



Connecting the Next Generation:

MASA: Israel Journey for Jews from the United States

PROGRAM PROPOSAL

JULY 2008





Connecting the Next Generation:

MASA: Israel Journey for Jews from the United States

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A radically different Jewish future for the next generation is possible.

Imagine what Jewish life would look and feel like fifteen years from now if there were exponentially increasing numbers of young Jews who had experienced a semester or a year in Israel. By providing young Jews from the Diaspora with the opportunity to experience Israel as "insiders," rather than as outsiders looking in, **MASA bridges the widening gap between young Israelis and their Jewish peers throughout the United States, helping them build a life-long relationship with Israel and a firm commitment to Jewish life.**

Since 2003, MASA has been a catalyst in developing new and exiting quality programs which express the multi-faceted experience of Israel. There are over 160 MASA programs that encompass everything between a semester or year spent at an Israeli university to participation in a work-study or volunteer program. MASA is able to offer scholarships to young adults worldwide who enroll in long-term programs in Israel - which provide meaningful Jewish education and Hebrew language instruction, leadership development, volunteer activities, field trips and encounters with Israeli peers.

This proposal is an invitation to join with the Jewish Agency and the State of Israel in the MASA initiative. **Matched dollar for dollar by the Israeli Government, all philanthropic funds invested in MASA are worth twice their face value.**

With your support, we will ensure that young Jewish adults from the United States can participate in long-term programs in Israel, thereby nurturing their capacity to identify with and contribute to the Jewish people.

Your investment of \$1,500 per person will sponsor young adults from the United States to participate in MASA. Their participation will jumpstart a life-long relationship with Israel and significantly strengthens each participant's Jewish Identity.



PROGRAM RATIONALE

Go forth from your land, from the place of your birth . . . to the land that I will show you, and I will make of you a great nation.
Genesis 12.1

Jewish identity in the USA is declining sharply. According to the Council of Jewish Federations' 2001 National Jewish Population Survey:

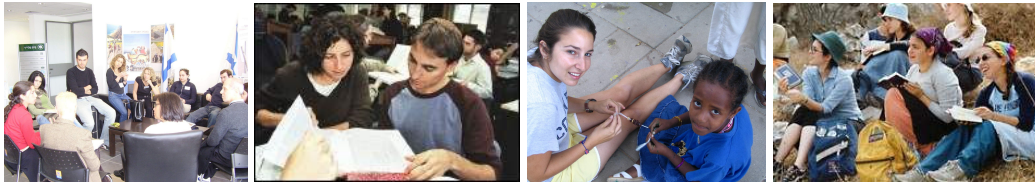
- Of 5.2 million Jews, 2 million American Jews live in households identified as non-Jewish.
- Before 1965, 10% of Jews who married did so outside the faith; The current intermarriage rate for Jews in the United States is 47%.
- 54% of all American Jewish children under the age of 18 are being raised as non-Jews or with no religious affiliation.

These alarming facts express the need to significantly increase Jewish Identity building programs throughout the United States. Second only to Israel, the United States has the largest concentration of Jews in the world. Alarmingly, however, the United States also has the fastest declining Jewish population in the world. The facts are clear: the USA stands as the paramount country to focus and exert the greatest amount of effort to increase Jewish Identity building and combat the rapid weakening and decline of world Jewry.

MASA meets this challenge head on.

One of the most effective ways of reaching out to Jewish youth is by building a strong connection to Israel through long-term programs. Indeed, Jewish educators, communal workers, and lay leaders agree that spending an extended period of time in Israel is an essential element in the formation of a strong, life-long Jewish identity among youth and young adults.

Although a short-term Israel experience is an essential stage in building a relationship with Israel, nothing compares to the significance and impact of long-term Israel programs. Long-term programs, which may range from youth leadership-training programs, to Judaic training programs, to academic programs at leading colleges and universities in Israel, provide opportunities for connecting to Israel and its people while



strengthening commitment to Jewish continuity and local Jewish communities. The programs emphasize study, meaningful encounters with Israelis, volunteering, and contributing to Israeli society, together with adventures, challenges, and familiarity with young Jewish adults from all over the world.

TARGET POPULATION

MASA is offered to Jewish young adults between the ages of 18-30.

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To help Jews in the United States build a life-long relationship with Israel and a instill in them a firm commitment to Jewish life
- To increase Jewish community involvement and strengthen Jewish communities through long-term Israel experiences
- To counteract the rapid rise of Jewish intermarriage and assimilation in the United States through strengthening Jewish Identity in young adults

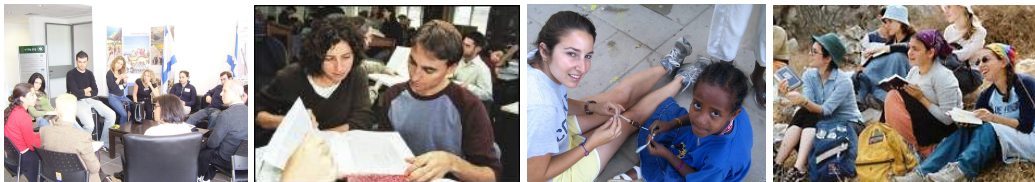
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

MASA is not just another program. It is a simple idea designed to dramatically increase participation in a wide variety of long-term programs in Israel by:

- Building the right programs
- Aggressively marketing the idea of long-term programs
- Helping young people find the program that's right for them
- Making it affordable and easy to fit into a participant's life
- Connecting the graduates back into Jewish life

To ensure that MASA fulfills its ambitious goals, it has devised the following set of educational standards for MASA programs:

- Concentrated Hebrew language studies
- Extensive, diverse Jewish and Israel-oriented curricula
- Volunteer-work within various communities or neighborhoods
- Field trips to familiarize students with Israel and its people
- Leadership seminars
- Encounters (mifgashim) with Israeli peers, traversing the breadth of Israeli society



In addition to the educational and social programming offered by individual programs, MASA has initiated centralized programming, including: "mega-events", e-learning, seminars, cohort meetings, community-based meetings, cultural activities and more.

MASA Scholarships and Programs

The vast majority of MASA funding is used to provide scholarships to help increase the number of MASA participants exponentially each year. 9,200 students are expected to participate in approximately 160 programs in 2008-2009 (up from 5,500 participants in 120 programs in MASA's 2004-2005 pilot year). The MASA Company works with many program providers in order to create new programs that will meet the needs of every sector of the Jewish community and accommodate major increases in the number of participants.

After extensive analysis of two years of data, MASA has developed new scholarship policy guidelines for 2008-2009. Under the new guidelines, every MASA participant from the United States will receive a universal grant. Participants before the B.A. will receive a grant of \$2,000, participants' post-B.A. in a one-semester program will receive a grant of \$3,000, and participants' post-B.A. in a year-long program will receive a grant of \$4,500. For individuals from the U.S. who have financial difficulty, MASA will create a special fund for scholarships for needy participants.

The MASA Community in North America

The MASA Community initiative asks Federations in North America to:

- Contribute \$1,500 for every prospective MASA student from that community, with a minimum contribution of \$15,000.
- Work in partnership with MASA to promote long-term programs in Israel, and agree to increase the community contribution commensurately with growth in MASA enrollment.
- Consider adopting students from countries where there is no community infrastructure to offer them financial support.



In return, the MASA Community will receive:

- Leveraging power--with every dollar contributed matched by the Government of Israel.
- A commitment that any student from that community who signs up for a MASA program will receive a universal grant of between \$2,000-\$4,500 depending on the length of their program and whether or not they have completed their B.A.
- Recognition by each MASA student that he/she has been supported by their home Federation.
- Complete contact information for MASA graduates, offering a potential resource for Israel educational activities and other leadership roles in the community.
- Assistance in developing a local marketing strategy for long-term Israel programs.
- First preference in selecting pilot campuses and other sites for intensive marketing of MASA programs.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REPORTING

MASA was launched five years ago as a collaborative effort between the Government of Israel and the Jewish Agency. MASA was developed to encourage tens of thousands of young Jews around the world between the ages of 18 and 30 to participate in long-term programs in Israel.

In May 2004, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon celebrated the conclusion of MASA's first full year of operation with the following words:

"It is not every day that a man sees his dream beginning to be realized. Two years ago, I announced ... that I had a dream that every Jew would visit Jerusalem at least once, and that I believe that we must set the goal that every Jewish youngster would live here for at least one year during their lifetime. . . . I view it as my personal responsibility, as a Jew and as Prime Minister of the Jewish State, to ensure the future of the Jewish people for the next thirty years, the next 300 years, and, G-d willing, the next 3,000 years. The MASA Project is part of the actualization of the State of Israel's commitment to the future of the Jewish people."



Research on long-term programs in Israel indicates that the impact of the experience upon participants is striking:

- The number of participants in long-term Israel programs who married other Jews rose to 91% relative to only 53% of non-participants of similar age
- Synagogue membership grew to 79% for participants relative to only 43% of non-participants of similar age
- Levels of volunteerism in Jewish frameworks rose to 72% for participants relative to only 25% of non-participants of similar age
- Future charitable contributions to Jewish communal campaigns increased to 57% for participants relative to only 30% of non-participants of similar age

Backed by compelling statistical evidence, MASA capitalizes upon the powerful force of a deep and meaningful experience in Israel to build an enduring commitment to Israel and the Jewish people.

PROJECT BUDGET

The cost of sponsoring each MASA participant is \$1,500.

FUNDING REQUEST

Your investment of \$1,500 per person will sponsor young adults from the United States to participate in MASA. Their participation will jumpstart a life-long relationship with Israel and significantly strengthens each participant's Jewish Identity.

Matched dollar for dollar by the Israeli Government, all philanthropic funds invested in MASA are worth twice their face value.