



"Where I come from in Ethiopia, we were religious Jews, and we did not even know that there are Jews in America - we only knew that there are Jews in Israel. When I made aliyah to Israel, I went to school with only Orthodox Jews, and I didn't know what Reform and Conservative Jews were. Nesiya totally changed my perception about Jews outside of Israel. Thank you to everyone who made this project possible - it helped me learn a lot about Judaism and the Jewish people."

Dersu Balta '06, Yemin Orde, Israel, made aliyah from Ethiopia and studies at a boarding school for immigrants, disadvantaged and at-risk youth.

Investments in Nesiya

"Nesiya opened up an entire world of Judaism that I hadn't known before. During high school I wasn't exposed to many positive models for Jewish identity, and on Nesiya I saw so many different positive ways of being a Jew. During college, I would speak to people at Nesiya Winter Retreats about the struggles of being Jewish on campus. It was there that I got the spiritual support which gave me a sense that if I wanted things to happen, I didn't have to wait for someone else."

Ilana Foss '96, participated in numerous Nesiya Winter Retreats, worked three summers in the Kehillah program, and, after working for several years with inner city youth, is now a rabbinical student at JTS.





"Meeting with Israeli activists and artists who created positive changes in their communities inspired me to take action in my community."

David Brown '06, Palo Alto, CA, is active in the Conservative movement and studies at Gunn High School.

מכון נסייה

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2004 - 2007



"Nesiya helps each of us find ourselves in the deepest way, provides a safe place for searching and asking questions, and helps us become better and more caring people who are more aware of our surroundings."

Ruth Chai '06, Jerusalem, Israel, lives in the urban kibbutz Beit Yisrael and attends the religious pluralistic high school Reut.



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The Vision

The invigoration of Jewish life in North America and Israel depends upon creative and idealistic young people. If we want young people to experience and contribute to the vitality and relevance of Jewish life, young Jews need to:

- Explore Judaism and Israel as resources for their personal growth;
- Build relationships and explore differences with Jews from diverse backgrounds;
- Learn to express themselves personally and creatively;
- Develop skills as innovators and leaders; and
- Contribute their talents and passion to local communities.

Nesiya inspires North American and Israeli young people from diverse backgrounds to develop themselves as unique individuals and as contributing members of the larger Jewish community.

By providing tools for personal growth and creative leadership, Nesiya enables participants to deepen their relationships with Judaism, the Jewish people, and the nation and land of Israel.

The Nesiya Model

Every Nesiya program explores differences among diverse Jews in order to develop Jewish leaders and invigorate Jewish life.

Nesiya brings North Americans and Israelis face to face with the richness and complexity of Jewish life – and with each other.

Our programs focus on key areas of personal and communal development, including leadership, self-expression, Judaism, and Israel.

The Nesiya model of experiential learning combines community building, outdoor adventure, creative text study, community service, and the arts.

Core Programs

Nesiya's three core programs are:

- **The Kehillah Summer Program**, a six-week Israel program for North American and Israeli high school students.
- **The Winter Retreat**, a week-long arts and text-based program in North America, with enrichment and educational leadership training for high school, college, and post-college age young adults.
- **The Kehillah Fellows Program**, an academic-year community service and learning program for religious and secular Israeli high school students, with training for post-army Israelis as experiential educators.

During the past ten years, Nesiya also began conducting new initiatives, including: programs for Jewish high schools; college leadership programs; and programs for educators, lay leaders, and families.

Since 1985, over 2,500 North American and Israeli young people have participated in Nesiya's innovative programs.

Participant and Program Growth

We are proud of the significant growth and enrichment achieved during the past three years:

- **Total Participants and Programming Days**

Nesiya provided programs for more than 350 participants per year in the past two years, compared to 228 in 2004, with an average of 200 programming days per year.

- **Scholarship Funding**

Due to the generosity of donors, including a growing number of multi-year commitments, scholarship awards to North American and Israeli participants increased from \$172,726 in 2004, to \$195,681 in 2005 and over \$250,000 in 2006.

- **Community Service and Follow-Up**

During the 2006-7 academic year, North American alumni are fulfilling over 3,000 hours of service and enrichment, and Israeli Kehillah Fellows are fulfilling 7,800 hours of community service activities.

- **Participation of Israelis**

Participation of Israelis in the Kehillah Summer Program was the highest ever in 2006, with 38 Israeli young people.

- **Kehillah Israeli Fellows**

The Kehillah Fellows Program has increased by 30 students per year for the past three years; this year there are 115 Israeli high school students participating in four different cities.

Organizational and Financial Development

Recent organizational and financial accomplishments demonstrate Nesiya's increased capacity for continued growth and development. These include:

- **Financial Management**

Eliminating the organization's previous debt, implementing new accounting software, and developing more sophisticated tools for managing expenses, cash flow, and strategic planning.

- **Marketing and Recruitment**

Developing new recruitment and marketing materials including: a new website; print and digital media; holiday cards and study guides; and a dual-language songbook with Ehud Banai, a leading Israeli musician.

- **Administrative Growth**

Hiring, developing and promoting key staff, including new positions in financial management, North American recruitment, Israeli recruitment, and Israel programs.

- **Technological Advancement**

Upgrading Nesiya's database software for alumni tracking and recruitment management.

Long-Term Impact

In letters, emails and interviews, alumni describe the profound and lasting impact that Nesiya has had on their lives:

• Character Development

Nesiya programs challenge participants to look beyond themselves to positively influence the world around them. Alumni attest that Nesiya helped them to develop self-confidence and interpersonal skills, inspired their participation in volunteer activities, and motivated them to be involved in social and political change.

• Leadership

Nesiya encourages participants to become agents of change. Hundreds of alumni and staff have been influenced by Nesiya to pursue careers and commitments as educators, communal workers, artists, social activists, and lay leaders.

• Diversity

Nesiya programs emphasize the importance of appreciating fundamental differences among Jews from diverse religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Alumni report how Nesiya influenced them to seek out communities and projects that foster collaboration and learning between Jews of diverse backgrounds.

• Judaism

Nesiya inspires participants to continue exploring Jewish rituals, spirituality, and values. Participants report increased participation in Jewish organizations, involvement in Jewish learning, and greater appreciation of complexity in matters of Jewish identity.

• Israel

Young adults greatly benefit from the opportunity to grapple honestly with diverse attitudes toward Israel and Judaism. Alumni say Nesiya influenced them to have a more empathic and critical approach to Israel, to visit Israel more frequently, to continue relationships with Israelis, and to examine the meaning of living in Israel versus living in the Diaspora.

• Professional Development

The quality of Nesiya programs are a direct result of intensive mentoring and training of North American and Israeli young adults as pluralistic experiential Jewish educators. Staff report how their work with Nesiya has influenced their educational leadership skills, choices of study, and career decisions. Nesiya serves as an incubator for the cultivation of outstanding educators and professional leaders in Jewish life.

Looking Ahead

Nesiya's capacity to continue enriching and expanding high-quality programs depends upon generous charitable support. Short-term goals include:

Programmatic Goals

- Increasing enrollment of both North Americans and Israelis in the Kehillah Summer Program.
- Developing a Kehillah North American Fellows program, which links merit and need-based funding to service and education projects in participants' home communities.
- Expanding the Kehillah Israeli Fellows program as a replicable and scalable model of creative leadership development and community service for Israeli high school students, with professional training in experiential Jewish education for post-army Israelis.
- Expanding programs for partner organizations including Harvard Hillel, Diller Teen Fellows, Wexner Heritage Foundation, and Jewish Community High Schools.

Building Organizational Strength and Capacity

- Strengthening recognition and appeal of Nesiya as a unique creative leadership development organization for North American and Israeli young people.
- Intensifying recruitment, retention and professional development opportunities for the highest-quality staff.
- Increasing numbers of committed donors and multi-year funding pledges.
- Expanding support for merit and need-based Nesiya fellowships for young people from specific communities.
- Continuing to strengthen fiscal management and reporting.

For a copy of the complete report "Investments in Nesiya: 2004-2007," with updated financial statements and audited reports, please write to info@nesiya.org.