

Securing the Future: Forging the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Jewish People The Jewish Agency's New Strategic Directions*

The Timeless Vision for the Jewish Agency

The work of the Jewish Agency has always been driven by an enduring vision; the vision was most recently reaffirmed in 2004, and it remains true and pertinent as we look to secure the Jewish world's tomorrow:

To ensure the future of a connected, committed, global Jewish People with a strong Israel at its center

It is a vision embodied in an 80-year history in which the Jewish Agency has played a number of different roles but has always remained relevant by adapting to the specific challenges and needs of Israel and the Jewish People.

The Jewish Agency in its first 80 years

Over the past 80 years, the Jewish Agency has served as the government of the State of Israel in the making, and, since 1948, as the Jewish People's central, global organization and the main facilitator for relations between the world Jewish community and the Jewish homeland of Israel. It has built an extraordinary record of achievement - enabling the aliya of more than two million Jews before 1989 and the mass aliya of a further one million Jews from the former Soviet Union since 1989; building kibbutzim and moshavim that, quite literally, defined the borders of the State of Israel; caring for youth-at-risk through Youth Aliya; helping revitalize development towns and depressed neighborhoods through Project Renewal. Since 1994, this work has continued through Partnership 2000, a program that engages Jews and Israelis in multiple and diverse activities that improve the quality of life of residents of towns and regions throughout Israel while creating channels for direct dialogue between Israelis and Jews around the world. From being intimately involved in helping resolve some of Israel's social challenges, emerges a significant sense of Jewish identity. The Jewish Agency has strengthened Jewish education around the globe through an emphasis on the centrality of Israel, connecting an entire young generation of world Jewry to Israel through transformative short and long-term experiences to Israel, and particularly birthright and MASA.

* Summary of the Jewish Agency's revised Strategic Plan

Core Expertise

The Jewish Agency is a unique organization that fulfills a role within world Jewry that no other body can fulfill. The Jewish Agency's unique position in the Jewish world and our decades of experience mean that we bring to our work core expertise:

- Worldwide reach that brings the entire Jewish world together with a focus on Israel;
- Global Jewish table that addresses urgent concerns;
- The ideological generator and operational arm of the Jewish people for aliya;
- Unique relationship with the Israel government and Israeli society;
- Proven expertise in strengthening the role of Israel in Jewish identity;
- Decades-long experience in working with youth and young adults;
- Sustained focus on and ability to have an impact on the Jewish future;
- Partnership, particularly Partnership 2000 (P2K), as a pivotal platform to realize our vision.

The World has Changed

The world has changed and continues to change. Not just in Israel and not just among the Jewish People, but in the larger world in which Jews live and of which Israel is a part.

Israel is the vision and venture of the Jewish People. Her resilience, vitality and strength are of critical importance to the Jewish world. Israel today is physically developed and economically robust, yet there are still social gaps. The classic Zionist spirit that characterizes Israelis as actively coping with the tough challenges of life is less well developed in the areas of civil society. A significant factor that impacts the motivation of young Israelis is that they do not feel connected to the Jewish People and Jewish values, a phenomenon that undermines worldwide Jewish solidarity as well.

Similarly, a sense of Jewish belonging around the world is weakening as succeeding generations of Jews are offered - and accept - choices for lifestyle and identity that were unthinkable for Jews only decades ago. This correlates with a weakening commitment to the State of Israel as younger Jews feel less affinity with and, in some cases, ambivalence and indifference towards an Israel that was a defining component of identity for earlier generations.

Parallel to the threats are many opportunities that provide promising prospects. There is a growing openness to the world; the opportunity for individuals to have and express multiple complementary identities; the potential of globalization that makes it increasingly easy for people to spend extended periods of time in other countries; and modern technology that provides opportunities for the creation of new communities and networks on a worldwide level. There is a growing interest in and commitment to service and volunteerism among the younger generation who are seeking to make a difference in the world; there is a revival of national and ethnic pride; and a growing search for meaning and hunger for spirituality.

In light of these changes and realities, and considering our core expertise, what course of action should the Jewish Agency now forge to secure the Jewish future?

Strengthening Jewish identity – with Jewish Zionist DNA

Strengthening Jewish identity with a focus on the younger generation is the central vehicle through which we, the Jewish Agency, can, today and tomorrow, impact the Jewish future and address some of the major imperatives resulting from this changed world.

We will infuse all our programs with four Jewish-Zionist values to create our unique content DNA:

- **Connecting a Jew and her People (*Bein Adam l'Amo*):** the fundamental idea that Jews share history and destiny;
- **Connecting a Jew and his Heritage (*Bein Adam l'Morashto*):** the wellspring of Jewish civilization as a source of intellectual inspiration, spiritual ideals and cultural values;
- **Connecting a Jew and her Land (*Bein Adam l'Arzo*):** Israel as the spiritual, cultural and physical homeland for all Jews;
- **Connecting a Jew and his Community and Society (*Bein Adam l'Hevrato*):** the embodiment of the Zionist spirit - the responsibility of the individual to address actively Jewish collective challenges.

The Three Facets of Identity

Social scientists define and describe identity as being comprised of the emotional, behavioral and cognitive components - sometimes referred to as ABCs of identity (Affect, Behavior, Cognition). Each of these aspects can serve as a gateway to strengthening Jewish identity and connections:

- *Know:* One can know that they are Jewish and understand the meaning of their own Jewish life and connectedness to other Jews, to Israel and to Jewish ideas, values, history and heritage. Here, formal and informal education and other knowledge acquisition activities add to the individual's identity and sense of competence;
- *Feel:* From our own Jewish makeup and from the shared experiences with other Jews comes the Jewish identity that is felt in the *kishkes*. Here are found the many ways we feel our Jewishness, from the delight we feel learning a Nobel Prize winner is Jewish to the outrage we feel when we know a Jew somewhere has been attacked. From awe at the rebirth of Israel to pride at the resilience of Jewish ties. Feeling can be a cultural connection or a deep spiritual bond... or both, and it breeds a sense of conviction;
- *Do:* One can help others by undertaking activities, derived from Jewish values and commandments, through working for welfare, cultural, Zionist, religious or communal organizations. Here, simply taking an action expressing one's Jewishness has impact on one's personal dignity, adds to the individual's responsibility for his or her community and generates a sense of confidence.

All three - to know, to feel, to do - are access points for one's Jewish identity. The beauty of learning, the joy of celebrating and the excitement at making a difference together are the wonders of experience. This insight applies to young Jews in Israel and around the world. Evocative experiences yield competence, conviction and confidence. Therefore the programs and activities of the Jewish Agency need to offer ongoing opportunities to experience all of these elements of identity. This enables Jews to continue along their personal journeys to identity, which then leads to higher levels of connectedness among Jews, greater self-worth and, finally, the power of the Jewish collective to meet every challenge.

Mission

Therefore, in order to realize the vision in today's world, the Jewish Agency's updated mission is to:

Inspire Jews throughout the world to *Connect* with their people, heritage and Land, and *Empower* them to build a thriving Jewish future and a strong Israel

At the same time, we will continue to serve as the Jewish People's emergency first responder, retaining our preparedness for aliya of rescue, and being ready to assist in crises in Israel and throughout the Jewish world.

The Operational Strategy to Realize our New Mission

This updated mission, approved by the Board of Governors, will address the following imperatives:

- Ensure that young Jews from around the world do not opt out of the global Jewish collective and remain connected to Israel;
- Connect young Israelis who are increasingly distanced from their Jewish roots to the global Jewish collective;
- Help vulnerable population groups in Israel ;
- Ensure that people who decide to make aliya can realize their dreams;
- Help Jewish communities in emergency situations;
- Connect FSU Jewry to the global Jewish collective.

In order to do so, the Jewish Agency must adopt a focused operational strategy. Based on the unique added value of our core expertise, we will focus all our efforts on the following two global strategic drivers, both of which are highly effective in strengthening Jewish identity and a sense of connection. Each driver is built of a set of activities which operate simultaneously and in synergy so as to create an integrated impact that is cumulative and powerful:

- A fully-integrated range of continually-expanding and deepening **Israel experiences** to enrich Jewish life and create aliya opportunities;
- A range of identity-building **social activism** opportunities for all young Jews to help vulnerable populations and bridge social gaps in Israeli society.

We have selected these strategic drivers because they can generate the highest possible impact in strengthening Jewish identity, and because through our core expertise, we are uniquely positioned to play a central, integrative role in promoting them.

In addition, unique regional circumstances require two further complementary thrusts:

- A comprehensive approach to the aliya of **FSU Jewry** and their reconnection to their Jewish roots;
- The capacity both to enable the aliya of **olim from countries of distress** and respond quickly and effectively to emergency situations in Israel. Today this requires a particular focus on helping Ethiopian olim.

The First Strategic Driver: A fully-integrated range of continually-expanding and deepening Israel experiences to enrich Jewish life and create aliya opportunities*

Experiences of Israel are the most effective tool to strengthen the Jewish identity of young Jews from the Diaspora. The strength of the impact can be seen in the high levels of identification with Israel, involvement in Jewish community life by program graduates, and in the high number of the graduates who make aliya. We will therefore create an integrated approach to Israel experiences and focus all our educational outreach activities on them:

- ***Short-term programs:*** We will deepen our strategic cooperation with birthright and Lapid (high-school age programs), which are the main feeders for longer-term Israel experience programs;
- ***Long-term programs:*** We will enhance and expand MASA;
- ***Mid-term programs:*** We will create the crucial, but currently missing range of shorter long-term programs, generally two months long, to allow college students and post-college young adults to spend a summer in Israel on academic study or activism programs, or on professional internships;
- ***Pre- and post-programming:*** We will create a continuum between the experiences through effective pre- and post-programming, so that the momentum of connection created by participation is not lost. Our shlichim, training programs for local educators, and Israel experience program alumni will play a central role here;
- ***Emphasis on Young Shlichim:*** We will send a larger number of young shlichim and deploy them on campuses and communities where they will serve as role models;
- ***Zionist youth movements:*** We will work with the Zionist youth movements around the world in a coordinated effort to increase the number of their members participating in the spiral of Israel experiences;
- ***Aliya Tracks:*** We will expand and diversify aliya tracks for young adults and people with qualifications that are in demand in Israel, and systemically market them alongside other Israel engagement opportunities;
- ***Leadership Tracks:*** We will develop special leadership tracks within MASA to train activists for Israel advocacy and role model programs in communities and campuses;
- ***Special Tracks for Educators:*** We will develop special tracks for educators from Jewish formal and informal educational institutions and suitable pre- and post-programming;
- ***Involve Young Israelis:*** We will maximize the involvement of young Israelis in MASA, so as to provide more opportunities for young Jews to meet each other and develop mutual understanding;
- ***Training Program for Educational Staff:*** We will institute a training program for the educational staff of all Israel experiences;
- ***Jewish-Zionist Content DNA:*** And, of course, we will ensure that all these programs - in Israel and around the Jewish world - are infused with our Jewish-Zionist content DNA.

* Our strategic drivers are based on careful examination of research findings into how to strengthen Jewish identity and the potential of social activism to bridge gaps within society, and we will be happy to provide details.

Israel Experiences: How we will Measure Success

With a focus on quantity, quality and variety, the success of our activities in this strategic driver will lead to such outcomes as:

- Increased numbers in each Israel experience program, and increased numbers of those who, having participated in one program, register for a second one
- Stronger sense of commitment to Israel and sense of connection to Jewish Peoplehood among program graduates
- Increased ongoing levels of involvement among program graduates in Jewish community life and specifically as community activists and leaders
- Integration of young Israelis into programs to create meaningful encounters
- Increased levels of aliyah and a stronger Jewish identity among olim

The Second Strategic Driver: A Range of Identity-Building Social Activism Opportunities for all young Jews to Help Vulnerable Populations and Bridge Social Gaps in Israeli Society

Identity-building activism is a highly impactful tool in strengthening the Jewish identity of the younger generation of both young Israelis and Diaspora Jews, and the energy of young social activists is a critical driver for social change and the empowerment of vulnerable people such as youth-at-risk or new olim.

- ***Pre-Army Service Social Activism for Israelis (Shin Shinim)***: Places on a year of pre-army social activism are in high demand, and the arena's growth from the current 2,500 annually is only constrained by government regulations limiting the numbers:
 - We will work to **increase the numbers** in general, and specifically the numbers of young Israelis who perform their pre-army service social activism within Diaspora communities;
 - We will enhance the frameworks' professional training and infuse them with our **Jewish-Zionist content DNA** educational programming;
- ***Trustees Social Activism Model***: a unique model based on the Youth Futures program—higher education graduates who are prepared to devote two-three years to work with weaker sectors of the community:
 - We will infuse the trustees with **Jewish-Zionist content**;
 - We will expand this model to new areas such as *klita* (immigrant absorption);
- ***Young Communities***: We will focus our activities on **incubating new communities** of idealistic young Israelis who choose social activism in distressed areas of the country as a way of life;
- ***Activism within MASA***: We will systemically encourage social activism within MASA programs;
- ***Zionist Youth movements***: We will work with the Zionist youth movements to deepen their members' commitment to *Tikkun Olam* and encourage them to embrace opportunities provided by the Jewish Agency's social activism platform;

- **Activism within Jewish communities:** We will train selected MASA participants to be young Israel advocates and role models for Israel engagement alongside young shlichim;
- **Shared Social Activism:** We will create in Israel and developing countries platforms for common social activism by young Israelis and their Diaspora counterparts enriched with our Jewish-Zionist DNA content.

Social Activism: How we will Measure Success

The success of our activities in this strategic driver will lead to such outcomes as:

- Increased numbers in all of our social activism opportunities for young Israelis, and particularly establishing as a norm among mainstream Israeli society a gap year of community social activism between high school and the army
- Stronger Jewish identity among program graduates that finds expression in all three dimensions of identity - Affect, Behavior and Cognition
- Impact of the work of the social activists on the empowerment of vulnerable populations
- Growth in the number of young Diaspora Jews who participate in social activism models in Israel alongside their Israeli counterparts
- Increase in the numbers of these social activism model graduates who subsequently become community activists or leaders in their communities
- Increased numbers of young Israelis and their Diaspora counterparts who work together on shared social activism programs in developing countries that have a strong Jewish values base

Our Complementary Thrusts

FSU Jewry

The unique history of the Jews of the Soviet Union and the closing window of opportunity to reconnect the Jews of the FSU to their Jewish roots and the Jewish collective, impact the nature of our operations among Russian-speaking Jews. While in other countries we offer programs for engagement with Israel to existing community structures, in the FSU, we operate the very structures that enable the programming to take place. We will develop a specially-tailored strategy and strategic driver for this population.

First Responder in Emergencies

We will maintain our capacity to be the first responder to crises in the Jewish world and in Israel whenever and wherever they arise. In coordination with the Israel government, over the next three years we will expand our involvement in the immigration of the remainder of the Ethiopian Jewish community, including taking responsibility for the transit camps in Ethiopia and the integration of Ethiopian Jewry in Israel.

Aliya and Klita Continue

The Jewish Agency is committed to encouraging and facilitating the move to Israel of all Jews who wish to do so, and will continue to play a leading role, including remaining responsible for aliya eligibility:

- Aliya opportunities will be marketed within the broader context of Israel engagement through a wide variety of Jewish Agency platforms;
- The Jewish Agency will be the integrator and professional mentor for local organizations that specialize in aliya promotion, including developing cost-effective best practices for aliya encouragement;
- Aliya preparation and services will be primarily addressed by the Global Center in Jerusalem. We will restructure our aliya services to ensure that they are as cost-effective as possible and use state-of-the-art methods;
- Aliya tracks for young adults and people with qualifications in demand in Israel will be significantly expanded and widely marketed;
- A larger number of well-trained activists will provide guidance and social networking to olim for extended periods;
- We will raise with the government the possibility of it taking over responsibility for all aspects of klita that the absorption centers provide to new olim arriving not from countries of distress (less than 10% of olim in absorption centers).

What is New in the Way the Jewish Agency will Operate: Summary

- Focus: two main strategic drivers that encompass all our activities
- Specialization in: identity-building of young Jews - wherever they live
- Strengthening connections: between Israelis and Jews worldwide
- Integration: Between identity, engagement with Israel and aliya
- Shaping Israeli society through social activism opportunities:
 - Harnessing the younger generation, from Israel and throughout the Jewish world, to help bridge social gaps in Israeli society
 - Creating a Jewish young generation committed to collective challenges and Jewish values
- Enhancing impact: increasing and deepening operational partnerships
- Focus on: a new approach to aliya to ensure future growth
- Responsive: to the needs of our funding partners and our programs recipients