiative, and 100 thousand people from around the world participated in kabbalat Shabbat activities, with materials that we prepared especially for this purpose.



The Department is active in **connecting #BringThemHomeNow and the Diaspora communities and federations**. With the federations' help, posters of the hostages were hung in countries around the world, solidarity and support rallies were organized, and representatives of the families were invited to meet with local dignitaries, to help exert pressure for the hostages' release.

Inbal Zach (photo at left), a cousin of Tal Shoham who was held hostage in Gaza, traveled to Bulgaria at the invitation of the local Zionist federation, and met with high-ranking members of the Bulgarian government.



Another delegation of relatives of hostages went to Uruguay, where they also met with high-ranking officials, including the president of Uruguay, media personalities, and members of the community.



In late November, we brought a **solidarity delegation of federation heads** from around the world to Israel. The delegation met with journalists to hear about the situation in depth, visited the Gaza Perimeter, met with #BringThemHomeNow, visited the logistical center of Brothers in Arms, and more.



**Other initiatives (more information is available online) included:**

- Coordination of projects and volunteer activities in Canada – <https://www.wzo.org.il/department/irgoon-israelis-abroad/volunteering>
- Israelis stranded abroad and unable to fly back to Israel were connected with local communities that hosted them. Kabbalat Shabbat were held together and joint respite activity was provided for children – <https://www.wzo.org.il/department/irgoon-israelis-abroad/volunteering>

## The Extraordinary Zionist Congress Marking 75 Years of the State of Israel's Independence

One of the pillars of the Department of Irgoon and Israelis Abroad activity is the Department's responsibility for the Zionist Congress. From April 19-21, 2023 (28-30 Nissan 5783), exactly a week before Israel's 75th Independence Day, the Extraordinary Zionist Congress was held in the International Convention Center – ICC Jerusalem. The event's name – 75th Anniversary of the Independence of the State of Israel – highlighted the festive milestone, as did its programming.

Some 650 delegates from around the world took part in the Congress, along with hundreds of guests. In total, the Extraordinary Congress events drew over 1,000 participants.

The Extraordinary Congress was held in addition to, and between, the regular congresses, so that delegates could engage in unmediated, face-to-face contact, after the previous congress (the 38th, held in October 2020), was held online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Department's small but professional staff worked tirelessly to plan, build, and organize the Congress, together with the staff of the Human Resources Division and Ortal Productions.

The Congress opened with a gala plenary session at the International Convention Center – ICC Jerusalem.

The Congress president, Adv. Yaron Shavit, gave an opening speech, followed by welcoming remarks from the Chairman of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, Yaakov Hagoel, and WZO president Tova Dorfman. The opening session also included the traditional Honorary Fellow certificate presentation ceremonies for selected delegates, and an In Memoriam segment acknowledging the names of Congress delegates who had passed away during the previous year.

Afterwards, the Congress delegates were given an overview of the activity of the World Zionist Organization departments in interactive workshops called Zionism in Action. The participants chose from a variety of offerings that allowed them to experience an impressive array of activities produced and operated by the departments in Israel and around the world. In the afternoon, the delegate groups broke up for Congress committee meetings, to discuss resolution proposals that had been in advance.

The committees presented the main topics for discussion: the Declaration of Independence and the Jerusalem Plan Committee, the Aliyah and Law of Return Committee, the Strengthening of the State of Israel Internally and in Diaspora Communities Committee, the Diversity in the Zionist Movement Committee, the Shoah Commemoration and Combatting Antisemitism Committee, and the Strengthening the Zionist Movement Committee.

The first evening concluded with a gala event – a spectacular show that reviewed Zionist history from its beginnings to the present day.





The second day of the Congress opened with a panel discussion entitled 125 Years of Zionism: The Role of the Zionist Federations in the 21st Century, moderated by Gusti Yehoshua-Braverman, head of the Department of Irgoon and Israelis Abroad. Participants included Zionist federation leaders from the US, Australia, Ukraine, Uruguay, and South Africa.

Out of a desire to include additional, non-delegate participants, a Zionist Youth Congress was held at the Congress venue, attended by 800 youth movement participants from around the world who were then in Israel on Masa programs. Over the rest of the day, the Congress delegates were able to choose between taking part in joint discussions with the young attendees or joining special tours to learn about different aspects of Israeli society as they manifest in Jerusalem.



The day's activities continued with meetings of the Congress factions, a tribute to Avraham Duvdevani (Duvdev), the former WZO chair who retired after decades of Zionist activity, and an Adoption of Resolutions plenary session.

The day concluded with a Celebrating Zionism event, with the participation of the President of Israel, Yitzhak Herzog, and hundreds of Zionist Youth Congress participants. The event was held at the National Institutions Square. An impressive World Zionist Organization audiovisual presentation was screened against the walls of the historic National Institutions Building, and the Hatikva 6 reggae band performed.



Friday, 30 Nissan 5783 (April 24, 2023), the Extraordinary Zionist Congress concluded with a closing plenary session. In light of the fact that no votes were held at the Resolutions Plenary, it was decided that Congress votes would be held online. Accordingly, a few weeks after the Congress, a final vote was held on the resolution proposals, and the Congress resolutions were published without delay.



For a full and detailed schedule of the Extraordinary Zionist Congress, click here: <https://www.wzo.org.il/page/extraordinary-congress/extraordinary-congress>

# THE DEPARTMENT FOR FUNDRAISING AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Department Head: Yaakov (Yanky) Dery | Department Director: David (Dudu) Amar

## About the Department

The Department for Fundraising and Strengthening Community Relations is a new department. The Department was founded in order to connect Jewish communities around the world to the World Zionist Organization's vision. That vision sees the relationship between the communities as a crucial value, one that encourages aliyah to Eretz Israel and enhances support for the State of Israel and its institutions around the world.

In order to realize its goals, the Department holds tours and trips to communities that until now had no relationship with the World Zionist Organization. The Department also supports and sponsors community events, while embedding its values and objectives within them.

The Department runs a variety of activities in these communities, with an eye toward the future; investing in a Diaspora Jewry spread across the globe increases the sense of connection between members of the community and the State of Israel and its institutions. Departmental efforts include Zionist activities of various kinds, and building relationships and infrastructures for fundraising to help realize the aforementioned goals.

Over the past two years, the Department has been active worldwide, in the UK, Belgium, Italy, France, Austria, Ukraine, Germany, the US, Latin America, Canada, Australia, Morocco, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates. The Department saw its efforts in these countries bear fruit and connect the communities to Zionist values in accordance with WZO objectives, in the best possible way.

In light of these activities and their impact on communities the world over, communities have been asking to join and become part of the World Zionist Organization, and to reestablish contact and reconnect with community members.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Orot Israel project

The project revolves around the Jewish calendar, for which the Department organizes events for the High Holy Days, Hanukkah, Purim, and other holidays throughout the year. The project was launched on the Department's initiative in order to connect the communities with World Zionist Organization values, by funding activities in the Jewish calendar. WZO content and connection to Zionism and the state are featured at these events, and last year thousands of community members around the world took part.



### Hanukkah 2021

In December 2021, the Department held four large events in Florida, France, Dubai, and Germany, with the participation of thousands of community members in each location. These events were the first chapter in a series of activities that have since been held across the globe.

### Purim 2022

A few months later, on Purim, the events concept was expanded, and activities were held in six communities. These events, held in Switzerland, Canada, New York, Morocco, Mexico, and Austria, were also attended by thousands, giving WZO activities worldwide considerable exposure.



### High Holy Days 2022

For the upcoming High Holy Days, and in light of the Hanukkah and Purim events' resounding success, it was decided to organize no fewer than 50 slichot events around the world, with an emphasis on countries with large Jewish populations and on influential communities. The events featured a cantor and a speaker sent by the Department, and incorporated WZO values in accordance with Department objectives.

### Rav Siach (Symposium) project

In addition to its activities around the world, the Department decided to open up another avenue of influence, that of the Haredi media, as a means of promoting WZO values. For example, in the first project, a symposium was held at the Herzl Center with major Haredi influencers. At this meeting, we familiarized the participants with Herzl's activity. The Chairman of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, Yaakov Hagoel, and Herzl Center chairman Uri Zachy honored us with their presence.

### Drachim LeZion ("Paths to Zion") project

Delegations from around the world visited Israel in the framework of this project. The Department planned a full itinerary for the visitors, including meetings with the President of Israel, the Prime Minister, the Sepharadi Chief Rabbi of Israel, and a visit to Israel's memorial and heritage sites.

[Photo: delegation of senior members of the Argentinian Jewish community meeting with the President of Israel]

### Remembering Jerusalem project

Memorial days and/or events pertaining to the story of Jerusalem are held in the communities on Jerusalem Day and Tisha B'Av. These events achieve a dual goal: they incorporate the memorial days into the Zionist agenda, and they promote connection between the community and the WZO institutions.





### Knowledge Missions project

This project disseminates books on Judaism and Zionism, as well as informational brochures on World Zionist Organization activity to selected communities around the world. The project was chosen for its "shelf life": through books that are used regularly, and the Department's assistance, WZO institutions gain broad exposure. A few examples:

### Shabbat songbook (zmiron)

A booklet of Shabbat and Eretz Israel songs in phonetic transliteration for German speakers was disseminated to Europe's German-speaking communities.



### Pri Etz Hadar – Tu B'Shvat seder text

This publication, which provides a new and annotated edition of the Tu B'Shvat seder text, was distributed to 60 communities around the world.



### Shabbat and Eretz Israel songbook in phonetic transliteration for Portuguese speakers

Distributed to Portuguese-speaking communities in Brazil.



## Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

### Remembering and Connecting project

A global day of prayer for the success of the Israel Defense Forces, for victory in the campaign, and for the return of the hostages: The Department organized a day of prayer and Psalms for wartime (Psalms 121, 130, 142). Many communities around the world answered the call and participated in the prayers. The day of prayer brought Jews from many and varied backgrounds together for the sacred task of prayer for the Jewish people.



### Tour of the Gaza Perimeter for Haredi influencers

As part of the Remembering and Connecting project, an extensive tour of Kibbutz Kfar Aza was organized for the Mashpi'im Committee, senior journalists in the Haredi sector and in the Israeli media. This group includes influential figures in the Haredi media – print newspapers, radio, television, and all social media platforms. In the days following the tour, and in its wake, articles were published in major Haredi newspapers such as Yated Ne'emman, Hamodia, and BaKehilla, as well as on websites and other outlets. The publications offered a unique angle on the events, and broadened the media coverage that is so necessary at this time to ensure that the entire world knows what is happening.



### Remembering and Connecting – Hanukkah 5784 / 2023

During Hanukkah 5784 / 2023, the Department held a number of holiday events for communities around the world, within the framework of Remembering and Connecting. These events featured the screening of a short narrative film carefully produced by the Department, that tells the story of Israeli volunteering during the war. The film is meant to elicit viewers' emotions, to strengthen their connection to Eretz Israel and Zionism, and to gain exposure for WZO activity.

# THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMBATING ANTISEMITISM & PROMOTING DIASPORA COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Department Head: Raheli Baratz Rix | Department Director: Gali Ofir

## About the Department

The Department for Combating Antisemitism and for Promoting Diaspora Community Resilience operates in the sphere of formal and informal education to eradicate antisemitism and bolster the resilience of Diaspora Jewish communities.

Target audiences: Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, with an emphasis on educational institutions around the world, youth organizations and movements, Jewish institutions, student organizations, Jewish communities, and Zionist federations. There is a strong emphasis on activity and awareness-raising regarding the delegitimization of Israel. Main activity locations: Europe, South America, North America.

Department objectives for 2023

- Raise awareness of antisemitism among young people, and increase their involvement in efforts to eradicate it.
- Strengthen cooperation with opinion leaders around the world
- Lead projects in the sphere of community resilience
- Serve as a knowledge hub on antisemitism and identifying trends
- Combat Israel's delegitimization.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Enhancing resilience and Jewish-Israeli identity among Russian-speakers

In collaboration with Limmud, conferences have been held over the past two years in several locations around the world, including Warsaw, Berlin, Baku, Lublin, and Israel. The Baku conference was the first Jewish studies conference held in Azerbaijan, and drew 300 participants. Dozens of meetings were held in the course of the conference, including a discussion of the state of antisemitism past and present, and what we should do to fight it. With the aid of these conferences, we are deepening our relationship with the communities and bolstering their resilience.



### Roundtable seminar on antisemitism, the UK

During the seminar, a roundtable was held with representatives of communities across the UK, who discussed the challenges currently facing Jews and Judaism, antisemitism, Jewish identity, and connection to Israel. The roundtable was moderated by the Channel 12 European correspondent Elad Simchayoff. In addition, the Department head took part in a panel on the challenges of antisemitism worldwide. The seminar was held at London's Tottenham Stadium.





### Seminars on resilience and coping with challenges: Sweden, Mexico

The seminars addressed community resilience and offered practical tools for coping with community crises, whether on the geopolitical plane (antisemitism, security) or on the physical plane (earthquakes, fires). The first seminar was held in Stockholm and attended by representatives from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. Another seminar was held in Central America, with 50 participants from 7 countries. At this seminar, we gave talks on community resilience and the importance of involving and strengthening the community as it copes with emergency situations. The conference was attended by Israel's ambassador to Mexico.



### Bootcamp on combatting anti-Zionism and antisemitism on campuses, Belgium

A seminar was held in Brussels with the participation of 30 selected Jewish students from across Europe. The seminar featured workshops at which the participants learned skills for contending with online and offline antisemitism. The seminar concluded with a study tour of the European Union.



### Conference on combatting antisemitism, Southern Cone

A first conference of its kind in Argentina, in cooperation with the Department of Pioneering Youth and Future Generations. The conference was attended by 128 young Zionist leaders from 4 Latin American countries. The participants gathered in Buenos Aires, to share, learn, and prepare for upcoming challenges.

### Between Culture and Antisemitism – Greece, Romania, and Tunisia

To mark 80 years since the deportation of Greek and Romanian Jewry, we organized a mission to Bucharest, Thessaloniki, and Tunisia. In Romania, the participants were introduced to additional angles on Jewish history and culture; we saw synagogues that had survived and learned about communities that had not. We met with community members and mayors who expressed support and sympathy for Israel, and paid our respects at silent gravesites and at mass graves. In Greece, the delegation marched the March of Life and participated in memorial services at cemeteries; it was also present at the inauguration of a new Torah scroll. In Tunisia we presented new and intriguing evidence of a rich culture now lost, and discussed the difficult situation faced by the Jews of Tunisia during World War II.



## Academic conference on combatting antisemitism, Things You've Never Heard, Poland

At this conference we presented new research on antisemitism, the global impact of various events, and the ability to cope with them. Conference participants included community representatives from Poland, Ukraine, Austria, Germany, and more. Among the guests were Israeli and non-Israeli journalists and academics. The author Jaroslaw Kurski talked about his new book, which discusses the "conspiracy of silence" and tells the story of his son, who is haunted by the missing piece of their genealogical puzzle.

## Don't Preach to the Choir

As part of the Department's educational activity, several programs to raise awareness of the importance of fighting antisemitism were carried out with non-Jewish audiences:

**1. Mexican educators' delegation** - The Department hosted a delegation of school principals and educational staff trainers from across Mexico (including personnel from Catholic schools). The delegation members traveled to Germany, Poland, and Israel. The project was implemented in cooperation with Universidad Hebraica. Discussions were held with the participants about the current rise of antisemitism in Latin America and around the world, and about how to raise awareness of the fight against antisemitism.



**2. Student exchanges** in the framework of delegations marking the 50th anniversary of the murder of the 11 Israeli athletes. As part of a collaboration between Wingate College and the Technical University of Munich, 15 German students came to Israel to get to know the country. The students participated in the inauguration of the Maccabi games. A reciprocal visit of Israeli students to Munich included a bicycle ride in the Munich Massacre victims' memory, as well as participation in a ceremony in the presence of the Chancellor and President of Germany.

**3. Delegation of clerics from Guatemala and Argentina** - A delegation of evangelicals came for a tour of Israel and to see "first-hand" the conflicts unique to it.

**4. Delegation of Romanian students** - A thousand pupils from across Romania participated in an essay contest on combatting antisemitism and commemorating the Holocaust. Outstanding essay awards were presented for 21 essays at a ceremony in Bucharest, which also marked 1700 years of Romanian Jewry. The ceremony was attended by the Romanian minister of education and culture and by European ambassadors and diplomats. The 21 award winners came to Israel for a first-time visit, which included seminars on antisemitism and community resilience.



### Cooperation agreement with the University of Georgia (Tbilisi)

A meeting was held with senior figures at the University of Georgia, and a cooperation agreement was signed, enabling students at the University to study antisemitism and ways of combatting it. The meeting featured a discussion of the importance of maintaining contact between the Diaspora communities and Israel.



### Research on antisemitism, Australia

A first study of its kind in Australia encompassed 33 universities across the continent and looked at the scope and forms of antisemitism. The study investigated the experiences and sentiments of Jewish students, and offered a previously-unknown, unreported picture of everyday antisemitism.

### Unity and reconciliation bootcamp, Israel

We held a 4-day seminar on unity, community resilience, and reducing societal polarization in Israel. Two main areas of dispute were discussed: religious issues and national issues. The young entrepreneurs who took part in the seminar presented their social initiatives, which deal with unity and community leadership.



### Annual conference on combatting delegitimization, Israel

The first annual conference on coping with the challenges of BDS and raising awareness of the issue in Israel was held at ANU - Museum of the Jewish People. The conference featured senior figures whose work pertains to the topic of delegitimization, enabling participants to hear a variety of opinions during the course of the conference. Speakers included: Professor Alan Dershowitz, Justice Hanan Melcer, Judge Oded Modrick, academics, journalists, and others.



### Seminar on 84 years since Kristallnacht, Israel

A Candle in Remembrance seminar was held at Jerusalem's Beit HaAm to mark 84 years since Kristallnacht. The event was attended by hundreds of high school students from across Israel. During the seminar we held an expanded panel discussion with the teens on the topics of antisemitism, Kristallnacht, the Eichmann trial, causes of antisemitism, the impact of antisemitism and what can be done today.



### Production of a film on antisemitism – Good Friday

Good Friday is a short film that discusses antisemitism in the modern world and the dangers it presents. Filming was done in Spain, and the language of the film is Polish. The film was screened as part of the Department's activity with students around the world.



## Education and culture

Out of an understanding that books remain as community testimony, we support and encourage the publication of books relevant to the Department's programs and agenda. Among the books that we supported over the past year was *AAA – A Brief and Visual History of Antisemitism*.

The Department participated in the publication of a memorial book for the 11 victims of the Munich Massacre, written by family members. Another book, *The List*, enumerates and reviews antisemitic events of past years. The Department also published the book *We-They*, a collection of short stories about Jewish-Zionist women written by Dan Vaknin.

Another book written by the Department is *Grandpa's Goal*, which looks at an experience with a national dimension that connects our here-and-now identity with the history that shaped it. The aim was to produce an accessible book full of color and vitality that would deal with antisemitism while also conveying universal messages of accepting people as they are, and emphasizing the damage caused by antisemitism and the failure to accept the other.



## Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

### Monitoring antisemitism worldwide

The Department continuously monitors and gathers antisemitic content that appears on social media and in print and filmed/photographic media. Content is monitored in several languages: Hebrew, English, Arabic, Persian, Russian, and others. Antisemitic events have increased since October 7th by hundreds to thousands of percentage points. Violent incidents and vandalism have increased by over 500%, while on social media there has been a 1000% rise in antisemitic discourse, including calls for violence and the denial of Israel's right to exist. As part of its efforts in this sphere, the Department produces weekly and monthly reports that summarize the main antisemitic events for Knesset members, government ministers, and communities abroad.

### You're Next campaign

Social media campaigns, including a worldwide effort in which we conveyed to the free world the message that "You're Next." The campaign was created for 20 different cities and disseminated on social media as well.



### Monitoring and reporting on antisemitism on social media

This international program monitors and reports on antisemitic content in the online space, along with the movement to combat antisemitism on the Internet. As part of the collaboration with the Department, dozens of webinars have been held for hundreds of participants from across the globe, speakers of dozens of different languages. When the workshops conclude, the participants become activists with universal tools that enable them to operate creatively as they post content on social media, fight antisemitism, and raise awareness of the issue. This puts them on the front lines of the digital battle.

As of December 2023, there are over 3000 such activists.

During the first month of the war, 34,000 antisemitic posts (per the IHRA definition) were reported on nine different platforms. Content is being monitored in eight languages, including English (47%), Russian (27%), French (12%), and Arabic (9.5%).

### Opening speech at the EJA conference, Croatia

Due to the war, the Department head did not fly to Croatia to inaugurate the conference; a video was sent instead, with a speech explaining the events of the war and the situation in Israel. Because the conference took place on October 11th, this was a not-to-be-missed opportunity. A delegation of legislators and Jewish leaders from across Europe attended, as did Israel's ambassador to Croatia and a former president of Croatia.

### Hasbara on antisemitism in wartime – what can and can't be said – FAQ pamphlet

The international legal arena has become a major battleground for Israel and the Jewish people, whether the issue at hand is the threat of terrorism, rising antisemitism, BDS, or attempts to delegitimize the Jewish state. The increase in antisemitic incidents is having a dramatic impact on everyday life in Diaspora Jewish communities. In cooperation with the International Legal Forum, pamphlets were written in English and Spanish answering major questions that arise in international discourse. Among the questions: Who is Hamas? Does international law give Israel the right to defend itself? Are Israeli actions proportionate? Can Israel strike civilian targets? Is it permissible for Israel to cut off electricity, fuel, food, or water to Gaza? Click here for the pamphlet: <https://www.wzo.org.il/department/haravotbarzel/faq/en>

Additionally, 10 English-language videos were disseminated to convey accurate and important information on a number of issues pertaining to the fight against antisemitism and the legality of the war. One is an animated video explaining the massacre, the abductions, and the inception of the Gaza-Israel war. Other videos are concerned with the issue of legality, including Israel's legal status, what the law says about Hamas's use of civilians as human shields, and more. All of the videos are accessible and visually "clean," without disturbing images, and suitable for ages 15 and over. Click here for one of the videos: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=639819934986017>

### WZO compound at the Pan-American Maccabi games, Buenos Aires, Argentina

In late December 2023/early January 2024, as part of the Maccabi games in Argentina, the Department set up a compound where educational empowerment activity was provided on the topics of connection to Israel and raising awareness of the current situation and the recent massacre. Many delegations from a large number of countries, including the US, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Panama, France, the UK, and Israel, took part in activities at the compound. A number of stations were set up, including ones dealing with the October 7th events, a Yizkor (memorial) station with the names and pictures of those murdered and abducted, an active Nova station, and a station for sending letters to Gaza Perimeter residents and soldiers.



### HaGal Sheli (My Wave) – Creating Waves of Hope, Israel

The Department began collaborating with HaGal Sheli (an organization that empowers youth through surfing) in 2022, conducting surfing activities to empower at-risk teens and return them to educational frameworks. In the wake of October 7th, the Department conducted joint activities with HaGal Sheli that included support for 6 groups of young people aged 12-18 from localities on the confrontation line, the Sha'ar HaNegev and Eshkol regional councils, as well as survivors of the Nova festival. Together, the young people surf and receive support and assistance from the organization's counselors.

A word before you move on... Anyone who has experienced antisemitism or needs support and/or guidance, is welcome to contact us at an e-mail address created especially in response to the sharp rise in antisemitic incidents worldwide: [care4u@wzo.org.il](mailto:care4u@wzo.org.il)



# DEPARTMENT FOR TIKKUN OLAM, SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND PRESERVATION OF ZIONIST HERITAGE

Department Head: Dror Morag | Department Director: Dor Zvikelsky

## About the Department

The Department for Tikkun Olam, Social Activism and Preservation of Zionist Heritage promotes Zionism, democratic values, equality, and social justice, in the spirit of Herzl's model society: social entrepreneurship, the aspiration to reduce social disparities, bringing the periphery and the center closer, and advancing tolerance in Israeli society. We work with all Israeli population groups, out of a deep conviction that civic partnership is the basis for the State of Israel's existence and for the realization of the Zionist vision.

Additionally, the Central Zionist Archives and the Herzl Center operate under the Department's auspices. The Archives are now at a major historical juncture; infrastructures and climate control systems are undergoing comprehensive renovation, and the opening of a visitors' center will transform the facility into Israel's leading archive.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Leaders in Local Government – Building a Model Society

2022 was the fourth year of "Leaders in Local Government – Building a Model Society", in cooperation with Kolot. The program is intended for leaders in local government and deals with the major challenges faced by these leaders in Israel. It features "beit midrash" study and a study trip to learn about different streams of North American Jewry.



### Mofet – Timna Shweika Social Entrepreneurship Accelerator

A unique program to encourage social initiatives that advance Herzl's vision of a model society, promoting social justice and tikkun olam.

In 2022 the accelerator's sixth cycle was launched.

In 2023 the accelerator's seventh cycle was launched, on the theme of sustainable Zionism and the climate crisis.



2022 and 2023 also saw the launch of two Mofet – Tikkun Olam cycles in Diaspora communities: Vienna, Austria and Melbourne, Australia



### Collection of donated winter necessities for earthquake victims in Turkey

The earthquake that hit Turkey in February 2023 cost tens of thousands of lives and made millions of people homeless refugees in harsh winter weather. In the wake of the event, the Department joined forces with the Social Delivery organization for a winter-necessities drive benefiting the earthquake victims.



### Holocaust Memorial Ceremony at Yad Mordechai

In cooperation with the Department for Israel and Holocaust Commemoration Worldwide.

The 2022 ceremony's theme was leadership at critical junctures.

The 2023 ceremony's theme was the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.



### Unit for Activity with the LGBTQ Community

In 2022 and 2023, we deepened our relationship with the LGBTQ organizations through collaboration and welcoming of delegations to Israel.



### "Standing Guard" exhibition

In 2023 we mounted an exhibition based on Zionist Archive materials, to mark 110 years of Hashomer Hatzair.



### Memorial plaque at the home of Dr. Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl

In 2023 a memorial plaque for Dr. Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl was installed at Herzl's home during the First Zionist Congress (1896-1898), on Berggasse Street, Vienna.



### Greening of the Herzl Center

The Herzl Center became a sustainable facility by shifting to the exclusive use of multi-use items, recycling, and composting.



### Anniversary of Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl's passing

In 2022, the anniversary of Herzl's passing was marked with a performance of Herzl's play, The New Ghetto.



### Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl's birthday

The 163rd anniversary of Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl's birth was celebrated with HaMeshakem, a company that employs 2,700 people with disabilities, 300 of them senior citizens with disabilities.





### Participation in the annual J Street convention

The convention deals with maintaining the relationship between American Jewry and Israel and with support for Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. In 2022, the Department attended the convention in order to deepen cooperation between the World Zionist Organization (across its various departments) and J Street and the Jewish communities and organizations that participate in the convention.



### Herzl, Zionism, and Arab Israeli Citizens Conference at the Herzl Center

The conference was held in late 2021 at the Herzl Center, which operates under the Department's auspices.



### Cooperatives Accelerator

A program to encourage the founding of new cooperatives and to expand already-active ones through in-depth knowledge of the cooperatives field in Israel and abroad. Advanced training in business administration and cooperation with influential figures in the Israeli economy.

### Leadership course for youth from the Ethiopian community

2023 was the seventh year of the leadership course for youth from the Ethiopian community, in cooperation with the Nachshonim organization. The course is held in Holon's Jesse Cohen and Atikot neighborhoods – two groups per venue.



### Mixed-Cities Leadership Program – Ramle

In 2022 and 2023, a leadership program for Jews and Arabs was operated in Ramle.



### Tour of Herzl Center for Chaverim BaTeva (Friends by Nature)

In 2023, we held a tour for a group of Ethiopian-community farmers from the Chaverim BaTeva organization at the Beta Israel memorial site at Mount Herzl, as well as an Amharic-language guided tour at the Herzl Museum.



### Tour of Herzl Center for Midreshet Mayim participants

In 2022, we held a tour for participants in the midrasha operated by the Department for Social Activism in cooperation with Mercaz Ma'ase and the Mayim organization.



# Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

## Leaders in Israeli Society – Building a Model Society delegation

The Leading a Shared Future – Building a Model Society program was founded in response to growing threats to gender equality in both Israel and the US. The aim was to bring women leaders from Israel together with their peers in the local Jewish community, in order to establish partnerships and relationships that would promote gender equality in the world's two largest Jewish population centers. The horrors of the present war have highlighted the need to tell the Israeli and Zionist story via the feminine narrative. In recognition of this opportunity, a delegation of 14 women leaders went to New York to meet with high-ranking public officials, philanthropists, and heads of Jewish women's organizations. Together they discussed the role of women's leadership in shaping Israel's image, and in promoting a better future for women, with particular emphasis on the day after the war.



## World Zionist Organization hotline

The hotline is operated at the Herzl Center, and coordinates needs and requests received from communities and individuals who have had to leave their homes and require a response in terms of equipment, as well as requests and institutional needs of IDF units. Since its creation, the hotline has responded to all needs and requests received, including those of individuals. We have been assisting organizations abroad with the transportation and release from customs of donations that they send to Israel, and with the purchase of relevant equipment such as mobile ultrasound scanners for battlefield physicians, mattresses, laser pointers, shoes, and more.



Department Head: Dror Morag | Department Director: Dor Zvikelsky

## Mobile showers project

A joint project of the Department for Israel and Holocaust Commemoration and the Department for Social Activism and Tikkun Olam: showers for soldiers in staging areas and in the Gaza Strip.



## Volunteering and assistance-to-farmers days

As part of the effort to assist farmers, we held work days in the fields of Kibbutz Netiv HaLamed-Heh in which employees from all the departments participated.



# THE ZIONIST ENTERPRISES DEPARTMENT

Department Head: Silvio Joskowicz | Department Director: Hilla Drechler

## About the Department

The founding of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people solved the need for a national home for the Jewish people. Although this issue has been resolved, we, as a people, perpetually seek answers to major questions pertaining to the state's identity and image. How can we strengthen Jewish identity? How can we deepen the younger generation's sense of belonging to the Jewish people?

These questions are on the Department's agenda and dictate its vision: ensuring the Jewish people's future and uniqueness by promoting and strengthening Jewish identity and the connection to Israel, in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the Jerusalem Program.

A major means of generating social change is to mobilize a critical mass of Jews, from both here and there, for a joint effort. The great Zionist enterprise of building the State of Israel had a successful outcome in terms of the founding of the state. Thus, we in the Department are engaged with the issue of the next generation's Zionism, that is, with the building of a model society in Israel and in the Jewish world as a whole.

The Unit for Humanistic Cultural Judaism, established as part of the Department per a resolution of the most recent Zionist Congress, provides a home and a Jewish-Zionist response to the needs of Jewish communities and individuals who see their Jewish identity as an ethical/ideological idea or in terms of tradition, memory, custom, and family, in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Out of a recognition that there are Jews in places where the community infrastructure is less strong, and that a connection with Israel promotes meaningful Jewish identity for the future of Israeli society, the Department works to enhance and to further opportunities for engagement, joint activity, content development, and community building. The Department works with local and international partners, including: the WZO departments, the Jewish Agency, the Jewish federations, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, UnitEd, Mosaic, JDC-Israel, ECJC, JCCA, OSA, AMIA, CONIB, BINA, Hamidrasha at Oranim, Shitim Institute, and others.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Ayin LeZion

Is the Committee on Zionist Leadership in Small and Medium-Sized Jewish Communities of Latin America, whose members include major leaders from each community and from a variety of educational and cultural frameworks. Over the years, the Department has maintained continuous contact with these leaders and serves as their direct and immediate connection to Israel, for the receipt of information and educational/cultural content.

### Annual Educational Leadership Conference in Argentina

The fifth Jewish education conference for Jewish educators was held in July 2023 (the fourth was held in 2022). Over 1,700 educators attended 70 workshops and lectures on the year's theme: Powerful Teaching, Unforgettable Learning.



### Beyachad Conference, Brazil – annual education and leadership conference in Brazil

August 2023 saw the first annual conference on education and leadership in São Paulo, similar to the conference held in Cancún a year earlier. Over 100 participants came from all across Brazil and Latin America, to jointly create opportunities for cooperation for the future of Jewish education and the Jewish communities"



### Beyachad conference, Cancún

In 2022 a conference was held in Cancún, Mexico with 4 different tracks. Two tracks were intended for community and educational leaders from 17 Latin American countries who also signed the Cancún Declaration on strengthening the connection between the communities and Israel. There was also a Lázus Movement young leadership track, and a Ketzev (rhythm) Latino-Israel track that also ran in 2023 with 150 community leaders and folkdance teachers from around the world, along with teachers from Israel. This track provided an opportunity to experience the connection with Israel and to strengthen it through dance.



### Mexico Leadership Conference in Cancún

A network of Jewish leaders and entrepreneurs was created on the Department's initiative. The 2023 conference was attended by dozens of Jewish entrepreneurs from 12 Latin American countries, Italy, Spain, and the US. These entrepreneurs are not part of the official Jewish establishment. At the conference they discussed the development of social and educational projects for the Jewish people's shared future, and engaged in networking.



### Latin American Education Leaders Conference, Argentina

In March 2023, on the Department's initiative, a forum of over 20 Jewish school leaders from 7 Latin American countries was created. The aim was to create a unified voice and a shared vision. The motto of the Jewish Education Leaders' Vision Forum is "Education Is Our Tool, Jewish Renewal And Relevance Are Our Fate."

### Seeds of Summer program

A beit midrash where discharged soldiers study Zionism and Judaism. The purpose of this five-week program at Hamidrasha at Oranim is to reacquaint young people and students aged 20-35 with core texts pertaining to Jewish identity stemming from culture and humanism, as well as their connection to the Jewish world.



### Tikkunei leil Shavuot

Every year, the Department holds tikkunei leil Shavuot (study on Shavuot night) across the country. Each such event draws hundreds of participants for extended and meaningful study of the Book of Ruth, topics in social betterment and self-improvement, and burning issues of the day, facilitated by speakers, lecturers, and teachers.



### Tiyulim im Olim (Trips with New Immigrants)

The project was developed to relieve loneliness and to connect young Israelis and new immigrants in different age groups. Five trips and get-togethers were held around the country, including the Kinneret, Mount Herzl, and a graffiti tour in Tel Aviv.



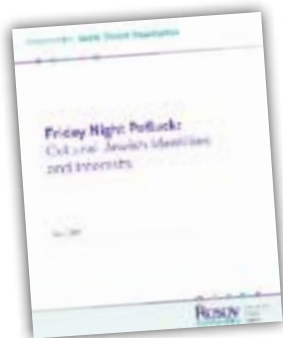
### Emda program

Jewish-Zionist beit midrash training instructors for pre-military academies. Ideological-educational training and acquisition of educational and pedagogical skills.

## Unit for Humanistic Cultural Judaism

### Research

In 2022, we conducted a qualitative study, the first of its kind in the Jewish world, to learn about the young Jews who identify with the "humanistic Judaism" camp, and their mode of conduct. The study, which was performed by Rosov Consulting, encompassed over 120 young people from over 20 Jewish communities across the Jewish world. The findings show that among many who self-define as affiliated, there is already sporadic activity and a great thirst for additional involvement, along with very complicated feelings about Israel.



### Holidays website

As in past years, we continued to develop content, translate material and add technological features to the holidays website. The site is used by hundreds of thousands of visitors per year. It has been translated from Hebrew to English and Spanish, and contains a wide range of content on the Jewish holidays and the Jewish calendar and holidays for teachers, the general public and students.



### Hamidrasha

In accordance with a plan to enable young Israelis to study in a "yeshiva" framework while also fulfilling their military obligation, we embarked on a multi-year effort with BINA: 20 young people are engaged in a multi-year program combining meaningful service with in-depth study of Judaism as a culture.



### Batei midrash in Palo Alto and Budapest

Out of a desire to reach Jewish populations around the world, we have established batei midrash in two major hubs of cultural Judaism in the Jewish world. The batei midrash are focal points for activity surrounding the Jewish lifecycle and the Hebrew calendar in the Diaspora, with a connection to Israel.



## Talks on Israel's Declaration of Independence in Europe and the US

As part of our collaboration with the Moishe House organization, we sent two speakers to two special events in the US and in Europe (Belgrade). Several talks were given on the Declaration of Independence, its history and future, to hundreds of participants in a variety of forums.

## Mah Darush LaRuach

In 2022 we enlisted a group of outstanding intellectuals and educators for a trip to Israel showcasing Judaism as a culture and urban/community systems of inspirational quality. We toured Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, and encountered different aspects of Israeli society.



## Holiday kits

We developed culturally-tailored Passover and Hanukkah kits for English-speakers. On Passover our unique haggadah was accompanied by digital products and adapted for home printing, with an emphasis on those celebrating in a family context, and distributed to over 33 thousand households. For Hanukkah 2022, we developed a kit with a set of supplementary digital products. For the most recent holiday, due to the war, we developed a set of special greeting cards in the spirit of the times.



## Intellectuals and educators conference, Munich

Held in June 2022 for educators and intellectuals in European Jewish communities. The participants gathered to talk about Judaism as a culture in pro-Israel activity and education, and marked the 50th anniversary of the massacre of Israel's athletes in the 1972 Olympics.

## Spielberg Archive

Continued support and operation of the Spielberg Jewish Film Archive at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

## Holiday counselors

Each year, with the help of organizations and partners of in Jewish communities around the world, we present holidays in the spirit of Israel and Judaism as a culture, by means of young Israelis. We aim to reach diverse populations and to bring Hebrew festivities to the Diaspora. In 2022 alone, some 90 counselors went out to 30 communities and over 11,000 participants. To mark Independence Day 2023 (Israel 75), we ran 30 activities around the globe, from Brazil to Copenhagen, from Winnipeg, Canada to Cape Town, South Africa.



## Community building

We established 3 young communities around the world for people ages 25-45, where they can engage in developing Judaism as a culture in their communities. The participants underwent a screening, training, and preparation process, and took part in conferences, lectures, and knowledge-sharing with their peers across the world.



## International Bible Quiz for Adults

The Department, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, held the advanced stages of the International Bible Quiz for Adults in the Diaspora, and produced and marketed three local finals. The finals in Argentina were held in September 2023. The New York and Paris finals were postponed until next year due to the war.



## Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

### Heroes of Light

19 heroes of light, survivors of October 7th in the Gaza Perimeter and the Nova festival, traveled during Hanukkah to Jewish communities in the US, Europe, and Latin America to share their experiences, and in doing so gave faces, names, and identities to the catastrophe. Through these interpersonal encounters, they added another layer to the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora communities, and bolstered mutual support within the Jewish people as a whole. In total, over 100 events were held, attended by over 15,000 people!



### Argentinean soccer commentator, Hernán Feler, visits Israel

Starting on October 7, the Argentinean sportscaster Hernán Feler began every soccer broadcast with a plea for the release of his aunt, Ofelia Roitman, who had been abducted by Hamas terrorists. Since her release after 53 days of captivity, Hernán has continued to speak out and to demand the release of all the hostages still being held by Hamas. These broadcasts have gone viral and attained global reach. The Department brought Hernán to Israel on a trip that included numerous meetings and public events, the most moving of which was the reunion with his aunt.



### Faces of October 7th

The Department supports the Faces of October 7th project, in which survivors of the Nova festival and the kibbutzim visit North American Jewish communities, organizations and, in particular, academic campuses, to talk about their experiences. To date, over 20 survivors have made these important trips and visited communities, institutions, and universities.

### Pakal – Inspiration for Commanders

In cooperation with "Yahav – Educating for Zionism", Pakal – Inspiration for Commanders was launched. The project is a collection of writings by David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, Hannah Szenes, and others, meant to encourage and inspire IDF soldiers and commanders. Pakal has been shared widely and is still being disseminated in the field.



## Webinars for Jewish communities around the world

We held a number of webinars on various topics, including explanations of current events. Speakers included a former IDF spokesperson (Spanish-speaker), families of Hamas hostages, representatives of civil volunteer organizations, journalists, resilience talks, and more.

## Solidarity mission of Jewish community leaders from Argentina

Leaders representing Argentina's largest and most central Jewish communities came to express solidarity with Israel at this difficult time. During their trip, they met with key Israeli public figures and leaders, visited the kibbutzim, and viewed the devastation first-hand. The leaders committed to working for the return of all the hostages, and to keeping the issue on the Argentinean government's agenda.



## Solidarity mission of Latin American school principals

Over 20 Jewish school principals from the Jewish Education Leaders Vision Forum came to express their support for Israel, to learn about what happened here, and to pass the information on to their home communities and schools. They met with families of hostages and displaced families, visited Kibbutz Kfar Aza, and met with the President of Israel, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, and other public figures, as well as with colleagues and educators.



## Anthology on bereavement

This Broken Time, an anthology published by the Shitim Institute, is a first attempt to provide spiritual support, from a Jewish humanistic perspective, to those who have lost loved ones and may need additional readings and sources of guidance in crisis.



## 24 Hours of Tribute and Remembrance

To mark the shloshim (30-day mourning period) of the October 7th massacre, we held a memorial event that was broadcast on YouTube for 24 hours. The names and pictures of the murdered and the fallen were screened alongside musical and artistic selections and the reading of poetic passages. The tribute can be found on our YouTube channel.



## Face-to-Face encounters with youth

Young Department volunteers responded to the situation by holding face-to-face talks with teens online. Later, the Department developed material for a seminar on Jewish identity and connection to Israel for young people. The seminar was held in Germany.

## Call to UNICEF on World Children's Day to act for the release of all the child hostages

To mark World Children's Day (November 20th), we called for immediate action to secure the release of all of the Israeli children held hostage in Gaza, along with school principals and educators who demanded that UNICEF act for the children's release.



For Shabbat, to foster togetherness and provide comfort, we organized Kabbalat Shabbat gatherings for evacuees from the south and north residing in hotels, and hosted virtual Zoom gatherings with our sisters and brothers overseas, in collaboration with Bina and Beit Tefila Yisraeli.



# DEPARTMENT OF PIONEER YOUTH AND THE NEXT GENERATION

**Department Head: Sergio Edelstein | Department Director: Ariel Goldgewicht**

## About the Department

The mission of the Department of Pioneer Youth and the Next Generation is to give concrete and ideological expression to the goals of the Zionist movement, and to serve as a major entity in transmitting values to the younger generation of Diaspora Jews. These values, which were formulated by Herzl over 125 years ago and are still central to the consolidation of Jewish identity today, are based on the Zionist goals that continue to guide us:

- The State of Israel as a national home for the Jewish people.
- Israel will be a place where every Jew can choose to live his or her Judaism as the "norm."
- Israel will be a Jewish, democratic, and ethical state, on the basis of our heritage.
- Israel will be a state that contributes to the development and wellbeing of humanity.

As it says: "On three things the world stands: justice, truth, and peace."

### Operative goals

1. To deepen the younger generation's identification with Zionist values as an integral part of their personal identity, by promoting informal educational frameworks that serve the global Zionist youth movements, the hagshama (Zionist "realization") movements, and organizations that work with students around the world.
2. To develop, train, and consolidate a young leadership within the Jewish people, with an emphasis on the older cohorts of the worldwide Zionist youth movements and members of the hagshama movements. Leadership with core values of Zionism and of Israel as a Jewish-democratic state.
3. To intensify, focus, reinforce, leverage, and accelerate the educational activity of the global Zionist youth movements.

### Department objectives

1. To organize long-term educational projects and processes for the target populations.
  2. To encourage and promote collaboration between the youth movements, in accordance with their needs as they arise in each specific community.
  3. To create and consolidate a network of young Zionist leaders committed to Israel, Zionism, and Jewish communities around the world.
  4. To promote professionalism, innovation, and Zionist educational creativity in the Diaspora.
  5. To position the Department as the central WZO unit for the younger generation, now and in the future, and to establish the Department as the central axis linking the movements with the national institutions.
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## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### WAY – Worldwide Assembly of Youth Councils [Council of World Zionist Youth Movements]

An initiative to create a global network of young Zionist councils. The participants are the heads of existing councils, some of whom are madrichim in their respective movements. The aim is to join forces in order to create something new and meaningful for the world youth movements – together.

In the past two years, several seminars have been held across the Diaspora – WAY conferences in Argentina, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Budapest. The councils have also held activities in South Africa, Australia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, and elsewhere. It should be noted that this year, for the first time, we renewed activity with the US council as part of the Z3 conference.

The Department oversees the annual work plan of all the councils, both organizationally and budgetarily.



Liderazgo en Acción  
ENTRADA Y COORDINACIÓN  
Escuela Regional de Liderazgo - Buenos Aires

## Zionist Leadership Academy

The Zionist Leadership Academy (ZLA) is an initiative of the Department of Pioneer Youth and the Next Generation in the World Zionist Organization, along with the Fundraising Division of KKL-JNF. The initiative arose from a desire to ensure continuity in future Zionist leadership, in recognition of its importance, as well as from a desire to develop the younger generation of donors for the worldwide Zionist enterprise.

**Program objective** - to create a select and cohesive group of young leaders from Jewish communities around the world, leaders committed to meeting the needs of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, leader who will work to strengthen ties between the communities, and between the communities and the national institutions in Israel.

**Program framework** - The program duration is ten months, starting with a new group each year. Biweekly Zoom meetings and two in-person conferences. One conference takes place mid-program, somewhere outside Israel; the other is a final conference in Israel.

When the annual program cycle ends, each participant group joins a network of past program alumni. The alumni continue to work on behalf of their communities and Israel.

The Zionist Leadership Academy's first annual cycle opened in November 2021 and ended in September 2022. The first group comprised 40 participants ages 25-40, from 30 countries.

The second annual cycle opened on December 12, 2022, and was supposed to conclude in November 2023, but the final conference was postponed until February 2024 due to the war. The second group comprises 35 participants ages 25-35, from 30 countries.

The third cycle - In July 2023 registration began for the third program cycle, which is scheduled to start on 7/1/2024.



## World Zionist Conference on Informal Education and Young Leadership

**Rationale** - An annual innovative and experiential conference dedicated each year to a major topic on the agenda of the young Jewish populations, their needs and areas of interest. Every year the conference discusses and focuses on different challenges faced by informal education around the world – challenges that are intensifying from the unique perspective of our people, scattered across the Diaspora in different and diverse communities.

Many complex issues require in-depth thought, discussion, and dialogue, particularly with our future leaders, the young people in the worldwide Zionist youth movements. We feel that the way to successfully address these numerous challenges is through open and sincere dialogue that encompasses the range of opinions of those involved and engaged with Zionism, leadership, Judaism, and Israel. Dialogue will happen through workshops, talks, round tables, discussions, and in particular, joint learning about what distinguishes and unifies us.

**Goals** - The goal of the World Zionist Conference on Informal Education, vis-à-vis the global Zionist youth movements in particular and the organizations dealing with youth in general, is to connect, nurture, train, and enrich the younger generation. We will do this through open dialogue, thinking, and training of young people in the Diaspora and in Israel, aiming to ensure the continued commitment of the frameworks, movements, and communities around the world to Zionism, Jewish identity, and the strengthening of Israel as a national home for all Jews around the world.

We will advance this goal by means of a conference that focuses each year on a major issue on the agenda of young Jews across the globe.

**Target population** - The conference's target population is young alumni of Zionist and educational programs and movements, participants in pre-military mechinot (academies), Zionist Council educators, educators from informal and school-based frameworks, and young leaders from the Zionist federations, along with numerous other participants from around the world. We plan to reach 1000 participants from Israel, North America, Latin America, Europe, Australia, and South Africa, with an emphasis on leaders of WAY – Worldwide Assembly of Youth Councils.

The first conference was held in October 2021, on the topic of Building a Zionist Future Together. The second conference was held in October 2022 on the topic of From Vision to Action, while in April 2023 the third conference was held within the framework of the Extraordinary Zionist Congress, on the topic of Jewish and Democratic Israel's 75th Anniversary.

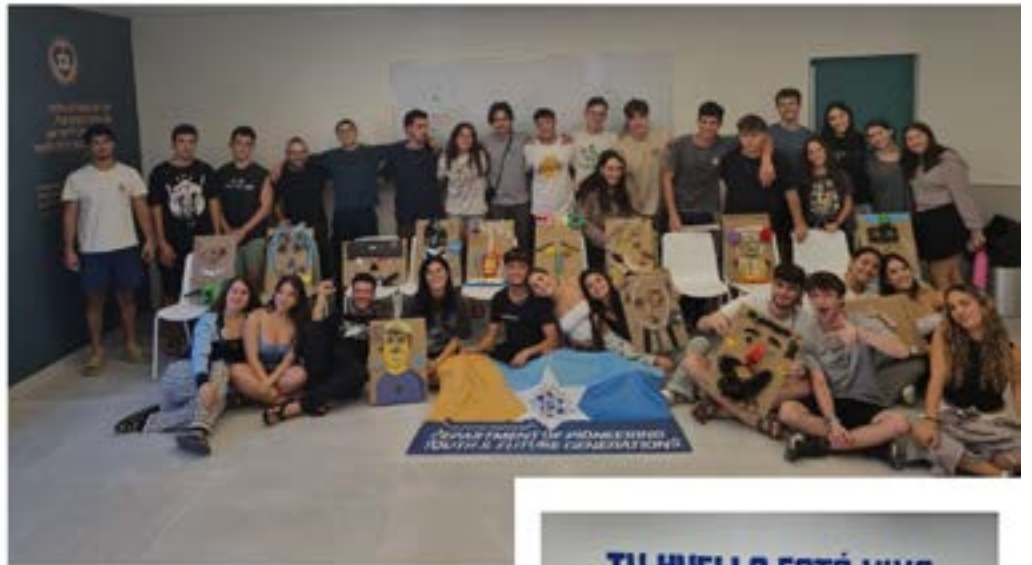


## The Department's specific and special missions to address current challenges

### War in Ukraine

The Department, in cooperation with the worldwide youth movements, sent educational delegations to countries bordering Ukraine, and held activities on the ground for the war refugees.

The array of programs associated with the process-oriented activity at the heart of the Department's vision: Young Leadership Australia seminars in Israel, "Liba Tzionit - Zionist Core", "Nekudat Tziun" - Milestone, "Keshet", and an international study of informal education in the framework of the worldwide Zionist youth movements.



## Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

- The Zionist Leadership Academy members are involved in exhibitions for the release of the hostages, pro-Israel demonstrations, fundraising for projects in Israel, and social media Israel advocacy in their communities and around the world. They are interviewed by local and international news channels, write articles that garner broad exposure, and help draft war-related action plans for youth movement madrichim.
- Production of a film with the participation of the worldwide youth and hagshama movements, calling for the hostages' release.
- Assistance with the educational processes and organizational needs of the movements with alumni in Israel on a variety of education programs, including the Machon L'Madrichim Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad.
- The artist Hanoach Piven organized creative activities for evacuees, both in Eilat and at the Dead Sea. The aim, in response to demand, is to support his activity in other parts of Israel. We also asked Piven to conduct activities promoting emotional expression through art, for the Machon L'Madrichim.
- The Department is formulating methods for activity plans for all youth movement madrichim in the Diaspora, to ensure that the madrichim know how to use the many different materials posted online, adapted for the different youth movement age groups.
- The Department's limited staff reorganized to address all current needs, with particular emphasis on guiding the councils and projects, and meeting local or regional needs.
- Large-scale Israel advocacy on television and in the print media (in all languages and regions) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Publication of all WZO projects and initiatives for movement alumni, university students and Academy graduates.
- Assistance with specific needs of Israel's border localities.



# DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE AND HEBREW LANGUAGE

Department Head: Yigal Brand | Department Director: Nir Ben-Simon

## About the Department

The Department of Culture and Hebrew Language was founded to promote the Hebrew language and Jewish culture in the Jewish world and among the Diaspora communities.

The Department fosters Hebrew language instruction in the Diaspora, supports Hebrew study frameworks, develops initiatives to encourage connection to the nation's language and culture, and offers new tools adapted to the current needs of Diaspora Jews in the 21st century. The Department employs a variety of means to connect Diaspora Jews and Israeli citizens to Jewish-Israeli culture, including: enhancing the status of Hebrew around the world, improving Hebrew instructional methods, and imparting knowledge of Hebrew to the next generation, as a meaningful and relevant language.

The Department works to cultivate Hebrew language and culture in Israel and globally in a variety of ways: producing educational materials, curricula, and enrichment programs, training Hebrew teachers and fostering their professional development, continuously advising teachers and educators in Israel and abroad, developing projects that strengthen ties to Israel through the Hebrew language, producing cultural events across Israel, with an emphasis on the peripheral localities, organizing and participating in educational conferences, and more.

It should be noted that the past two years have witnessed changes in the Department's administrative staff. Between November 2021 and January 2022, Yifat Ovadia-Luski served as head of the Department of Culture and Hebrew Language. After she was elected chair of KKL-JNF, Yigal Brand was appointed head of the Department. Throughout the period, under the leadership of both Ovadia-Luski and Brand, the Department produced and initiated an abundance of activities. There is insufficient space here to mention them all, so we will present selected examples below.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### There Is a Home for Hebrew

#### Online database of materials for Hebrew teachers, educators, and all those interested in Hebrew language and culture

The Department created a website devoted entirely to the teaching of Hebrew language and culture. The website contains a wide variety of educational booklets and enrichment materials, activity suggestions, articles, recorded lectures, and links to recorded meetings, information on continuing education opportunities, as well as an online space (forum) for Hebrew teachers, for joint discussion aimed at creating a cohesive educational community. The website contains the array of materials developed by the Department, accessible to all, at no cost. Visit the site via this link: <https://ivrit.wzo.org.il/>



"The students really enjoyed the program, and loved learning about Israeli culture and Jewish history. The experience wasn't just one of language learning; the students also gained an understanding of Israeli society, from a place of depth and authenticity." Concluding remarks by one of the teachers who taught in the program in the US

### International Hebrew Exam: Hebrew language and literature study for Diaspora Youth

Over the past two years, the Department has created a special study program for high school students, in cooperation with the Lookstein Center at Bar-Ilan University. Participants practice their reading and viewing comprehension skills, gain experience in writing Hebrew essays, and study selected literary works, from R. Judah Halevi's "My Heart Is in the East" and Hayim Nahman Bialik's "Take Me Under Your Wing" to the stories of Shai Agnon and Amos Oz and current works by Etgar Keret, Adi Keissar, and others. When the program concludes, the participants can take a final exam recognized by Bar-Ilan University, and receive academic credits. The innovative program has a dedicated website containing all of the relevant literary works and study materials. All are invited to enjoy the Hebrew literary offerings and to enrich their intellectual world – at this link: <https://internationalhebrewexam.org/>





## Educational materials, study and enrichment programs – Enlisting for Hebrew

### Hebrew-study program for young Diaspora Jews who want to enlist in the IDF

This unique program offers systematic and sequential study of vocabulary, linguistic patterns, and concepts prevalent in Israeli society and culture, so that young Diaspora Jews can easily integrate in Israel, and especially in the IDF. The program is also being successfully operated at mechinot and hesder yeshivot in Israel where young Diaspora Jews are enrolled.



### Shirim veShiurim (Songs and Classes): Hebrew-language study through Israeli song

The program, intended for beginning Hebrew students, offers an experiential framework for Hebrew language study and for learning about Israeli society and culture. The program comprises 20 study units, organized in a systematic and sequential manner and accessible to all at no cost.



### Ivrit baShetach (language, technology connection)

A joint project of the Department with the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs (UnitEd) and the Argentine Committee on Education (AMIA) to offer a uniform and structured curriculum for all Argentine and Latin American Jews. Over the course of three years, selected Argentinian teachers developed a continuous Hebrew curriculum – from first grade to high school – with defined study goals for each stage, suggested activities, and study materials. The teachers “in the field” created the curriculum under close supervision by an expert on Hebrew language instruction (Fabio Radak). It should be noted that, although the curriculum was intended for Argentina, it can be implemented in other countries and expanded to reach all of Diaspora Jewry.



### Hebrew: a Renewed Language – website marking the centennial of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's passing

In December 2022, to mark 100 years since the passing of the reviver of the Hebrew language, the Department set up a website with a variety of materials on the Hebrew revival. The site offers digital booklets with links to videos, texts, games, and experiential activities; presentations designed as films that convey the Ben-Yehuda story in a visually effective way; enrichment materials on Hebrew sayings and word “evolutions” and their sources, and a film that we produced on Ben-Yehuda, translated into a number of languages.



### Israel: a Trip Through Time

In honor of 75 years of Israeli independence, we produced a 75-unit curriculum covering the period from 1948 to 2023. Each unit is devoted to an event, personality, or concept related to the year in question, and features relevant vocabulary and a variety of activities meant to strengthen Hebrew communication skills: speaking, writing, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and the like. The curriculum encompasses a wide range of topics: historical events (e.g., the Declaration of Independence), socioeconomic issues (the austerity period, Sallah Shabati, the FSU and Ethiopian aliyot), music and culture (Mizrahi music, the songs A Ba Ni Bi and Chai, the Israeli Children's Song Festival, the Banai family), art and literature (e.g., the Israel Museum, David Grossman, Room for Rent), nature and geography (the Negev localities, the Israeli national bird – the hoopoe or duchifat), Israeli inventions (such as Iron Dome), and many other topics. The curriculum is unique in that it offers Hebrew instruction to different levels and age groups through authentic and interesting materials that introduce students to milestones and major figures in Israeli history, deepen their familiarity with Israeli society and culture, and foster their personal attachment to the state. The curriculum is available for use at no cost to those engaged in Hebrew education and study, in Israel and in the Diaspora, in both schools and informal frameworks.



## Professional development for teachers: continuing education and conferences

Many Hebrew teachers in the Diaspora (and sometimes also in Israel) have not been professionally trained for the role, but rather have "fallen into it" through a variety of circumstances. The Department of Hebrew and Culture aims to address the situation by providing Hebrew teachers with pedagogical and practical skills, courses, continuing education, enrichment activities, and peer learning, and by establishing a shared educational community. Over the past two years, we have held dozens of continuing education activities for Hebrew teachers in Israel and abroad: workshops, online courses, and conference-based lectures and workshops. To follow are a few examples.

### Conferences

#### Main Jewish education conference in Argentina

In July 2022, the Department participated in the Jewish education conference in Argentina, which was attended by over 1,500 teachers and educators from Jewish schools in Argentina and Uruguay. During the conference we taught workshops and gave lectures to hundreds of Hebrew teachers. The workshops were highly successful.



#### Conference for Central European Hebrew teachers

In May 2023, for the first time in years, a conference was held for Hebrew teachers from Central European countries: Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Sweden, and more. The conference, which received support from the Pincus Fund, was held in Budapest over the course of three days, with the participation of dozens of teachers who enjoyed the variety of workshops, lectures, and tours.



#### International Conference of Professors of Hebrew (NAPH)

In June 2023, the Department participated for the first time in the international conference of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew, held that year at Tel Aviv University. The Department presented its programs to dozens of Hebrew instructors and teachers from academic institutions around the world.

As noted, over the past two years we have held dozens of online continuing education activities and courses. Selected examples:

### Online courses

**Early Literacy:** A course for preschool teachers and early-childhood Hebrew teachers, facilitated by Margalit Constock

**We Won't Stop Singing:** Course on teaching Hebrew through song, facilitated by Fabio Radak

**From Input to Output:** Pedagogical course facilitated by Dafna Saslavsky of Universidad Hebraica, Mexico.

**Connecting to Hebrew + Developing in Hebrew:** Courses for Hebrew teachers, facilitated by Inbal Barel (Gottesman)

**Song, Story, or Legend:** Writing workshop for Hebrew teachers, facilitated by Inbal Barel (Gottesman)

**Moadim L'Kri'ah (Holiday Readings):** Meetings for Hebrew teachers and the general public, with reading and discussion of Hebrew texts related to Jewish holidays, facilitated by Inbal Barel (Gottesman)

### Online continuing education

**Teaching Reading and Writing:** Continuing education for early-childhood teachers, facilitated by Ilanit Goldenberg

**Playing in Hebrew (Hebrew Games):** Continuing education on teaching Hebrew through games, facilitated by multiple instructors.

**Hebrew Through the Screen:** A variety of continuing education sessions on the use of technologies in Hebrew instruction

**Zmanim uChagim for language:** Continuing education on Hebrew teaching in connection with Jewish holidays

**Continuing education for specific target audiences:** Workshops for specific participant groups, such as: teacher emissaries, shlichim to campuses and communities, teachers of children of Israelis, Hebrew teachers in the Ministry of Education, and more. These continuing education workshops are developed to meet specific requests and requirements of the target audiences.

**Enrichment encounters:** Online encounters for educators and the general public, with writers, artists, and cultural figures.

### Special Hebrew instruction courses

The Department has also launched special Hebrew instruction courses.

For the first time, we offered a course in **Hebrew for foreign correspondents** – journalists posted in Israel, in cooperation with the Government Press Office.

We also created a special track in **Hebrew for young people in hagshama programs in Israel**, in cooperation with the Machon L'Madrachim. These two programs were highly successful, and we would be happy to offer them again.



### Cultural activities

As noted, the Department promotes Hebrew culture in Israel and the Diaspora. In the context of our Diaspora activities, we supported an Israeli children's theater festival in the UK, in which thousands of children (and parents) enjoyed quality Israeli productions. We also supported cultural events in Australia, cultural activities in the US, and more. In Israel, the Department cooperates with the Tarbut L'Israel organization, which mounts hundreds of cultural productions across the country, with an emphasis on peripheral localities. In 2022 we produced shows for children in Jerusalem and in the Sharon, as well as "theater days" in many different localities, which included productions of Habima, as well as encounters with actors. We also spearheaded a wide variety of cultural activities for residents of the Gaza Perimeter, during Operation Breaking Dawn (August 2022), and Operation Shield and Arrow (May 2023). In 2023 we also held culture festivals in Hadera, Akko, Or Akiva, and other cities: musical performances, Mizrahi dance workshops, theater days, and more.



### Selichot events at the Cave of the Patriarchs

The Department held selichot events at the Cave of the Patriarchs, including tours of the Jewish settlement in Hebron and a spectacular performance by Boaz Sharabi. Hundreds of people from all over the country were thrilled to visit the historical site, and enjoyed the extraordinary performance against the background the Cave of the Patriarchs.



### Special events marking the centennial of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's passing

December 2022 marked a century since the passing of the reviver of the Hebrew language, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. Throughout 2022-2023 the Department held activities and events pertaining to Ben-Yehuda as a historical figure and to his life's work. In addition to developing educational materials, we invited Israelis to participate in guided tours of Jerusalem following milestones in Ben-Yehuda's life. We also developed virtual tours of Ben-Yehuda's workroom for Diaspora Jews, while on Hebrew Language Day 2023, we produced a gala cultural event in Even Yehuda, where Gil Hovav, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's great-grandson, talked about the unique way in which their family spoke Hebrew. The event also featured an enjoyable musical performance.



# Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

As soon as the war broke out, the Department launched operations in three main areas:

- Cultural events and activities for Israelis evacuated from the Gaza Perimeter, the Negev and, later, the Galilee, to provide respite, rebuild resilience, and strengthen morale.
- Online encounters between Israeli and Diaspora teens, to generate open dialogue about the situation in Israel, and to share feelings and spark meaningful discussion reinforcing the connection between young Diaspora and Israeli Jews.
- Development of war-related educational materials for Hebrew teachers, tailored to different age groups.

## Cultural events for residents of the Gaza Perimeter, the Negev, and the Galilee

Starting in the first week of the war, dozens of workshops, encounters, and performances were held for survivors of the massacre and for the tens of thousands of Israelis displaced from their homes. During the course of the war the activity expanded to all parts of the country; over the past three months, some 4,000 events have been held – workshops and guided encounters for children and their families, shows and experiential activities for children and teens, and major performances by well-known artists such as David Broza. The events were held in cooperation with Tarbut L'Israel and the Ministry of the Negev, the Galilee, and National Resilience. They were planned in accordance with the status of the evacuees, and took place across the country: Tiberias, Haifa, and the Jordan Valley; the Sharon and Gush Dan; the Jerusalem area and the Dead Sea, Eilat and the Arava. There were events for Arabic-speakers as well.



## Online encounters between Israeli and Diaspora youth and young adults

As early as the fourth day of the war, we organized an online encounter between Diaspora and Israeli youth, to generate authentic dialogue and understanding of the war's impact on the lives of all Israelis. Some 600 people from across the globe took part in this moving project, and over the following weeks we conducted many additional meetings. Hundreds of teens and students from all over the world joined in, listened attentively to Israelis, and raised questions. We also held special encounters in Spanish for dozens of Jewish schools in Argentina, and as well as for non-Jewish schools. These meetings, which were held in cooperation with AMIA, contributed greatly to international Israel advocacy. All the participants, whether from the Diaspora or from Israel, felt that the encounters were highly meaningful experiences for them. The Diaspora teens said that the discussions had enabled them to truly understand the situation in Israel, while the Israelis found the meetings to be of therapeutic value, and were pleased to make new friends overseas.

## Educational materials for Hebrew teachers in the Diaspora

The war posed special challenges to Hebrew teachers in the Diaspora, who wanted to teach about the war but had trouble finding materials suitable for their students' level of Hebrew. We therefore decided to create a website offering authentic materials on the war, adapted into easy Hebrew: songs, videos, stories, pictures, social media posts, and more. The materials were carefully chosen to familiarize students with the situation in Israel and to provide them with meaningful content for Hebrew language study. The website is accessible to all at this link: [link: /https://ivrit.wzo.org.il](https://ivrit.wzo.org.il)



# DEPARTMENT FOR ALIYAH PROMOTION

Department Head: Marina Rozenberg-Koritny | Department Director: Alexandr Goldenstein

## About the Department

### Department goals:

- To encourage people to decide to make aliyah, through the development and reinforcement of Zionist motivation;
- To help prepare people for aliyah by deepening their understanding of Jewish tradition and of Israel;
- Hebrew instruction: aspiring for all Jews around the world to speak Hebrew, through participation in Zionist projects.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Our flagship project: a network of aliyah-promotion centers – Ulpan classes

The Ulpan (Hebrew instruction) classes that the Department operates are spread across 12 countries: the US, Canada, France, the UK, Belgium, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Mexico, Columbia, Chile, and South Africa.

Since 2016, we have opened 2500 classes with over 37,000 past or present students. This is the essence of aliyah promotion: people build their connection to Israel, its culture and everyday life, through knowledge of the language. And that is how the idea of aliyah coalesces and gains traction.

In 2023 we opened 300 classes, and are proud to relate that in many countries there are waiting lists and demand for additional classes.



### Geula – training project for young women

A program training young women for leadership, Zionism, and aliyah promotion activity in the Jewish world, inspired by the figure of Geula Cohen. In December 2022, the first group of participants – 18 women selected from across the globe – started the program. They took part in workshops, attended lectures, and participated in aliyah promotion activities. The program was held in Israel and abroad over the course of three weeks. The second program cycle will be held this year.



### Online and in-person aliyah promotion meetings

The Department holds a variety of online aliyah promotion meetings at which potential olim learn about Israel. To these meetings we bring "influencers," compelling speakers who have made aliyah and can talk about Israel and their personal success stories in Israel.

Some of the meetings are devoted to learning about the land, its culture and places.

Participants hear online lectures, and more.







## Golden Golda

An award for overseas women who have contributed greatly to the Jewish people and the Zionist movement and who have successfully participated in Department's projects.

Since 2017, the WZO's Department for the Promotion of Aliyah has been awarding the Golden Golda Award to Zionist women who promote aliyah, in recognition of their efforts and out of an awareness that women play a central role in organized Jewish-Zionist activity in the Diaspora. Furthermore, Department research has shown that women have a decisive influence at both the familial and the community levels regarding the decision to immigrate to Israel, and regarding the sense of connection to Israel. This year the award ceremony was held in New York, in the presence of high-ranking community members, diplomats, intellectual figures, a representative of the WZO executive in the US, and many others.



## The largest Hebrew class in the world

In schools, lecture halls, synagogues, and Jewish institutions, thousands of Jews across the globe participated in the largest Hebrew class ever given in history. The class was held to mark the centennial of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda's passing. The broadcast, which was facilitated by Miri Nevo, was transmitted via several different platforms and viewed by people from over thirty countries. Ulpan students from the town of Ushuaia on the Tierra del Fuego archipelago – the planet's southernmost city, located at the southern tip of South America – sang "Jerusalem of Gold," while 98-year-old Sidney from the UK spoke movingly about the Hebrew language's place in his life.



## Aliyah fairs

Every year, the Department holds in-person and online aliyah fairs in the US; it also participates in Jewish Agency aliyah fairs in Western Europe and Latin America. The purpose of the fairs is to familiarize aliya-eligible people with Israel, its institutions, universities, localities, and the like, and to answer questions raised by potential olim.

In-person fairs were held in the United States, South Africa, Brazil, and Argentina. Online fairs were held in the US, the UK, and France.



# Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

Since the war broke out, the Department headquarters in Israel has been conveying information regularly to its staff abroad – transmitting data and building hasbara strategies to assist with the national effort. The European, North American, and South American staff receives ongoing instructions on how to act in emergencies, how to share WZO content (e.g., My Home Is Your Home), and how to mobilize for Israel advocacy efforts. At present, the Department considers it its duty to provide maximum assistance in the dissemination of its own programs and those of the organization's other departments.

A situation room was established in the Department to deal continuously with war-related problems: helping teachers from abroad stranded in Israel due to the unavailability of flights to return to their home countries; assisting ulpan students who have made aliyah (i.e., interacting with the authorities, translating documents, and the like), assisting the organizational efforts to the extent possible (translation, answering phones, disseminating materials, etc.).

Department employees have taken part in many different initiatives in their respective countries, including:

- The March for Israel in Washington, D.C. that drew hundreds of thousands of participants;
- Raising awareness of the hostages and support for Israel on the main streets of Buenos Aires, New York, São Paulo, London, Paris, and elsewhere – rallies, banners, LED billboard trucks, metro stations, and more;
- A daily hour on the leading Russian-language Jewish radio station in North America (with 350 thousand listeners), devoted entirely to support for Israel. Major interviewees: the WZO chair, the head of the Aliyah Promotion Department, former and current security personnel, a Russian-speaking IDF spokesperson, bereaved parents, public messaging personnel, and more;
- Ongoing online and offline efforts with public messaging personnel around the world, dozens of Zoom meetings with the communities and ulpan teachers.
- Development of new and current materials for the Department's ulpan classes worldwide; ongoing instruction for teachers.

# DEPARTMENT OF DIASPORA ZIONIST ACTIVITIES AND FRENCH SPEAKERS

Department Head: Nerya Meir esq. | Department Director: Elidor Cohen

## About the Department

The Department for Zionist Activities in the Diaspora and for French Speakers is responsible for cultivating the relationship with Jewish communities worldwide and with the Jewish federations, organizations, and institutions. The Department's main strategy is that of "connecting Jews to Israel," out of a belief in Israel's centrality to the Zionist idea. Within this framework, the Department works to develop new programs aimed at bringing Israel to the Jews of the Diaspora. The programs are based on two main principles:

- a. Each program includes collaboration with local Diaspora organizations.
- b. Each program includes the use of tools that encourage entrepreneurship and innovation in the connection between Diaspora Jewry and Israel.

The Department's primary geographic spheres of activity are North America, Latin America, Europe, and Australia. Department employees speak Hebrew, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Regular projects

#### The United States: Israel for the public

Today's main challenge vis-à-vis the younger generation in the US lies in the public-school sphere, where 84% of Jewish children are educated. In order to strengthen the connection to Israel in the public sphere, the Department launched a program, the first of its kind, to provide those in charge of supplementary Jewish education with tools for reinforcing attachment to Israel and Zionism among students.

The program enriches and deepens the Israel-education capabilities of directors and teachers in supplementary Jewish education/Hebrew school frameworks in the United States. As noted, most American Jewish children and teens are educated in the public school system, meaning that their opportunities to learn about Judaism and Israel generally come from supplementary frameworks.

The project was launched in 2022 with the Toronto federation. Two groups of teachers came to Israel in May and June 2023 for an in-depth experience and encounter with contemporary Israel, the aim being for them to impart their knowledge to pupils later on. In 2023 we began working with the Atlanta and Chicago federations, reaching all of the Atlanta teachers in the course of the project. These teachers are slated to come to Israel in November 2024 (some were scheduled to visit in January 2024, but their arrival was postponed due to the war).



#### Bridge to Israel

The Bay Area in California is a particularly challenging place in terms of attitudes to Israel and the current high levels of antisemitism in the US. Bay Area Jewish teens face these challenges as early as high school. In order to provide an appropriate Zionist response to the situation, the Department launched a pilot program in cooperation with NCSY, to create a "pro-Israel unit" – teens who will teach their peers to be proud of their Zionism and their connection to Israel.



The first program cycle ended in May 2023 with 25 teens who gained skills and studied, and engaged with Israel-related topics, so that they could connect with their Zionist identity and help other teens to do so. The program goal is to transform these teens into "Israel ambassadors" on academic campuses later on, so that they will be able to contend with antisemitic and anti-Zionist situations on those campuses, as well as in their current high schools and local communities.

The second program cycle started in September 2023 with 25 teens. The program gained in importance after October 7th, and became highly relevant for these young people.



### Weserve

A unique and innovative project intended for former Mahal servicemen/women – individuals from abroad who volunteered for IDF service and returned to the United States after their service. The goal of the project is to forge a community of these ex-soldiers, and to make them "ambassadors of Israel" in their home communities. These former soldiers feel isolated on their return, as their peers have moved on and do not understand what they experienced. On the other hand, there is great potential for Mahal alumni to strengthen the sense of connection to Israel in their communities. The program is addressing the situation by creating a new community of these ex-soldiers, and guiding them toward Zionist activity in their current surroundings. We are now in the project's second year, with branches in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Arizona, and New York, and hundreds of participants from all over the United States.



### Latin America: Impact Nation

This program brings together young leaders from Latin American Jewish communities in a professional training framework meant to advance and improve their work within those communities. The program gives them training and support so that they can develop social projects in their communities.

The program includes: 1. Online instruction. 2. A local seminar in South America. 3. A seminar in Israel. 4. Practical mentoring. 5. Implementation of their projects in the communities.

We work with AMIA and other Latin American organizations.

The program's first cycle was held in Argentina with 20 participants in 2022-23. The second cycle is now underway with 30 participants from Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina. The local seminar was held in August 2023 with the participation of Department Head Nerya Meir.



### Netfil

In 2022, the Department for Zionist Activities in the Diaspora created a platform called Netfil. This is an online platform containing Israeli content in Spanish and Portuguese for use in local communities, schools, and youth movements. The platform holds over 100 videos and other resources, organized by category: Jewish history / Judaism / Zionism / Zionist leaders, and the like. The platform also comes with educational activities for classroom use, and online instruction for teachers.

## Special projects

### Europe: Jerusalem Day

The Department for Zionist Activities in the Diaspora sent out two Zionist "mobile units" in May 2023, to tour southern and eastern France for a week, bringing Jerusalem Day festivities to small and medium-sized Jewish communities that do not normally celebrate this holiday. Each mobile unit was staffed by a lecturer, singer, Shnat Sherut participants, and a representative of the World Zionist Organization. Together they led activities that included talks about Jerusalem, singing and dancing, and an Israeli cooking workshop.

The mobile units visited dozens of small and medium-sized communities, enabling them to celebrate Jerusalem Day for the first time. The Department was also involved in the production of a huge Jerusalem Day event in Paris, in which 2000 people participated.



### Mission to Poland

In February 2022, after war broke out in Ukraine, the Department for Zionist Activities in the Diaspora sent an emergency mission to Poland to help Jewish refugees at that difficult time.

In light of Israel's extensive experience with emergency situations and trauma care, the Department sent a resilience mission, in cooperation with the Israeli Trauma Coalition. The mission operated primarily in Warsaw, to which Jewish refugees were evacuated, as well as in areas along the Ukrainian border. In addition to providing a response to the refugees' psychological-emotional distress, the mission offered professional training to community personnel, and instructed them in trauma care. The mission also provided a response for those who expressed interest in aliyah to Israel.

### Latin America:

The Department offered an Inside Yom HaZikaron workshop, in cooperation with Beit Avi Chai, to communities across Argentina and Brazil. Workshop participants included homeroom and subject teachers and pupils from a variety of schools and communities. In Argentina the workshop drew over 150 people from Buenos Aires communities, as well as educators from 10 communities in the country's interior, the FACCMA instructors' school, Beit Hillel, and a number of schools. Over 700 pupils from Brazil participated as well, hailing from Porto Alegre, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro.



## Israel for non-Israelis Manitou conference

In June 2022, the Department organized a tribute to French aliyah and marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Manitou – Rav Yehuda Leon Ashkenazi.

The event was held in French and Hebrew at the International Convention Center – ICC Jerusalem, with 2800 attendees. It included classes, discussions and panels on topics pertaining to Manitou. There was a central evening event with the participation of numerous dignitaries, and a performance by the well-known French immigrant singer Ishay Ribo. The tribute was mounted with the assistance and sponsorship of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage, and the Jerusalem Municipality.



## French Jewish leaders' delegation (the Consistoire) – event at the Knesset

In March 2023, the Department for Zionist Activities in the Diaspora, together with Knesset Chairman Amir Ohana, held a special event at the Knesset for a delegation of French Jewish leaders – the Consistoire. The delegation comprised 250 leaders of the French Jewish community and French parliament members, in recognition of their service to Zionism.

## Around the world: A Flag for Every Child and Israel 75th poster

To mark the national holidays of 2022 and 2023, the Department decided to launch a project that would give every child in the Diaspora an Israeli flag. In its first year, the project operated in Latin America, France, Morocco, and Italy. In addition to the flag, the children and their families received a booklet of holiday messages and songs for the national days. In 2023 we added a unique and original poster, as well as a booklet explaining the figures and symbols on the poster, produced especially by the Department to mark 75 years of Israeli independence. The poster was created by artist Itamar Magid and shows a typical Israeli apartment building with major Israeli figures and symbols – the building blocks of the national home constructed over Israel's 75 years of statehood. In the project's second year the flags and the poster reached North America as well.

We invite you to scan the barcode and view the array of figures and symbols that appear on the poster.



## Zionist Leaders' Heritage

The Zionist Leaders' Heritage project uses the medium of film to spark discussion of the lessons learned by Zionist leaders, and consider about how those lessons may be applied today. The project began with the film Mahapach (Upheaval), a documentary on the life of Menachem Begin. Another documentary, Shamir, B'Darko, was devoted to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Preliminary screenings of Mahapach were held in April 2022 for an audience of 150, in cooperation with Nefesh B'Nefesh. The screenings were intended especially for English-speaking olim, to mark the 30th anniversary of Menachem Begin's passing. Another screening took place in Denver, Colorado, in September 2022, with hundreds of viewers in attendance. The film was also shown in São Paulo in August 2023 to an audience of 400. In February 2023 a first screening of Shamir, B'Darko was held in Atlanta, for hundreds of viewers.





# Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

## Department head on reserve duty

Since the start of the war on October 7th, most of the Department's employees have been called up for military reserve duty. The Department head, Nerya Meir, was called up in his capacity as a major in the Paratroopers Brigade, and is playing an active part in the fighting in northern and southern Israel. The Department has been sharing news about his activity on the ground, to the extent possible. In addition to the Department head, two other Department employees are on active reserve duty, one in the IDF Spokesperson's Unit (Spanish), and the other in the fighting in Gaza.



## Zoom talks for French- and Spanish-speakers during the war

Two Zoom meetings were held for Spanish-speakers. One took place at the beginning of the war with an IDF spokesman, Major Roni Kaplan, and 600 participants. The other was intended for young Latin American Jews and was entitled "Being a Young Israeli During Wartime.". The meeting drew 350 participants and was held in cooperation with OSA and AMIA Joven. Since the start of the war, Zoom lectures for French-speakers have been renewed, in cooperation with the Department for the Promotion of Aliyah. The meetings occur on a weekly basis, meaning that 7 had been held by late November 2023. Each meeting drew 350 participants on average.



## Weserve – mobilizing former soldiers to speak to the broader community about feeling connected to Israel in wartime

As part of the project with former Mahal servicemen/women, Weserve, former IDF soldiers spoke to audiences in public schools, synagogues, and youth organizations across the United States, with an emphasis on Baltimore and New Jersey. The project is slated for operation in California and other places as well, with hundreds expected to participate.

In addition to the above, the project participants took part in a FIDF unity event for Israel in Baltimore. They are also leading discussions in the community and promoting ties to Israel and the IDF.

At this crucial juncture, we are also reaching out and recruiting additional participants for the project, people who feel strongly connected to Israel but cannot travel there. This effort has enabled us to open Weserve branches in other places in the US and to successfully enlist dozens of new participants.



## Department participation in solidarity missions to Israel

The Department for Zionist Activities in the Diaspora collaborates with delegations that come to Israel to express solidarity. In November, we joined and collaborated with Aish HaTorah on a 60-person delegation from North America, and we plan to take part in two additional North American delegations of college students from the Keren Tikva organization and the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston.

## Hanukkah of Heroes:

In honor of Hanukkah, we collaborated with an Israeli initiative by 4 women called Milchama shel Giborim (War of Heroes). The aim of the initiative was to tell stories of wartime heroism in an accessible and appropriate manner for children ages 9 and over. We translated 9 stories of heroism into English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, thereby providing a platform for them. Through these stories, we will be reaching thousands of people around the world, and linking Hanukkah to the present day.



# DEPARTMENT OF PERIPHERY ADVANCEMENT AND DIASPORA INVOLVEMENT

**Department Head:** Yisrael Schwebel | **Department Director:** Nechemya Malinowitz

## About the Department

The Department of Periphery Advancement and Diaspora Involvement was founded in order to deepen the connection and broaden familiarity between all parts of the Jewish people; to promote Zionist and Israeli values, and to further knowledge of the eternal treasures of our Jewish heritage, in Israel's geographic and social periphery.

In its activities, the Department fulfills the vision of a shared connection between all segments of the people, based on unity and mutual responsibility. These values are transmitted through education, nurturing the Jewish people's cultural assets, and partnership in settling the land.

In order to realize this vision, we work to deepen Diaspora Jews' familiarity with all parts of Israeli society. We introduce groups of teens and visitors from the Diaspora to the many different facets of Israel, and publicize the many beneficial activities of the World Zionist Organization.

When the Israel-Gaza War broke out, the Department operated via formal and volunteer frameworks to advance projects of connection and to facilitate donations from Jewish communities around the world – communities that wanted to express solidarity and to support the citizens and soldiers bearing the burden of war, for the sake of Israeli security. Our activity had effective outcomes and drove deep-seated processes of connection and partnership within broad swaths of Diaspora Jewry, who came to visit and contribute and who assisted in a variety of ways with the home front effort and by extending support for IDF soldiers.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

### Workshops to bolster aliyah and the sense of connection to Israel

One Department project involves holding workshops and activities for new immigrant groups and veteran-immigrant communities coping with the challenges of acclimation and housing in Israel. The project's objective is to help new olim contend with social difficulties that arise in the course of their integration in Israel. The project also assists olim with familial and educational challenges that may develop as a result of social difficulties in the process of integrating in Israeli society.

The project places special emphasis on connection between new or prospective immigrants and veteran immigrants who, based on their many years' experience, can help and guide young people who want to follow in their footsteps and immigrate to Israel.

The project includes workshops for parents, featuring meetings with educational speakers, couple and family therapists, and other therapy professionals. The meetings include lectures and classes, as well as open-dialogue meetings where questions are raised for discussion moderated by the lecturers. Experiences are shared between parents who help each other based on the experience amassed over the years since their aliyah.

The project also features social activity for the workshop-participating families, to promote the sense of a shared existence and an atmosphere of connection to land and heritage, and to strengthen the spirit of aliyah and the connection to Israel.

### Interactive Zionist educational activity for foreign students

A unique project offering educational Zionist activity in North American educational institutions and communities. The participating students view a presentation created by the Department to strengthen their attachment to heritage and to Zionism. The presentation introduces participants to key Zionist concepts, and imparts knowledge about Zionist heritage sites. The project also enables students in foreign educational institutions and schools to participate in the substantive experience of an interactive quiz, and to acquire knowledge and basic concepts regarding Zionist heritage and the State of Israel.

The presentation shows the map of Israel and gives a historical overview of Jewish rebirth and the founding of the state, with an emphasis on geographic landmarks appearing on the map.

The presentation is a three-dimensional slideshow of forty minutes' duration, in which participants undergo a multisensory viewing and visualization experience through which they acquire the knowledge transmitted by the presentation. The slideshow is followed by a symposium,, moderated by the educational staff with the aid of instruction sheets, on the messages conveyed by the presentation, with the participants processing their shared experience.

Another program element is an interactive quiz in which the students demonstrate the knowledge they acquired through the presentation, and additional knowledge about Eretz Israel and the Zionist heritage. The quiz draws on a huge database of questions about Eretz Israel, Zionism, and Jewish heritage. For every quiz, questions were selected at random for students who had competed against each other in groups. The contest winners received prizes and Eretz Israel souvenirs.

The project has been a great success, with demand exceeding expectations. The Department is preparing to launch another presentation in the summer of 2024, to focus on the painful events of the past year in Israel, and on how Israeli society has coped with them – through wartime unity and mutual aid.



# Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

## Overseas students' hotline

The outbreak of the war caused panic among the families of overseas students spending the academic year in Israel. Some students who were abroad for the holidays feared to return, while others who were present in Israel were asked by their parents to come home, out of concern that the security situation would worsen.

The Department responded by launching a support and advisory hotline for students and their parents, to address their concerns and to provide the full picture, including the security risks.

The hotline also served institutions and students seeking means to enhance the personal sense of security, such as security guards at the institutions, and protection and security systems that would ensure their safety.

A comprehensive hasbara campaign was also conducted vis-à-vis the heads of the institutions, to bolster the students' morale and encourage them not to leave Israel due to the new situation. The institution heads strengthened the students' resolve and called upon them to remain in their study frameworks. Educational staff from the institutions went on an overseas mission to talk with the parents and persuade them to send their children back to Israel.

The success of the activity could be seen within a few weeks' time: a very high percentage of the students returned to their educational frameworks and maintained a stable study routine. At the same time, the Department staff organized to provide operational and bureaucratic solutions to challenges posed by the return of the students from abroad.

## Israel advocacy in overseas communities

When the war started, the Department received queries from many different communities regarding the implications of the current situation in Israel, and the various issues affecting the lives of Israeli citizens. Department staff formulated a response to the queries, and participated in Zoom meetings with community members and meetings with rabbis, to explain what was being done, and to boost morale in Diaspora Jewish communities.

The aim of the project was to strengthen the relationship and to galvanize public opinion in the overseas Orthodox communities on Israel's behalf. The public-opinion effort's impact can be seen in the communities' public discourse, which has united around Israel's legitimate stance; it can also be seen in the share of community members who have participated in pro-Israel rallies.

## Situation room for shipments and equipment

The war sparked high demand for donations and supplies for reserve soldiers called up for duty with no advance notice. Donations were also required for evacuated families: some were staying in hotels without the personal supplies they left behind in their homes, while others had evacuated independently to housing and guest units in Israel's central cities.

Department staff organized to assist with shipments of equipment from abroad and to handle the distribution of goods fairly and as needed.

The deliveries came from overseas communities and from donors who purchased or collected the supplies in cooperation with community members, who packed the shipments for those in need.

Logistical coordination was needed in order for the shipments to get to Israel, as well as coordination with the social services and aid entities that organized to assist the evacuees. The Department coordinated with the donors and aid organizations distributing the supplies and working to meet the needs of the evacuees and the reserve soldiers.

Dozens of shipments were sent during the months of fighting, coordinated by the Department and distributed in an optimal manner.



### Overseas students packing supplies and food for the war effort

During the war, many requests were received from the heads of institutions for overseas students, seeking activities in which their students could volunteer to help those affected by the fighting.

In response to these requests, the Department organized a large-scale packing operation – gift baskets, food for displaced families, and boxes of supplies for soldiers and for families evacuated from the south and the north. The supplies donated from Israel and abroad were packed by students in joint operations organized by the Department. The students who participated in the activity were given an explanation of the importance of their efforts and their contribution on behalf of those affected by the war. Some added supplementary items to the packages they prepared. The institution heads commended the Department staff on this important project that enabled the students to take part in this effort.

As part of the student volunteering initiative, groups of students went to hotels and hospitals to cheer and boost the morale of evacuees and families of the wounded, and to distribute gift baskets. Other groups volunteered with families of reserve soldiers with young children, making up for the father's absence and helping care for the children and perform household chores.



### Events for soldiers on army bases

To boost national morale and to help the military forces and reserve troops, the Department launched an initiative to hold events each evening for soldiers on army bases, funded by Diaspora organizations and philanthropists. The troops enjoyed lavish meat meals, barbecues, and salad bars with abundant offerings. The evening events continued with quality social activities and musical performances in which all the soldiers participated.

The events were enthusiastically received by the soldiers, and demand to participate in them emerged among the public. The Department managed the queries and matched requests from army bases with organizations and philanthropists undertaking to finance the events. Dozens of successful events were held over the months of the war, and were greatly appreciated by the officers and troops for the pleasant respite in the shadow of the war.



### Coordination and supervision of shipments from abroad

Over the past few months, many different groups from Jewish communities across the US have expressed interest in visiting Israel, to see first-hand what occurred on the Black Shabbat – October 7th, when the horrific massacre was perpetrated by the Hamas terrorists.

The Department drew up a proposed itinerary, and coordinated with production organizations and military authorities to enable delegations to enter Gaza Perimeter kibbutzim, so that the participants could form a direct impression of the scope of the terrorist atrocity.

Later in the tour, the delegations met with the heads of regional councils and the secretaries of localities coping with security needs created by the war, to determine possibilities for assisting them. The delegations paid condolence calls to bereaved families, and visited wounded soldiers in hospitals.

The delegations included groups of journalists and public opinion makers, as well as groups of donors who took part in, and contributed to, a wide variety of projects on behalf of the troops and war wounded. The delegations' impact has translated into broader circles of influence and mobilization of public opinion in the American Jewish communities.



# CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS IN THE DIASPORA

Department Head: Roi Abecassis | Department Director: Ariel Chesner

## About the Department

The Center is responsible for the Orthodox community living outside of Israel, and is committed to strengthening its connection to the Jewish people, to Jewish heritage, and to reinforcing Jewish-Zionist identity by fostering the bond to the State of Israel and highlighting its centrality in the lives of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. The Center is also engaged in raising the Jewish-Zionist issue in the community discourse and in social networks.

Responsibilities of the Center are mainly:

- Ben Ami communities: an educational program that works to connect dozens of small and medium-sized communities to the State of Israel and Judaism through emissaries.
- Flying the Flag program: an experiential educational activity for thousands of students from abroad who come for a year of Jewish studies in the State of Israel. Upon their return abroad, the participants become ambassadors of the State of Israel on campuses and communities.
- Leadership conferences: empowering leadership groups in Israel and the Diaspora, to strengthen the relationship between the leaders of the communities and the State of Israel, and between Israeli society and communities in the Diaspora.

## Main Department Activities During the Report Period

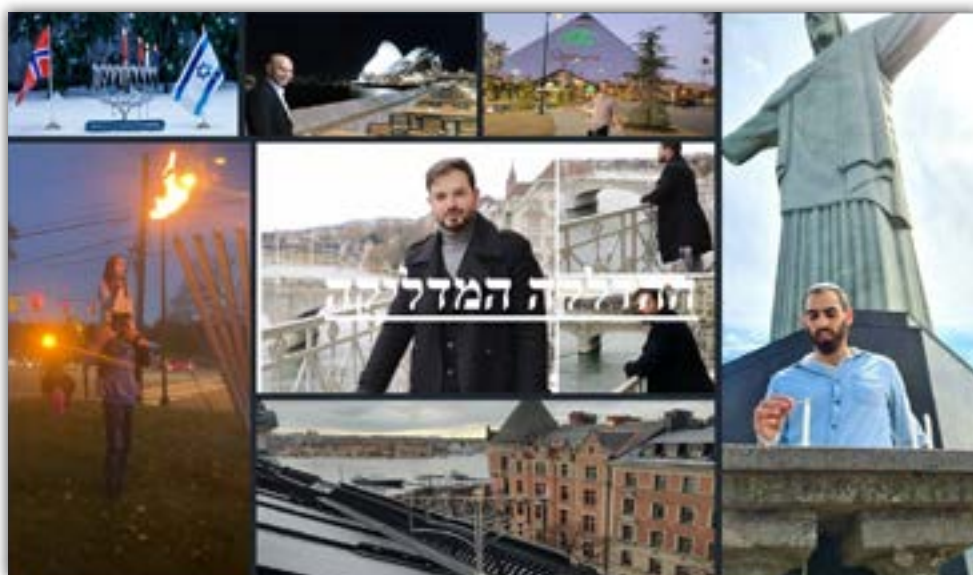
**Emergency missions to Moldova and Ukraine** With the outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the Center sent a team of 8 shlichim to aid the refugees. The delegation assisted the refugees in crossing the borders between Moldova and Ukraine and with their arrival in the refugee camps, distributing food, encouraging their spirits and inviting them to make aliyah. One of the special tasks was: helping the sick and elderly to cross a border crossing of about 300 meters on foot. In preparation for Purim and Passover, 15 shlichim were sent by the Center to various communities in Europe that took in refugees from Ukraine. With the help of local rabbis, the emissaries organized Purim celebrations and the Seder night for the refugees and activities for children during the holidays.





## 14 Ben Ami communities around the world

**The "lighting the best Hanukkah menorah" competition-** the competition was held among the Center's emissaries – who will light the best Hanukkah menorah? The emissaries lit the menorahs in exotic places – try to identify the locations. The contest was attended by thousands of voters from numerous communities around the world who rated the lightings. Among the winning communities: Basel, on the balcony of the visionary of the State – Binyamin Ze'ev Herzl!



**Hafrashat challah evening** for women of the Jewish community in the small resort town of Albufeira, Portugal. The Jewish community in Albufeira is a tiny community that only in recent years renovated the synagogue and began offering a variety of activities around the holidays. Through Ben Ami's emissary, Aryeh Atias, the Jewish community was re-established in the town, which includes local Jews who returned to their Judaism alongside Israelis, and many Jewish vacationers from around Europe who stay in Albufeira for extended periods during the year.



### Independence Day celebrations in Auckland, New Zealand

As every year, the Independence Day celebrations and observance of Yom HaZikaron are one of the highlights of the Jewish community. Led by the Ben Ami emissaries, these events focus on all age groups in the community. All members of the community are invited to the main event, to which the Ben Ami emissary brings the scents, tastes and special atmosphere that only an Israeli emissary can give to the community.



### Flying the Flag program

**Experiential and educational Zionist trip days and weekends** for over 4,000 students. These days we are filling the heads and hearts of students with Zionist and Jewish content in an experiential way, with the hope that these seeds will grow and influence the students' decisions and paths in life. Thousands of yeshiva and midrasha students who study in Torah institutions in Israel are exposed to Torah in an in-depth way and visit various sites in Israel. The Center seeks to build another level to deepen their connection to the State of Israel. Through the seminars it conducts together with the institutions, the Center strengthens the Zionist dimension and gives them the motivation to become Zionist activists upon their return abroad, encourages those interested to enlist in the IDF, and encourages aliyah among those who choose this route.



**Delegations** to educate and mark the national holidays in the Diaspora, in a mobile "caravan" style. A team of 8 leading educators from around the world visited 12 communities from 7 countries!

The educators told the story of Jerusalem through singing, playing and studying, and thus touched hundreds of community members of all ages, leaving them with a taste of Jerusalem. Each community experienced a unique event specially tailored for it. The educators knew how to adapt the system to each age group and each audience so that all the meetings were a great success.



## Leadership conferences

**A Jewish community leadership conference** in Latin America was held in Argentina with dozens of shlichim, rabbis and heads of communities from around South America. As part of the Center's goals to strengthen small Jewish communities, it holds a continental conference once every two years, where it brings together the leaders of the Jewish communities in South America alongside key activists, emissaries serving in the communities, and student leaders. During the conference, the participants get a conceptual boost in their connection to the religious world and their relationship with the State of Israel. Emissary organizations participated in the conference and discussed together with the communities the challenges of shlichut and the help that the communities need.



**Europe emissaries conference 2022**, Paris – one of the highlights that every emissary eagerly anticipates is the Continental Emissaries Conference held by the Center for Religious Affairs. More than 100 religious Zionism emissaries from all over Europe attended the conference. The conference mainly focuses on the emissaries, recharging their batteries with content, discussions, conversations into the wee hours of the night – all to give them the strength to come back and continue their special work in the communities. The emissaries say that for them these conferences are "Israeli air to breathe" the "Israeli oxygen" that gives them the strength to continue their shlichut with full enthusiasm.



**A young leadership conference** was held in Paris with the participation of young people from 15 different countries who were interested in attending a conference that is all about Zionism and Judaism. We discussed the future of the Jewish communities in Europe, what it means to be Jewish, the image of Israel in the media and the world, and how to become active on all these fronts in order to strengthen our Judaism and Zionism. The participants requested that these conferences be held annually and even more frequently. For them, the meeting of young Jews all over Europe who discuss these issues is something rare and important.



**Yom HaZikaron event** for 2,500 people at ICC Jerusalem (in English).

Although there are many events on Yom HaZikaron, one of the major and well-regarded events held in English is a start-up that has made waves. The deluge of thanks and requests for a repeat event was above and beyond what we expected. The event was opened by Rabbi Leo Dee, who lost his wife and two daughters. Later the event was dedicated to bereaved mothers. Participants: Miriam Peretz, Debra Kay, Racheli Frank and other mothers.



# Department Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

Leading a **housing project for evacuees "My home is your home"** of the WZO from Israel and abroad. About 500 apartments for evacuees were included in the project, and in cooperation with "Open Doors" we housed many hundreds of evacuees, with over 100 of them directly through us! The project was one of the most amazing projects we had the privilege of leading. The unity we felt on the part of the Jewish people in Israel and in the Diaspora, the generosity of the homeowners to give their personal and private homes to the evacuees without any remuneration, the gratitude of the evacuees to the homeowners, the connection between religious and secular, left and right, Israelis and Diaspora Jews were a prism for the world and the future we wish for.



The **"Spirit of the Nation"** project – during the war we created a video archive of people of spirit and vision to strengthen the national outlook during war with over 200,000 views. The videos were in three languages – English, Hebrew and Spanish. Among the speakers: Col. (res.) Golan Vach, Dr. Yoav Heller, Professor Haim Shapira, Rabbi Shay Piron, Rabbi Meir Yisrael Lau and more!



# THE SETTLEMENT DIVISION

Division Chairman: Yishai Merling | Division Director-General: Hoshaya Harray

## About the Division

The Settlement Division operates within the World Zionist Organization as an executive arm of the Israeli government. It establishes new localities and handles existing ones, strengthening them in the framework of rural settlement in Eretz Israel.

The Division operates in accordance with Government Resolution 1998 and a framework agreement.

The Division is also active in national priority areas: the Galilee, the Golan Heights, the Negev, and Judea and Samaria. The Division is primarily concerned with all aspects of demographic growth: society and community, infrastructures, means of production, planning, and more.

### Guiding local councils

The Settlement Division helps dozens of local councils in normal times and in emergencies. This includes direct contact between professional personnel in the Division and the local council division and department heads. Assistance and guidance are provided in the submission of RFPs and in making the necessary information available in all areas. Additionally, there is direct contact between the council heads and the Settlement Division chair, both on issues directly related to the Division and on matters pertaining to government ministries and various auxiliary units. It is a privilege to serve the residents and the councils, and to provide solutions and assistance on matters that are not always addressed by the government ministries or policymakers.

### Government resolutions

In the past two years, several government resolutions were passed on the topic of promoting rural settlement. The Settlement Division strove to implement the resolutions without delay. The resolutions include:

\*Government Resolution 864: Plan to Encourage Sustainable Demographic Growth in the Golan Regional Council Localities and in Katzrin During the Period 2022-2025

\*Government Resolution 1280: Establishment of a New Locality – Nitzana

\*Government Resolution 1359: Establishment of a Communal Settlement in the Arava, South of Ein Hatzeva Junction – Ir Ovot

\*Government Resolution 1325: Establishment of a Settlement Strip in the Northern Negev – Mevo'ot Arad



\*Gal Greenwald was appointed to head the settlement division, as of January 1, 2024

## Division budget increase

The Settlement Division's budget has grown significantly in recent years. This increase stems from a close relationship with ministers and senior officials in the various government ministries, and from confidence-building as well as the demonstrated capabilities of the Division's rising professional cadre.

The increase was successfully obtained despite the frequent changes occasioned by recent governmental instability, and it proves once again just how crucial the Settlement Division is to the State of Israel.

## Frontline localities program

Some 44 rural, agricultural, and communal settlements have been established to date along Israel's northern border; the defense establishment has designated them "frontline localities." Over the past decade (between 2009-2019), while some northern localities showed an increase in the number of resident families, the aforementioned frontline localities absorbed a total of 1,100 families – an increase of 2-3 families per year per locality. This indicates a major problem with the absorption of new residents in these communities.

The goal of this program is for the 44 frontline localities to absorb 2,000 new families over the coming four years. The goal is based on a recognition of these localities' importance and contribution to the state's resilience and security in normal times and in times of crisis. Another aim is to strengthen and enlarge the frontline communities so as to ensure the social-communal and economic robustness necessary for their continued existence.

The program is modular and has five separate but interrelated components:

1. Support at the council level
2. Support at the locality level
3. Support at the familial level
4. Support for initiatives and employment
5. Community support

We are currently making adjustments to the program, in accordance with the developments of the present war and an awareness that an action-ready practical plan would help the government make the appropriate decision to set a goal of demographic growth for the area.

It should be noted that the program was developed by professional personnel, including planners and architects, in cooperation with the regional councils where these localities are situated.

## Division Activity During the Israel-Gaza War

From the time of the murderous Simchat Torah onslaught, the Settlement Division has been conducting daily situation assessments and surveying needs on the ground. The Division has also been adapting its operations to the new and complex situation, while organizing for an immediate response in terms of bolstering the resilience of the communities and guiding the councils and the localities. Details on our activities below:

### Emergency Community-Resilience Budget

Out of an awareness of acute need, we budgeted NIS 4 million to strengthen community resilience in all of the regional councils under the Division's responsibility through the purchase of resilience "components," including activities for children, medical equipment, psychologists/counselors, and the like.

What is at issue are not requests for proposals, but rather service contracts. This simplifies the work and budget-receipt process, and constituted the first response of a governmental entity after the outbreak of the war.



### Employee recruitment for the Division's southern section

When the war started, many Division employees received Tzav 8 call-ups for reserve duty, including the director of the southern section, the section engineer, and the director of the Society and Community Unit. These posts are critical for the section's functioning in these difficult times. The Division successfully filled these positions by recruiting recent retirees who know the work well and were able to take over quickly and do their best to assist the Gaza Perimeter localities.



## Tekuma Administration

The civilian cabinet made the decision to establish the Tekuma Administration, tasked with overall responsibility for the rehabilitation of the Gaza Perimeter. The Settlement Division, along with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, are playing an active role in the Tekuma Administration, and are working in full cooperation with the Administration staff. The Division is actively involved with the communal aspect of the situation, temporary camps, rehabilitation and construction.

As part of the budgetary approval process for the Division for 2023, a budget of over a billion NIS was approved for all Division activities after the war broke out, including a significant budget for rehabilitation of the Gaza Perimeter. We are currently drafting detailed plans for the realization of this budget.





### Community resilience for the Gaza Perimeter

In addition to founding the Tekuma Administration in response to the current emergency situation, which entails many different actions, and in order to assist all of the regional councils and localities, the Settlement Division entered into an agreement with the Mahut organization. Mahut specializes in community recovery, and is providing professional services under the Division's guidance and in cooperation with the councils and localities, at a cost of NIS 5 million.

### Rent freeze

The Settlement Division has buildings under its management throughout the country, including in Gaza Perimeter localities – i.e., localities situated up to 7 km from the Gaza border that are subject to missile and mortar attack. Most of the residents have left their homes and the area has been declared a closed military zone. Consequently, it was decided to freeze payment for the use of the mobile structures managed by the Division, from October 2023 and until the situation is clarified. Furthermore, pre-military academies located in the Division's areas of activity that were evacuated due to the situation, whether for security reasons or in order to assist with various projects, received an exemption from rental payments, in accordance with the wartime developments.

### Dialogue with locality leaders

Regional directors in the Division's southern section, with the supervision and assistance of Leah Shalem, who managed the Society and Absorption Department for many years and was brought back from retirement, are traveling around the country to visit the communities. Their goal is to show support, to learn about needs on the ground, and to formulate proposals for continued activity, both for the Division administration and for government decision-makers.

Many Division employees and their families were called up for reserve duty, and some have been displaced from their homes as part of the Gaza Perimeter and northern Israel evacuations. All face complicated issues as a result of the security situation. However, we are pleased and proud to say that the Division employees are going above and beyond in order to provide services and solutions for the councils and their residents.





ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית  
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