



# Taglit-Birthright Israel: The Gift of a Lifetime

## PROGRAM PROPOSAL

JULY 2008





# Taglit-Birthright Israel: The Gift of a Lifetime

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Taglit-Birthright Israel provides the gift of first time, peer group, educational trips to Israel for Jewish young adults aged 18 to 26.** Taglit-Birthright Israel was founded to send thousands of young Jewish adults from all over the world to Israel as a gift - in order to diminish the growing division between Israel and Jewish communities around the world; to strengthen the sense of solidarity among world Jewry, and to strengthen participants' personal Jewish identity and connection to the Jewish people.

Jewish educators, communal workers, and lay leaders agree that spending even a short period of time in Israel is an essential element in the formation of a strong Jewish self identity among youth and young adults. Being in Israel, together with other Jews of the same age, in an educational framework, and becoming acquainted with the diversity of Israeli society, is instrumental in reinforcing the bond between the individual Jew, his or her historic homeland, and the Jewish People. Surveys of past participants of Taglit-Birthright Israel demonstrate the enduring impact of this program in terms of enhanced communal affiliation, financial support for Jewish communal institutions, repeat visits to Israel, and substantially reduced rates of intermarriage and assimilation.

To ensure that the next generation of Jews deeply identify with their vast culture and history, we must provide innovative programs that encourage young Jews to connect with their Jewish roots and identity, in a manner that is meaningful to them.

Taglit-Birthright Israel does just that.

**Your investment of \$1,500 will sponsor one young Jewish adult, between the ages of 18-26 and living in the Diaspora, to visit Israel for the first time and connect to their Jewish identity through the experience of a lifetime. Due to the overwhelming and practically endless demand, you can sponsor an unlimited amount of participants.**



## 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. Alarming, 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.

**Just eight years have passed since Taglit-Birthright Israel's launch, and in that time, more than 160,000 young Jewish adults have received the gift of a lifetime.** The free, 10-day educational trips have connected these young Jews to the land and people of Israel and to their own identity. It has also touched the lives of thousands of Israelis.

**Each session, there are literally thousands more applicants than spots available to bring them. Taglit-Birthright Israel is the only program in Jewish North America that has such a gap between supply and demand.**



## TARGET POPULATION

Young Jews living in the Diaspora that have never been to Israel between the ages of 18-26.

## PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To provide young Jewish adults in the Diaspora with their first experience in Israel
- To awake, strengthen and maintain every Jew's connection with the Jewish People and the Jewish Homeland
- To strengthen the bond between Jews in the Diaspora and Jews in Israel

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Taglit-Birthright Israel offers participants a 10 day Israel experience that has proven to be incredibly successful in instilling participants with a positive, Israel-centered Jewish identity.

Taglit-Birthright Israel provides peer group educational trips to Israel for Jewish young adults ages 18 to 26 that have not yet set foot on the land of Israel. There are two divisions, Pre-College and Post-College, to ensure that each group is with other Jews in very similar levels of life. There are many different kinds of Taglit programs that are offered, encompassing everything from completely non-affiliated groups to Ultra-Orthodox groups of Jews. The 10-day program is as varied as the applicants – participants can have exiting outdoor experiences, archeological trips, history-focused trips, or can remain in religious communities and experience religious Jewish life in Israel.

Birthright aims to send thousands of young Jewish adults from all over the world to Israel in order to diminish the growing division between Israel and Jewish communities around the world; to strengthen the sense of solidarity among world Jewry; and to strengthen participants' personal Jewish identity and connection to the Jewish people.



## PROGRAM EVALUATION AND REPORTING

**Launched in 2000, the Taglit-Birthright Israel trip has had a transformative impact on the 160,000 previous participants.** For many of them, this intense, 10-day microcosm of a tightly-knit community is a first opportunity to connect Jewishly. Surveys of past participants of Taglit-Birthright Israel demonstrate the enduring impact of this program in terms of enhanced communal affiliation, financial support for Jewish communal institutions, repeat visits to Israel, and reduced rates of intermarriage.

The trip takes place during the critical formative young adult years of 18-26. Participants bond passionately with Israel, and learn basic concepts of Jewish life and each other. The scale of Taglit-Birthright Israel's outreach is exponentially greater than any other effort taking place in the Jewish community. **Birthright Israel attracts more than 50,000 applicants each year.**

As funding support grows, a Birthright Israel trip will become a normative experience for young Jewish adults, accomplishing nothing less than a transformation of the American Jewish community over the next few decades.

Of equal importance, an integral element to each and every Taglit-Birthright Israel trip is a *mifgash* -- a structured encounter with Israeli peers. Each busload of participants spends several days traveling with Israeli peers, creating a strong bond of recognition and understanding that becomes the living bridge between Israeli and Diaspora Jews. **Since the beginning of the trips, more than 25,000 Israelis have taken part.**

Additionally, Taglit-Birthright Israel has made a significant contribution to the Israeli economy. Since the program launched in 2000, more than \$267 million dollars has been pumped into Israel's essential tourism industry.

## FUNDING REQUEST

**Your investment of \$1,500 will sponsor one young Jewish adult, between the ages of 18-26 and living in the Diaspora, to visit Israel for the first time and connect to their Jewish identity through the experience of a lifetime. Due to the overwhelming and practically endless demand, you can sponsor an unlimited amount of participants.**