

Steinhardt Social Research Institute
at the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

**BUILDING MASA:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. MARKET FOR LONG-TERM PROGRAMS IN ISRAEL**

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Introduction

A broad range of research consistently finds that Israel experience programs strengthen the Jewish identities and feelings of connection to Israel among Diaspora youth and young adults.¹ Moreover, the impact of Israel experience programs is evident not only in the short-term, but also after several years. Recognizing the increasingly vital role of such experiences in the Jewish education of Diaspora young adults, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) established MASA Israel Journey. The aim of MASA is to encourage Diaspora young adults to spend a semester or year in Israel as part of an Israel experience program. MASA pursues this mission by providing “one stop shopping” for more than 130 study, volunteer, and career development programs, and by providing financial incentives in the form of grants and scholarships. The program’s ambitious vision is to increase the number of Jewish young adults who choose to participate in long-term programs in Israel to 20,000 by the year 2010.

The present research was commissioned by MASA North America to guide the organization toward growth. The report describes research conducted by the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies on the U.S. market for participation in MASA-qualified programs. Individual interviews with parents and focus groups with students and young adults were conducted in eight communities across the United States. Participants included MASA’s most promising market for expansion: students and parents who are interested in, but not yet fully committed, to long-term programs in Israel. Both interviews and focus groups explored views regarding long-term study in Israel, as well as specific preferences regarding Israel experience

¹ See Saxe, L. & Chazan, B. (forthcoming). *Ten Days of Birthright Israel: A Journey in Young Adult Identity*. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England; Saxe, L., Sasson, T., & Hecht, S. (2006). *Taglit-birthright israel: Impact on Jewish Identity, Peoplehood and Connection to Israel*. Waltham, MA: Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies; Saxe, L., Sasson, T, Phillips, B., Hecht, S., & Wright, G. (2007) *Taglit Birthright Israel Evaluation: 2007 North American Cohorts*. Waltham, MA: Steinhardt Social Research Institute; Cohen, S.M & Kelman, A., (2007) “Beyond Distancing: Young American Jews and their Alienation from Israel.” New York: Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies.

programs. Views regarding MASA's marketing strategy, as well as its incentives to encourage participation in its affiliated programs, were also examined.

The first section of the report describes MASA's target population. The study's research methodology is then described. Subsequent sections describe the views of prospective MASA parents and participants regarding opportunities for long term volunteer, study, and career development programs. The final sections explore the policy implications of the research findings.

Profile of MASA Participants

MASA supports participation in long-term Israel programs in three distinct age groups: high school seniors; college freshmen and sophomores; and college seniors, graduate students, and post-college young adults. Each of these groups is potentially faced with different types of decisions corresponding to their age, stage of education, and life experience:

- Jewish high school seniors make decisions about attending a gap year program in Israel prior to starting college. Institutions in Israel offer a variety of gap year programs that combine study of Jewish texts with travel and/or volunteer work. Because of age and financial considerations, parents are invariably involved in these decisions.
- College freshmen and sophomores make decisions about studying abroad during their junior year, and if so, whether they want to study in Israel. The majority of these decisions are made with the assistance of a university study-abroad program. However, state universities in California and a small group of other schools do not permit their students to enroll in Israel-based study-abroad programs. Students at such universities who wish to study in Israel must withdraw and, following completion of a program in Israel, petition for readmission and credit transfer.

- College seniors, college graduates, and young adults make decisions about working or volunteering in Israel after graduation. Some may choose to enroll in Israel-based graduate programs or participate in post-graduate internships.

MASA's goal is to provide information and funding that will encourage Jewish young adults to participate in semester and year-long programs in Israel. Understanding the motivations and considerations of Jewish young adults relative to such programs is necessary to attain this goal and was the driving force behind this study.

Methodology

The primary source of data for this study came from focus group discussions with Jewish young adults who fit the profile of prospective MASA participants. In the case of high school seniors, focus group participants were recruited from lists supplied by administrators at pluralistic, non-Orthodox high schools, since students from these schools represent a key market for expansion of MASA programs.² Parents of high school students were also interviewed by phone. For the focus groups conducted with college students and recent graduates, staff at campus-based Hillel foundations assisted with recruitment. Thus, most subjects in the study are Jewishly affiliated, either through their parochial high school or their connection to a Hillel group on a college campus.

Twenty-one focus group discussions were conducted. Six group discussions were conducted with high school seniors at Jewish high schools focusing primarily on gap year programs. Seven groups were conducted with college first year students and sophomores focusing on junior year study abroad programs. Eight groups were conducted with college

² Students attending Orthodox Jewish high schools presently participate in gap year yeshiva study at a very high rate, and therefore do not constitute a key market for MASA's expansion. Future research will focus on Jewishly-affiliated public school students.

seniors and recent graduates focusing on post-graduate internships, volunteer opportunities, and career development programs.

Focus groups were held in the following communities: Boston, Champaign/Urbana, Illinois, Chicago, Gainesville, Florida, Los Angeles, New York City, Northern California, and Washington, DC (see Table 1).

Table 1: Institutions Hosting Focus Groups

| Location | High School Seniors | College First/Second Year Students | College Seniors and Graduate Students |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Boston | Gann Academy | | Boston University |
| Champaign/Urbana, IL | | University of Illinois | University of Illinois |
| Chicago | Chicagoland Jewish High School | | |
| Gainesville, FL | | University of Florida | University of Florida |
| Los Angeles | Milken Community High School and New Community Jewish High School | UCLA | UCLA |
| New York City | Heschel High School | New York University | New York University |
| | | Baruch College and Brooklyn College (both groups open to all undergraduates) | |
| Northern California | | UC Davis | UC Berkeley |
| Washington, DC | Charles E. Smith | George Washington University | George Washington University |

As shown in Table 2, the sample included 143 focus group participants, equally divided between male and female. More than 80 percent of the participants had been to Israel at least once, either on a family trip, with Taglit/Birthright Israel, or with a high school tour group. Roughly one quarter of the sample grew up Orthodox; 40 percent Conservative; and 20 percent Reform. Among the college students, half attended day school during their primary years.

Roughly half the sample (48 percent) had heard of MASA prior to the interview. The sample represents what is believed to be MASA’s core constituency: those who have been to Israel previously and are willing to contemplate participation in a long-term program. Future research will be needed to assess the interests and needs of Jewish students who are unaffiliated and have not previously traveled to Israel.

Table 2: Characteristics of Participants

| | | |
|---|----------------|-----|
| Gender | Male | 50% |
| | Female | 50% |
| Household Denomination | Orthodox | 25% |
| | Reform | 20% |
| | Conservative | 40% |
| | Other | 15% |
| Day School Education (post high school) | Attended | 50% |
| | Did Not Attend | 50% |
| Familiar with MASA | Yes | 48% |
| | No | 52% |
| Prior travel to Israel | Yes | 80% |
| | No | 20% |
| Total Participants | | 143 |

The focus group interview questions explored the participants’ general plans for living and studying abroad, and their thoughts, feelings, and plans in relation to Israel in particular. We also discussed their specific program preferences and the significance of the MASA incentive structure. (Discussion questions for each category of focus group are shown in the appendix.)

As noted, most interview subjects had visited Israel at least once and were tied to their Jewish communities. Moreover, in all discussions, the participants expressed positive feelings

about Israel and Israelis, and most mentioned their intention to visit again in the near future. However, when asked if they planned to attend one of the MASA-supported programs in the near term, most were undecided, with small numbers either certain that they would or certain that they would not.

Alongside the focus group interviews, thirteen individual interviews with parents of current high school juniors and seniors were also conducted. The aim of the parent interviews was to assess opinions regarding gap year programs in general and the MASA program in particular, as well as the decision-making process regarding study abroad in Israel. Our sample of parents included several each from lists provided by B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO), Prozdor, (Hebrew College's supplementary high school program in Boston), NFTY, and the supplementary high school program of a large Reform synagogue in the Boston area. The interviews thus included parents representing a range of non-Orthodox Jewish identities. Eleven of the parents were mothers; two fathers. All had been to Israel, and most had traveled there with their children as well. Three parents indicated that their children were planning to attend a gap year program in Israel (in all three cases, the Young Judea Year Course). The remaining ten parents indicated that their children plan to attend college next year.

The discussion begins with the views of these parents, specifically with regard to MASA's gap year programs. In subsequent sections, we consider the program features that the focus group discussion participants regarded as attractive, and the obstacles to participation that they mentioned.

Parental Perspectives on the Gap Year

Across the board, parents believe that gap year programs provide an opportunity for teenagers to gain maturity and direction prior to college. Many also pointed out that the run-up to

college applications is exhausting, and that their children need and deserve a break from intense academic competition before commencing college. One Prozdor parent, whose daughter has enrolled in Young Judaea's Year Course, feared that absent a gap year her daughter would "crash and burn," or "change her major eight times and take an extra year to graduate."

The parents' perspectives on the suitability of a gap year programs for their specific teenagers reflects their assessments of their teenagers' readiness for college. The gap year is attractive to parents who believe that their specific teen would benefit, in terms of maturity and college-readiness, by deferring college for a year. As one Prozdor mother expressed, "a gap year lets you go away, do something different, learn who you are and what you like to do without parental influence."

The gap year programs are less attractive to parents who feel that their teen is college-ready. One interview subject from a Reform synagogue described the benefits of a transition year between high school and college, but explained that his child does not need one: "There's a certain amount of professional development as kids move from high school to college in terms of ideas, sense of self. [My son] has that already; he is not wondering who he is. It's a useful process [the gap year] for kids who need more direction."

Parents who believe their teen is college-ready worry that a gap year program might cause her or him to fall behind or lose motivation for college. Others simply view their children as ready for college and see no reason to delay. Such parents view study abroad as a valuable experience but as one that can be pursued during the junior year of college rather than during a gap year. International experience is valued across the board by these parents, but not necessarily in Israel, and not necessarily during the gap year. One parent commented that she

expected her daughter to study Spanish in college and hence to study abroad during her junior year in a Spanish-speaking country.

Notably, for almost all of the families in the study sample, the key decision-maker regarding the gap year is the young adult. If she or he is not interested, then no parent in our sample is willing to force the matter. Notably, all of the parents we interviewed indicated a willingness to support their teenagers' decisions in favor of a gap year.

The parents in the sample were asked whether the MASA financial incentives would factor into their decision making regarding a gap year program. All parents in the sample indicated that incentives were a nice "bonus" or a "plus," but that in the final analysis such incentives would not influence decision-making. The cost of college, whether incurred immediately or deferred a year, is viewed as so enormous as to render the MASA scholarship insignificant.

Parents were more divided over the significance of the opportunity to earn college credit during the gap year. For some, the opportunity to earn up to a full semester of credit is very important and would factor into their decision-making. For others, the opportunity to earn general college credit prior to matriculation is not especially attractive and would not factor into decision making. Finally, a few parents indicated that worries over security would discourage them from sending their teenager on a full-year program prior to college. Perhaps the bigger news is that a clear majority of interview subjects did not regard safety as a significant factor in their decision making.

In the next section, we turn to the focus group discussions among prospective participants in MASA programs. We begin by describing the features of MASA programs that prospective participants described as especially attractive.

Most Attractive Features of MASA Programs

In all focus group discussions, participants were asked in general what they might like to do in the context of a long-term program in Israel. Participants were also provided a list of key features of MASA programs (see Appendix) and asked to identify those they regarded as most attractive. The priorities and preferences of discussion participants for programs in Israel differed systematically by age cohort. The high school seniors contemplating a gap year in Israel were primarily interested in having a great experience that deepened their understanding of Israel and provided a global perspective on world events. Many also relished the opportunity to take a break between the demands of high school and the anticipated demands of college. The first and second-year university students were more focused on programs that would enable them to advance in their academic careers by satisfying general credit, language, and major requirements. The third age cohort, college seniors and recent graduates, were most focused on graduate school and career-related programs, as well as programs that enable them to contribute to Israel while earning their way.

These distinctive trajectories notwithstanding, the participants' preferences regarding specific program features overlapped to a significant extent. Accordingly, in the sections that follow, we examine the most attractive program features for the study participants as a whole, specifying as we proceed the features that are most relevant to one or another age cohort.

Social action

Many prospective gap year and post-college discussion participants responded positively to programs with a social action component. They view social action as a way of contributing to Israel while also learning more about Israel as a multi-cultural society. Such opportunities promise to deepen their knowledge of Israel. The attraction is increased when such programs

feature opportunities to interact with Israeli peers. Many recall their positive mifgash experience on Birthright Israel; they like and admire Israeli young adults. Social action that enables participants to discover Israel's diverse Jewish and non-Jewish population groups would also attract a wide range of applicants. But not all social action programs are equally attractive; a few expressed a disinclination to volunteer in the periphery (e.g., the Negev); another expressed a disinclination to work with the elderly. The following conversation extracts are illustrative; the speakers are describing the kinds of programs that they would find attractive:

I would say participating in social justice or development programs, interning for an Israeli organization, or interaction with an organization. I know there is a lot of cool NGO and non-profit organizations in Israel doing really interesting work with lots of interesting problems that we talked about. And I think that working or interning in one of those organizations really would be interesting. (UC Berkeley seniors/graduate students)

I think that number one would be the participating in social justice work because I don't want to join an army and I don't want to volunteer in that way, but I feel like I have something to give back to Israel. And I would like to say ten years from now that I had done something to help the state, so that would be good. (Smith HS)

Travel beyond Israel

Programs that feature opportunities to travel beyond Israel were especially attractive to high school seniors contemplating a gap year. Several such students in the discussion groups would like to return to Israel but are also seeking new experiences. The fact that many respondents want to visit countries other than Israel reflects the sampling of day school students for the high school groups. These discussion participants come from intensely Jewish households and schools; many now seek new experiences and opportunities beyond the "Jewish bubble." This perspective is captured in the following quote:

I have heard great things about Kivunim [an Israel-based gap year program that features travel to additional countries]. And part of the thing about traveling from Israel is, I think it sort of makes Israel more of your home because you are taking vacations from Israel...

So, I think that would just be a cool feeling to travel from Israel and also to learn about these Jewish communities [around the world] and then go and experience them.

(Chicagoland HS)

In response to our questions, individual respondents often mentioned several different program preferences. The following quote shows how multiple preferences (e.g., social action; getting to know Israelis; travel beyond Israel) were often packaged in the conversations:

I guess one big thing is visiting other countries in addition to Israel...I think that would actually make the trip a lot more interesting and much longer. Social justice work would be interesting. I would actually be a lot more interested if it wasn't just Israelis, also Palestinians, Bedouin—everyone around that area—much more multicultural. And those would be pretty much my two things and also just getting to know and living with Israelis.
(UC Berkeley seniors/graduate students)

Hebrew immersion

Perhaps surprisingly, several respondents in each age cohort indicated that they would like to master the Hebrew language in the context of a long-term program in Israel. In many instances, the speakers were individuals who had studied Hebrew but not attained a desired level of understanding and fluency. For such individuals, developing fluency in Hebrew is a concrete goal, a way to measure whether the experience has produced the desired result. Consider the following exchange among two high school seniors:

Alana³: Definitely just immersing myself in Hebrew and having just to speak Hebrew for awhile is something I am looking for. I wouldn't want the program to get to Israel and then be trapped in an American bubble. That is kind of how I felt about my Israel trip I went on over the summer.

³ Names are employed in extracts that include more than one speaker. In all cases, the names employed are pseudonyms.

Dan: For me, improving my Hebrew would be [very important] because I feel like the connection that I make to Israel right now is going to be—I think it is going to be pretty constant for the rest of my life, and I think that language is a big thing I want to establish. (Heschel HS)

College students looking ahead to their junior years abroad also commented on the importance of language acquisition through cultural immersion, as indicated in the following quotation:

I would go for the culture and for the language. So I kind of feel like if it was as laid back as high school that is great. You are getting the credits anyway for these easy classes and you are learning the language and you should be learning the culture. But the submersion [sic] programs where you could be concentrating on the language would be exactly what I would want to do. (George Washington University first/second year students)

Transferable course credit

Earning college credit is virtually obligatory for the college students contemplating study abroad during the junior year. It is also highly desirable for the gap year students. However, the issues in the two cohorts are different. Potential gap year students often have a general desire to earn credits so as to justify the deferral of college. The courses for which they receive credits do not much matter, and they do not discern between credits that can be easily transferred and those that must be negotiated with their home university. Their goal in earning credit is to enable greater flexibility in course selection during their undergraduate careers or to make possible graduation after seven rather than the usual eight semesters of college study.

University students contemplating the study abroad, typically in the junior year, face more concrete challenges with respect to college credits. They seek credit that will easily transfer and will satisfy either language requirements or requirements of the major. Consider, for example, the following quotations:

My concentration in international affairs is security and conflict. And so, of course, Israel is definitely a place beyond just the cultural ties that I would want to study. And if there was a program available that tied in to my major—it would make it a lot easier to travel there if it would count towards my major with the credits. (George Washington University first/second year students)

If you are not in a major where a language is part of your curriculum or history is part of your curriculum [then] the classes don't fit unless you are in your first or second year of school and you are doing general education and you can make a program at Hebrew University or Tel Aviv University fit into your curriculum. I didn't ever have the opportunity to go abroad because the classes that I can take abroad would not be the same as here and they weren't offering chemistry and biology and everything else in Israel. I would have loved to be able to do something like that. (University of Florida seniors/graduate students)

At the graduate level, the fit between the student's academic goals and the program options in Israel must be still closer, as the following quote testifies.

Getting academic credit is what I was probably most concerned about. I think I could see going into graduate school there or something like that. It is not a huge possibility but maybe. I have two professors right now in economics who went to school there, and [Israel] is pretty well known in theoretical economics, some of the universities there. So that definitely would be good. (UC Berkeley seniors/graduate students)

Participants in several groups expressed a preference for participating in their home university programs to ensure seamless transfer of credit, notwithstanding their greater expense relative to Israel-based programs. These students understand the cost differences and, nevertheless, express a preference for attending their own universities' programs abroad.

I just want to go abroad and I'm pretty open minded about where I go. Like one day I'm going to Australia, the next day it's like maybe Italy. So, I don't know, maybe I'll throw Israel into the mix. But it seems like it's kind of difficult, since it's easier just to go with the Education Abroad program, and you get to go with like all the UCEs (University of California Education Abroad) and so those have more appeal than like going out and researching your own. (UC Davis first/second year students)

Career development opportunities

Among discussion participants contemplating a post-college program, opportunities to test career options, develop career-relevant skills and networks, and/or complete a prestigious internship or training program were especially popular. The discussion of such programs included several niche possibilities, such as opportunities for medical and legal internships and training rotations. Participants also expressed interest in business and technology internships. Consider the following examples. The speakers are discussing their preferences regarding long-term programs in Israel:

I put doing a work internship in an Israeli organization first just because I am considering maybe...graduate school. I am looking at both medical school and masters or PhD programs. So maybe if I do an internship there in the bio field, or in the chemistry field, because I know that they do a lot of biotech stuff over there, maybe it will help me decide which direction I want to go when I continue my education. (UCLA seniors/graduate students)

I guess the thing that I would want to do in Israel is do a [medical] rotation there, and I guess it would all depend on how possible it is—if it is because I have time constraints that are just really complicated to set it up, or I feel like it is just too much then I probably wouldn't do it. But if it is feasible then I might consider it. (UCLA seniors/graduate students)

For where I am right now in my studies, the Bar Ilan International MBA looks very good because it addresses a couple of different things that I am interested in. Number one is student's work while taking classes...The second would be earning a master's degree, which is another thing that I am interested in. And I would get to do both work and study but in Israel. (University of Florida seniors/graduate students)

Obstacles and Disincentives

Most discussion participants expressed great affection for Israel and found it very easy to identify attractive programs from among the options described in the MASA brochure. Why then do more not enroll in a program? What are the obstacles and disincentives to joining a MASA-supported program?

Been there, done that

A sizable majority (80%) of the discussion participants have been to Israel. Many had strong Jewish upbringings, especially the high school seniors. As a consequence, many anticipate traveling to Israel frequently over the course of their lives. However, they do not express a sense of urgency about returning in the near term. Instead, many express a desire for a new experience, one that will take them out of the insular Jewish world of their youth. For these young adults, college is viewed a time for new experiences; Israel is an "open invitation" that they can accept at a later date. The following three quotations illustrate this theme:

The reason I was less enthusiastic than the others is just because I feel like study abroad for me is more of a chance to do something that you will never get to do again in real life and to do something totally different. And I have already been to Israel and I feel like most of the people who will be studying abroad in Israel would be Jewish, and they are similar to me. I want to go somewhere crazy. (George Washington University first/second year students)

I think that I will always be connected to Israel. I will always visit Israel, and college is a fantastic time for me to take advantage of programs that take me to other parts of the world, which I would never have the opportunity to explore outside of the university setting. (University of Illinois first/second year students)

I really want to study abroad, and before I went on Birthright I was heavily considering Israel as the place I wanted to go, but then, once I went on Birthright [and] the actual - well, the reason that I no longer consider Israel as really an option for me to study abroad is because I went to Israel, and now I want to go somewhere else. It has nothing to do with my experience in Israel, it's just that I went there, and so now...I should go somewhere else. (UC Davis first/second year students)

Fear of “flip out”

Several high school seniors expressed the fear—or reported their parents’ fear—that they would either make aliyah or become religious, which they described using the terms “flip out” and “frum-out.” Having heard stories of peers who elected to remain in Israel permanently following a year of study, or who became more religiously devout, these individuals express caution. Consider the following comments of one high school senior:

I would want to go to yeshiva to study. And my parents would rightfully think that if I go...and study I would frum-out. They think that [this will happen] even if I go on Nativ [a yeshiva of the Conservative movement]...because they know one guy who frummed-out after going on Nativ. And they think I will enlist [in the army] or make aliyah or both. So they will not let me go to Israel on a gap year. (Chicagoland HS)

Such concerns are undoubtedly more prevalent among day school seniors and their parents than among students in the broader American Jewish community. The notion that a gap year student would elect to remain permanently in Israel or adopt an Orthodox lifestyle seems

plausible to day school seniors (and their parents) in a way that it might not to American Jews with weaker ties to Israel and Jewish tradition.

Length of program

Discussion participants frequently expressed a desire for shorter programs. A year is too long for many; they fear falling behind in their academic and career pursuits. Many high school seniors said they were eager to begin college and stay apace of their peers.⁴ Respondents in many focus groups of all types feared “disconnecting” from friends and family. In this connection, many discussion participants expressed the hope that MASA would provide support for summer and other shorter-term programs. Consider the following examples of this theme:

I want to get my education done. I really do want to go to Israel for a year but I really also want to get my education done in four years and just move on. And I know that I will be able to see Israel hopefully in the future. (Chicagoland HS)

Well, I would really love to go but I feel like I have responsibilities at home and...I feel really bad leaving my family behind. That is actually the only reason I wouldn't go...but I would really love to go. That is why I am very interested in shorter programs, not for an entire year, but for a summer or trimester. (Gann Academy)

Program reputations

A small number of participants in several college groups reported that Israel study abroad programs do not have a reputation for academic excellence or immersion in culture and language. In the first quotation below, the speaker characterizes study abroad programs in Israel as primarily focused on promoting love of Israel or aliyah regardless of their formal curriculum.

⁴ A recent development that may make shorter-term programs more attractive is that a number of select colleges are admitting mid-year classes, along with the traditional September class.

This model works well for many Jewish young adults, the speaker notes, but it is an obstacle to the participation of others.

I think Israel programs always sell themselves short...in two ways. First of all, when they advertise they are like, Israel, Israel, Israel, thinking that that is going to be the clincher and not talking enough about their programs. On the other hand, I think that Israel is going to be enough to get people to go on their programs. And, so, maybe they don't develop their programs well enough to make there be a reason for people who have been to Israel before or people who don't give a shit about Israel but want to do a really good program to go. And, so, I think what MASA needs to do is make themselves look different and to develop the program in a way that makes it obvious to a person who sees an advertisement that it is not an 'Israel program.' This is a program for the environment or whatever to make it worth people's time. (UC Berkeley seniors/graduate students)

Several participants also commented that existing Israel programs do not provide sufficient linguistic immersion in Hebrew or cultural immersion in Israeli society. In comparison to study abroad options in other countries, those in Israel, these participants believe, tend to relegate North Americans to an English-speaking "bubble." Consider the following:

I would not have chosen the international programs [of Israeli universities] because I am familiar with the people who have gone on those programs, and they have emphasized how they really had like an American type of experience there. They are dormed, or they live with Americans and they barely learn Hebrew. And I know that if I would choose to do a program in Israel, really having an Israeli experience would be of value to me. (UCLA senior/graduate students)

Requirement to withdraw from university

Of the universities in our sample, several—University of California, Davis, University of California, Los Angeles and George Washington University—do not offer study abroad credit in Israel. They require that students withdraw in order to matriculate in programs in Israel. At the

conclusion of the program, students can petition for readmission and transfer of the credits they earned studying in Israel. Students in the discussion groups understand the process but regard it as convoluted and risky. Consider the following exchange between two George Washington University students:

Dan: It's definitely an obstacle. I met with my advisor just because I need to go next spring, and I was talking to her actually about Israel and she was telling me, 'Well, if you were to withdraw there is no guarantee that the credits and the classes would transfer over correctly and it would involve a lot of paperwork.' It is definitely a hindrance...

Dean: Yeah. I was just curious and stopped by the study abroad office and one thing I didn't realize is apparently you don't apply for programs until the semester before. I was like oh, I want to get it all sorted out. And what they said is, for Israel you have to temporarily withdraw and there is some fee with that, and then what they said is then you pay directly to whatever programs. It is very complicated. (George Washington University first/second year students)

These students would clearly be more likely to enroll in MASA-supported study abroad programs were their universities willing to support such programs.

Need to break even financially— post-college

Finally, several post-college students commented that they cannot afford to pay for a long-term program in Israel. Even the inexpensive and heavily-subsidized programs featured by MASA appear to be beyond their means. Following college, they explained, most young adults need to support themselves, and few have money saved for an experience in Israel. They are willing to work but need to break even financially for the year. If they cannot break even volunteering in Israel, then they will do something else, such as teach English in Japan. Consider the following quotation:

I know that most of the programs cost somewhere around \$10,000 to \$12,000, if not more. So tacking onto that travel fees and living expenses it can come to a hefty price. So \$3,500 could pay just for the flight and I guess a few weeks of stay in Israel. I mean it is very helpful but...If there would be a way to kind of pay as you work...that would be a suggestion I would give. If they are able to give you a scholarship of sorts you would be able to work it off if you do some sort of research or work as a research assistant. (UCLA senior/graduate students)

Marketing MASA

How much did the participants know about MASA prior to the discussion? What did they think of the incentive structure for participation? How did they assess the MASA marketing materials? The next section of the report examines the discussion participants' views on MASA's marketing strategies.

Buzz

Roughly half of the participants had heard of MASA but none expressed depth knowledge or enthusiasm for the program. MASA does not have brand appeal comparable to Birthright Israel. It is not generally recognized as an entity independent of the programs it supports. Rather, it is viewed among those who have heard of it as a scholarship program—one among several, including those provided by federations—to subsidize travel to Israel.

Participants in the high school groups offered a number of observations about how MASA could draw attention to its programs:

- Since high school students are not inclined to seek out information about gap year programs; it is necessary for MASA to bring the information to them through information sessions.

- High school students are heavily focused on getting into a good college. Since college admission is on everyone's mind during senior year, MASA should focus on juniors.
- High school faculty and administrators do not say much about gap year programs. College counselors in particular need to raise the option in conversations with students.
- High school youth groups and supplementary programs are also good places to talk about MASA programs.

Participants in all of the groups recommended a greater electronic presence, including on Facebook, and also stressed the importance of meeting alumni and speaking directly with representatives of the program. Recommendations from alumni of MASA programs are the single most important mechanism for spreading word about the program. Several participants also stressed that MASA should establish closer ties to Birthright Israel. “Whatever Birthright is doing, they’re doing it right,” commented one participant.

When the parents we interviewed were asked about how the program might raise its profile, they stressed the importance of enlisting guidance counselors, synagogues, youth groups, and supplementary high school programs. The right time to begin spreading the word among prospective gap year participants, they insisted, is even earlier than the high school students themselves suggested—during their sophomore years in high school. At that early stage, high school students are already imagining what their future course of study will entail and ought to know about the gap-year possibility.

Incentives

The financial incentives appear to make no difference in the decision making of college students who are contemplating a study abroad year. Many such students, in fact, are prepared to

pay far more in order to matriculate in a program that will advance their studies or career prospects. The following exchange, from the George Washington University student group, illustrates the discussion of this topic:

Dan. With the way they set it up at the school is you have to pay \$18,000 to go abroad plus \$4,000 or \$6,000 for room and board. So \$2,000 is like—if you are going to spend the money it is not going to be that much of a difference.

Moderator. So \$2,000 doesn't really make much of a difference?

Adam. It is nice but it is not going to change anything.

Amy. It is travel money.

Dean. Yeah. And not to generalize—I don't know what everyone else in this room is like but my guess is that we are all sort of upper middle class and going to GW and the \$2,000 isn't—I mean it is nice but it is not going to sway a decision. (George Washington University first/second year students)

Students contemplating gap-year programs expressed interest in the scholarships, but it is clear that their parents will make the financial decisions. The parents with whom we spoke described MASA's financial incentives as a "nice bonus" but not as a decisive factor in their decision making. The college seniors and graduate students, as noted in the previous section, are a different story altogether. Most recent graduates must be able to break even financially. The MASA incentives help but, as currently structured, they are insufficient.

Policy Implications: Rethinking Message, Program and Incentives

Whether it makes changes or not, MASA will likely continue to expand over the coming years, as more Birthright Israel alumni elect post-college programs, and as participation in gap and junior year abroad programs continues to expand for the age demographic as a whole. New MASA programs that provide opportunities for social action and travel beyond Israel will attract increasing numbers of young adults. Absent fundamental changes, however, MASA is unlikely to cause the revolution in life-planning among North American Jewish families that would make a semester or year in Israel a normal rite of passage. In the sections that follow, we discuss what such changes might entail, under the rubric of message, program, and incentives.

Message

MASA's website and brochure describe the program as a "personal journey" that helps to "build a life-long relationship with Israel and a firm commitment to Jewish life." This theme will prove highly relevant to many prospective MASA participants. However, to reach a wider range of American Jewish students and young adults, MASA might also consider describing Israel as a site for advancing one's academic and career goals. Such themes are especially important for prospective participants in college and post-college programs. Many such students, as we have noted, express interest in opportunities for cultural immersion, Hebrew language acquisition, and internships that will advance their specific career objectives. Whereas some prospective students are drawn to programs that promise a more relaxed pace than their home universities, others seek prestigious, academically demanding, and intellectually stimulating programs. At the post-graduate level, whereas some are drawn to volunteer and social action

opportunities, others will opt for study in Israel only if it satisfies very specific academic or career-development goals.

MASA might also consider emphasizing Israel's multicultural and diverse character. Displaying Israel's ethnic and religious diversity is one way of conveying the deeper layers of experience that only become possible in the context of a long-term program. The multicultural character of the country—including its diverse Jewish and non-Jewish populations—sparks the curiosity and interest of many prospective participants. Programs that promise to introduce such students and young adults to diverse groups of Israelis will justify a return visit.

Programs

Changing MASA's message cannot be accomplished through marketing alone; if the programs MASA supports do not achieve their stated goals, claiming that they do will weaken the program rather than strengthen it. Programs that advance academic and career goals are those that provide easily transferable credit in needed areas; skills that are in demand; connections that facilitate career advancement and that confer prestige. Undergraduate programs with reputations for excellence, both in terms of overall program quality as well as in the academic program, will attract students who presently might opt for study abroad elsewhere. Graduate programs that offer terminal degrees and are taught in English, for example, the new MBA program at The Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, will likely prove popular. Internship opportunities in fields for which Israel is famous, such as biotechnology and computer science, will also attract students. In a globalized world with ever-increasing travel and electronic communication, designing more such programs, in a fashion that is relevant to segments of the North American Jewish world, would not be impossible.

For those seeking new experiences that include travel beyond Israel, social action opportunities, and opportunities to work alongside Israeli peers, MASA might consider encouraging service programs for Israeli and Diaspora youth that take place both inside and outside of Israel. Such programs, especially relevant to the gap year and post-college cohorts, might constitute a kind of Jewish Peace Corps. By commencing in Israel, with a substantial training component, such programs would establish Israel as a hub for Jewish social action programs worldwide. Partnering with an organization that already has an international presence, like the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee or the American Jewish World Service would create portals to programs around the world.

In addition to improving existing academic and career development programs, and developing new ones, MASA might think “out of the box” about strategies to influence the “demand side” for such programs. If more Jewish students were studying Hebrew or Israel/Middle East studies at U.S. universities, more would find Israel naturally relevant to their academic development. Language study is especially relevant to this equation. Students generally study foreign languages to satisfy requirements and not as part of a major. Moreover, at many universities, study abroad is only permitted in countries in which a student has already demonstrated a desired degree of mastery of the local language. However, whether MASA can influence enrollments in Israel-relevant courses at North American institutions is an open question.

Many prospective participants expressed interest in shorter programs than those presently offered by MASA. MASA might consider supporting nine or ten-week summer programs. Such programs might provide credit equivalent to one or two university courses, including especially a semester of Hebrew language credit. The summer semester format would fit into the college

calendars of most university students. Although summer programs cannot provide the depth of experience of five-month or full-year programs, they would clearly deepen the experiences of those who have only visited Israel on short family or Birthright Israel-type trips. For such programs, which would be less costly than the regular semester programs, the MASA incentives might also make a material difference.

Finally, participants in many of the focus group conversations clearly indicated a preference for study abroad programs sponsored by their own universities. Cultivating the proliferation of such programs would certainly increase the number of MASA participants.

Incentives

The above indicates a possible need for MASA to reconsider how it allocates the resources at its disposal. Such a need is further clarified by consideration of the reactions of discussion participants to the existing program of subsidies. The subsidies appear largely irrelevant to the study abroad students. They appear to provide only a marginal incentive to the gap year applicants. Of those we interviewed, only the post-graduates indicated that affordability is a key obstacle to participation. For this group, the MASA subsidies help but do not go far enough. Shifting MASA resources to provide full support for post-college study and to encourage the development of Hebrew abroad might be the kind of “out of the box” strategies needed to build the program.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND HANDOUTS

1. Questions for Parents
2. Questions for High School Seniors
3. Questions for Sophomores & Juniors
4. Questions for Seniors & Graduates
5. Handouts
 - A. Features of Israel Programs
 - B. Description of Gap Programs
 - C. Description of Academic Programs
 - D. Description of Career Development Programs
 - E. Description of MASA

PHONE INTERVIEW WITH PARENTS

1. Where is your son/daughter at right now in planning for next year? Is s/he applying to colleges? Is s/he considering a gap year program? [If yes, What options have you considered?]
2. In terms of college choice and choice of a gap year program, how would you describe the decision making process in your family? Is the decision primarily up to your son/daughter, is it basically your decision, or is it a decision that you will arrive at together?
3. Some Jewish students choose to go on a gap year program in Israel. Have you discussed the possibility of your son/daughter spending a semester or a year in Israel on a gap year program?
4. On a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 is you're 100% sure you want your child to go on such a program, and 0 is you absolutely don't want them to go, where do you fall? Where does your child fall?
5. What are some of the reasons you might want your child to go on such a program?
6. What are some of the reasons why you wouldn't want her/him to go?
7. What are your thoughts about your child studying abroad in college? In Israel? Elsewhere?
8. I'm going to read to you some characteristics of gap year programs in Israel and I'd like you to tell me how important they are in the decision to send or not send your child:
 - Financial reasons
 - Opportunity to earn college credit --
 - Opportunity to learn Hebrew →
 - Opportunity to study Jewish texts and Jewish history --
 - Chance to meet Israeli peers --
 - Opportunity to volunteer --
 - Opportunity to combine a visit to Israel with other international travel --
 - Others as appropriate
9. Have you or your spouse ever visited Israel? Have you taken a family trip to Israel?
10. If your child were to participate in a gap year program in Israel, would you visit?
11. Have you heard of MASA? If so, what are your impressions of MASA? (Read a short description of MASA).
12. Would knowing about these scholarships effect your thought about a gap year?
13. What would be the best way for MASA to get their message out to parents like you? Would you come to an information session in your community?

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

1. Let's start by introducing ourselves. Tell me your name, where you live, and what, if you know, if your plan for after graduation.

2. Now let's talk about Israel. If you haven't been there yet, what are your feelings about going? If you have been there, please tell me about your trip(s). How many times have you been there? Who did you go with? What did you like the most?

2. I'd like to ask you about how you feel about a gap year in general. Is this something you're considering? Have you talked about a gap year with your parents? What do they think?

4. Let's talk about a gap year in Israel specifically. If the decision were entirely up to you, on a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 is I'm 100% sure I would go, and 0 is there's no chance I would go, where do you fall? Why?

- What are the reasons for going or not going or not being sure?
- What would make it easier to go or harder to go?
- How are college-related considerations like college credit and college acceptance a factor?
- How does money factor into your decision?

3. On the same 0 to 100 scale, if the decision were entirely up to your parents, where do they fall? Why?

4. What are the most important components of an Israel experience for you – meeting with Israelis, studying Hebrew, traveling, learning more about yourself, and so on? What would be the top two or three features? (*Distribute "Features" handout to be used as a reference.*)

5. I'm going to give you a list of Israel gap year programs (*Distribute Academic Programs handout*). Take a minute to read through the list. What are your first impressions? Which of these programs appeal to you the most and why?

6. If you were to consider an Israel program, what specific information would you look for in a order to make an informed decision, and where would you go to find it? (Probe for program type, cost, length, political affiliation, MASA website, etc.)

7. What advice would you have for MASA to get their message out to high school seniors like you?

8. Is there anything we didn't ask but you think we should know about gap year, Israel travel, etc?

Distribute/collect Background Information form, circulate gift certificate form, and distribute gift certificates, "What You Should Know About MASA Israel Journey" Form and gift items.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL FOR FRESHMEN/SOPHOMORES

After introduction, distribute/collect Informed Consent Forms

1. Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Tell me your name, where you are from, your year in school and what you're studying, and any activities you're involved in on campus.
2. How important is it to you to travel or study abroad during your time in college? Would you rather do it during college, or after college?
3. Now let's talk specifically about Israel. If you've never been there, what are your feelings about going? If you have been to Israel, please tell us about your trips... how many times have you been there...who did you go with (probe regarding BRI)...what was it like?
4. I'd like to ask you about how you feel about a study abroad program in Israel – a summer or semester in Israel before graduation. On a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 is I'm 100% sure I would go, and 0 is there's no chance, where do you fall?
 - Tell me about your thinking in make this decision... what are some of the factors that might affect going or not going? Probes:
 - professional/career interests
 - school policies and other academic considerations
 - cost of the program
 - availability of information about different programs
 - personal relationships
 - role of parents
 - desire to visit other countries
 - How much of a difference does it make whether the program is run by [Name of School] or another school?
 - Would a \$3,000 grant for a semester make a difference in your decision making?
5. What are the most important components of an Israel experience for you - meeting with Israelis, studying Hebrew, traveling, learning more about yourself, and so on? What would be the top two or three features? (*Distribute "Features" handout to be used as a reference.*)
6. I'm going to give you a list of Israel-based study abroad programs. (*Distribute Academic Programs Handout*) What are your first impressions? Which of these programs appeal to you the most, and why?
7. If you were to consider an Israel program, what specific information would you look for in order to make an informed decision, and where would you go to find it? (Probe for program type, cost, length, political affiliation, role of study abroad office, Hillel, MASA website, etc.)
8. How should MASA get out the message about Israel programs to college students like you?
9. Is there anything we didn't ask but you think we should know about your feelings about study abroad, Israel travel, etc?

Distribute/collect Background Information Form, circulate Gift Certificate Form and distribute gift certificates, "What You Should Know About MASA Israel Journey" Form, and gift items.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL SENIORS/GRADUATES

After introduction, distribute/collect Informed Consent Forms

1. Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Tell me your name, where you are from, your year in school and what you're studying, and any activities you're involved in on campus.

2. How important is it to you to travel or study abroad after college? Did you travel or study abroad during college?

3. Now let's talk specifically about Israel. If you've never been there, what are your feelings about going? If you have been to Israel, please tell us about your trips... how many times have you been there...who did you go with (probe regarding BRI)...what was it like?

4. I'd like to ask you about how you feel about a study, work or volunteer program in Israel after graduation. On a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 is I'm 100% sure I would go, and 0 is there's no chance, where do you fall?

- Tell me about your thinking in make this decision... what are some of the factors that might affect going or not going? Probes:
 - professional/career interests
 - grad school policies and other academic considerations
 - cost of the program
 - availability of information about different programs
 - personal relationships
 - role of parents/significant other
 - desire to visit other countries
- Would a \$4500 grant make a difference in your decision making?

5. What are the most important components of an Israel experience for you - meeting with Israelis, studying Hebrew, traveling, learning more about yourself, and so on? What would be the top two or three features? (*Distribute "Features" handout to be used as a reference*).

6. I'm going to give you a list of Israel-based study abroad programs. (*Distribute Post College Programs Handout*) What are your first impressions? Which of these programs appeal to you the most, and why?

7. If you were to consider an Israel program, what specific information would you look for in order to make an informed decision, and where would you go to find it? (Probe for program type, cost, length, political affiliation, relevance to career/grad school program, MASA website, etc.)

8. How should MASA get out the message about Israel programs to graduating seniors like you?

9. Is there anything we didn't ask but you think we should know about your feelings about study abroad, Israel travel, etc?

Distribute/collect Background Information Form, circulate Gift Certificate Form and distribute gift certificates, "What You Should Know About MASA Israel Journey" Form, and gift items.

Features of Israel Programs

Listed below are features of Israel programs. From the list, identify the five features that are most important to you personally and **underline** them. Then, rank order your top five choices. Put a 1 in front of your first choice, a 2 next to your second choice, and so on until you have put a ranking next to all five of your top choices.

- _____ Touring Israel
- _____ Participating in sports and athletic programs
- _____ Participating in army training
- _____ Getting to know Israelis
- _____ Living with an Israeli family
- _____ Improving your Hebrew
- _____ Doing a work internship in an Israeli organization
- _____ Learning about Jewish history
- _____ Doing environmental work
- _____ Learning more about yourself
- _____ Studying Jewish texts
- _____ Doing social justice/helping Israelis in need
- _____ Getting academic credit toward college
- _____ Helping you select a career
- _____ Visiting other countries in addition to Israel
- _____ Being in a program with people from all over the world
- _____ Doing outdoor nature activities
- _____ Other _____



Post High School Programs

Siach

Nine month program exploring classical and contemporary Jewish sources, and the many dimensions of Israel. Fully accredited Jewish and Israel studies curriculum. Program includes trips, volunteer work, internships, cultural activities and Hebrew.

www.siach.org

Kivunim

Nine months of international travel and study. Based in Israel, Kivunim is built around fieldtrips to Lithuania, Russia, Spain, Morocco, India, Czech Republic, Hungary and Italy. Students explore history and contemporary life of Jewish communities and world's cultures.

www.kivunim.org

Nativ- United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Academic year program for creating Conservative Jewish leaders of tomorrow. Includes academic university classes, Hebrew, Judaic and Yeshiva studies, travel, volunteer work, and kibbutz experience. High school graduates can earn college credits.

www.nativ.org

Young Judaea Year Course

Nine months of formal and informal education. Program divided into three trimesters: community volunteer, Jerusalem studies, Israeli experience. Student can earn up to one year worth of college credit through the University of Judaism in Los Angeles.

www.youngjudaea.org

Young Judaea- Olami

Students travel and learn about people, politics, history and culture of France, England, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Morocco and Ethiopia. At the end of each trip, Olami participants return with new perspective on each country and Zionism.

www.youngjudaea.org

Young Judaea- Olami 2- The Lost Jewish Communities

Visit four extraordinary “Lost Jewish Communities” by traveling to Portugal, Uganda, India and South Africa. Explore the physical, cultural and spiritual survival of a variety of small communities who lived for many centuries in secrecy and isolation. Approximately every two months, participants take a week-long trip to one of these countries. At the end of each trip, Olami participants will return to Israel – with a new perspective of each country, and its connection to Zionism and the Jewish state.

www.youngjudaea.org

Young Judaea Year Course Athletic Program

A new track which comprises of three parts: The first part includes exercising, training and coaching. The second part includes sports related volunteer placements, and the third part includes academic and informal education, up to one year of college credit.

www.youngjudaea.org

Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music- 10 months Israel’s largest independent professional music school for the advanced study of contemporary music. Students choose from among eight majors in various disciplines of performance, composition and production. During the program students take classes, participate in master classes, and join ensembles alongside Israeli students.

www.rimonschool.co.il

Carmel- An Israeli Study Program & Beit Midrash- Reform Movement

Reform Movement’s one year accredited college program. Includes Ulpan, volunteer projects, travel, and kibbutz program.

www.carmelisrael.org

Habonim Dror Workshop

Nine months of experiencing Israel and integrating into various sectors of Israeli society. Program includes volunteer positions, special journey to Poland, and thorough historical overview of the Holocaust. Students participate in educational seminars on Jewish identity, Israeli society and politics, Zionist history, etc.

www.habonimdror.org

Shnat Netzer-Reform Movement

A unique 10-month leadership training program which develops participants’ skills and knowledge necessary to become a leader in the Reform movement. It facilitates personal development, and offers opportunities to study Jewish and Zionist ideals and history.

www.wupj.org.il/young_adults

Academic Programs: Undergraduate and Graduate



Study abroad programs in Israel include semester, year and degree options. All programs offer rigorous academic experiences in a variety of disciplines and also include extracurricular activities, community service opportunities, seminars, lectures, Hebrew language courses and trips.

Arava Institute, a Jewish Environmental Experience

1 semester/year

A one semester or one year program in environmental studies which gives undergraduate or graduate students an opportunity for hands-on experience in the Middle East. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds take classes exploring a wide range of environmental issues from a regional and interdisciplinary perspective.

www.arava.org

Master's in Desert Studies-Environmental Studies Specialization

2 year

In conjunction with Ben-Gurion University's Albert Katz International School for Desert Studies, the program has a desert ecology track and a social sciences track. Course and thesis research focus on a variety of regional environmental issues.

www.arava.org

Bar Ilan University, International MBA

1 year

The program offers a challenging curriculum focused on global business and is taught by distinguished faculty drawn from the Israeli and international academic community. Information technology and entrepreneurial skills as well as leadership training are emphasized. Students work while taking classes. Classes are taught in English.

www.biu.ac.il/imba

Ben Gurion University, Center for International Studies

1 semester/year

Academic courses are taught in English. Students choose from courses in the humanities and social sciences such as Anthropology, Archeology, Middle East Studies, and Jewish Studies. Classes in Hebrew, organized trips, lectures and seminars are included.

www.bgu.ac.il/osp

Haifa University, International School

1 semester/year

Academic courses are taught in English. Students choose from courses in humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Classes in Hebrew, organized trips, lectures and seminars are included.

www.uhaifa.org

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Rothberg International School

1 semester/year

Academic courses are taught in English. Students choose from offerings in Jewish, Israel and General Studies. Classes in Hebrew, organized trips, lectures and seminars are included.

www.overseas.huji.ac.il

IDC Herzliya, The Raphael Recanati International School BA

3 years

The program offers students a full B.A. degree. Students can choose between degrees in Government, Strategy and Diplomacy (includes Middle East Studies, international affairs, conflict-resolution and counter-terrorism studies), Business Administration or Communications. Classes are taught in English.

www.rris.idc.ac.il

MBA

1 year

The program offers a curriculum with a strong international component and provides students with training in international and region-specific modules. Bringing together a distinguished faculty from universities around the world, the program offers a rigorous curriculum consisting of 9 semesters, each 6 weeks. Students specialize in International Business or Entrepreneurship. Classes are taught in English.

www.rris.idc.ac.il

Rimon School of Jazz and Contemporary Music

10 months

In partnership with the Berklee School of Music, Rimon is Israel's largest independent professional music school for the advanced study of contemporary music. Students choose from among eight majors in various disciplines of performance, composition and production. During the program students take classes, participate in master classes, and join ensembles alongside Israeli students.

www.rimonschool.co.il

TASP – Teach and Study Program

2 years

The program includes an MA in Education from Tel Aviv University and a teaching internship in an Israeli school working alongside Israeli teachers. Summer orientation on the Israeli educational system, a Hebrew *Ulpan*, and educationally enriching seminars and trips are also provided. Classes are taught in English.

www.tasp.org.il

Tel Aviv University

1 semester/year

Academic courses are taught in English. Students choose from offerings in Jewish, Israel, Middle East, and General Studies. Classes in Hebrew, organized trips, lectures and seminars are included.

www.telavivuniv.org

The Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design

9 months

Israel's top academy of visual arts. Offers classes in fine arts, crafts, design, digital media as well as a liberal arts curriculum. Bezalel prepares its students to be professional artists in today's society.

bezalel@jafi.org.il

Post College Programs: Community Service/Career Advancement



Career Experience (5 months to 1 year)

Offers recent college graduates professional internships at leading companies and organizations in the public and private sectors. Internship placements are available in fields such as government, law, medicine, media, education, computer science, business and others. www.careerisrael.com

Livnot U'Lehibanot; To Build and Be Built (5 months)

Participate in community service, travel and explore topics in Jewish practice, Jewish history, and learn Hebrew. Geared toward Jews with little or no background in Judaism, participants learn in a pluralistic environment. www.livnot.com

Otzma (10 months)

A service-oriented leadership development program for college graduates. Components include Hebrew *Ulpan*, tours, community service, Judaic Studies or army service, and a social action project. www.OTZMA.org

Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies (5 months to 1 year)

Pardes is a dynamic center of Jewish learning. Students engage in Judaic Studies in a non-denominational environment of open inquiry. Different levels of knowledge are encouraged and accommodated. www.pardes.org.il

WUJS Institute in Arad- 3 tracks

5 months to 1 year www.wujs-arad.org

- Track 1: Land, Language and Society- 5 months

Participants explore the diverse and rich experience of living in Israel. Includes an intensive Hebrew *Ulpan*, and courses in Jewish History, and contemporary Israel. Incorporates community service, field trips, and the opportunity for internships.

- Track 2: Peace and Social Justice- 1 year

Designed for those interested in diplomacy, democratic development and social justice. Participants take Hebrew *Ulpan*, and courses in Jewish Studies and contemporary Israel. In the second semester, participants engage in grass-roots work with an approved social change agency.

- **Track 3: Arad Arts- 5 months**

Provides residency and studio space for visual artists, musicians and writers from around the world. Artists work within their artistic medium in a supportive community.

Ulpan Akiva, Netanya (5 months)

Located in the town of Netanya on Israel's coast, the program provides intensive Hebrew language classes. Students take classes with young people from all over the world. Educational seminars, workshops and trips are also included.

Additional program options are also offered. These include:

- "MAOF" Ivrit"- intensive Hebrew language and Israeli culture studies.
- "Professional MAOF"- Intensive Hebrew and Israeli culture plus 3 months internship at the municipality of Netanya. p. 116 in the catalogue.
- "Scientific MAOF"- a combination of intensive Hebrew language, Israeli culture studies, and academic studies at the Weizmann Institute of Science- one of the esteemed research institutions of the world.

www.ulpan-akiva.org.il

Israel Government Fellows (6 months)

A unique leadership program for exceptional candidates who seek to engage in public service. Program provides internship experience in one of three branches of Israel's government: executive, legislative or judicial. www.begincenter.org.il

Conservative Yeshiva Year Program (9 months)

The Conservative Yeshiva offers Jews of all backgrounds the skills for studying classic Jewish texts in a vibrant, open-minded, egalitarian community. www.ConservativeYeshiva.org

Israel Service Corps (5 months)

A community service program in the peripheral areas in Israel, ISC volunteers use their skills and experience in helping children and youth maximize their potential, and enrich the community via social activities for its members. www.israelservicecorps.com

Artneuland (5 months)

Explore the land of Israel and Israeli society through art. Program includes courses in photography, video, and social art, as well as Zionism, Judaism and bringing art back to society. No experience or background in digital media required. Students learn how to use media technology and then go out in the field to pursue their own projects. www.artneuland.com

Intern at Hak'far Hayarok, "The Green Village" –Because We Care (5 months)

Participants use their own experience and knowledge to make a positive contribution to Israeli society through an individually-tailored internship.

Leave in an agricultural boarding school located 15 minutes from Tel Aviv. www.kfaryarok.org.il

Kibbutz Ulpan (5 months)

Three days per week of Hebrew *Ulpan* and 3 days per week of working on a kibbutz. Live and work side-by-side with Israelis in a small community. Kibbutz options all over Israel.

www.kibbutzulpan.org

Green Apprenticeship, Environmental Studies at Kibbutz Lotan (6 months)

A unique study and work experience located in Israel's Southern Arava Desert. Live and work on Kibbutz Lotan while learning desert ecology, organic gardening, energy-efficient building practices, and the ethical, physical and social components of sustainable development from a liberal Jewish perspective. www.kibbutzlotan.com/creativeEcology



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MASA Israel Journey

MASA is a joint project of the Government of Israel and the Jewish Agency for Israel.

MASA is an umbrella organization for over 120 long term programs to Israel. Programs range in duration from 1 semester to a year.

There are more than 8,000 MASA participants in the 2006-7 academic year.

We provide the following:

- One stop shop for information about the various programs available
- Universal grants for all participants, and needs-based scholarships
- Promotion of existing programs and development of new ones along with the program providers

Possible programs:

- Post high school programs
- Undergraduate semester in any of the universities and colleges in Israel
- Graduate schools; MA and MBA
- post-university academic studies
- professional internships
- volunteerism

Universal grants available for all North American participants:

- \$2,000 for ages 18 to 21
- \$3,000 for ages 21 to 30 for semester long programs
- \$4,500 for ages 21 to 30 for year long programs

Additional needs-based scholarships are also available.

Steps for applying for a MASA grant:

- Apply to the program of your choice
- Download a MASA application from www.masaisrael.org
- Submit your completed MASA application to your program

For further information, consultation, and promotional material,
please contact Megan Schiff at megans@masaisrael.org 212 339-6073 or
Aaron Goldberg at aarong@masaisrael.org 212 339-6077.