



Tribute Book 2023

Honoring Our Community's Heroes



Bob Ogan
Youth to Israel Award



Dr. Hans Fisher
Inspirational Leadership Award



Michael Gruenbaum (of blessed memory)
Inspirational Leadership Award



LappinFoundation.org

DEDICATED TO HEROES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Bob Ogan Dr. Hans Fisher Michael Gruenbaum (of blessed memory)

Thank you for all you do to help to ensure our Jewish future. You are inspirational role models, especially to younger generations.

Lappin Foundation Board of Directors

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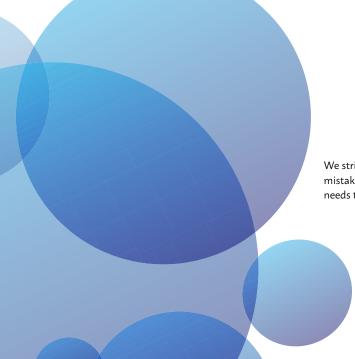
Jay Goldberg

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We strive to do our best, but mistakes do happen. We apologize for any mistakes that may appear in the Tribute Book. Please let us know what needs to be corrected and corrections will be posted on our website.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

To Our Generous, Loyal and New Donors,

"HANK YOU for your support of Lappin Foundation's 2023 Tribute Book, which is the Foundation's major fundraiser of our 2023 Annual Campaign. The success of the Tribute Book funds programs that allow us to reach and engage with thousands of individuals throughout Greater Boston,

> the North Shore, the Merrimack Valley and beyond. Our ever-changing world demands we change the way we work. Knowing we have the support of loyal and generous

donors inspires creativity, and from creativity, great things come.

This year's Honorees — Bob Ogan, Dr. Hans Fisher and Michael Gruenbaum (of blessed memory) — have given of themselves in deeply meaningful ways to ensure the success of Lappin Foundation. Your tribute ads honoring these three outstanding individuals provide the resources we need to build on our successes over this past year, making it possible for us to engage with more individuals, form new alliances, and establish more program partnerships.

For more than 50 years, Youth to Israel Adventure (Y2I), Lappin Foundation's cornerstone program, continues to be a life-changing, immersive Jewish experience for teens. Thanks to support from our donors, every Jewish teen who qualifies for Y2I is able to participate in this exciting teen Israel adventure of a lifetime. This would not be possible without you.

Together we are raising and nurturing the next generation of young people who feel proudly Jewish. Honoring our community's heroes in the presence of Y2I teens inspires them to imagine their potential and reach higher, realizing they, too, can make a difference in this world.

Thank you for being an integral part of Lappin Foundation's success. We could not do this without you.

With gratitude, Deborah L. Coltin

Deborah L. Coltin

President and Executive Director

MISSION STATEMENT

Lappin Foundation's mission is enhancing Jewish identity across generations.

We accomplish our mission by:

- Funding exciting Jewish programs for children, teens and adults that spark an interest in Jewish living and learning
- Building Jewish pride
- Developing a connection to and love for Israel
- Instilling a feeling of belonging to the Jewish Family
- Fostering positive relationships with individuals of all faiths through education
- Imbuing young people with the desire to stay Jewish and raise their own children Jewish
- Serving as an educational resource center to the community for programs about Judaism, the Holocaust and antisemitism

Lappin Foundation removes cost as a barrier to participation whenever possible, making our programs free and accessible to all who want to participate. Our areas of programming include:

Youth to Israel

Holocaust and Antisemitism Education

Teens & Tweens

Professional Development

Interfaith Outreach

Adults

Families with Young Children

Resource Center for the Community

Visit LappinFoundation.org for up-to-date information about our programs.

STAFF AND HONORARY BOARD OF ADVISORS

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YOUTH TO ISRAEL AWARD Bob Ogan

hat Bob Ogan remembers most about his own Youth to Israel trip 50 years ago is the caring and love for Israel that he felt in the weeks following the trip, when Israel was attacked during the Yom Kippur War.

He recalls being glued to the radio for news, all the while wondering, "why would all these countries gang up on Israel? What did they do to deserve it?" And, he realized that the summer he spent in Israel, time on moshavs, kibbutzim, and formative experiences with other Jewish teens, really got to his subconscious.

Much later, as he grew into his own role as a leader in the Jewish community and an active supporter of Israel, and after several more trips to the Jewish homeland, Ogan reflected on the gift that Robert I. Lappin gave so many Jewish teens by providing the free Youth to Israel (Y2I) experience. "When you go to Israel, regardless of your mindset prior to going, you will come back a different person. You will be touched in some way and my guess is in a way that you are not even looking for," he noted.

Ogan's first trip to Israel came after a lifetime of role modeling from his parents and their peers. He recalls forging friendships through the Kernwood Country Club, the only country club for Jews at the time, and through Emanu-El in Marblehead. His father, along with other Jewish businessmen, committed themselves to building and supporting the Jewish institutions in the community – the Jewish Community Center, the predecessors to Epstein-Hillel Academy, the synagogues, and the Jewish Federation of the North Shore. As a friend of Peter Lappin, Ogan witnessed the deep commitment of Robert I. Lappin, *z"l*, to both Israel and the community.

Against the backdrop of this role modeling, Ogan understood the values of tikkun olam, repairing the world, and has always, one way or another, been involved with the Jewish community. He had many different leadership roles with many organizations including the Jewish Federation of the North Shore, the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish Community Center, and the Lappin Foundation. With his wife Leslie, the Ogans have philanthropically supported almost all the Jewish agencies and others too such as Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

Today, he lauds the work of the Lappin Foundation. In addition to sending so many teens for formative experiences in Israel, he supports their work with antisemitism, Holocaust education, and work with young families through Shabbat programming and PJ Library. "I believe it will help make the Jewish community and ultimately the world, a better place."

Ogan is the President and CEO of Bake'n Joy Foods, Inc., a company started by his grandfather in 1941 when he came to the U.S. from Russia. His son Michael now works alongside him in the business taking it into the fourth generation. One thing

Ogan learned through participation in leadership programs designed to create unthinkable business breakthroughs is to "never to put any boundaries on our thinking. If you put boundaries on your thinking, then you limit the possibilities. That holds

true in thinking about the community. That is something I want to share with young people today."

But, he also wants to share the lessons of kindness, something that is especially important in today's climate of escalated hate rhetoric and incidents. "What I learned over the years from family is to be a better person and to be empathetic."

"My message to young folks would be to never forget your roots, never forget what the Jewish people have accomplished. Don't forget the Holocaust and don't forget the Jewish community both worldwide and here. We can make a difference and it is incumbent on you to do it, because no one else will. It is important that you take a stand for what you believe," Ogan said.

Ogan lives in Marblehead with his wife Leslie of 42 years. Their family includes their grown children, Rachel and Michael, daughter-in-law Emily, and grandchildren, Lylah, Nathan and Levi. The Ogans are members of Congregation Shirat Hayam.



INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD Dr. Hans Fisher

Lappin Foundation is honored to present Dr. Hans Fisher and Michael Gruenbaum (of blessed memory) with the 2023 Robert Israel Lappin Inspirational Leadership Award for their active involvement in the Foundation's Holocaust Symposium and for their extraordinary efforts teaching thousands of high school and middle school students and others about the Holocaust by sharing their lived experiences during the Holocaust. The award is presented to individuals who, like Robert Lappin (of blessed memory), defy their age and continue to contribute in deeply meaningful ways to the betterment of society. Hans and Michael lead with purpose and passion.

ans Fisher was born in Breslau, Germany (now Wroclaw, Poland) in 1928. As a child he escaped Nazi Germany in 1939 with his mother and sister on the ill-fated SS St. Louis, attempting to reunite with his father, who settled in Cuba after being ordered to leave Germany. Hans' presentations bring the listener back in time to Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, with his remarkable recollection and detail of the destruction and fear that gripped his family and the Jews of Germany. Several voyages and two years later, Hans, along with his mother and sister, reunited with his father in Cuba, eventually settling in New Jersey. Hans went on to live an accomplished life, including earning a PhD in Nutritional Biochemistry from the University of Illinois. In 1954 Hans was hired to the faculty of Rutgers University in New Jersey where he served as Professor and Associate Provost for the Life Sciences for 54 years, 22 of those as Department Chair. He has been married for more than 70 years to his wife Ruth, and he is a proud father, grandfather and great grandfather. Hans challenges the younger generation to not be silent about antisemitism, hatred and intolerance, urging them to speak up and stand up and not be a bystander.

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

Michael Gruenbaum (of blessed memory)

ichael Gruenbaum was born in 1930 and lived in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Michael's talent for storytelling and his sharp memory were a gift to thousands of students and others who heard Michael's testimony of surviving the Holocaust, bringing to life vivid memories of the years he spent in the Terezin concentration camp as a young teen. There were many other facets to Michael's life beyond being a survivor of the Holocaust — he was a father, grandfather, husband, engineer, entrepreneur, scholar, and author of two books, including Somewhere There is Still a Sun, which has been translated to almost 20 languages. Sadly, Michael passed away unexpectedly early this year, yet his story will continue to be told through his book and through the animated educational film The Teddy Bear, which he narrated. The film can be viewed at LappinFoundation.org. As a survivor, Michael took to heart his responsibility to remember, to tell, and to never forget, ending his presentation with a challenge to young people to find ways to use the lessons of the Holocaust to fix what's broken in the world.

You can learn more about these two remarkable heroes at LappinFoundation.org in the Featured Programs section, on the Holocaust Education and Commemoration page.







Dear Bob, Dad & Papa,

With our utmost love and admiration, we congratulate you on receiving the Youth to Israel Award on the 50th anniversary of your attending that trip! You continue to inspire our family and our community with your dedication to the State of Israel and generosity in support of Lappin Foundation's Youth to Israel program.

Mazel tov and congratulations!

All our love,

Leslie, Rachel, Michael, Emily, Lylah, Nathan, Levi and Minney

Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) and Jewish Teen Initiative (JTI) at CJP

celebrate the extraordinary achievements and contributions of

Bob Ogan with the Youth to Israel Award

Thank you for your tireless work in the Jewish community of the North Shore and beyond to create a thriving Jewish future. Your generous support of CJP and commitment of your time to better our community year after year has helped so many. You continue a legacy of giving, making it a family mission to give unconditional support to the State of Israel, care for the most vulnerable, and work toward an even brighter Jewish future for all.

CJP is proud to partner with and support the Lappin Foundation in enhancing Jewish identity across generations.

May you go from strength to strength





To honor the legacy of Congregation Ahabat Sholom, The CAS Religious Fund is proud to support the Lappin Foundation in its amazing work.

From its founding in 1901 until its closing 120 years later,
Congregation Ahabat Sholom of Lynn,
Massachusetts was where generations of people
nourished their spiritual lives, found friendship, and
held closely to each other in times of joy and in times
of need — and where Kiddush after Shabbos services
was simply unsurpassed.

May the memories of Ahabat Sholom remain in our hearts, be passed on l'dor v'dor, and continually inspire all who seek and all who cherish love of peace.

Congregation Ahabat Sholom



Congratulations to Bob Ogan,
Dr. Hans Fisher and Michael Gruenbaum
(of blessed memory) for their unwavering
dedication and vision in transforming
our community. Your compassion, resilience,
and commitment inspire us all to strive
for a better future.

With much gratitude, Jody Kipnis and Todd Ruderman





Morton and Lillian Waldfogel Charitable Foundation and Peter and Maureen Waldfogel

Proudly support
Lappin Foundation's Interfaith
Outreach Programs
and provide financial aid for
Youth to Israel Adventure

Congratulations to the North Shore Heroes

Thank you to the Lappin Foundation board and staff.

"It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either."

Rabbi Tarfon Pirke Avot 2:21







Jack,

I am so proud of your leadership efforts on behalf of Lappin Foundation!

> Love, Bubbe



'It is not for you to complete the task; but neither are you free to desist from it.'



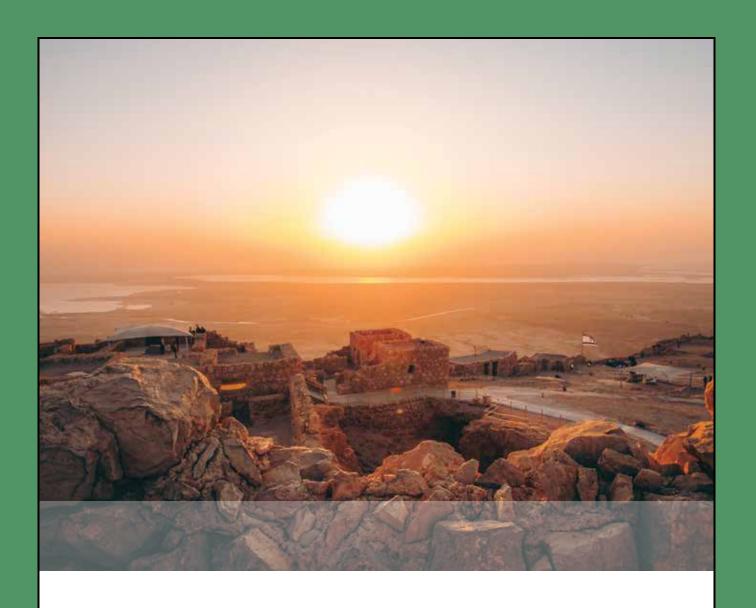
Hans, thank you for sharing your story with students to help keep history alive!

Michael (*z'l*) Your amazing legacy will continue to educate and inspire others to stand up to hate.

Bob, thank you for your deep commitment and leadership on behalf of Lappin Foundation.

Sarah Ovadia





Another great year for our North Shore teens.

Sharon and Howard Rich



Cummings Buildings

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Charities

Cummings' profits benefit local nonprofits

Almost all of Cummings Properties' real estate is owned by and operated for the benefit of Cummings Foundation. Each year, the Foundation donates tens of millions of dollars to organizations in communities where its properties are located and where many of its employees and clients live. The Cummings organization has awarded more than \$480 million in grants to date. Learn more at Cummings.com/charity.





Andover | Beverly | Burlington | Marlborough | Medford | Somerville Stoneham | Sudbury | Wakefield | Wilmington | Woburn



Mazel tov, Bob, and congratulations on receiving the 2023 Youth to Israel Award!

We have always admired your unwavering commitment to Israel, our Jewish community and causes that are vital to our Jewish future.

With immense respect,

Karen and David Rosenberg Shelby, Lev, Amanda, Whitney and Andrew

G2 is proud to be the tour provider for Lappin Foundation's Y2I Adventure and their other trips to Israel. Congratulations to all the Honorees!

G2 Travel is a tour company specializing in educational travel to Israel. With our carefully planned programs, knowledgeable guides and immersive experiences, we strive to provide young adventurers with a transformative journey through the rich cultural, biblical and historical wonders of Israel and leave a lasting impact on the minds and hearts of young explorers. We are honored and excited to welcome you to Israel.

Eran Benkel

General Manager eran.benkel@g2-travel.com https://israel.g2-travel.com/Home

G2 Travel Israel











Sarah and Lappin Foundation,

I'm happy to support the work you do to strengthen our Jewish future.

Harold Levy



On Behalf of The Dr. David M. Milch Foundation

CONGRATULATIONS LAPPIN FOUNDATION

For All The Hard Work Done and The Much More To Come!

The Dr. David M. Milch Foundations Proudly Presents: Lives Eliminated | Dreams Illuminated (LEDI)



Eva Nemova Lauren Bergman Oil on cradled panel

Born 1937, Prague, Czechoslovakia Death unknown, Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia or Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp, Poland

In November 1941, Eva and her family were taken from their home in Prague to the Terezin ghetto, a concentration camp located in what is now the Czech Republic.

Before the tragedy ensued, Eva's parents had a studio portrait taken of their daughter. Tragically, Eva, like many other young children, did not survive the Holocaust.

LEDI Painting - Eva Nemov

Find out more at: https://LivesDreams.Art

LEDI is an immersive multi media art, music and educational experience that aims to stem hate, specifically anti-semitism, through teaching, using a new approach to personalize victims experience. This forces the viewers to confront the consequences of such hate, espcially in regards to the Holocaust, directly to stimulate hard conversations.

The General Public

Open to and Programming for free to:

Educators, Scholars & Classes

Institutions & Groups

THE LEDI Experience Debuting September 7, 2023

HBI Brandeis 515 South St. Waltham, MA 02453 Open Daily Through October 25, 2023

Congratulations to the Honorees!
I'm happy to support the work
of Lappin Foundation.

May you go from strength to strength.

Myrna Freedman





Bob:

The longevity of your relationship with the Lappin family and the Lappin Foundation makes this such a meaningful tribute.

Thank you for Leslie's and your commitment and for your leadership in enabling the realization and in strengthening the endurance of our dad's vision.

Mazel Tov,

Diane, Andy, Lauren, Danielle and Alex Lappin Epstein Hillel School is proud to join the Lappin Foundation in honoring

Bob Ogan, Dr. Hans Fisher, and Michael Gruenbaum z"l

for their incredible dedication and commitment to ensuring the continuity of the Jewish people.

Thank you for inspiring us to continue our mission to educate the next generation of Jewish leaders.



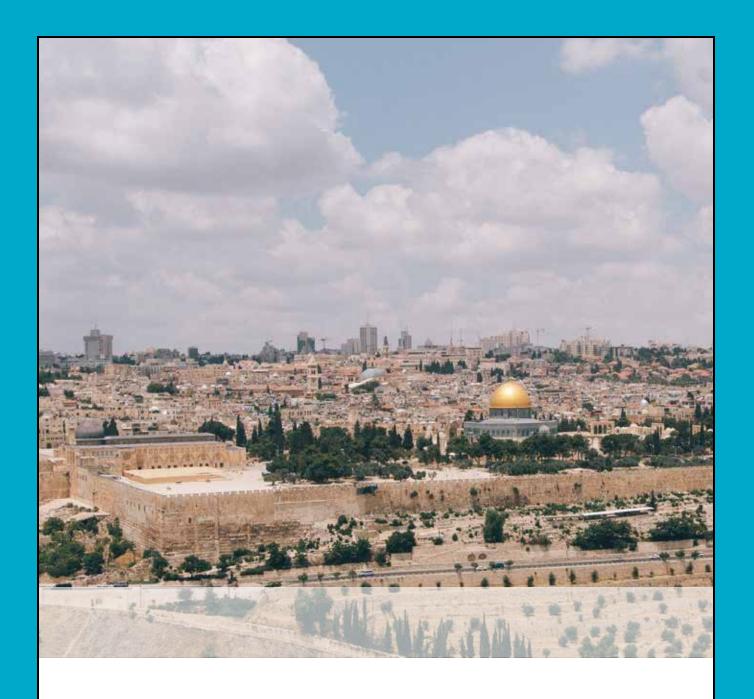


Best wishes to Lappin Foundation.

Thank you for all that you do!

Ruth and George Rooks





In honor of Robert Lappin's dedication and tremendous influence on our youth, and his lasting legacy for years to come.

Fara and Jay Goldberg



Bob,

We have been friends for many decades. Your carrying the torch of leadership has set an example for many of us, and we are all appreciative of your aiding the continuation of my father's legacy. It is an honor for me, my family, and our friends to share in this moment. A true leader and friend. Thank you for all of the support and thought you have shared.

Pete



The community is grateful for your leadership!

Allison, Matthew and Jesse Swartz Debbie and Neal Shalom



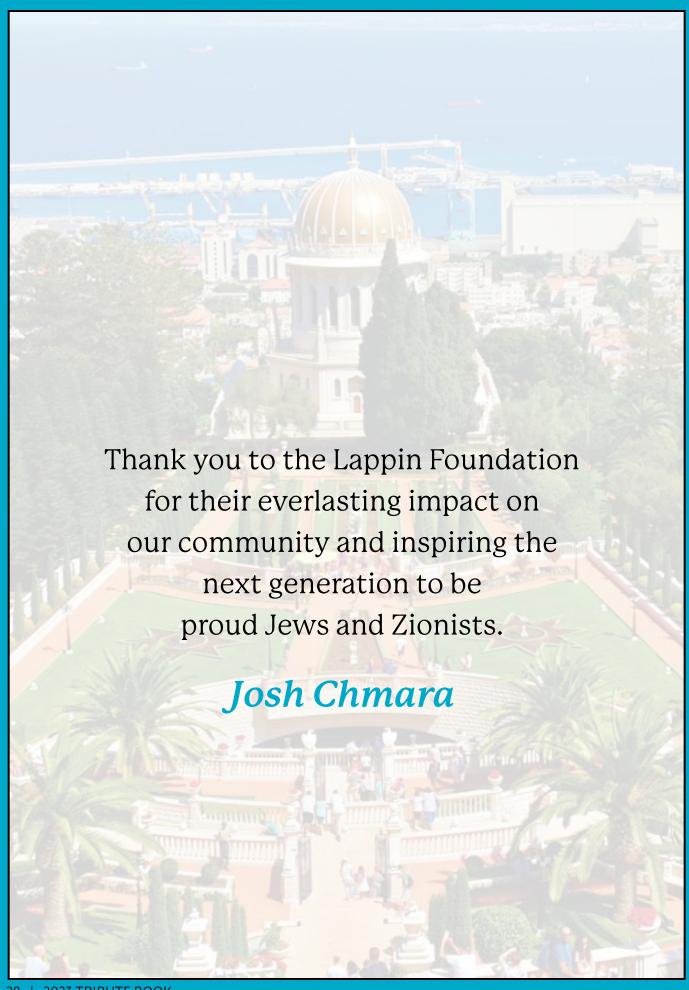
Thank you, Bob Ogan, for all you have done over the years to support the Lappin Foundation's Youth to Israel program.

We applaud your work to engage new Jewish leaders in our community and strengthen their connection to Israel.

We are proud to call you and Leslie our dear friends!

Kol Ha'kavod!

Diana Lloyd and Jordy Hershman



Our heartfelt congratulations to three outstanding individuals

Bob Ogan Dr. Hans Fisher Michael Gruenbaum

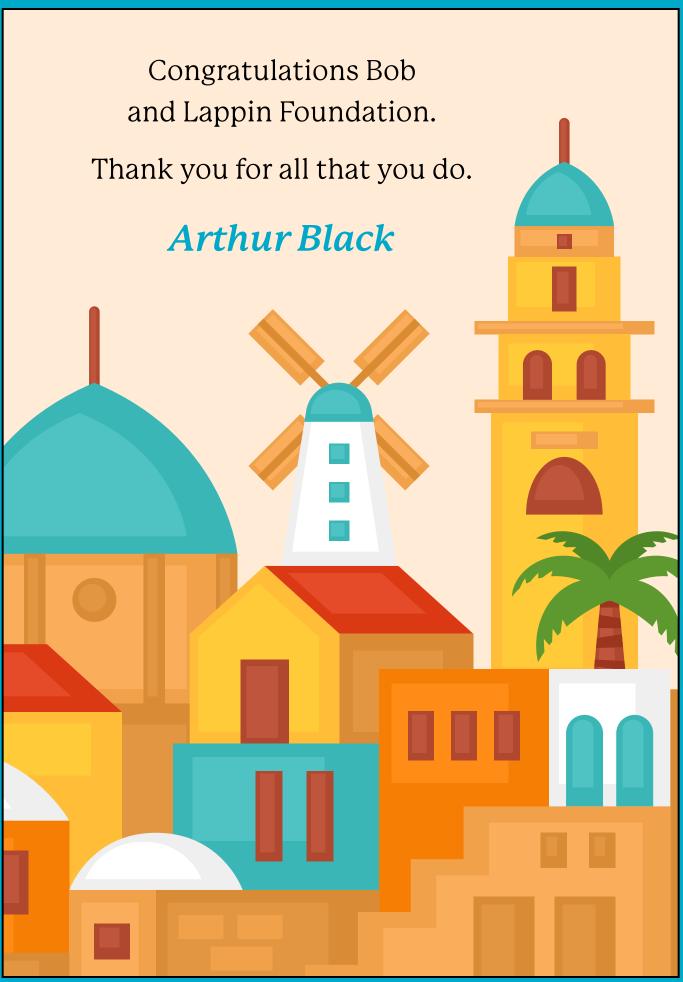
(of blessed memory)

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for the Jewish community.

Your efforts are truly inspiring and deeply appreciated.

Debbie and Gary Coltin







Camp Bauercrest is thrilled to partner once again with Y2I and the Lappin Foundation. We are so grateful for the opportunity to send our boys to Israel on this extraordinary trip, which continues to add a beautiful layer of Jewish enrichment to our CI program every summer. Our boys return to camp even more connected... to one another, to other teens from the group, and to their Jewish heritage.

We couldn't do it without you. THANK YOU!

Camp Bauercrest

Congratulations to the Lappin Foundation and the honorees.

May the generations to come continue to benefit from your commitment and your work.

Marcia Kaplan-Mann

Mazel tov to our outstanding heroes! Bob Ogan Dr. Hans Fisher Michael Gruenbaum (Zikrono l'vrachah) You honor the work of the Lappin Foundation. Richard and Dorothy Tatelman & Children



We applaud and support the Lappin Foundation's efforts to fight antisemitism. Debby and Erik Belt

Bob,

Thank you for all you give and continue to give. Through your efforts, more teens have the opportunity to participate in the Youth to Israel Adventure.

Mazel Tov!

Phyllis and Alan Bolotin and Family

Trust yourself.

Create the kind of self that you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into flames of achievement.

~ Golda Meir

Thanks for your hard work and creating new avenues to fight antisemitism and all forms of hate.

Jay Bovarnick





Eastern Bank is committed to recognizing the good in our communities and celebrating the work of the

LAPPIN FOUNDATION

We proudly support the 2023 ANNUAL AWARDS CELEBRATION

Congratulations to Dr. Hans Fisher, Bob Ogan, and the late Michael Gruenbaum



Member FDIC

Thank you, Lappin Foundation and Honorees, for your dedication to our community.

Lori and Larry Groipen





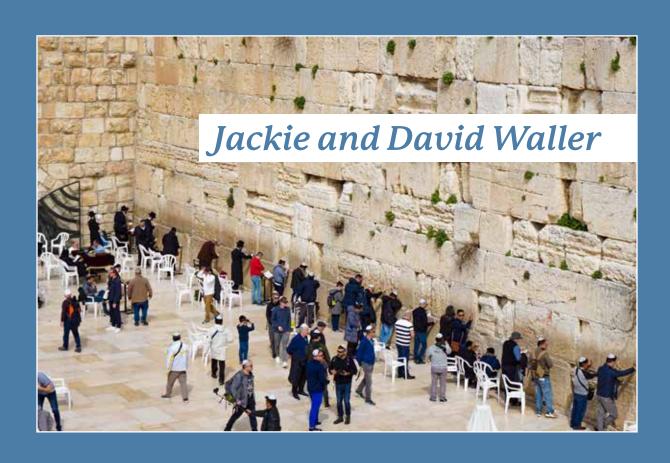
A heartfelt thank you to Lappin Foundation for their exceptional partnership and unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in our community. Your dedication and collaboration have created lasting change and inspire others to follow suit. We are grateful for your tireless efforts and look forward to the continued success we can achieve together.

Jody M. Kipnis President & CEO



Thank you, Lappin Foundation, for continuing to lead the way in the Greater Boston area and the North Shore. Your educational programming has strengthened thousands of teens' connection to Israel and their Jewish identity. May you go from strength to strength as you continue to plant seeds for our collective future.

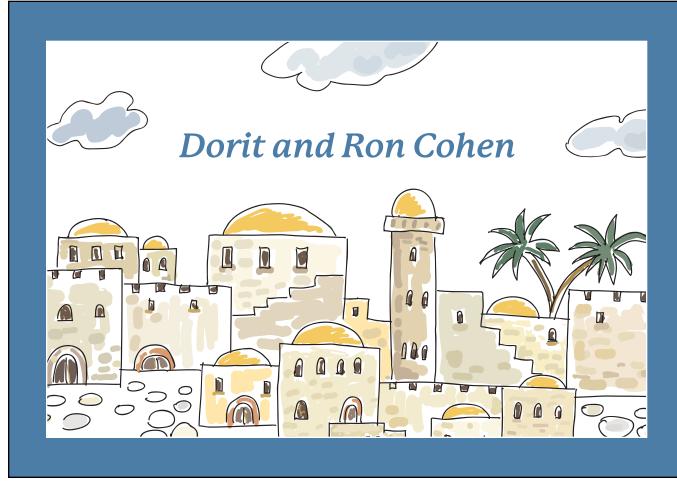
Anonymous

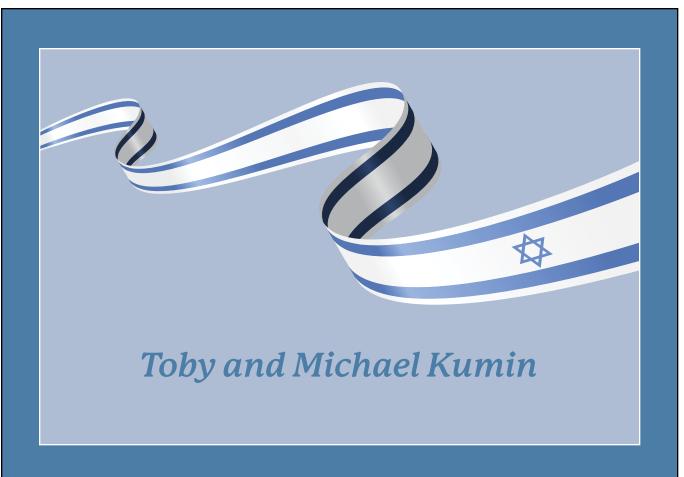


Congratulations Bob, on your well-deserved Youth to Israel Award. We are very proud of you!

Love,

Leslie and Michael Goldberg
Pam and Adam
Zack and Sasha





We at Prime Buchholz are honored to support the Lappin Foundation and its 2023 honorees, whose dedication is sure to benefit generations to come.

Congratulations on another year of work toward your goal of strengthening Jewish identity and uplifting the community!

Prime BUCHHOLZ

Role model

[rol 'madəl] noun

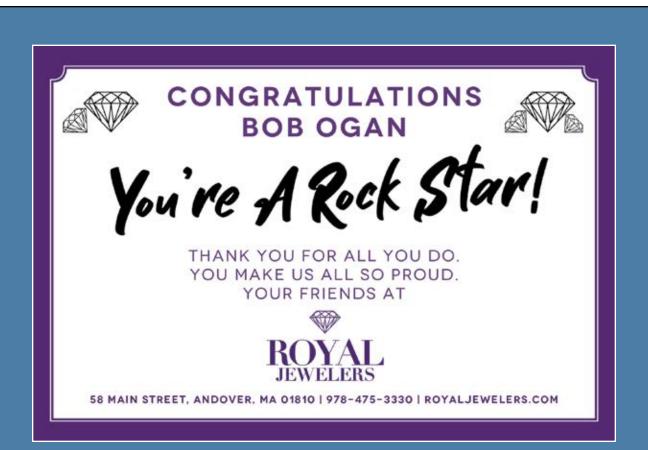
A person, esp. one who is unusually effective or inspiring, who serves as a model for others in some social role, an occupation, etc. Webster's New World College Dictionary



Dr. Hans Fisher

Michael Gruenbaum

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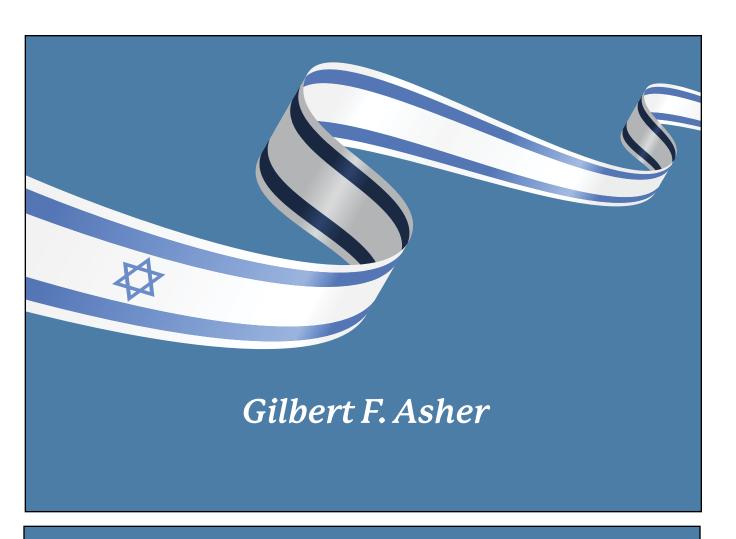
Thank you to Debbie Coltin and the Lappin Foundation. They have supported our family from birth through our children's teenage years. Their love, support and programming is irreplaceable. Wishing you many more years of helping Jewish families on the North Shore.

The Tanger Family

To our good friend, Bob Ogan

Congratulations on this well-deserved honor!
Our community is stronger because
of your leadership.

Steve and Karen Solomon

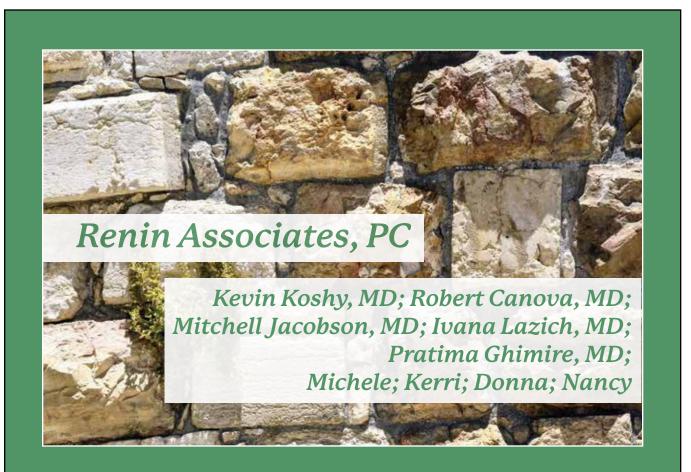


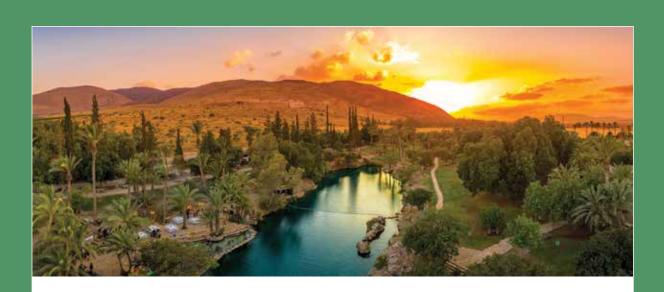




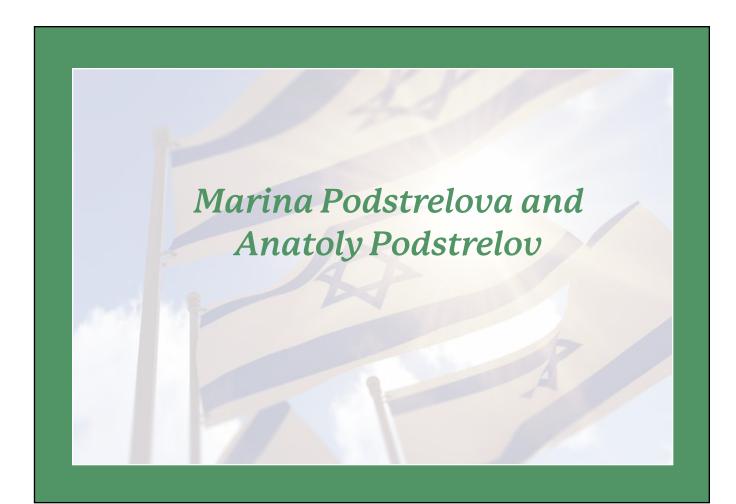
Mazal Tov to our father, grandfather and great grandfather, Hans Fisher! You have always been our hero and role model! Mazal Toy also to Bob Ogan and Michael Gruenbaum, z"l.

Dan and Carol Fisher and Family, David and Claire Fisher and Family, Mark and Debby Joseph and Family





Barbara Goldman and Eitan Aviel





Thank you for making the Youth to Israel Adventure happen and keeping our youth connected to Judaism.

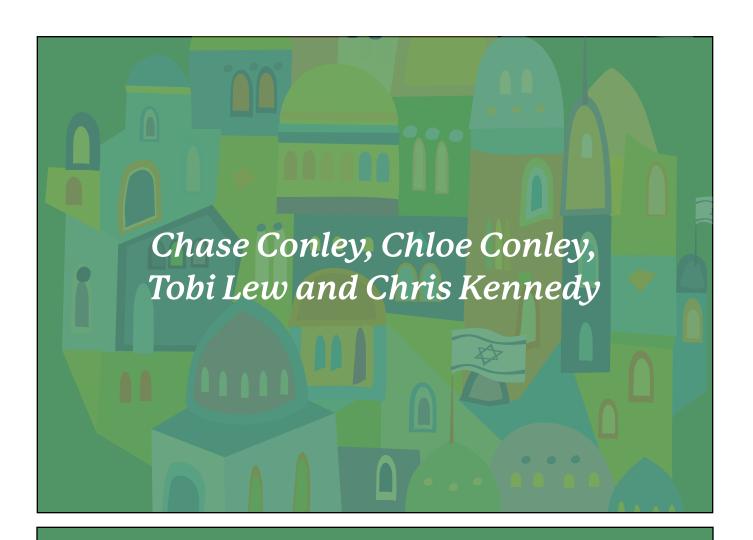
Misiura Family

Mazel tov, Bob Ogan, on receiving this special honor!

Thank you for all you do to support the North Shore Jewish Community.

Congregation Shirat Hayam



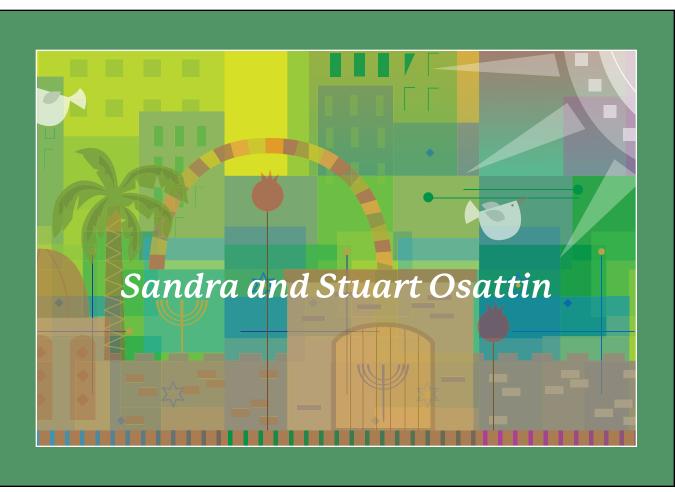






Congratulations to Deborah Coltin and the staff for keeping Judaism alive.

Shirley Merken

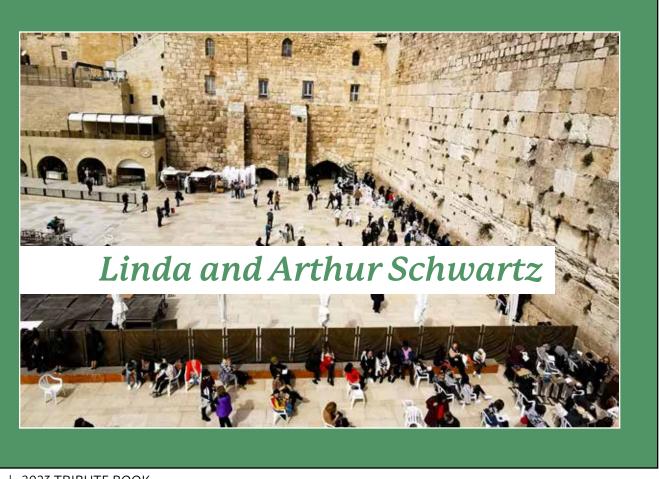




Essex County Chiefs of Police







Proud to be a Lappin Foundation supporter. Traveland

We proudly support



The Lappin Foundation

and applaud their mission to enhance Jewish identity across generations



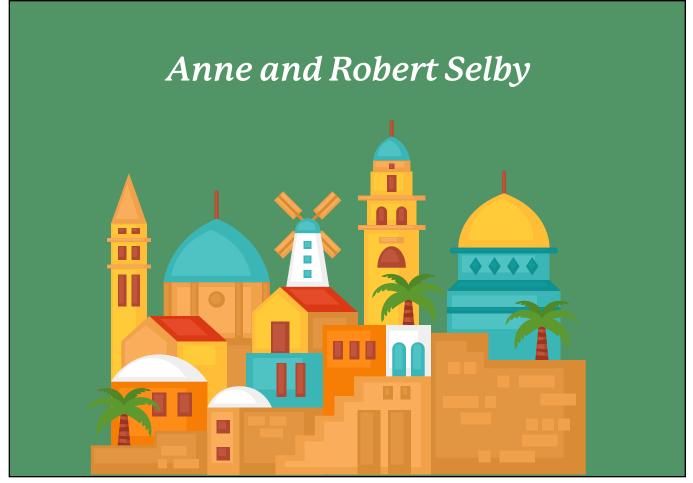
Chestnut Hill Realty

Ed E. Zuker and Family

Managing People's Homes With Pride

Mazel tov to Bobby Ogan on this well-deserved honor. Thank you and the Lappin Foundation for their passion and commitment to our Jewish community. May you go from strength to strength.

Beth and Marc Andler



To our dear cousin Bob,

Your parents instilled in you a love for Judaism and Israel. They "passed the torch" and you have "taken that torch" to become an extraordinary leader and philanthropist. Your first trip to Israel was through Y2I; this experience solidified your lifelong devotion to Israel.

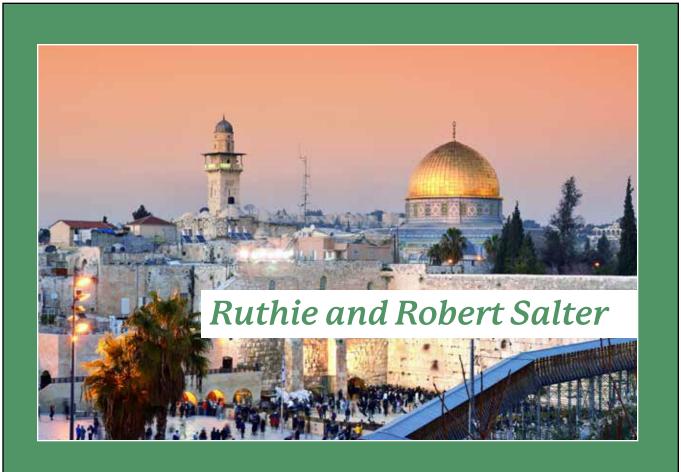
Much love,

Judy and Bill Mishkin and the extended Mishkin family









Thank you to the Lappin Foundation for sponsoring the incredible Y2I program. Gratefully, The Geller-Naftoly Family

Thank you to the Lappin Foundation for their dedication in keeping the spirit of Judaism alive in our youth.

Lisa and Marc Aronson



If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.

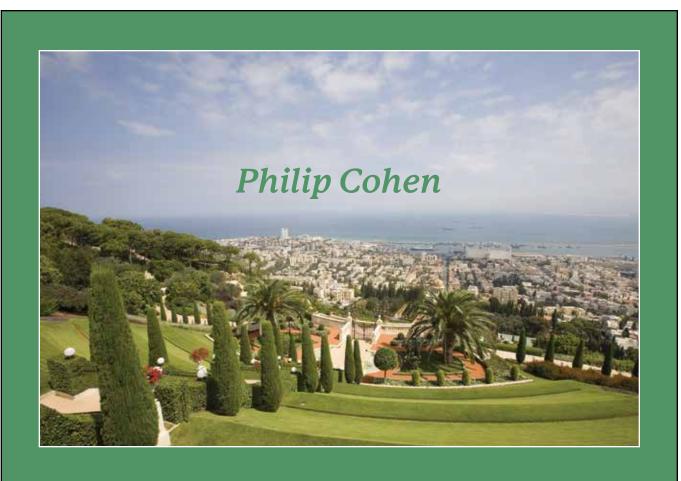
—John Quincy Adams

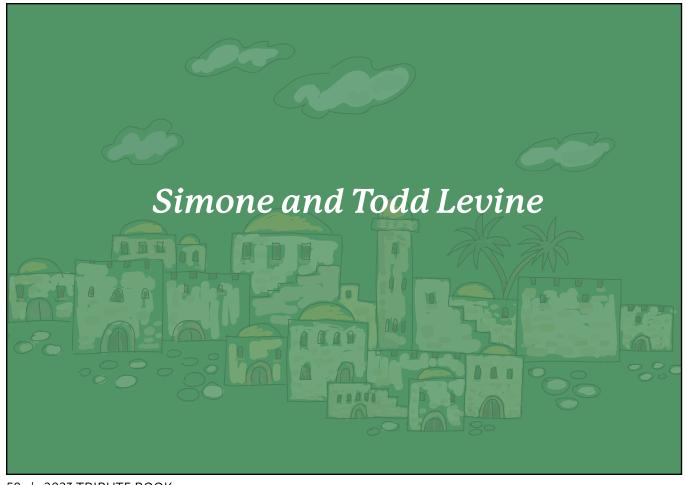
In appreciation of the leadership of Bob Ogan and the Lappin Foundation for all that they have done and are doing for our Jewish community.

Todah Rabbah!

Flori and David Schwartz and Family

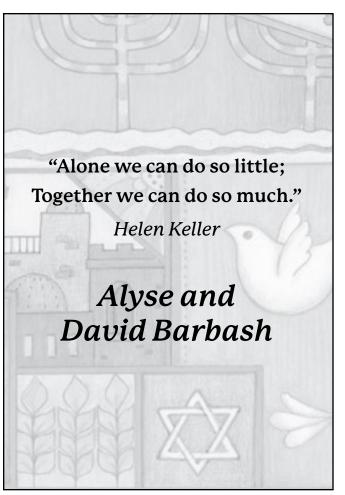


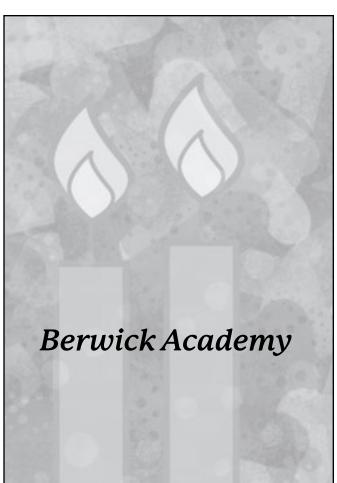


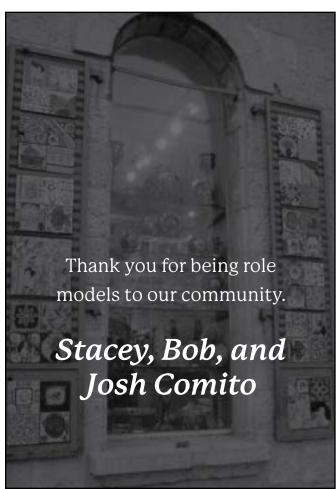


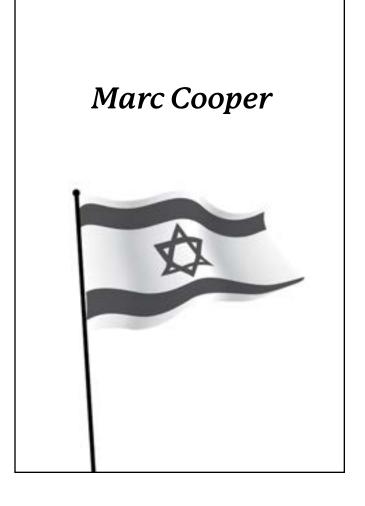


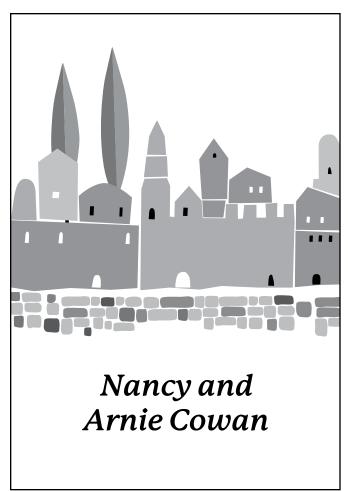










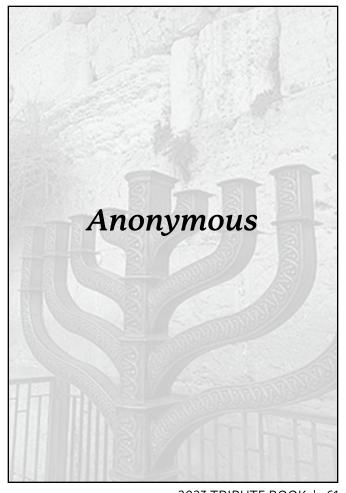


Thank you for the great work you do for the Jewish community and Israel.

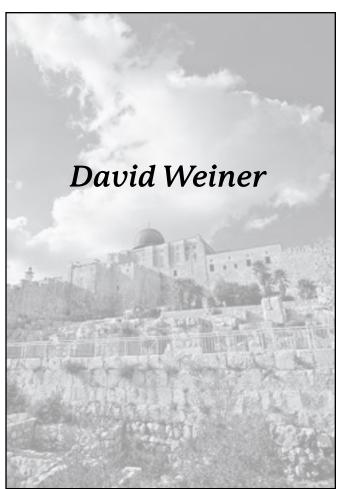
Norma and Warren Epstein













In memory of our father, Michael Gruenbaum, Terezín Holocaust survivor and author of Somewhere There Is Still a Sun.

The Gruenbaum family

Mazel tov to the Lappin Foundation Staff and Board and the teens on the Teen Antisemitism Task Force.

> Bradley and Beth Jacobson



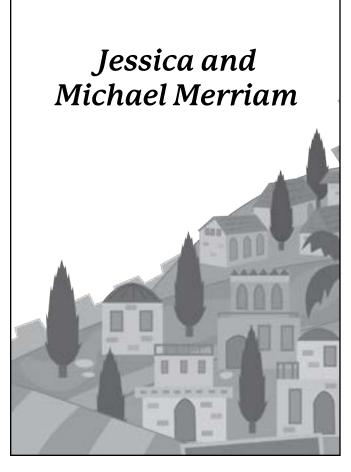
Thank you!

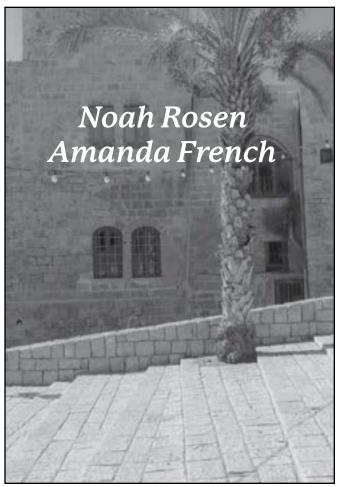
The Janock Family

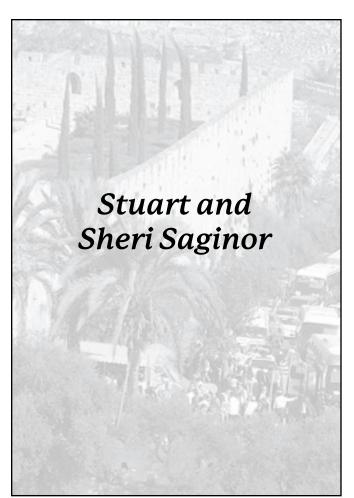


Thank you to the Lappin Foundation for giving our daughter Ilona and so many other teens the amazing opportunity to participate in the Y2I trip to Israel in addition to all the other wonderful programs offered throughout the years.

The Linn Family

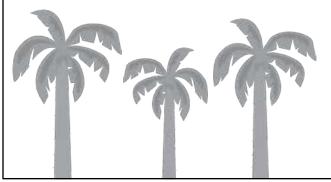




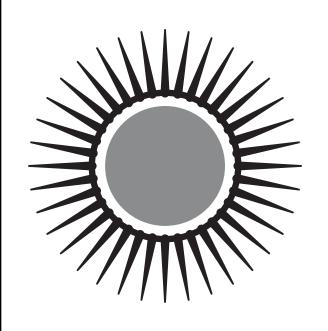


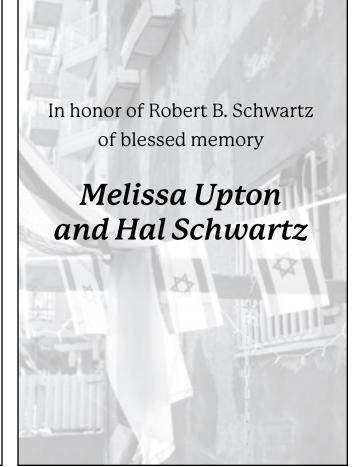
Thank you for making the Youth to Israel Adventure happen and for keeping our youth connected to Judaism.

Kate, John, Adam and Leah Saragosa









As the daughter of a child Holocaust survivor, I deeply appreciate the invaluable efforts of the Lappin Foundation in educating people about the atrocities of the Holocaust and safeguarding the memory of its victims.

Evelyn Stein and Mauricio Karchmer





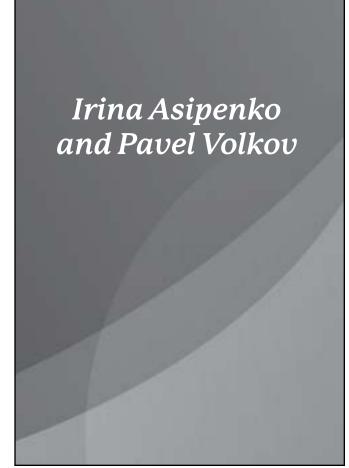
Mazel Tov!

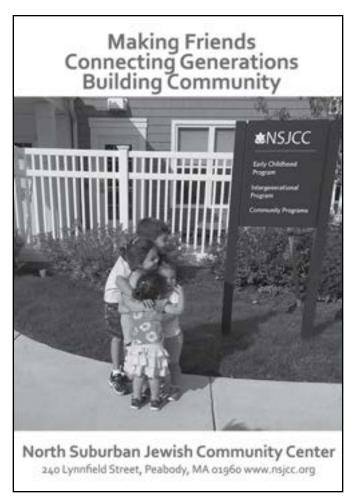
200 E. Lothrop Street Beverly, MA tbabeverly.org

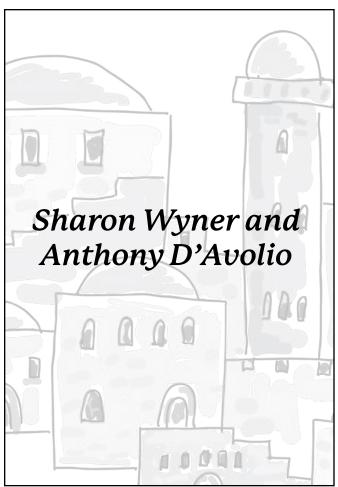
In Support of the Mission and Programs of the Lappin Foundation

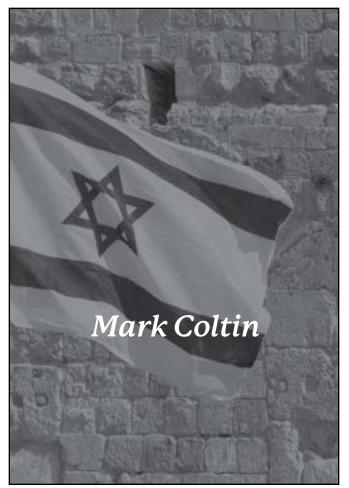
Debby and Richard Strauss







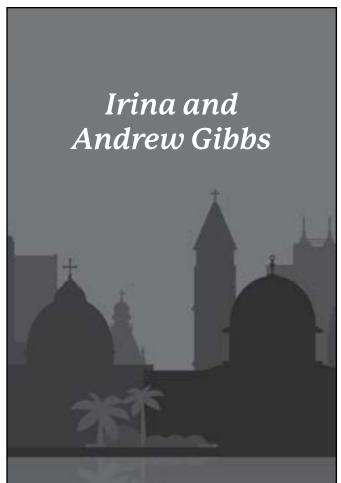




In honor of Robert Ogan Ashley, Michael and Ruth Goldberg

Your work to educate teens in high school about the Holocaust before they're on college campuses is critical for our Jewish future.





Congratulations to the honorees! Thank you Lappin Foundation for your important work in the community.

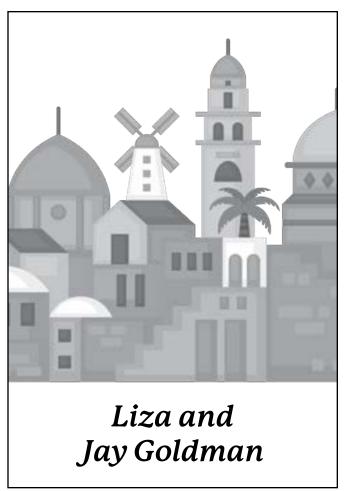
Deborah and Marc Schwartz

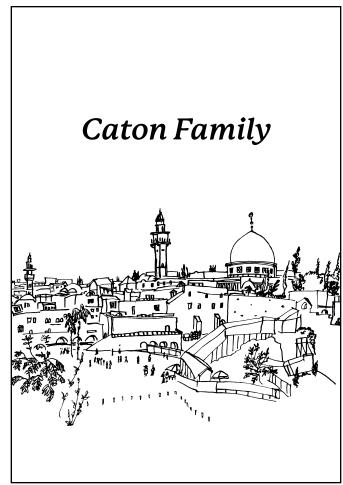


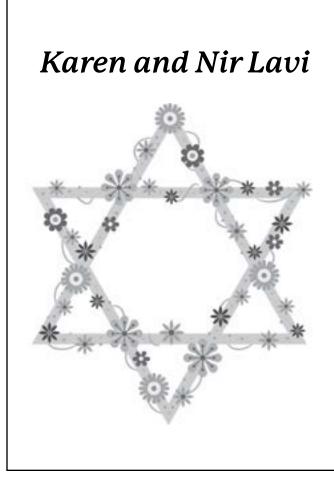


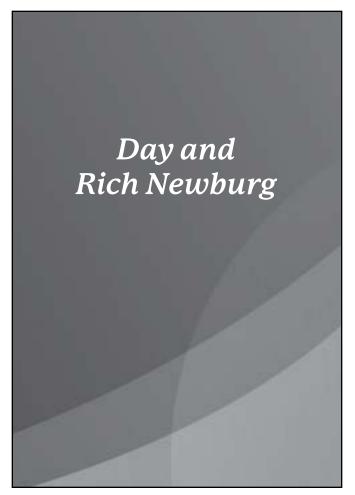
Congratulations to all of the award winners and thank you to the Lappin Foundation for all you do for our Jewish Community.

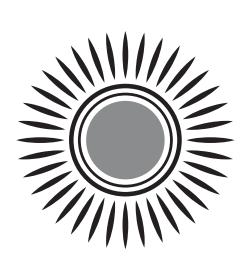
> Michele and Brian Cohen









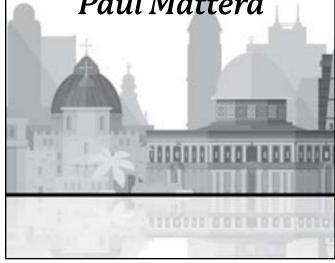


Thank you Debbie, Sharon, and the whole Y2I staff for an amazing trip!

The Kaplans

In honor of our friend, Bob Ogan. His and Leslie's work in support of social justice makes us a better community.

Judy and Paul Mattera



Lee Family

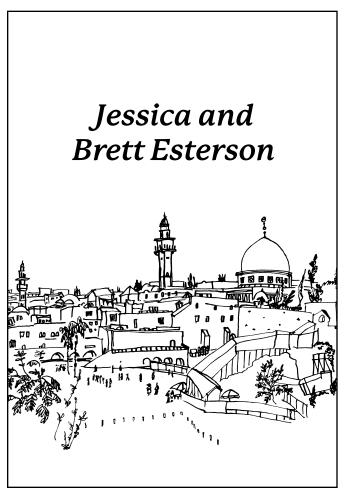
in honor of Ethan's trip to Israel

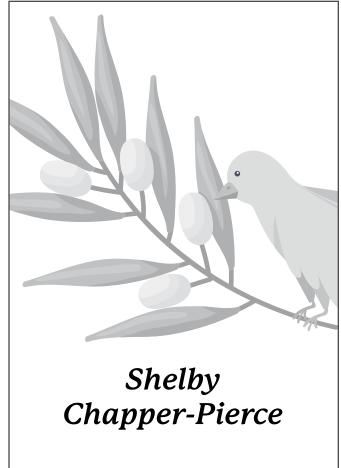


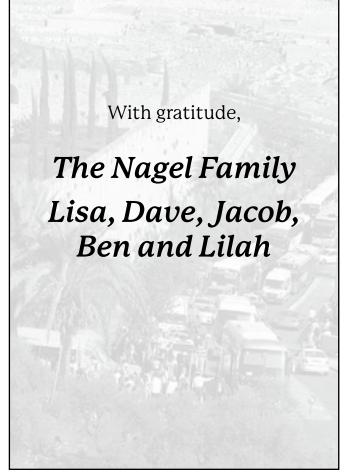
Congratulations to this year's honorees!

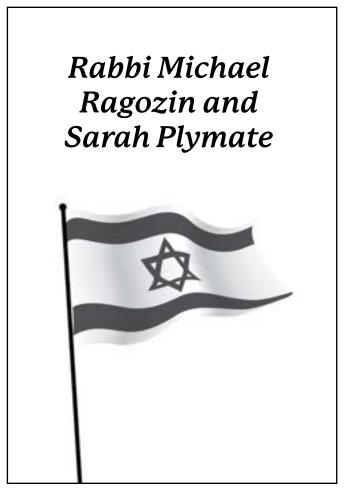
Thank you to Lappin Foundation for reaching teens through your inspiring and educational programs such as the Holocaust Symposium for Teens and your award-winning Youth To Israel Trip. Your work helps to ensure a strong Jewish community here, and in Israel!

Dave Zaltas









Thank you Y2I

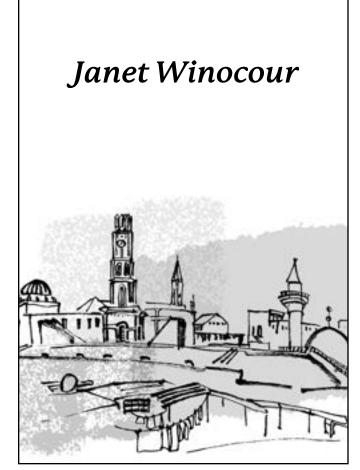
for giving Emma the experience of a lifetime!

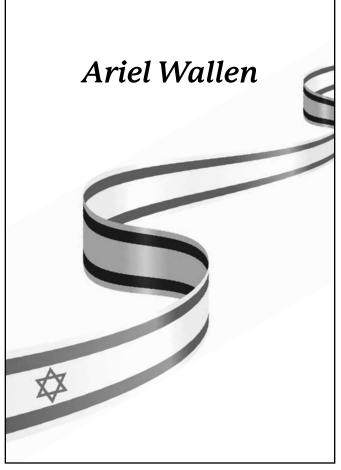


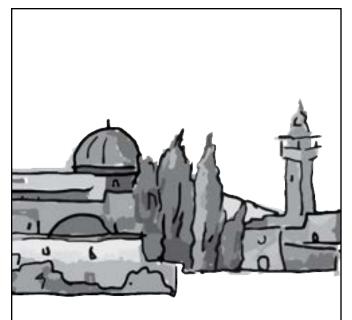
The Remis Family

Joan Wasser-Gish and Jason Gish

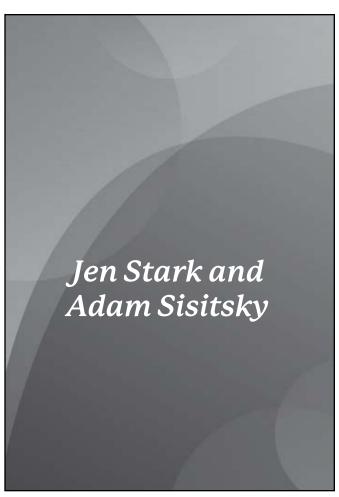








Adam and Ely Wallen

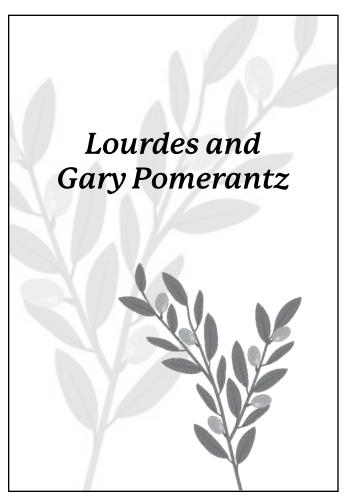


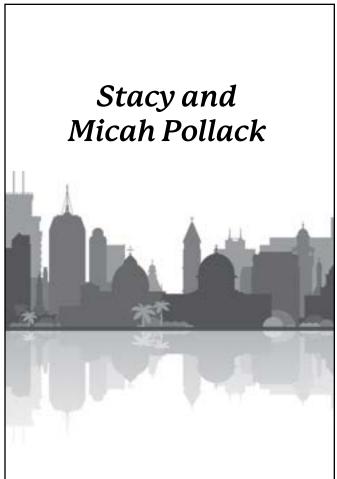


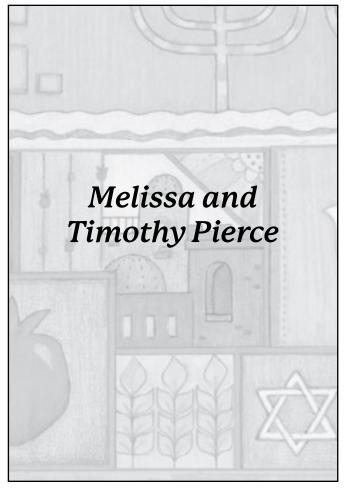
Joie and Wayne Spritz

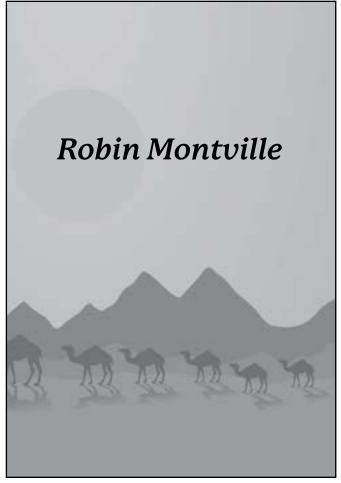


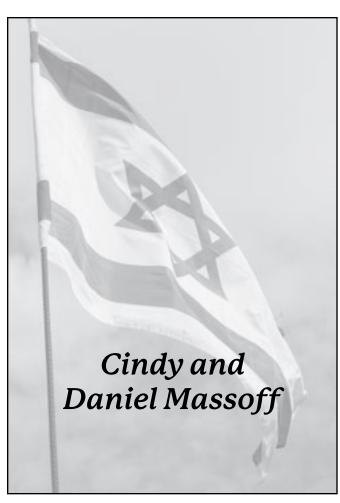


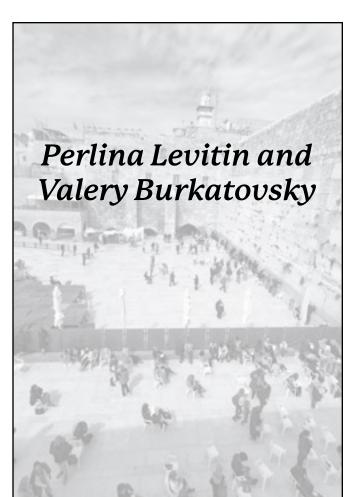


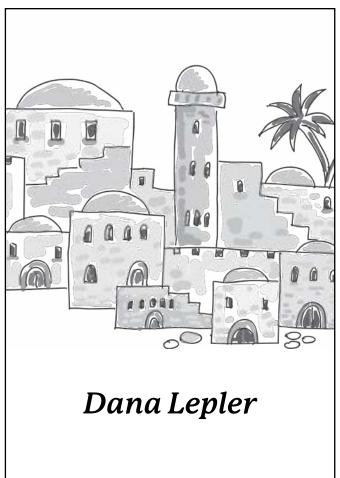


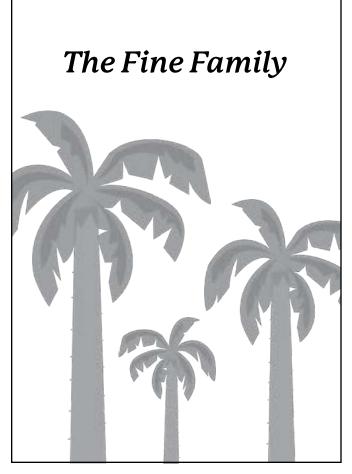




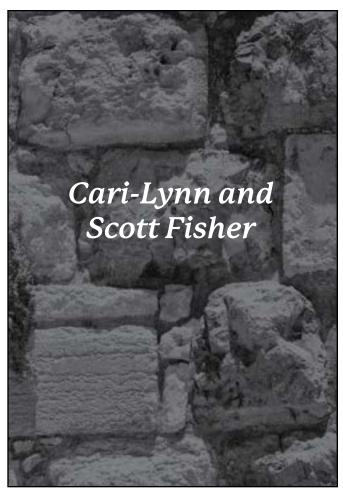


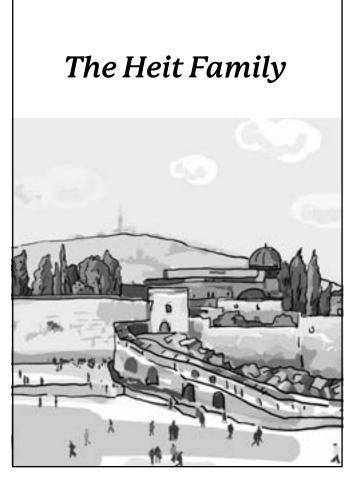


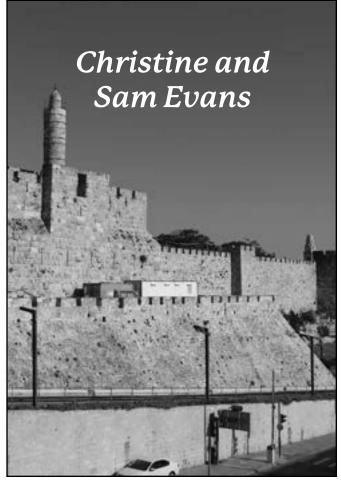


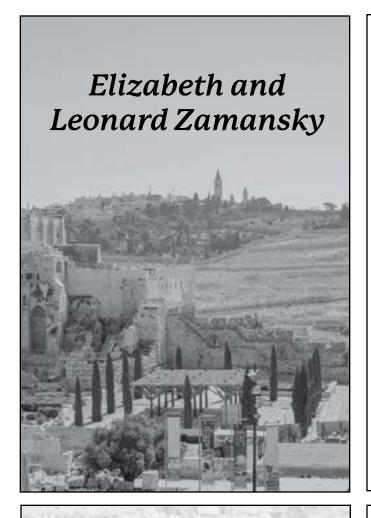




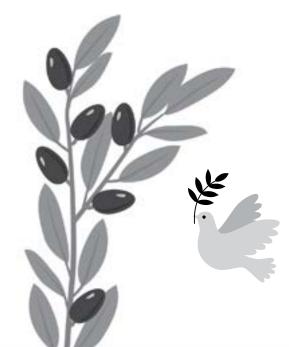








Audra Lyn Barrie and Mark Lepler



Thanks very much to Lappin Foundation. Ben had a wonderful trip.

Lily Weitzman and Robert Leaton Thank you, Lappin Foundation, for such an amazing experience!

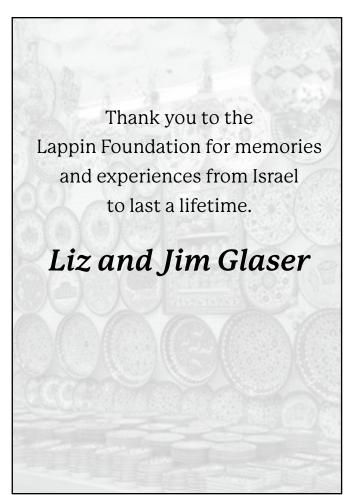
For Dana it was a great opportunity to learn the history of Israel, realize the importance of the existence of the Jewish state and feel a part of it.

And, of course, she was happy to make new friends who share the same moral values and aspirations.

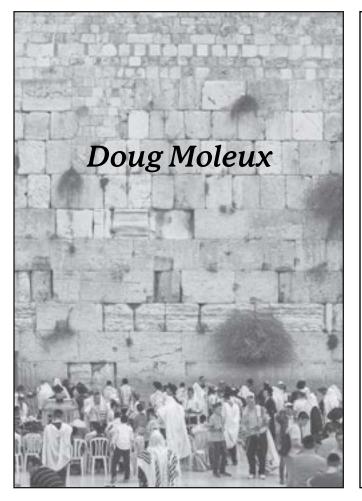
You're doing a very important job keeping our children connected to the eternal homeland of the Jewish people.

Thanks again and good luck!

Michael and Anna Slepoy







The Gary and Jon Ogan Charitable Foundation is delighted to support the Lappin Foundation as it honors the wonderful community work and commitment of Bob Ogan to their cause.

> Congratulations Bob on the Youth to Israel Award!

The Gary and Susan Ogan Family

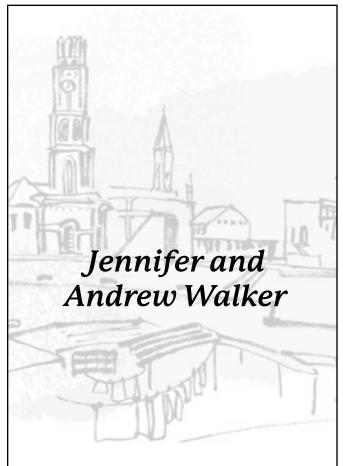


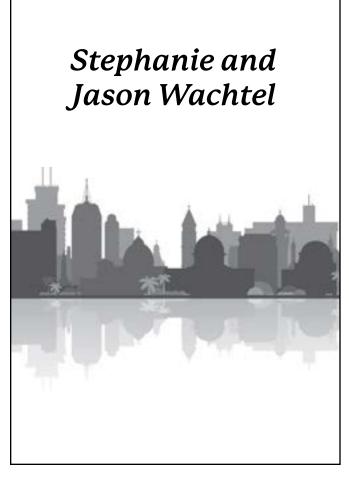
Thank you Lappin Foundation for your dedication and leadership in the Jewish community. A big thank you for connecting our teens to Israel and deepening their Jewish faith.

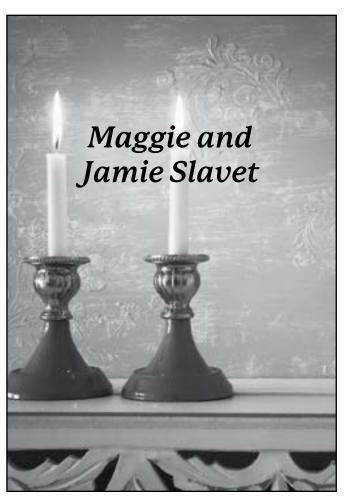
Andrew and Michele Copelotti

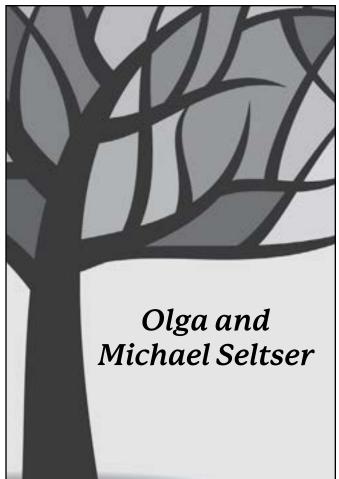
Lina and Greg Zaltsman

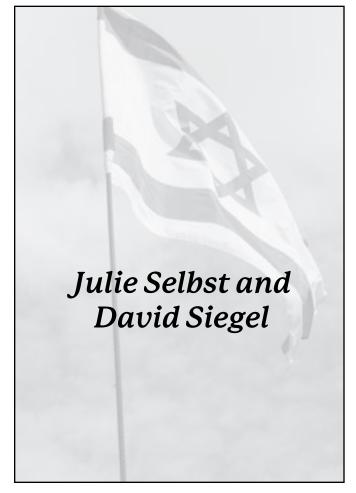


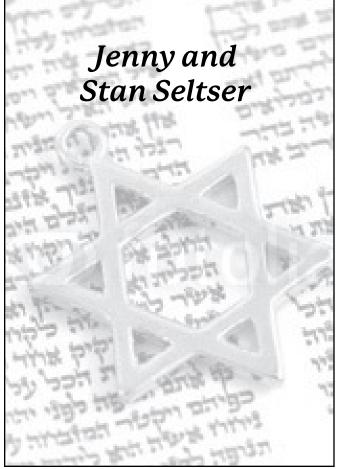


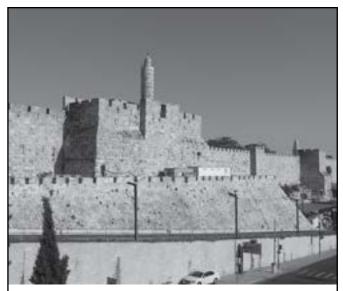




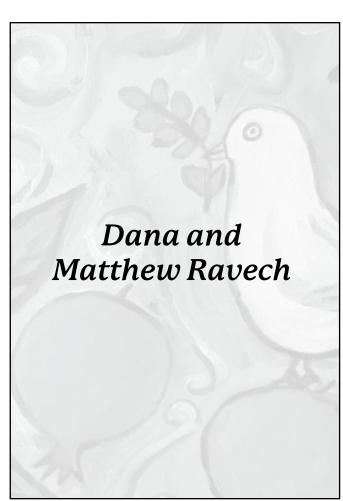


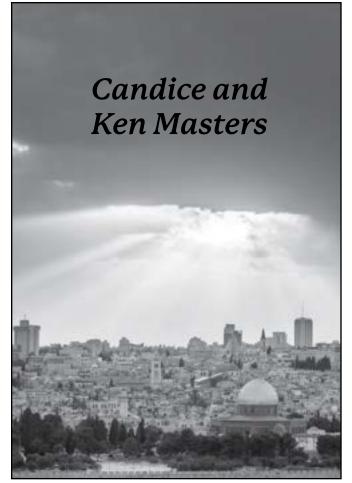




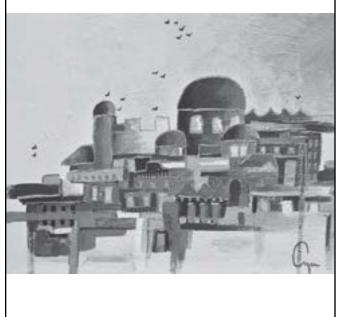


Danielle Schwartz









Thank you so much for this amazing opportunity.

With sincerest appreciation,

The DuBrava-Rakowsky Family



Thank you to the Lappin Foundation for sponsoring the incredible Y2I program.

The Katzen Family

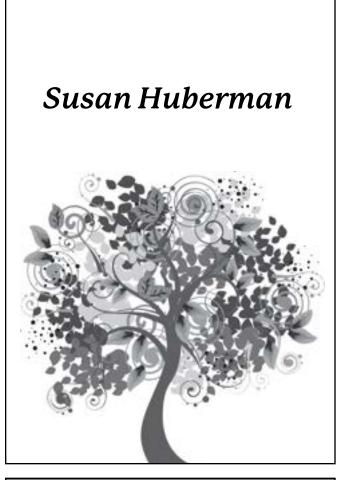


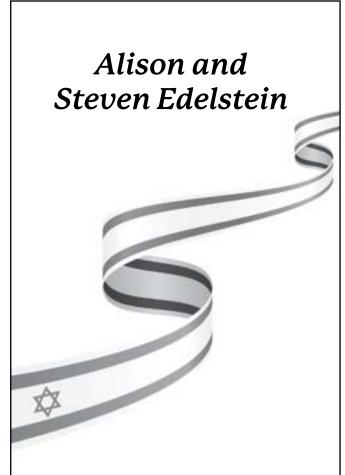
Jodi and Tim Carroll

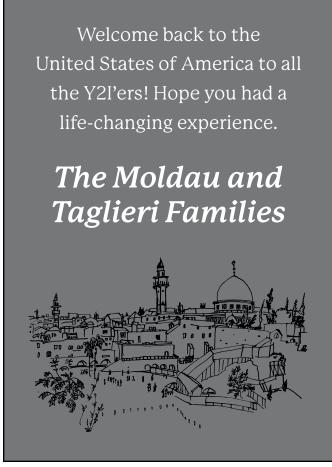


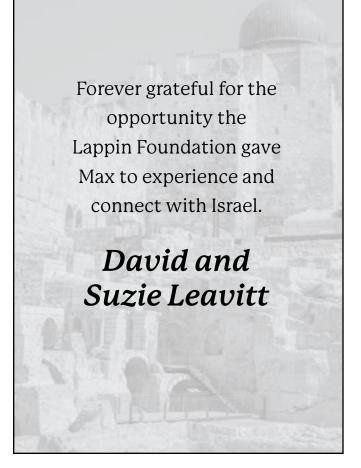
Kimberly Valkenaar and Jason Breitkopf





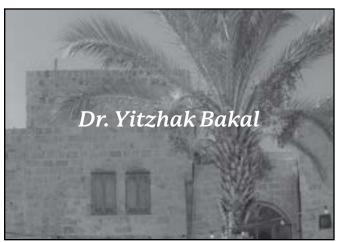












Thank you, Lappin Foundation for making and giving so many programs and trips available! We will always treasure our fabulous Israel trip hosted by Debbie Coltin. Thank you!!!

Jane and Donald Beader



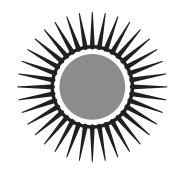
Kol Hakavod

Kit and Rabbi Richard Perlman

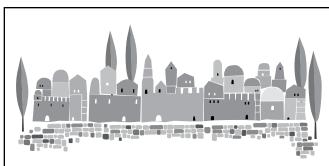


In honor of Lappin Foundation and in appreciation of Ido Aharoni Aronoff.

> Cheryl Brandes Pine and Lloyd Pine



Lori Polachek



Continue Your Good Works

Laura and Bruce Rafey

To All The Staff at Lappin Thank you for your tireless efforts!

Anonymous

Many thank yous! Judith Bennett and Family





Louise Borke

Harriet and Jeffry Brand

Congratulations on this honor!

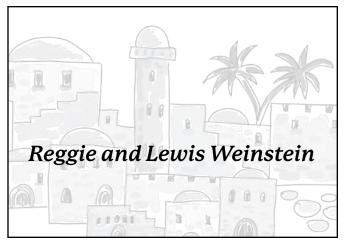
Audrey and Gary Brenner

In memory of our family members who died 1941-1945.

Thank you for all you do!

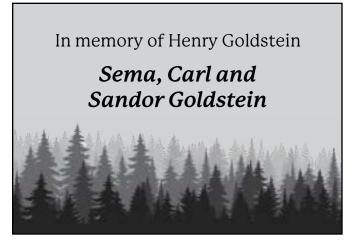
Ella and Fyodor Bromberg











Congratulations, Bob. Love, Cousin Lois and Family

Thank you, Debbie, Susan, Sharon, and the entire Foundation for your never-ending efforts to keep our children Jewish.

Barbara and Stephen Smidt

Congratulations Bob!

Evan Madoff, Owner Evan's Deli 252 Humphrey Street Marblehead, MA 01945 (781) 631-3354 evansdeli@aol.com www.evansnewyorkstyledeli.com



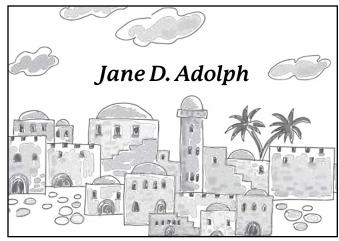
Debbie and the Lappin Foundation, Thank you for your inspired leadership and programming.

Ruth Budelmann and Sam Silverman Congratulations Bob Ogan on receiving the Youth to Israel Award.

Shari and Robert Cashman



Dawna and Thomas Butler





Our deepest appreciation for the leadership you have provided.

Eve (z'l) and Phil Cutter

Congratulations Bob. on this well-deserved award! The Rudolph Family

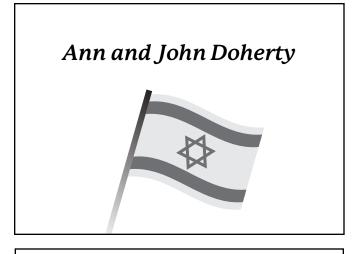


Congratulations, Bobby, on a well-deserved honor!

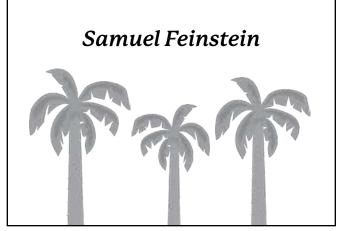
> Deborah and Alan Titelbaum

Mazal tov to all of this year's honorees and yasher koach to the Lappin Foundation for the wonderful work they continue to do!

Carol and Sam Denbo







Congratulations to Lappin Foundation and all the honorees!

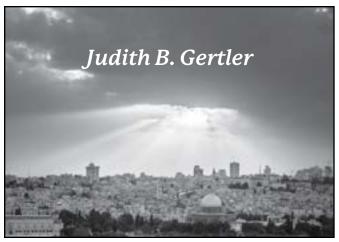
Sue and Steve Feinstein





Thank you for another excellent year of meaningful programs, such as Yom HaShoah and Y2I, that enhance the quality of Jewish life on the North Shore.

Amy and Billy Flaxer



In Honor of Bob Ogan Receiving the Youth to Israel Award

Mazal Tov,

Helaine and Jim Hazlett



Congratulations on a well-deserved honor!! Arthur and Esther Goldberg



Congratulations to our community heroes. Thank you for making a difference! Held-Giovanetti Family



Maureen Chapman

Thank you for shaping our perspective of Israel, igniting our passion, and giving us memories that will last a lifetime.

Ross Pergament Y2I 2016 Gillian Pergament Y2I 2018

Janice and Martin Labell

Congratulations Bob on this well-deserved honor.

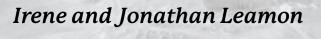
Best wishes to all the honorees!

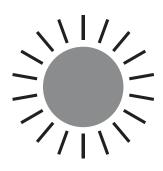
Barrie Atkin and Helen Tieger



I am proud to help continue the legacy of my grandfather, Robert Lappin, aka "pops."

Jackie Lappin





Carolyn and Stewart Leshin

Congratulations, Bob, on all your work on the youth programs to Israel.

Robert and Cindy Liptrot

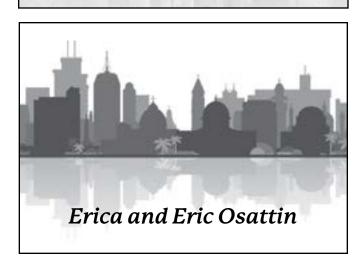
Mazel tov to Bob Ogan on this most deserving honor!

Michael and Cheryl Lunder

Kol Ha Kavod. The Legacy Lives On.

Cynthea Michaels





Ann and Michael Pearlman

Bob is the most caring person I know and well deserving of this award!

> David Love and Dorothy Miller

Jonathan Goldberg



Mazel tov, Bob, on this well-deserved honor. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to our Jewish Community.

Susan and Jonathan Yorks

Men's Club of Congregation Ahavas Achim

Congratulations Bob on this deserving honor!

Carole Cohen

Thank you for continuing to be such a force for good in our Jewish community!

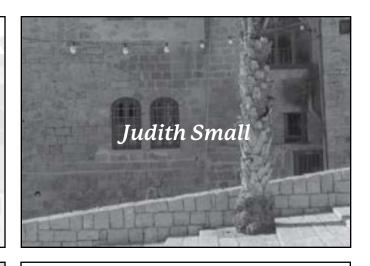
Shelley and Marty Schneer

You make a difference.

Thank you, Judith Sherman

Thank you Lappin Foundation for your tireless work, and a special thanks to the three distinguished honorees whose insights, passion and dedication over multiple decades have helped to enrich countless lives in and well beyond our Jewish community.

Leslie and Craig Slater



Bob,

For all the years of deep friendship and boundless generosity. Thank you and congratulations!

> Your pal, Bill



Congratulations Bob,

You and your family have always set an example of supporting our Jewish Community.

Risa and Joe Sontz







In honor of Deborah Coltin working hard to enhance Jewish identity here and in Israel. We love you!

Rich and Harriet Dechowitz

WELL WISHERS

Roberta Abrams

Amazon Smile

Anonymous

Julie and Jake Barth

Dan and Helanie Berg

Ruth Berg

Elliot Berke

Donald and Melissa Bornstein

Ronit and Chris Boyd

Dr. Sheldon Brown

Vivian Burton

Elaine A. Byrne

Carol and Bob Cipriani

Jodi Coburn and Steven Blumenkrantz

Caryn and Barry Cohen

Mr. & Mrs. Steven Cohen

Martin and Kelli Cohen Fein

Sherry Comerchero

Deanna Cooper

Linda and Frank DeAngelo

Linda and Steve Desatnick

Adam and Rachel Dicker

R & S Dinkin

Shoshana Dodge

Judy and Larry Dunn

Diane and Harvey Elefson

Risa Erbes

Lisa and Benjamin Fabry

Myrna S. Fearer

Zipora Feiner

Russ Finer and Terry Schultz

Thomas Fowler

Robert H. Freedman

Wendy and Mark Gershlak

Ron and Barbara Gilefsky

Lori Giunta

Lorna and Harvey Goldberg

Rachelle Goldberg

Saul and Sarah Goldberg

Mike Goodstein

Saul Gurman

Irene and Ed Gustat

Doreen Harris

Tania Fine Helhoski

Patricia Huxley-Cohen

and Alan Cohen

Laurie Hymanson and Family

Marcia Kalman

Peter Kaplan

Phyllis and Jacob Karas

Toby Karlyn

Andrea Katz

Ellen Katz

Michael and Paige Katzenstein

Abe and Anita Kaufman

Laurie and Henry Kay

Teri Kayne

Jim and Paula Kesslen

Juliette M. Landesman

Rachel Burton Lefebvre

and Ryan Lefebvre

Marjorie Levin

Dayna Levine

Joyce and Lawrence Lew

Jay Lewis

Andrea C. Liftman

Andrea and Nate Lincoff

Adele and Mark Lubarsky

Debbie and Joel Margolis

Ronald Matloff

Steven Matthews

Marion and David Mendelsohn

Merrimack Valley Jewish Federation

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Ruth Nemzoff

Alvah Parker

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R. Zachary Sanzone

Elliot P. Satenstein

Rene Schecker

Barbara and David Schneider

Eugene Schultz

Rachel and Mark Seliber

Donna and Ed Seligman

Beth and Peter Shribman

Corrine Shuman

Leeta Sinrich

Faye and Richard Soll Ann and Arthur Sommerstein Pauline and Vincent Spirito **Doris Ruhr Strauss** Karen E. Strauss Sara Stock, D.D.S. Sue and Eliot Sussman Ruth and David Titelbaum Phyllis and Robert Tobin Ronald Truxton Joseph Valof, Esq Elaine and Roger Volk Katherine Vyn **Sherry Warman** Beverly Wasserman Susan and Larry Weiner Annette and Daniel White Ashley Whyman Marv and Polly Wilson Steven and Jo Ann Wisotsky Robert Wright Janice and Elliot Wyner John and Donna Zahn

Dr. Irma W. Zarinsky





YOUTH TO ISRAEL In Their Own Words

Excerpts of Teens' Post-Trip Reflections

hroughout my journey in Israel, I had the privilege of meeting Jews from all over the world, and this experience showed me Israel is more than just a country. It is a land that connects Jewish people from all backgrounds into a place where people can proudly display their culture away from any discrimination. As a people, we are extremely lucky to have a safe haven to escape to in case of persecution as we have had throughout history. As I learned from the lectures on Y2I, Ethiopian Jews, as well as many other groups, have found their new homes in Israel, which makes me extremely proud to know that my fellow 'people' have created a place where Jews can feel a sense of belonging. To me Israel is a place where Jewish people can be proud of their heritage, reconnect with their roots, and celebrate their identity with others just like them. It serves as a powerful reminder that our history only made our bonds stronger and more prideful to be who we are. Walking home on Shabbat night I realized that Israel was a place where any Jew can find a true home.

NOAH ARONSON

Israel is a home, it's a home for the millions of Jews in the world, whether they live in Israel or not. To me, Israel means that Jews are represented, represented so that we always have somewhere to go, as a choice or not as a choice. Israel serves as a home for all, not just religious Jews, not just Jews, but for anyone that wants to call it home. Arriving in Jerusalem on Friday night to visit the Western Wall, connected me to Judaism in a completely different way than I had experienced prior. Similar to others, I felt connected to Judaism through my friends and community, such as going to summer camp, or going to my temple with my family. Forming bonds with those people made me comfortable and proud to be Jewish. At the Western Wall, I danced with Hasidic Jews and total strangers, who welcomed me into their circles, and treated me as if I were one of them. I think that this demonstrates the need for Israel, that all Jews are connected globally, even if we don't know each other, and having Israel can serve as the home for all Jews to congregate in a safe and welcoming setting.

ZACH ARONSON

Y2I was my very first time out of the country. You'd expect a country halfway across the globe to feel different. Like stepping out into a newly discovered planet. A place filled with strange and new customs and people. A place completely different from what you are used to. At least that's what I thought, based on the people around me. Everyone had this sort of expectation that I'd be walking through one hundred percent new territory, that Israel would be totally alien to me. It was not. My trip to Israel was wonderful, I enjoyed all of the fun I had there. If someday I am lucky enough to be able to go back, I'd do so in a heartbeat. I saw ancient Jewish artifacts and religious history. My stay in Israel was amazing.

ALLEGRA BREITKOPF

Visiting Israel as a Jewish teen was eye-opening. It wasn't just a trip; it was a journey that made me realize the importance of staying connected to my Jewish roots. Walking the ancient streets of Jerusalem and seeing the Western Wall left a deep impact on me. I felt a strong link to my ancestors, who faced hardship, but persevered, nonetheless. Learning about the Holocaust at Yad Vashem and Israel's struggles showed me the strength of the Jewish people. Being a Jewish teen in a diverse world can be complex, but my time in Israel taught me that being Jewish is more than just a religious label. It's about embracing traditions and values that bind us together as a community. Staying Jewish isn't just about following rituals; it's about living with compassion, seeking justice, and making the world a better place. I now understand that I have a role to play in creating a positive impact. Preserving our heritage and values is crucial in our fast-paced world. By staying Jewish, I honor my ancestors and contribute to preserving a rich cultural heritage. This trip sparked a desire to be an active part of my community. As I return home, I feel a renewed sense of pride in my Jewish identity. At Gann, Judaism sometimes felt like just another regular everyday thing, but Israel reminded me just how special it really is. Back at home, I am ready to embrace who I am and carry our heritage forward as a guiding light in an ever-changing world.

JORDYN BURKATOVSKY



My experience in Israel with Y2I has taught me many things. Y2I has revealed the true essence of Israel's resilience, inspiring me to embrace my roots with newfound passion and commitment for my religion and the state of Israel. I learned why it is important to stand up for Israel because of the amount of unnecessary and uneducated hate against the state of Israel and Israelis. The trip also emphasized to me how important it is not to hide my Jewish identity. By hiding my Jewish identity, it shows the people with hate for the Jews and for the Jewish state that they won. My trip also taught me that people are full of kindness, everywhere from the people we met on the street to our Israeli roommates. I found nothing but kindness. I also learned that Israel was not all war-torn, as it is portrayed to be. I also believed that the Israeli people were afraid of the conflict, but after conversations, I learned that they had strong pride for their military and believed that they would protect them. This trip has not only deepened my understanding of the region's complexities, but has also instilled in me a desire to continue advocating for peace and unity for the Jewish state. I am grateful for this life-changing opportunity, and I am eager to share the invaluable lessons of Y2I with others.

EVAN CARROLL

I'd say Y2I had a big impact on my life. It was a very fun experience. Meeting all the new people from here and from Israel was a great experience, and it was also very cool to see the culture in Israel. Another part of the trip I enjoyed was making new friends and getting to do all the activities with other people. I really enjoyed the Y2I trip to Israel and I'm definitely hoping to go back soon.

JOSH CATON

When I first heard I was going to see the Wall, I really didn't think that much of it. I thought it was going to be a regular experience, just going to see a monument or something, but when I arrived, I was taken aback by the view and the feeling. The closer I got to the Wall, the more I felt connected. When I put my tallis on and took my sunglasses off to really see the Wall, I just started to cry. I don't remember if I was sad or just full of emotions, but I just cried. When I went to the Wall and put my hand on it, it was an experience like no other. When I felt the Wall, I just knew. My second time at the Wall was the same, but different. We went on Shabbat and the sun was setting and the Orthodox Jews were crowding the Wall, praying. I had to push through to really get to the Wall, but when I got there, I felt the same rush of emotions as I did before. I didn't really know what to do when I got there, but I just started to pray whatever was on my mind. Midway through praying, I started tearing up again. It felt like I was praying for a couple minutes, but 20 minutes had gone by. It almost felt like I was stuck in that time, while all around me time went on. It truly was an experience like no other. In the end, it almost felt like I was welcomed back to a place I have never been before. My time in Israel with Y21 has taught me to embrace the Jewish religion, and you will truly find peace within yourself.

Walking home from the Wall on Shabbat will always be one of my favorite moments from the trip. Being at the Wall on Shabbat is an indescribable feeling. The sense of belonging and inclusiveness you feel with all the local Israelis as they pulled you into their singing circles is something I'll never forget. I had a negative preconceived idea of what our hourlong walk back to the hotel was going to feel like. I could not have been more wrong. The emptiness of the streets while our whole Y2I group happily walked through Jerusalem was the most connected our Y2I group had been. Israel definitely taught me not to judge anything before you do it because 99% of the time it'll be a fun experience. I know I've made lifelong friends.

CHLOE CONLEY

Even though I have not lived in Israel, all the people I met were so welcoming and heartwarming. I felt as if Israel was a second home for me, a place of comfort for me to share past experiences about my religion and culture. Y2I has made me feel more connected to my religion and has helped me understand our rich history of exile, hatred, and antisemitism, not only in Israel, but about my experiences in America, as well. Hopefully, by sharing these stories with them, I can create a richer and deeper connection to Israel for all of us.

JACOB COPELOTTI





The Y2I Israel trip for me was enriching, as for the longest time, I felt disconnected from my Jewish identity. After the twelve-day sojourn in Israel, I was a changed man. I realized that there was more to being Jewish than just believing in the religion. What I saw in the land of Israel was eye-opening. I saw the nation of Israel on full display: the people, its beauty, and its culture. I saw everyone openly expressing themselves how they please, such as the Hasidic Jews, as well as other people wearing their own cultural garb. Being Jewish is not about the religion, but rather, being Jewish is about perseverance and will. The Jewish people have been faced with oppression and cruelty over time, but rather than suppress their ways and live out their lives, they exhibit their Jewish identity in the face of persecution. Before the trip, I had chosen to keep my identity a secret in order to avoid any potential mistreatment because of it, but after the trip, I can finally say I am proud to be Jewish, proud to associate myself with the people of Israel, as I have seen first-hand what Jewish resistance looks like and feels like. This trip changed my entire perception about the Jewish identity, and after a long time, I have finally made peace with that part of me.

GUS CORDINGLEY



Y2I has taught me what Israel means to our community and how important it is to keep our holy land, as generations and generations have stood on the land, and more importantly to have a brighter future for the country. Y2I has taught me to stand up for what I believe in and what's important - standing up for what's right and facing antisemitism firsthand. Y2I has influenced me to be proud of my ethnicity and to wear it proudly as I continue to wear the star of David on my neck every day. It has also taught me that Israel is my home, even though I was not born there. I fit in because I am Jewish.



It was really nice meeting so many Jewish people my age, since, in my town, I do not have a lot of Jewish friends. It was interesting to find out how everyone practices Judaism in their own different ways. To me, practicing Judaism is going to synagogue for high holidays, becoming a Bat Mitzvah, celebrating the holidays, and practicing Jewish rituals and Jewish milestones with my family. I recognize this about myself because not everyone on my trip practices the same way. On my Y2I trip, my eyes were opened to this, as I have never seen this many Jewish kids my age all in one place, especially while we were having **common experiences in Israel**. I believe visiting all the historic sites in Israel made me think about how I view Judaism. Overall, it was a meaningful trip, as I learned many things about Jewish history, in addition to making new friends.

OLIVIA EDELSTEIN

My trip with Y2I impacted my life in so many ways both while I was in Israel, and also now that I am back home. I became more in touch with my Judaism, made so many new friends, and had the time of my life all at the same time. Seeing people of all different levels of Judaism all around the country was a beautiful ideology and an amazing realization to see. Also, interacting with all of the other teens on the trip and hearing about bar mitzvahs and other Jewish experiences like BBYO was a really cool experience. Another way my Y2I trip impacted my life is through the items that I bought. One of these items was a sterling silver chain with a Star of David pendant that I wear everywhere I go. And I wear it proudly to show who I am and where I come from. All in all, going on this trip through the Y2I program was an outstanding experience that I wish every Jewish American teen could participate in.

JAKE ESTERSON

During Shabbat the group visited the Western Wall, and we were greeted with hundreds upon hundreds of Orthodox Jews all gathered around the Wall and deep in prayer. Upon seeing the deep religious trance everyone was in, I was proud of my identity as a Jew and happy to be in the country where we were all accepted. All in all, my expedition in Israel was extremely invigorating and left me with many happy memories that will last a lifetime!

LEO EVANS

My recent Y2I trip to Israel was an absolute blast! It's hard to put into words just how much this experience meant to me. From the moment we landed, I knew I was in for an incredible journey. Israel turned out to be everything I had hoped for and more. I had the chance to meet and connect with Israelis, and some of those friendships are still going strong. These newfound friends opened my eyes to a different side of life, offering unique perspectives and insights into Israeli culture. Israel was an eye-opening experience that showed me a different world, a different way of life. It expanded my horizons, challenged my beliefs, and made me appreciate the beauty of diversity. The trip was a rollercoaster of emotions, filled with unforgettable moments, lifelong friendships, and a profound sense of gratitude. My Y2I journey to Israel was an adventure of a lifetime. It wasn't just about the places we visited, but the connections we formed along the way.

ETAN FARFEL



Most people will tell you their favorite part of being in Israel was the food, the history, or maybe even the ocean. While I loved everything about it, my favorite part of being in Israel was the feeling of being part of the majority. I had never been anywhere where being Jewish was "the norm." It made me feel safe and secure knowing that almost everyone around me was Jewish, whether they were Orthodox, unreligious, or somewhere in between. I loved how there were people from all over the world who moved to Israel because of the connection that they felt. I am happy to say that I made connections of my own with the beautiful country that I had been waiting so long to see.

SARAH FINE

Looking back on my journey to Israel, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and enlightenment. The transformative experience not only allowed me to explore the rich history and culture of the land, but also rekindled my connection to Judaism. As I walked the ancient streets of Jerusalem. stood in awe of the Western Wall, and ventured through the diverse landscapes of this remarkable country, I found myself embracing my Jewish heritage with a newfound vigor. Israel, with its sacred sites and deep roots in Jewish history, felt like a living testament to the strength and resilience of our people. I was moved by the thousands of years of continuity that echoed through every corner, reminding me of the extraordinary journey we have undertaken as a community. The warmth and inclusiveness of the local Jewish communities I encountered further reinforced my connection. Engaging in conversations with fellow Jews, sharing stories of our traditions, and participating in religious ceremonies brought a sense of belonging and unity that I never really see back in America.

JOEY FISHER

Every day in Israel was filled with insightful learning experiences, beautiful sights, amazing food, and the increasing pride I felt in my Jewish identity. As I spent more time in Israel, I felt the connection to my Jewish identity and roots grow. Being surrounded by others who share the same Jewish identity as I do felt very special. Meeting and spending time with the Israeli teens was definitely a highlight of the trip. I met several Israelis with whom I had many things in common and shared many similar interests, which was such a cool experience. Spending time in Jerusalem especially sparked a feeling of pride in my Jewish identity as I learned so much about the history and values of Judaism. Going to the Western Wall on Shabbat was a truly remarkable moment. Singing prayers with the Y2I group and even other Jewish youth groups visiting Israel helped me realize the importance of staying connected with Judaism. Learning about the importance of standing up for Israel and Judaism was also very eye-opening to me. In a world where antisemitism is increasingly present on social media platforms and elsewhere, I have struggled to figure out how to combat this kind of discrimination and hate. Hearing from Charlotte of StandWithUs and various other speakers throughout the trip was super helpful and informative. I'm very grateful to return to the U.S. with amazing friendships, unforgettable memories, and an increased sense of pride in my Jewish identity. I am now more motivated to advocate against antisemitism and learn more about the importance of Judaism.

ELIZA GIBBS



Israel to me is more than the 8,550 square miles it takes up. For me, Israel is my safety and my protector. It provides me with the comfort of knowing I will never be without a home. Knowing that I always have a home in Israel takes a huge weight off my shoulders in navigating my life. I know I will never be without a home and a place to be myself. I also learned I have history in Israel that will never be erased. Seeing holy sites, such as the Western Wall, was extremely moving because it made me feel a sense of connection to other Jews before me. It almost put me in their shoes and helped me better understand them. Seeing the Yad Vashem memorial had a huge impact on me because it showed me the support that I don't always see for Jews. Even just walking around Israel opened my eyes. I saw people of all different origins coming together to be Jewish. I saw how strong the Jewish and Israeli people are. All in all, I don't think I would be the same person without this experience. I have found a confidence in knowing my safety, and I am so grateful for all Israel taught me.

AVA GLASER

During the course of the trip, not only did I learn a lot, but I also bonded with Judaism like I never have before. That feeling of peace from being around people that are just like you is something that I have never experienced before. By bonding with Judaism, I grew a greater love for the religion and culture. Understanding more about what I believe in gave me more hope, hope that one day, the thing that we Jews all believe in can help us to end all of our problems and disputes. An example of my experience is my time at the Western Wall. Before I went there, I had heard all about it from my family, and all they always said was, "It's so special," so when I went to put my hand on that wall, wrapped in tefillin, I wanted it to be special, and it was. It was more special than I could imagine. I felt safe and at peace knowing that I was in the middle of where it all started for the Jewish people. Slipping the notes brought optimism to my mind that said, "Hey, maybe one day, all people who are Jewish can get this sense of harmony." As I walked away, I knew that I was stronger as a person, mentally, physically, and religiously. These moments and memories only happened because of the Y2I trip. Without this experience I would still be out of

DREW GOLDMAN

tune with my faith.

Israel showed me the true diversity of Jewish life in an unimaginable way and offered me a new, invaluable understanding of what it means to be **Jewish.** One of the most powerful aspects of being in Israel is the connection to the long history of Jewish people. Walking through the old streets of Jerusalem and touching the Western Wall conveyed a profound sense of belonging and pride to my heritage. Meeting Jews from different backgrounds, experiencing various traditions, and witnessing the different expressions of Judaism has enhanced my Jewish identity altogether. I was shown through all these experiences that my identity does not have to look identical to anyone else's and that we are still connected through shared history and values. I'll forever hold this experience and its lessons with me.

MADDIE GOLDMAN

During Y2I, I learned about many different cultures and ways of living. I saw what it was like to live on a kibbutz and what it was like to live in the bustling city of Tel Aviv. These experiences changed the way that I think about Israel and showed me the diversity of the state. Before this trip, I had little idea of what Israel was really like. I had based most of what I thought it'd be like on stories I saw in the news or heard from my family. When we arrived, I quickly realized that there was so much more to Israel than I thought. This trip also showed me how strong the Jewish community is. I was fascinated by how everyone came together on Shabbat at the Western Wall. Although we were all so different, we came together because we all had something in common, our religion and curiosity. Regardless of whether we practiced Judaism the same way, had differing beliefs, or spoke different languages, we came together on our respective sides of the Wall to pray and celebrate Shabbat together. On the women's side, we joined hands with another group of Israelis and young women on a trip from the UK. We seemingly had nothing in common, but after singing together, we all realized we were more alike than we all thought. Y2I made me feel a connection to Israel that I never would have felt if I hadn't visited. It taught me more about my religion and brought me closer to my roots than I ever have been.

ABBIE GOODWIN

My favorite part of Israel was Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum. I was struck by it because it really showed, in great detail, the horror and evil of the Holocaust and the atrocities that were committed against the Jewish people in Europe. It made me realize that Jewish people have endured so many terrible things throughout their history, and I now understand why they need to fight for their freedom and survival. It also taught me that, even in the darkest times, there can be light at the end of the tunnel, and that it is important to have a Jewish identity throughout your entire life.

ETHAN HEIT

Judaism isn't just a religion; it is a cultural, ethnic group of people that, when they come together, are courageous and strong. The pride that I have for my Jewishness and the Jewish people has really grown. With the two captivating lectures given by Charlotte and all the history that we were shown, I couldn't be prouder of our people. For example, the trip to Mount Masada really blew my mind because I thought what they did would've been impossible. The village on top of the mountain – it was crazy to think that this was made over thousands of years ago by our ancestors and was where we fought, brave and proud. The story about how the Jews killed themselves before the Romans got to them was sad, but also provided great insight on how the Jewish people will not get bossed around and will do things on their own terms. Another great example of my growth in my pride for my Jewish identity is the bullet factory that we toured. To listen and see this mind-boggling creation of the Jews was just great, simply because of what the people working in the bullet factory had to endure all day long. Really made me proud. These two places combined with so many others, such as the Western Wall and City of David, really made me feel the Jewish in me. I'm proud to be Jewish, and I want nothing more than to express my Jewish identity to the world.

JAYDEN JANOCK



Throughout my Y2I trip, I met a lot of new people from different places, whether that was from Israel, a town next to me, or a different state. Once the trip started, I was making more friends faster because we were constantly with each other. It was really nice to meet so many Jewish people my age, since in my town, I do not have a lot of Jewish friends. It was interesting to find out how everyone practices Judaism in their own different ways. To me, practicing Judaism is going to synagogue for high holidays, becoming a Bar Mitzvah, getting confirmed in the temple, celebrating the holidays, and practicing Jewish rituals and milestones with my family. I recognize this about myself because not everyone on my trip practices the same way. On my Y2I trip, my eyes were opened to this, as I have never seen this many Jewish kids my age all in one place, especially while we were having common experiences in Israel. I believe visiting all the historic sites in Israel made me think about how I view Judaism.

JEREMY KAPLAN

A transformative journey to Israel ignited a deep connection to Judaism within me. Immersing myself in the rich tapestry of Jewish history and heritage, I felt a profound sense of belonging and resonance with this ancient faith. Exploring the holy city of Jerusalem, walking in the footsteps of my ancestors, and standing before the Western Wall, I experienced a powerful spiritual awakening. Witnessing Jews from all walks of life engage in prayer, study, and reflection within the vibrant tapestry of Jewish life reaffirmed my own desire to embrace Judaism.

COLBY KARP

When I was hearing teens' stories about how their lives were changed from this trip, I didn't believe them. Now that I am back from the trip, I have learned that it truly was life-changing. Y2I has impacted me so much. I have met some amazing people that I want to know for the rest of my life. I have never felt so at home as I have with this group of kids and in Israel. When we went to the Western Wall on Shabbat, I never wanted to leave. I felt so at home, and I want to go back and relive that moment. This trip has made me feel more connected to Judaism, and I can't wait until I can travel to Israel again.

ANGEL KATZEN

In America, being Jewish is viewed almost completely as a religion. In my mind, I was half Jewish from my mom's side and half Israeli from my dad's. While my dad is technically Jewish, he is not religious, and since before this trip I viewed Judaism as only a religion, I considered myself 50/50 (Jewish/ Israeli). That was until Charlotte came to speak and fully changed my understanding of what being Jewish is. While part of being Jewish is the religion, it is not the entirety. I had always felt weirdly stuck in the middle of being both Jewish and Israeli. One parent had more exposure to the religious side, while the other was more cultural. In my mind, I was internalizing the thought that I was being exposed to two different cultures. In fact, it wasn't two different cultures, but two different sides of the same one. Clarifying my Jewish identity allowed me to be reassured and confident with who I am and where I come from. I've always known that Israel is an important country, but until Y2I, I never understood why. My whole life, I've grown up incredibly aware of the terrorism that goes on in Israel. As a five-year-old visiting my grandparents on the kibbutz, it was hard to comprehend why people would be sending over rockets while eating dinner. Since then, I've tried to educate myself as much as possible, but with all the information online and the millions of different accounts of how things have happened, it's not easy. For me, Charlotte's lecture explaining the three different conflicts and history behind each of them finally filled in a piece to a puzzle I'd been trying to solve for a long time. However, even with the newfound knowledge I obtained, there was one big message I took away from my time in Israel. While the truth isn't pretty, it's reality and needs to be known. Time and time again, Jews have been hunted throughout all of history. With rising antisemitism rates around the world, one thing is made clear: Israel needs to exist, for the safety of the Jewish people.

ZOHAR LAVI





People of all cultures and religions are seen in Israel and there is mostly acceptance of people there, especially at the most holy site, the Western Wall. When my close friend and I went into the men's section of the Wall, you could feel the inclusivity, whether they were dressed in gym shorts or in an Orthodox style. Multiple Orthodox groups invited us to join and pray with them, and people were happy to pause their praying to help another stranger out. What does this all mean to me in the end? Well, it's almost like having a second home, with the same feeling of safety. After this trip to Israel with Y2I, I now see the world beyond the USA with a new appreciation for cultural diversity, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging, making Israel feel like a second home.

BEN LEATON

One of the most significant aspects of my trip was the profound historical immersion I experienced. Walking through the ancient streets of Jerusalem, touching the Western Wall, I was humbled by the weight of centuries of human history. Witnessing the coexistence of multiple religions and their shared reverence for this land was truly inspiring. It challenged my preconceived notions and encouraged me to embrace diversity and seek common ground in my own interactions. However, it was the spirit of resilience and hope that left an indelible mark on my soul. Israel has faced numerous challenges throughout its history, yet its people have persevered with unwavering determination. Visiting Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, evoked a profound sense of empathy and a commitment to ensure such atrocities are never repeated. Witnessing the vibrant cities and thriving communities that have emerged from the ashes of adversity inspired me to approach my own challenges with renewed strength and optimism.

MAX LEAVITT

Dear Israel,

Thank you for showing me your land and all it has to offer, from the city of Tel Aviv to the old city of Jerusalem, to the heat of the desert and the Dead Sea, all the way to the very north of Tiberius and everything in between. The 12 days I spent in your land are some of the best days of my life, creating the best memories that will last a lifetime. From hearing stories about the land of Israel, I didn't know what to expect, but exploring and seeing the country from within, I saw the vibrance of the culture and the various aspects of scenery. I enjoyed every second of being in your land and exploring everything you have to offer, from roaming the Tel Aviv beach to walking through the water caves and floating down the Jordan River while doing just about everything in between. It truly is a one-of-akind experience visiting your land. Visiting the land of Israel has really opened my eyes to what is actually going on in Israel and not just what you see on the news. Sure, some of the stuff on the news is correct, but they don't show the atmosphere at the Western Wall on Shabbat. They also don't show vibrant markets in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem where people go to shop. Israel, I just want to say thank you for showing me your land and giving me one of the best experiences of my life.

ETHAN LEE

Our time at the Western Wall was the greatest moment of my life. I will never forget how I felt as I approached the Wall for the second time. Gazing into the sea of Hasidic Jews all facing the Wall, rocking back and forth as they recited their respective prayers, I thought to myself, "Well, how am I going to spend an hour and a half here?" I walked towards the Wall, put my hands against it, prayed, backed away with my face to the Wall, and then turned around when I felt comfortable. A smile immediately reached ear-to-ear across my face as my eyes met a big group of kids jumping up and down, yelling and singing out Jewish prayers. Not even questioning who this group was or if I knew anybody in this group, I practically sprinted towards them as I was eager to chant along with them. It's a moment like this that truly reflects Jewish culture. No questions were asked when I approached them. Two people immediately unlocked their arms to let me into the circle. Judaism is all about the embracing and love of others, and this moment truly reflects this. We chanted for an hour and a half, nonstop a truly unforgettable moment.

GAVIN LEPLER

I feel an obligation to all the Jews that came before me to be an advocate of Israel. I was most moved by this decision, not by facts, but by our final day in Israel. We visited Yad Vashem and Mt. Herzl military cemetery. It can only impact you so much to hear about what happened. On the last day, we experienced it when seeing the soldiers who lost their lives and citizens who died, but what sticks with me the most is all the children who died in the Holocaust. We have an obligation to advocate for Israel because of the safety it could have provided to all of those kids and soldiers. More importantly, Y2I educated me on Zionism, our history, and the necessity of our advocacy. Going forward, I will educate those around me on the necessity of Israel and hopefully create even more advocates for Israel.

MAX MASTERS

Now that I have experienced the country, I feel fulfilled with my Jewish roots. Ever since

Camp Bauercrest first partnered with the Lappin Foundation, my mother was so excited to see me go to my final year of camp. However, she never got to see me go because she passed away from complications of Covid 19 back in 2020. I wrote a letter to my mom when we visited the Western Wall. I feel that I have a deep connection with Israel, and it makes me even more excited for when I can go on Birthright. So, I would want to thank Y2I for making my trip amazing throughout the two weeks, and my family who also showed me what it is like being a citizen there.

SAM McSWEENEY

Dear Israel,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to you today as a devoted friend and admirer of Israel, with a deep appreciation for the country's history, resilience, and determination in the face of adversity.

As the world witnesses the unfolding events in Israel, I am filled with both concern and admiration for the Israeli people's unwavering strength amidst the current challenges. I have been closely following the developments of the ongoing wars, and I want to extend my heartfelt support to the nation during these difficult times.

Israel's history is a testament to the indomitable human spirit and the pursuit of peace in a region plagued by conflicts. Over the years, Israel has faced numerous challenges and threats to its sovereignty, yet it has managed to thrive and grow stronger with each passing day. From the inception of the state in 1948 to the Six-Day War in 1967 and beyond, Israel has overcome seemingly insurmountable odds, emerging as a beacon of democracy, innovation, and progress in the Middle East.

The current wars in Israel are undoubtedly testing the nation's resolve and unity. The resilience displayed by the Israeli people is truly awe-inspiring. I stand with Israel in denouncing all forms of violence, and support the nation's efforts to safeguard its citizens and seek lasting peace in the region.

Israel's contributions to the fields of science, technology, and culture are remarkable, and I am inspired by the country's commitment to education, inclusivity, and progress. The spirit of innovation that thrives in Israel is an example for the world, and I believe that such endeavors not only foster the prosperity of Israel, but also promote global advancements for the greater good.

As I reflect on my fond memories of visiting Israel in the past, I am reminded of the warm hospitality and rich cultural heritage that welcomed me. From the historical wonders of Jerusalem to the vibrant streets of Tel Aviv, each moment spent in Israel holds a special place in my heart. The landscapes, the people, and the spirit of Israel left an indelible mark on my soul, creating an everlasting bond that I cherish deeply.

In closing, I want to reiterate my unwavering love and support for Israel. The nation's strength, determination, and commitment to peace are truly remarkable. My thoughts and prayers are with Israel and its people during these challenging times. May the days ahead bring harmony and tranquility, and may the nation continue to flourish in its pursuit of a secure and prosperous future.

Sincerely,



Y2I impacted my life by showing me I was an **important part of a community.** Growing up in a small town with a tiny Jewish population was lonely. When winter came around, I was reminded how my traditions and heritage were different than others. I wasn't going to chop down Christmas trees or sit by a fire, singing carols like my peers were. As a kid, being different only makes you feel like you don't belong, so when I started to grow up I learned how to be more comfortable with this. I started to accept that kids in my school weren't going to understand why I was absent on high holidays or why I didn't believe in Santa Claus. I felt as if nobody but my few friends at my local synagogue would be able to understand me. Everything changed when I went on Y2I. I found it so hard to believe there were other kids in my area who shared the same beliefs and traditions as me. As time went by and everyone got closer, I started to feel like I was really part of something. I met so many people and created a family. I know now that I am not alone.

ILONA LINN

Going into the trip, I wouldn't have considered my Jewish identity very strong. After getting off that plane and seeing the beautiful land of Israel for the first time, I understood I was in for something I'd never experienced before. Every new day, I was amazed by what was awaiting me in Israel. I got the chance to see something new, which was connecting with other Jewish people and finding how similar we really are. My Jewish identity peaked when we visited the Western Wall during Shabbat. Immediately, walking in and being welcomed by a line of people, a man motioned for me to join in shoulder-to-shoulder with everyone, which I of course had to take him up on. Joining the line and reciting chants, I understood what it was to be Jewish. I understood that it was getting through centuries of being discriminated against for no reason, and finally being given a homeland that accepts you. Getting the chance to see exactly what it's like to be an Israeli really changed my perspective on being Jewish. I now understand how important Israel is to being Jewish, and how we have to do everything to protect our homeland.

CALEB MERRIAM

I made so many new friends and got closer with old friends. Meeting the Israeli teens was an amazing experience because I got to understand how they live in Israel and how our daily lives differed. We had some good conversations, and it put some things in perspective. For example, we talked about our worries for our future. For most Americans, including myself, it was what would happen after high school, such as college, getting jobs, and making a life for ourselves, but the Israelis explained how they all have to serve in the Israeli army once they reach a certain age. They didn't seem scared, but rather proud and excited to serve their country, which I admired. The schedule was packed with fun activities to get us to experience Israel and connect with each other. The lectures we had were also very informative and beneficial. The speaker, Charlotte, from StandWithUs, was very helpful in informing us about the history of Israel and what we need to do to protect it. She gave us useful ways to answer questions about Zionism and antisemitism and how to communicate with people who are misinformed about Israel. I hope that I will be able to use that in my daily life and to not be afraid to stand up for Israel.

BELLA MISIURA

Every day, I was ready to wake up and attend what we were doing that day. I found enjoyment there that I never thought I would quite find. I met new people and ventured to new places. I never had felt so connected with myself and a place so much. I felt welcomed and at home in a place I was only visiting for the first time. One thing that I will always carry with me is my experience on Shabbat. Going to the Western Wall and seeing thousands and thousands of people really opened my eyes. It made my heart warm, knowing that there is a place I feel safe and able to connect to myself. I had put a note into the Wall and prayed silently to myself, and in that moment, I cried. I felt relief, I felt safe, and I felt at peace with life. After traveling with Y2I, I definitely will try to go back to Israel, if not to visit the place and my new friends, but to live and stay with my identity.

REBECCA MISIURA

Throughout my trip through Israel, I found a stronger connection to other Jews, a further appreciation of our history, and a deeper pride for my heritage. Visiting the Western Wall in Israel was an experience that touched me in wonderful ways I couldn't have imagined. As I stood before the ancient barrier, witnessing the devotion and unity of the Jewish community, I felt an overwhelming sense of belonging. Surrounded by fellow Jews from all over, each with their own unique backgrounds, I realized that we were all connected by a shared faith and heritage. The energy of prayer and history that surrounded me made me feel like a part of something bigger than myself. It was as if I had found my place within a diverse group of people who shared a deep-rooted connection to their traditions and values. This experience at the Western Wall made me feel much more connected to the Jewish community, inspiring me to embrace and celebrate my identity with pride and sense of belonging. My visit to Masada National Park was an exciting pride-filling experience. As I explored the ancient fortress and learned about the heroic stand of our ancestors against oppression, I couldn't help but feel admiration and connection to my Jewish ancestors who fought against similar oppression and persecution. Standing atop that historic site, I could literally see the beauty and bravery that the Jewish people left behind rather than succumb to their oppressors. It was a reminder of the resilience and determination that our people have had to carry with them throughout history. I felt a deep sense of pride in being part of a community that has endured countless challenges and continually emerged stronger. Masada's story became a symbol of the unbreakable spirit that continues to define us as Jews, and it left me with an unwavering pride in my heritage and a deep appreciation for the sacrifices made by those who came before me.

JACKSON MOLEUX

During my time with Y2I, I developed a deeper understanding of how to show pride in my religion and educate and stand up to others who are misinformed about Israel. Gaining this knowledge during Y2I will help throughout my whole life. Overall, this Y2I trip was such a great opportunity to learn more about Israel, Judaism, and myself. Y2I also taught me not to hide my identity as a Jew, but rather to show it with pride. I took that message back home with me in the form of a necklace, and I wear it every day around my neck. I know a lot of the other teens on our trip did the same thing and dedicated themselves to showing off their religious identities. This trip was so meaningful, and I can't wait to go back!

BECCA NAFTOLY

The Y2I trip allowed me to gain new experiences and connect with my Jewish identity in a unique way. This once in a lifetime opportunity allowed me to embrace and fully appreciate being Jewish. I was able to immediately feel a connection with the other Jewish teens on the trip, and I ended up making amazing friends that I will have for a very long time. I thought it was very important that we learned about the current events and conflicts in Israel and that we were aware of what was happening in the country we were physically and emotionally connected to. With my newfound knowledge, I plan to continue standing up for Israel by educating others about the realities of Israel and combating antisemitism to the best of my abilities. I feel that standing up for Israel starts with educating the people around me.

ELIZA NAFTOLY



Since becoming a Bat Mitzvah, I've continually questioned my Jewish identity. Despite being born into Judaism, growing up in a synagogue, and graduating from confirmation, I saw myself as a poser, a fraud. I didn't understand Hebrew, I forgot the stories to our holidays, and I didn't always keep kosher. Being forgetful was humiliating. Even if I was not judged outright, I judged myself even harsher. Was I even a "real" Jew? If I didn't do this or that, could I still wear the Star of David with pride? The Y2I trip was an entirely new experience for me. All my life, visiting Israel was not even a question – it was a must – but the trip felt so far away, something I could only dream of. When my dreams finally turned into reality, it was totally surreal! Something unexpected that I noticed was the stark contrast of religious practices inside one singular religion. No two people were the same; no one believed the same, practiced the same, observed the same. Moreover, I felt accepted for my way of Judaism. I didn't have to know Hebrew, but I picked it up nonetheless. I didn't need to know all the stories because someone was always there to remind me. I didn't need to keep kosher because it did not fit my lifestyle. My passion was good enough, strong enough. For once, my identity was not questioned.

LILAH NAGEL

As inspirational as the trip itself was, the most influential part for me was the diversity of the country, and how even with all of the ongoing conflicts, I was still able to interact with a multitude of people and many different types of Jews. Along with my souvenirs, I also carried home a new sense of pride. When I finally got back to my bedroom, the first thing I did was rummage through my desk to find my Star of David, which I quickly put on. The next day, I reunited with all of my friends and told stories of all the interesting things I accomplished and all of the diverse people I encountered. **Even** though I may have lacked pride for my Jewish identity prior to the trip, when I came back, I returned as a new man, one who is confident, sanguine, and proud. No longer will I tolerate friends or peers speaking down about Israel because now I am educated and proud enough to stand up for my heritage. I am proud to be Jewish, and I hope others can stand with me and be proud alongside me.

JACK PIERCE



Everywhere we went, we got a history lesson. In school, I find it hard to listen and pay attention. However, when my tour guide was explaining Israeli history, I felt a connection to it. I even caught myself pretending I was there, defending against the Romans on Masada or working in the underground bullet factory during the War of Independence. A big moment for me happened at the Western Wall. I am not religious, or at least I wasn't, but I spoke out to the Wall and shared, and when I walked away, I felt a relief, like a burden had just been lifted, and that was a big deal for me. How could I feel something and then not believe in the Jewish people? Together as one people, we had to leave the Wall so long ago, and coming back to it after all these years is something beautiful. I feel connected with the Jewish people in a way I hadn't felt before as a result of this trip.

GREG PODSTRELOV

Before embarking on the Y2I journey to Israel, I thought it was a country that was filled with deserts and a lot of conflict. After the trip, I can say that my opinion on Israel was completely wrong, and my experience completely changed my life forever. Before the trip, I felt that going to Friday night services at my temple a few times every year and going to a Jewish summer camp was good enough to feel Jewish and embrace my religion. My view on this changed at the Western Wall on Friday night. Seeing thousands of Jews from around the world made me feel that everywhere in the world, there will always be a strong sense of community between Jews. I also felt that when at the Wall, the power of each and every person there was embracing me and making me feel at home, despite being 6,000 miles away. That experience alone makes me want to further step up in my community and show my Jewish identity. The meetings that were held by Charlotte with StandWithUs also inspired me to stand up against antisemitism in my community. In my town, there is not a lot of antisemitism, but once in a while, my friends will make a joke at me regarding Judaism, and I would normally just ignore it. Now that I have heard from Charlotte and have seen what antisemitism means to her and Jews across the world, I will try to stand up to it to the best of my abilities. To add on, I will not only stand up against it, I will educate and inform them about the topic. I believe it is important to stay Jewish because we are a minority in this world. Personally, being Jewish is something that I am very proud of and keeps me going. If I wasn't Jewish or if I didn't care about being Jewish, I would never have experienced the magic of Israel and how it will forever impact not only my life, but each and every kid in Y2I's life as well.

MAX POLLACK

After acknowledging the Western Wall in all of its greatness, I took time to look around me and really take in the experience. Along the Wall, there were hundreds of other Jews who all had come to the same place I had to feel the same connection to God that I had. It made me feel included and really involved in my community as a Jew and made the bond with my faith greater. Another instance that strengthened the bond to my faith was the second time I visited the Western Wall, this time during Shabbat. This experience made me feel closer to the people in the Jewish community and also made me realize how warm and welcoming they are. I was dancing and having fun with a large number of fellow Jews I had just met, talking and praying together like we had known each other for years. I had never felt closer to my religion than in that moment, and it made me feel a sense of belonging to something greater than myself.

SAM POMERANTZ

During my trip to Israel, I believe my life changed for the better. Throughout my life, I have never been a religious person, never really feeling a spiritual connection to anything. That was until our trip to the Wall on Shabbat. At the Wall, I felt not only a connection spiritually, but more importantly, but a great sense of belonging and community as soon as we walked through the gates. I don't know if I will ever have a feeling like that again, but I will carry it with me for the rest of my life. My favorite thing I am able to take from the trip is the people I met, not just the ones from Y2I, but the Israelis that we were with towards the end of the trip. It was really cool to meet them and learn about their culture, and I am still in touch with them to this day.

AARON RAVECH



When Charlotte Korchak from StandWithUs began her presentation, she immediately captivated my attention. Surprisingly, she did not start with how or why to support Israel. Instead, she went back over 2,000 years, and within two hours, I learned the history of the land of Israel. In the beginning, I was confused as to why this was shaping up to be a history lesson. Yet by the end, I understood that to support Israel and understand its importance, one must learn its history. The Jewish history was complex and hard to keep track of at times, but Charlotte quickly summarized it for us in four steps:

- 1. The Jews lived in Israel.
- 2. They faced exile and left Israel.
- 3. Around the world, they again faced discrimination and ultimately genocide.
- 4. With the Zionist movement, which is the belief that Jews have the right to return to the land of Israel, Jews began to return.

So while we may have left Israel for a long time, Jews are historically native to the land of Israel.

When they were forced to flee, other groups took over the land. The biggest issue today is when Jews returned, there were people there. Still today, this is a major conflict that I do not know the solution to. However, on this trip, I have truly learned the importance of a Jewish homeland. Charlotte taught us the tools to teach the rest of the world, which is largely misinformed, about the factual history of Israel. When I meet someone at my school or my town who is skeptical or against the Jewish homeland, I will calmly tell them our history in four steps: we are native to Israel, but we were kicked out and spread across the world. Still, there, we faced persecution, pogroms, and the Holocaust, which was the catalyst for the establishment of a haven for Jews. We returned home to be able to celebrate our religion and culture in a safe place. And that is why we need the state of Israel.

LIORA RAGOZIN

For me I didn't think that my perspective on life could change by going to Israel for 12 days, but it did, and I am so glad. Y2I taught me that no matter who you are or what you are, you can always belong. Y2I also allowed me to realize that you should never be afraid to try something new or talk to new people you just met. In the beginning of the trip, I felt like I was just going to stay with my little group I started with. I ended up branching out and making some of the best friends I have ever met in my life. This helped teach me a lesson that I should never be afraid to meet new people. Y2I also taught me how to step out of my comfort zone. I caught myself volunteering for things that I never would have before the trip. Y2I helped me find a new version of myself that is going to be around for the rest of my life, and I am so grateful I got the opportunity to go on the Youth to Israel trip.

EMMA REMIS

Starting with the monthly meetings, and then the pre-trip plans, I didn't know what to expect of Israel. I already knew some information about various historical sites, but I was eager to expand my knowledge with experiences, rather than facts. Throughout the whole trip there were ups and downs, especially on the drive to Masada. I met wonderful new friends that I still keep in contact with today. I am going up to visit my friends at Bauercrest on visiting day this summer, all of whom I would not know if it weren't for Y2I. My one take away from the trip is this: don't be afraid to meet new people, it is much more fun meeting new people than it seems. It was an amazing trip that I will never forget!

NATE ROSEN

One of the most meaningful teachings of my Y2I experience was learning the identity of the Jews to be a people rather than just a religion. Not only do the Jews share the religion of Judaism, but they have a similar cultural identity with many diverse races of people from all around the world. This resonated the most with me because a few months ago I had a non-Jewish friend ask me if being Jewish was a race, and I didn't know how to answer him. History has shown that people consider the Jews as a race themselves, but how can this really be the case? After hearing the second Stand WithUs workshop, my mindset was changed, as I am now able to explain to my friends what the Jews are: we are a people. A tribe. Overall, my Y21 experience was very impactful on my life as a part of the Jewish community because I was able to see that I am not alone.

JONATHAN ROSS

I have visited Israel before but, this had not been like any visit that I had ever been on. I was much more mature and older, searching for my connection to Israel and to Jews. When we first got to Tel Aviv, I immediately felt a rush of excitement and an immediate connection to Israel. like nothing I had felt before. The moment where I felt Israel that impacted me most was the day walking through Jerusalem. I could feel the weight of the past human civilization and past generations of Jews. As my hands touched the Western Wall, I could feel my connection with Israel and my self-identity as a Jew grow significantly. Everything I learned in Y2I made me realize how privileged I am to be Jewish. I had been surrounded by thousands of Jews at the Western Wall and felt strongly connected to my Jewish community. Israel isn't just a country to me anymore, or a place where my family is, or where my community lives. It's my forever home where I will always feel welcomed and have a place in. Israel's culture, diversity and most important of all, everything that connects me back to my country, is what will make Israel so special to me. Israel's impact on me goes beyond words and had touched my soul and inspired me to be prouder as a Jew, more compassionate, resilient, and overall, a better person.

SARAH SELTSER

Yad Vashem really moved me. The room that moved me the most was the Hall of Names, the last room in the museum. You are on a platform in the middle of a tall, circular room. In the middle of the room is a reflecting pool, surrounded by limestone. Stretching all the way up and down the walls are shelves and shelves of black binders, each of which contains one-page remembrance sheets of Jews who died in the Holocaust that include their dreams and hobbies, fears and secrets, and if possible, a photo. The bodies of those killed in the Holocaust were not given a proper burial. They were burned to ashes or thrown into huge pits and left to rot. The Hall of Names does not contain the bodies of the victims of the Holocaust, but it does contain their souls. Standing in that room, you are surrounded by the essence of every known Jew that had their life taken prematurely during the Holocaust. It is a powerful, moving space, and inside of it, I cried. I do not cry often, but in the Hall of Names, I shed tears. It is an experience I will never forget.

JUSTIN SAGINOR

Out of all the activities we did and the places we visited, my favorite day of the trip was probably Shabbat night in Jerusalem. We had visited the Western Wall the previous day, but on Shabbat it was such a different environment that it was unrecognizable. Seeing Jews from all over the world surrounding this sacred Wall was truly a magical experience. Not only did I put a prayer in the Wall for myself, but I delivered messages that my family requested from back home. After that, I escaped into the crowd which led into one of the most wholesome nights I have ever been a part of. From Orthodox Jews reciting prayers to tourists singing and dancing, the crowd around the Wall was so different yet unified all at the same time. One of the most important aspects of this trip was reaffirming my Jewish identity. Before this trip, I had not really done anything to enhance or showcase my religion since my Bar Mitzvah in 2019. While I still cared about my religion, I did not necessarily view it as an important part of my identity. I also did not understand most of the Israel-Palestine conflict and did not know how nor care enough to stand up for Israel. However, the StandWithUs workshops were very interesting for me, as I really enjoyed learning about the history of the conflict and the importance of Zionism. Overall, this trip was very important, fun, and educational, and I would definitely recommend it to other Jewish teens in the area.

ADAM SARAGOSA

My journey to Israel was a transformative experience that has profoundly enhanced my Jewish identity. Through exploring the diverse landscapes, immersing myself in the vibrant cultures, and witnessing the breathtaking beauty of this land, I have gained a deeper understanding of my heritage and the richness of Jewish tradition. One aspect that has greatly influenced my Jewish identity is the exposure to the various cultures within Israel. Being in a country where Jews from different backgrounds coexist has allowed me to appreciate the diversity that exists within our own community. I have had the privilege of engaging with Jews of Ashkenazi and Sephardic roots, as well as many other types of Jews. I learned about their customs, traditions, and unique contributions to our collective heritage. This exposure has expanded my view of the world and fostered a sense of unity and respect for the multicultural Jewish state. Moreover, Israel's captivating beauty has served as a constant reminder of the deep-rooted connection between the Jewish people and this land. From the cobblestone streets of Jerusalem to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, every corner of Israel seems to include a sense of historical significance. Standing at the Western Wall, I felt an overwhelming sense of belonging and connection to the generations that came before me. Also, Israel's landscapes serve as a reflection of the diversity and resilience of the Jewish people. The Golan Heights mirrors the challenges and victories that our ancestors experienced throughout history. Seeing the revival of barren lands and the flourishing of agriculture has shown me how incredible Israel is. Through my journey in Israel, I have not only deepened my understanding of my Jewish identity, but also strengthened my commitment to its values. The energy of the Jewish people is alive in this land, and the experiences I have had here have fueled my desire to contribute to our future. Israel has become a cornerstone of my Jewish identity, serving as a constant source of inspiration, connection, and pride.

MATTHEW SCHULTZ

Y2I gave me a way to connect with other Jewish teenagers living in my area who I otherwise never would have met. I became even closer to those I previously knew, but I also gained so many other friendships along the way. Besides the people living only a few towns over, Y2I also gave me a way to connect with Jewish teenagers living in Israel. From my amazing roommate to all of the other Israelis that I met during other activities, I made so many friends who shared with me everything it means to live in the center of the Jewish world. From rafting on the Jordan River to swimming in the Dead Sea to exploring Mt. Masada, there was never a dull moment on the trip. Every single experience was full of memories that I will never forget. The trip was amazing, memorable, and educational, but I'd like to end off describing it just as Ron would. The trip was three words: Un. Believe. Able.

HANNAH SCHWARTZ



Israel's technological progress and innovation left an indelible mark on me and fundamentally changed my view of Israeli development. From a small 'emerging country', Israel has grown to become a global leader in biotechnology and cybersecurity research and development. A diverse society of people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds was an important part of my view of Israel. Going to the Western Wall on Sabbath and seeing all the Orthodox Jews was a unique experience. Being able to walk up to the Wall and touch it in a crowd of thousands, just like myself, connects us with all our ancestors who survived the Holocaust and let us come onto this earth. Being able to spend a few days with Israeli teens, having interesting conversations, and see Israel from a young person's perspective means we can begin understanding America and Israel in a unique way. The sheer amount of knowledge they had about their country was amazing. I am forever grateful to my family that has encouraged me to participate and engage in this experience. It also allowed me to reflect on American culture and the way we live our daily lives. What an unforgettable opportunity.

MARK SELTSER



Y2I brought so many new memories, friends, and new adventures to my life. In Israel, I was able to try new foods, learn a new language and experience an entirely different culture from where I am from. Not only did this impact my life in the present day, this experience will impact me for the rest of my life. Without this trip to Israel, I would've never been able to experience the reality of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and what it's like to live a day-to-day life there. Y2I has created new friendships, experiences, and lifelong stories to tell family and friends, and I am forever thankful for this trip.

STEFAN SHEPARD

If I had to pick two big lessons I learned from going to Israel, it would definitely be that you cannot believe everything you see on social media, and more importantly, the necessity for the Jewish people to stick together and support one another. The reason why I say that is because when you read or listen about Israel on social media or even on the news channels, it is easy to believe the negative things they say and show about Israel. You hear all about how scary it is in Israel and how it is not a welcoming place. When I was in Israel, I was astonished when looking back at the twisted narratives people made up about my beautiful homeland. Israel was the most beautiful and safest place I have ever been to in my life. Everyone that you come across feels like family and not strangers. I feel way more connected to Israel and Judaism from learning about all the different types of history and actually getting to experience going to historical sites in person, like the Western Wall, Masada, and going to the Holocaust Museum. Israel and Y2I will always have such a special place in my heart.

MADISON WALKER

It just so happens Y2I 2023 was the perfect opportunity to meet my new best friends. As I entered the temple on the day of departure, I felt a wave of nerves flood into my stomach. Fortunately for me, I briefly met a few other girls at the pre-trip meetings. Soon, the realization that not many of the other girls knew each other hit me. As I bonded with these girls, the nerves were washed away and replaced with a feeling of home. Maybe this was because I was in Israel, or maybe it was because I was in Israel with these amazing girls. My new friends have changed my life for the better. They have made me feel like I belong in the Jewish **community.** This trip was memorable by itself, but it was extraordinary with five new best friends by my side. I left America with anxiety and barely knowing anyone, and I entered America with five new sisters.

LILAH SIEGEL

Israel means a lot to me. Israel is the land of my people and will forever be the home of the Jewish people for generations to come. Going to Israel, I was able to learn more about how this country thrives as one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world. Their "poop factory" was an amazing facility where they turned the sewage from the sewers into water usable for plants and crops. This blew me away, as I was able to see how Israel uses its technology to further better its people's lives.

JONAH SISITSKY

My Y2I trip had an amazing impact on my life. **This** trip has given me a new sense of independence. some amazing new experiences, and a new family. While I was in Israel, I had the opportunity to learn about the history of the country, as well as more of the history of the Jewish people. I learned about the conflicts going on in the country, as well as learning about all the different cultures that thrive and live in not just Jerusalem, but all of the country. This trip has enhanced my Jewish identity by showing me the country of our people. If we didn't have Israel, we would be less than we are now. I am now prouder than I already was to be Jewish, and I now have more courage to stick up for my people if I were to hear someone speak badly about them and our traditions. It's important to stay Jewish because we are very few in the world. There have been and still are people who don't want us to survive, but we will not just survive, we will thrive.

AILEE SPRITZ



Dear Israel,

Thank you for letting me experience your culture, talk to your people, and taste your food. Thank you for letting me create so many great memories with people that I met and people that I already knew. Thank you for letting me come back to Israel as a teen and letting me see a completely different side of Israel. The first time I went to Israel, I was nine. I didn't understand the significance of Israel's history and its creation. I observed your history. On this trip, at sixteen, I connected with it. Thank you, Israel, for letting me realize that you are my home and that I can always come back to you.

Until next time,

YURI VOLKOV

Y2I has given me confidence and knowledge that I didn't have before this trip. I became more independent. We were given many opportunities to walk around different markets throughout Israel. This gave me and my peers the opportunity to experience the culture and lifestyle on our own. Many people in the U.S. think of Israel as unsafe and dangerous. While walking through busy Israel markets, I felt very safe. Also seeing how much freedom other Israeli children had to be out with their friends made me realize how safe Israel was. Now that I am home, I hope to spread that message to my friends and peers. This trip also helped me gain confidence in making new friends. Not only with the kids on our trip, but the Israelis who joined us. Having a commonality of being Jewish and having a love for Israel made it really easy to connect with others. This trip has given me long lasting friendships.

TALIA TANGER

When I think about Israel, I think about home. A home is a safe haven, a place of comfort and security. I feel at home in Israel for many reasons. Israel is where our Jewish identity was formed and is still thriving. It warms my heart that when I come to Israel I am welcomed and surrounded by people who are like me. Being Jewish is more than a religion, it is significant to our culture and history, years of persecution but yet we are still standing, together. Israel embodies that spirit, it is the origin of the morals and values that the world is founded on, and the existence of Israel proves anything is possible. Israel continues to inspire me every day. I am in awe by the living history that is everywhere, like walking through the old city of Jerusalem and standing on the very stones Kings and prophets had stood on. The indescribable feeling of everyone coming together at the Western Wall on Shabbat. It motivates me when I see how far Israel has come in the last 70 years. A territory with more than half its territory covered in desert, now one of the global leaders in areas such as agriculture, medicine, technology and water. Israel is such a small country compared to the rest of the world, but it is doing such big things. The main reason why every time I go to Israel it has such a big impact on me, is because the sense of familiarity I feel when I am there. Israel has helped me become more connected with my Jewish identity, because the Jewish footprint is everywhere you go. I feel proud to say that I am Jewish, and that Israel is my second home.

DANA SLEPOY

My recent journey to Israel touched me in ways I could never have imagined. As I walked across the sacred land, a profound spiritual awakening washed over me, reinforcing the deep-rooted significance of staying Jewish. Being in Israel, the historical and spiritual home of the Jewish people, felt like coming home. The connection to my roots, the thousands of years of history that shaped our identity, left me in awe. It wasn't just about the physical location, the sense of belonging and unity I experienced with fellow Jews from diverse backgrounds. I felt accepted there in ways I did not expect. While in Israel, I witnessed the beauty of Judaism's diverse expressions. The spectrum of beliefs and practices showcased the richness of our heritage and the freedom we have to shape our relationship with our faith. It taught me that staying Jewish is about embracing the uniqueness of my journey while cherishing the common thread that binds us all. One of the most profound moments was visiting Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial. The weight of history's darkest chapter hit me hard. Yet, amid the sorrow, I felt a determination to preserve the memory of those who suffered. Staying Jewish, for me, means honoring their stories and ensuring that their legacy lives on. On this journey, I realized that staying Jewish doesn't require a physical presence in Israel. It's about carrying the lessons and experiences with me, wherever life takes me. Engaging with my Jewish traditions, studying our history, and being an active part of the community are how I nurture and grow my Jewish identity.

NATHANIEL ROSS

It hadn't been my first time in Israel when going on Y2I, but being older and more mature to what life has to offer, from the moment I stepped off the plane, I had felt immediately captivated by the land of Israel and the cultures. Whether we were at the hotel, the streets, markets, or the Western Wall, they all shared the same thing - the sense of unity and engagement that left you feeling with a sense of pride. Coming from the United States where people are judged and facing antisemitism every day for revealing their religion and culture, I didn't think it would ever be respected. Israel proved me wrong. All religions and cultures are not only widely accepted, but admired as well. In Israel you felt instantly connected to your Judaism and felt proud to be a Jew which is something most of us hadn't felt beforehand.

GABRIELLE WICKERI

Dear Israel,

Shalom! I'm super excited to write to you because as a Jewish kid, you hold a special place in my heart.

First of all, let me express my deep passion and say how much I admire your rich history and culture. Learning about your ancient past, ranging from the times of Abraham and Moses to the establishment of the State of Israel, has been influential and inspiring. Your story shows the strength and resilience of the Jewish people, and it makes me proud to be part of this incredible heritage.

To put it straightforward, in all honesty, you blew me away. I did not know what to expect at first, especially without ever going out of the country before. From the first day greeting random people asking about their stories to the sorrowful day at the Holocaust museum, I can definitely say every second I was there was interesting and fun. I could not thank you more as you were truly a life-changing experience, allowing me to reconnect with old friends as well as make new ones. In addition, bonding me with a much closer bond to my religion, that I truly cherish.

Roaming the streets of Israel with my buddies is something we will cherish forever. It's incredible to know that you are not just a distant place on the map but a real home for millions of Jews around the world. It's heartwarming to think that if I ever needed to, I could come to you, and you would welcome me with open arms.

As I finish writing this letter, I want to thank you, Israel, for being a constant reminder of our roots and for providing us with a sense of belonging. Your presence in our lives is a blessing, and I hope to visit you one day to strengthen my bond with you and my fellow Jews.

HENRY WEINER

With every new experience, I gained a new perspective or learned something that I had not known before. Throughout my life, being Jewish was only about being a part of a community, not the religion the community is built around. Growing up I was never super religious or believed in god, but after seeing sights such as the Western Wall on Shabbat, I am beginning to understand how religion can be an important piece to someone's life. However, I think the larger thing I learned from this trip was the comparisons and differences between the U.S. and Israeli cultures. Being halfway across the world means that we miss large amounts of context and information that is important to a full story and the only information we do get is through the news, which is largely biased and only shows the country through the perspective of the conflicts it is part of. We rarely hear about political conflicts and disagreements within the country,

and had I not been able to spend time in Israel and had great conversations with Israeli teens, I would not know about or have any

understanding about the issues they face every day. These conversations included what they see for their futures, what military service looks like, as well as more important topics such as politics and rights within the country. These conversations allowed me to draw parallels between the countries and see how both countries are becoming more politically divided as different debates rage within each country.

ELY WALLEN



My recent trip to Israel has left a lasting impact on me. It's a place I now hold close to my heart, as it introduced me to new friends, a rich culture, and a stronger connection to my Jewish heritage. Meeting people from diverse backgrounds was eye-opening. We bonded over shared experiences, creating connections that went beyond borders. Embracing diversity taught me to appreciate different perspectives, making Israel a vibrant meeting point of people and dreams. The StandWithUs workshop was empowering. I gained the confidence to defend Israel effectively in discussions. Learning about its history and struggles made me committed to being an informed advocate for Israel's narrative. Visiting the Western Wall on Shabbat was a deeply spiritual experience. Standing before those ancient stones, I felt a profound connection to my Jewish heritage. Israel strengthened my dedication to preserving our shared history. Israel's resilience and unity are inspiring. Despite its size, Israel shines as a beacon of progress and hope in a challenging region. It motivated me to be a catalyst for positive change in my community. Israel has **shaped my perspective and values.** It represents perseverance, diverse cultures, and the triumph of the human spirit. Open-mindedness and empathy are among the valuable lessons I've learned. Israel signifies hope, history, and life's celebration. It's where friendships are forged, dreams are nurtured, and my Jewish identity **blossoms**. I'll forever carry Israel in my heart, and this journey has ignited a passion to make a positive impact in the world.

LEO WINOCOUR

Before Y2I I had not been that close to my faith. I have not had a bar mitzvah or gone to synagogue in years. Yet I was hoping by going on Y2I I would change that. A task in which I succeeded. Because of this trip, I have gotten closer to my faith. To be honest, for the first few days of the trip I did not truly feel connected to my faith. Even on Thursday, when we visited the Western Wall, I decided against putting in a note because I felt too far from Judaism to do something so close and religious. I thought that such a religious act that millions do needs to be undertaken precisely. Since the only other time we were visiting the Wall on this trip was tomorrow, Friday, I felt that my correspondence to God had to be personal and well thought out. Walking through the Jewish Quarter, I gazed at the Wall on Shabbat, and it was beautiful. I saw hundreds of Jews from all around the world with the one goal of practicing their religion. And as I squeezed through Orthodox men praying to get closer to the Wall, I felt a feeling of belonging. When I put my note in the Wall, it was like completing a puzzle by putting the final puzzle piece in the puzzle. And as I walked away from the Wall and started moshing with the other Jews, we were dancing as one.

BEN ZALTSMAN

In my life, there was a time when being a part of the Jewish community was not important or significant to me. However, I always knew there had to be some reason why this religion was so important. Leading up to our journey to Israel, my head was flowing with preconceived notions and expectations of what Israel would be like. It was only when I stepped foot in Israel and saw for myself what it meant to be Jewish and the community I was a part of, did I begin to understand. As we progressed through Tel Aviv, getting opportunities to see the bustling city life and its residents, I began to feel increasingly more at home. No matter where we visited and how diverse each place was, there was always a proud Jewish identity present. Being able to touch the Western Wall for the first time instilled a connection to something I couldn't see, but thousands of years of history and faith I could sense. However, the trip pivoted when we met the Israelis. Each activity we spent together, they would inform me on the history and importance of what we saw, either passing by on the bus or getting free time to explore the cities. Lior and Joni instilled a feeling of Israeli nationalism, and how they lived their life truly changed how I wanted to live my own, through their interpretation of the religion and their spiritual morals. **Coming home from** the trip, I was nothing short of euphoric as I thought to myself no matter what happens in life, I'll always have Israel to come back to. With that statement, it's important to note Israel isn't guaranteed, and after such an important and influential visit, I want to make sure Israel stays my second home as well as my future generations.

BEN ZAMANSKY



This Y2I trip has not only allowed me to see Israel but learn and create connections and valuable memories with the country. I was able to travel with new friends and explore a majority of Israel. Almost everything had its own unique and fascinating background, from the Zodiac and Greek mythology that tied Jaffa to the rediscovered ruins on Mount Masada, every place has its own story. I didn't know any of this when we first arrived at each of the destinations. The water tunnels that we were able to walk through were like walking through history. The Hezekiah water tunnels were originally made to transport water from the springs into Jerusalem. I remember the whole experience clearly and will for many years to come. It's because I was able to learn about these parts of Israel as well as make my own special memories that are attached to the land.

LILY WACHTEL

This experience was very transformative for me. I learned so much about Israeli culture and politics. I feel much more connected to my Jewish identity after going on this trip. I have made very close friendships on this experience, both with other Jewish teens in my community and with Israelis. I also appreciated how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other political disputes were not just totally ignored on the trip. They were addressed many times, and I now feel like I have a much better understanding of the political circumstances surrounding Israel. Going on this trip has totally changed the way I view Israel and has strengthened my relationship with my Jewishness. I now realize how important it is for me to be Jewish, and how it is not a weakness, but a gift that connects me to many other people and a magical place.

LEONORE GARBER





I left Israel with a positive impact in my heart. The kosher meals, meticulously prepared while adhering to strict dietary rules, along with the weekly celebration of Shabbat, a day dedicated to rest and spiritual growth, offered me a profound insight into the Jewish lifestyle. Tel Aviv, a vibrant city renowned for its dynamic culture, was made even more enticing by the warmth and kindness of its inhabitants, leaving an indelible mark on my journey. The unswerving spirit of Israeli children, living under the constant threat of attacks yet fortified with home-based bomb shelters, truly epitomized their resilience and zest for life. Living under the constant shadow of violence taints life in Israel, but the depth and richness of its culture and history, along with my personal experiences, have only magnified my desire to return and delve deeper into understanding this diverse nation. Of course, I ended up making many friends from the trip who I will stay in contact with. I will definitely be recommending this trip to many others.

DANIEL KAIE

Going to Israel with Y2I helped to strengthen my Jewish Identity. Visiting all the famous historical places that I have always heard about was very special because it let me better connect with all of the history that has happened there. After going to Israel with Y2I, I feel prouder to be Jewish and overall better connected to my Judaism. I think it's very important for more Jews, and Jewish teens in particular, to experience going to Israel.

I thought that our trip to Israel was a very fun and unique experience. I made lots of new friends and saw many different cool sites. I am very grateful for the opportunity that was given to us to visit Israel. It was a once in a lifetime experience and I hope other young Jews are encouraged to go as well.

SAM TANGER





2023 YOUTH TO ISRAEL ADVENTURE

Over the course of 12 days, 83 teens from 29 communities and 34 high schools experienced the adventure of a lifetime on 2023 Y2I. Every teen made their mark on our ancestral homeland, leaving something behind and taking something with them. Thanks the generosity of hundreds donors to the Foundation, our teens are amongst the most fortunate in the country.

Matt Schultz

Mark Seltser Sarah Seltser

Stefan Shepard

Jonah Sisitsky

Stephen Slavet

Lilah Siegel

Hannah Schwartz

Noah Aronson Zach Aronson Allegra Breitkopf Jordyn Burkatovsky Evan Carroll Josh Caton **Chase Conley** Chloe Conley Jake Copelotti **Gus Cordingley** Olivia DuBrava Olivia Edelstein Jake Esterson Leo Evans Etan Farfel Sarah Fine Joey Fisher

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Bella Misiura
Jackson Moleux
Becca Naftoly
Eliza Naftoly
Lilah Nagel
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