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JOURNEYS

THAT LAST A LIFETIME SPECIAL EDITION
ISSUE 5 • 2015 CELEBRATION



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DEAR FRIENDS,

Throughout our lives there are special accomplishments and moments of passage such as the birth of our children, b'nai mitzvot, graduations and weddings that bring us together with loved ones to celebrate. We revel in how far we have come as a family, as parents, as students and reflect back on the journey that has brought us to this very moment. This year, we came together as the Jewish community and celebrated a shared milestone: the 15th anniversary of Birthright Israel.

Can you imagine your children not traveling to Israel with 40 of their peers for ten life-changing days? Is it possible to envision a stroll down Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem and not see "Welcome Birthright Israel" signs in stores offering participants the best deal on souvenirs? What if there were no college students dancing the horrah at the Kotel on Shabbat? Or Birthright Israel groups covering themselves in mud and floating in the Dead Sea? It is hard to imagine.

Thankfully, today we live in a world with Birthright Israel. 15 years ago co-founders Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt gathered philanthropic leaders in the Jewish community and presented them with the idea of a free, 10-day educational trip to Israel for young Jewish adults. When the first buses traveled through Israel in January 2000 no one could have imagined that 15 years later, more than 500,000 participants from 66 countries would receive this incredible gift.

Almost immediately, the program became a Jewish rite of passage with lasting effects on participants, their families, Jewish communities and Israel. In 2004, Birthright Israel Foundation was born to secure the financial support to send the tens of thousands of young Jewish adults who raised their hand each year to claim their birthright.



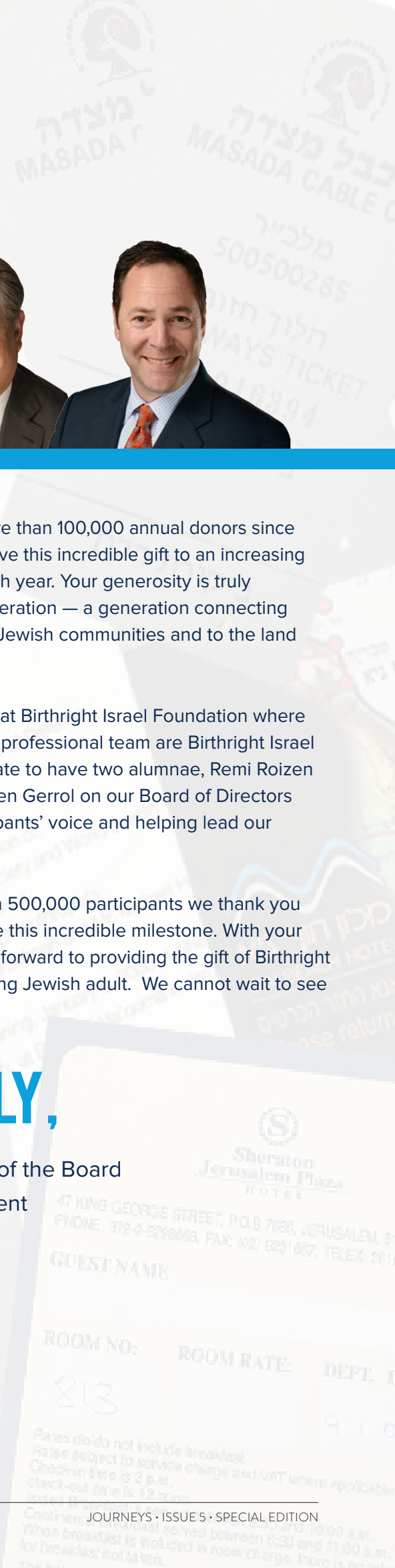
Thanks to you, and the more than 100,000 annual donors since inception, we are able to give this incredible gift to an increasing number of participants each year. Your generosity is truly transforming an entire generation — a generation connecting to its Jewish heritage, our Jewish communities and to the land and people of Israel.

This connection is evident at Birthright Israel Foundation where more than one-third of the professional team are Birthright Israel alumni. We are also fortunate to have two alumnae, Remi Roizen Weinstein and Rachel Cohen Gerrol on our Board of Directors — representing our participants' voice and helping lead our organization.

On behalf of the more than 500,000 participants we thank you for allowing us to celebrate this incredible milestone. With your continued support we look forward to providing the gift of Birthright Israel to every eligible young Jewish adult. We cannot wait to see what the future holds.

SINCERELY,

JOSHUA NASH Chair of the Board
DAVID FISHER President





IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT FIFTEEN YEARS HAVE COME AND GONE SINCE BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL WAS FIRST LAUNCHED.

It is even harder to imagine the Jewish world today without thinking of Birthright Israel and the enormous impact we've had in shaping the future of the Jewish people by giving every young Jewish adult the gift of a 10-day trip to Israel. This summer we celebrated the arrival of our 500,000th participant — an achievement that none of us could have initially imagined when we first sought to transform this bold idea into a reality.

An important milestone such as this puts into perspective just how far we have come over the course of the past 15 years in creating meaningful experiences that are empowering the next generation to be proud young Jews with stronger connections to Israel, to their community and to the Jewish people.

This has always been our goal; and will always remain so. With an unwavering sense of purpose and commitment, as well as the devoted support from our donors and partners, we look forward to the next 15 years and beyond. We know there is much more work that we can do, both here and now, and for the future of the Jewish people.

GIDI MARK
International CEO
Birthright Israel



SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

DAN GONCHER

Policy Analyst for a public sector consulting firm

Spending time in Israel really hit home for me that I am part of a global Jewish family and that is something very special to me. I am much more appreciative of the Jewish culture that I was brought up in and more attuned to the political and security issues facing the State of Israel.

BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL

CLASS OF 2000

In 2000, the first Birthright Israel buses filled with bright-eyed and enthusiastic participants set out on the first journey of its kind. This inaugural class embarked on an experience without knowing what to expect. 15 years later their memories are vivid and the impact of their trip is still evident proving no greater return on the investment made by our founders. *Journeys* checked in with some of the 9,462 participants from 2000 and here is what they are up to today.

SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

DEAN OSTILLY

*Mergers & Acquisitions /
Corporate Development at eBay*

The most amazing thing about Israel for me was that it felt familiar. It did not feel like a far off land with different people or a different way of life. It felt like home. My Birthright Israel experience taught me that no matter what happens in the world or in the country that I live in, there will always be another place I can call home... Israel.

PHOENIX, ARIZONA



FRANCI FEALK

*Litigation Associate at
Kutak Rock LLP*

The strongest memory from my trip was feeling as though all my relatives, both living and dead, were with me when I visited the Kotel for the first time.

HOUSTON, TEXAS

RACHEL WRIGHT

*Director of Business Development, EHIM
and Co-Vice Chair of YAD Campaign*

Without Birthright Israel, I'd miss out on meeting my best friend, Tracy, who was the maid of honor at my wedding, and understanding why I needed to go back. I have since been to Israel on 4 missions, led one of my own, fundraised for Birthright Israel Foundation, and held several leadership positions within Jewish Federation.



BEDFORD, NEW YORK



DAVID NABLE

Sales Manager at a large international bank, responsible for coverage of hedge and private equity funds

I vividly remember seeing Jews of all backgrounds - Sefardic, Ashkenazi, Persian, Ethiopian, Syrian, Yemeni, and Jews from the former USSR - all proudly and publicly living their lives as Jews. Growing up in my Brooklyn neighborhood, my heritage was something I hid. Being in Israel opened my eyes to a land where Jews could be proud of their rich heritage and openly display their faith.

WEST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

PAMELA FERTEL WEINSTEIN

Director of Communications, Birthright Israel Foundation

When I describe my Birthright Israel experience I often find myself saying that my trip took me from "believing" in our religion and history to "knowing." There is no greater educational experience than walking in the footsteps of our ancestors, standing on the ground where we fought for our freedom, praying at the Kotel that has stood strong for thousands of years followed by pure amazement and pride in the incredible country Israel is today. 15 years later, I am proud to dedicate each day to paying it forward so other young Jews can experience the magic of Birthright Israel.



BALA CYNWYD, PENNSYLVANIA

SUSAN HULLMAN

*Special education teacher/ emotional support
in a middle school in North Philadelphia*

Birthright Israel came into my life during a time that I was making huge decisions for myself. I went in as a misguided college girl that may or may not have eventually ditched my Jewish roots, and left with a new sense of self. I felt electrocuted with a new found sense of passion for my heritage and religion. Because of Birthright Israel, I have pursued my Judaism and am raising my kids with a different commitment to a religion that I was previously mostly impartial to.



BOYNTON BEACH, FLORIDA



HOLLY AND CHAD SOKOLOFF

Chad is a financial advisor and Holly handles communications & marketing for Arthur I. Meyer Jewish Academy in Palm Beach Gardens.

We didn't know at the time that our future started on that trip. We now have a family and a life that wouldn't have existed without the Birthright Israel trip that brought us together.

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

BARAK RAZ

Business Development

Israel was never too foreign to me, because my parents are Israeli, and so we visited. However, I was never in Israel in an educational setting with peers my age until my Birthright Israel trip. It ended up being a life-changing experience. I remember when we were at the Kotel, arm in arm, and everyone was just so overtaken by the emotion of being together in Israel.

OUR STORY FROM THE BEGINNING

Before the first Birthright Israel group left the United States heading for Israel, there was an idea. Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhart asked the question “what if?” Joined by their friends and peers, active members of the Jewish community came together to raise the initial funds and build the bones of this life-changing program and as a group they answered “yes,” and Birthright Israel was born. As we celebrate 15 years, take a look back and see exactly how the idea became a reality.



**MADLYN AND
LEN ABRAMSON**



**DR. MIRIAM AND
SHELDON G. ADELSON**



**DR. YOSSE
BELLIN**



**LAURIE
BLITZER**



**CHARLES
BRONFMAN**



**MARK
CHARENDOFF**



**SUSIE
GELMAN**



**MICHAEL
GELMAN**



**GIDI
GRINSTEIN**



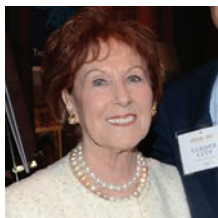
**AVRAHAM
INFELD**



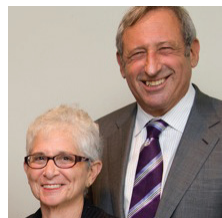
**BERNIE
MARCUS**



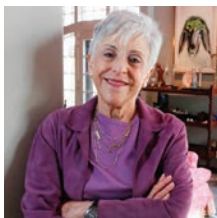
**DAN
OCH**



**MARLENE
POST**



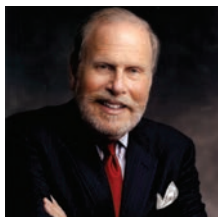
**BECKY AND ART
SAMBERG**



**LYNN
SCHUSTERMAN**



**SHIMSHON
SHOSHANI**



**JEFF
SOLOMON**



**MICHAEL
STEINHART**



**LESLIE
WEXNER**

WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN THE MID-90S THAT HAD YOU CONCERNED?

I was retiring from the business that I had been in for my entire life and I said to myself that I wanted to do something virtuous and ennobling, and I thought about a number of things, and finally wound up deciding that I would focus on the Jewish future. In the mid-90s it was already clear to me that there was an archaic sense to the Jewish institutional world, it was already in decline. So for me, the question was what might be done to change this? The first person I went to was Charles Bronfman, who I met at the annual Israel museum donors conference. I described what I had in mind for Birthright Israel, and I will always remember the one word he used to describe it, he said wow that is really audacious... and we've been partners ever since.
— **Michael Steinhart**

The Jewish community was in a state of flux. The appeal of Jewish life led by established institutions was falling off just as young Jews' understanding of their own identity and role in the world was growing in complexity. Jewish life suddenly had to compete for time and headspace in a marketplace of ideas and identities, and we just didn't have the right set of offerings, especially for young adults. We had then in front of us what we have today: a generation of young Jews eager to be part of something larger than themselves, hungry for meaningful experiences to share with their peers and ready to engage with their heritage according to their own interests and values. Birthright Israel was one of the first programs to fully understand this and to offer an experience that spoke directly to what young Jews were looking for and continue to seek.
— **Lynn Schusterman**

I saw that Israel didn't need the Jewish man collecting money for Israel. We needed to work on Jewish continuity outside of Israel because in communities all over the world people were leaving the Jewish community, at least statistically. So what is important for me was that you keep the Jewish people alive, not that you give money to the poor in Israel.
— **Dr. Yossi Bellin**

WHY DID YOU RAISE YOUR HAND AND VOICE TO SAY "I WANT TO HELP FIX THIS"?

Our foundation joined at that time CJF, UIA, and UJA, to increase the number of high school kids who were going on Israel experience trips. In 1998 when I was in Israel, Yossi Beilin suggested that all kids of 17 receive a coupon for a free visit to Israel. The problem was the money. Michael Steinhart and I had a conversation about what might happen, might not happen, and that was the beginning of our serious discussions about what became Birthright Israel.
— **Charles Bronfman**

I know how deeply transformational it can be to discover a deep and personally meaningful connection to one's Jewish identity and also to the Jewish community and Israel. I still remember the moment it all came together for me. It was 1977, and my late husband, Charlie, and I took our three children on a UJA family mission trip to Israel that changed our lives. I remember walking down the streets of Jerusalem, awakened to a feeling I had never experienced before — one of belonging to a global Jewish people. I knew we needed to do what we could do to share Israel's promise and potential with the world for generations to come.
— **Lynn Schusterman**

HOW DID YOU FIRST COME TO BE INVOLVED IN BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL?

In 1998 I was first approached and became director of the Birthright Israel planning process. We had no idea how long the trip would be or what age group would go but we did know we wanted to give a free ticket to Israel to young Jews around the world.
— **Avraham Infeld**

In the summer of 1995 I saw a pamphlet created by Yossi Beilin, in which he articulated this idea that every Jewish young adult should receive a gift from the Jewish People to visit Israel. This idea built upon research published earlier in the 1990s that a visit to Israel is the single most impactful experience for every Jew affecting all and any practice of Jewish life. So Dr. Beilin said: “let's bring all of them.” I was deeply inspired by the brilliance and simplicity of this idea and wrote Dr. Beilin a letter requesting the mandate to turn his vision into a plan. Beilin gave me this

mandate and then I went on to establish the first team with four other people and we got going. Dr. Beilin introduced us to Avraham Infeld, Founder of Melitz and later President of Hillel. Infeld, after being presented with our work and basically blown away by it, said, Birthright Israel cannot be an Israel-driven project. It must be a partnership with Diaspora Jewry. A few months later, in March 1997, we had our first meeting with a NYC-based team of McKinsey Consultants led by Laurie Blitzer.
— **Gidi Grinstein**

I got involved with Birthright Israel before it technically existed. I was the partner of a McKinsey team that had been asked by Charles and Michael to help "operationalize" the vision they had. I remember my first meeting about Birthright Israel so clearly - Charles' office had called to see if I could come over with a colleague to meet an Israeli (Avraham Infeld) and Jeff Solomon and hear about a "crazy" idea that they were beginning to work on. I was immediately entranced with the idea - like most great ideas, it was so simple, yet so powerful. I walked back across Park Avenue completely electrified about this vision - that every young Jewish adult should be entitled as their birthright, to a free ten day trip to Israel.
— **Laurie Blitzer**

I was president of National Hadassa in 1998 and I was asked if Hadassa would be the first organization that would participate, financially, in this new experiment, if you will, this new dream. It was the hope that if we did, other organizations would follow our lead. I finished my presidency in 1999, and Mr. Bronfman and Mr. Steinhart said now you have to really come on board, and so I became totally involved as Marlene Post, not as Hadassa, to make sure that this project really went somewhere.
— **Marlene Post**

We first got involved as donors. My father, Richard Goldman z"l, was one of the original funders. I'm sure he would be very pleased with the results of his investment. I got much more involved when I was asked by Charles Bronfman to become the inaugural chair of the Birthright Israel Foundation, a position I held from 2005-2008.
— **Susie and Michael Gelman**

We heard about Birthright Israel when we were taking congressman to Israel. We saw their reaction and heard about

Birthright Israel and the young adults participating and thought that is something we have to look at.
— **Sheldon G. Adelson**

WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS?

We thought it was a good opportunity to transfer our love of Israel to future generations. To extend to people who would never otherwise come to Israel, the opportunity to fall in love.
— **Madlyn and Len Abramson**

I like crazy ideas. I think we both grew up with a deep appreciation and a fascination with the state of Israel, and it was really a wonderful thing.
— **Art Samberg**

We grew up during the time of the formation of Israel, and I remember the little blue and white boxes that we had in our houses where you put in change and money to help establish Israel and to have this generation, our grandchildren's generation be exposed is a really terrific thing. I didn't visit Israel until we were adults, so we just felt that it was very important for young people to get the experience.
— **Becky and Art Samberg**



I realized that we were treading water, and that was an existential threat to this great idea. The vision itself was genuine, and held immense potential, so it was absolutely critical to find a way to make a breakthrough. It would require an earth-shattering move to restore optimism and a renewed sense of enthusiasm to the philanthropists whose vision was determined to revolutionize the Jewish world. The implementation process would have to be fueled by enthusiasm and renewed faith. — **Shimshon Shoshani**

My idea was not necessarily, that they would know Masada, or become experts in Israeli studies, or even ambassadors of Israel. For me, it was mainly about meeting each other on the bus. The main idea is to make Israel a vehicle, a meeting point in the Jewish world, and create a situation by which Jews meet Jews. It's a very primitive idea. So in a way, Birthright Israel is a clandestine way to bring young people together and for me, that's the whole thing. — **Dr. Yossi Bellin**

My conversation with Charles reminded me of a story of Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt. They noticed the troops were chasing after them. Moses goes to his advisors and said what are we going to do? The advisors have no idea. It is a couple of hours later and you can see the smoke rising from the ground as the troops get closer and closer and in a moment of desperation, he asks the PR person...what should I do? And the PR says you spread your arms, the seas will open, we will walk across, the Egyptians will try and the water will come down. Moses said, can I do that? And the PR person said I don't know but if you can, I'll get you 6 pages in the Bible! So you know, the question was can we do this? Can we bring young Jews to Israel? — **Jeff Solomon**

It made enormous sense to me. I believed in the idea. I thought then and think now that Israel reaching out to connect to Jews whether they are students or adults, we should be much closer together. We should be in communication. The older idea of missions to fundraise was good but this was better. The boldness of the idea, I thought it had great possibilities. — **Leslie Wexner**

I recall Jeffrey Solomon setting up a meeting with McKinsey, 4 young people to sit and figure out how is this Birthright Israel supposed to work. One of them was, Laurie Blitzer. In Israel, Gidi Grinstein led a similar team. Gidi worked with Laurie to create a think tank for our leadership. I learned more from them than anybody.

We consulted with federations, Jewish educators, we were called idiots. People could not imagine this working in 10 days. People were nervous about this idea. — **Avraham Infeld**

WHEN THE FIRST GROUPS LEFT FOR ISRAEL, WHAT WAS IT LIKE FOR YOU?

When word had gotten out, we were getting clobbered in the Jewish media. One after the other said these two guys, what the heck do they know about anything, this is going to be a failure, in ten days what can you learn and I, frankly was laughing, because although neither Michael or I knew what was going to happen, we knew we'd have at least a modicum of success. We had 8,000 spots in the fall for the winter trips, and we had 12,000 applications. So we already knew we had hit a good nerve in Jewish young adults. The only thing we didn't know was if the trips were going to be any good, and how far it would go. We certainly never had any expectation of a half a million young adults going on the trip. — **Charles Bronfman**

Unbelievably exciting. It was like nothing we had seen before in Israel. These were very different kids that didn't come out of day schools, they were turned on by the idea of a free trip. What amazed us all were the reactions of the participants. The reactions were always WOW! This changed my life. There were two factors that touched them: suddenly they felt at home. Their people were a majority. Secondly, they realized what they had been told of being Jewish in America was not necessarily so. Most of them were told that Judaism was only a religion and all of the sudden they learned that being a Jew was being a member of a family. — **Avraham Infeld**

HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THE BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL PROGRAM CHANGE OVER THE YEARS?

I am very proud that our basic outlook and approach to Birthright Israel remains the same as envisioned in the late 1990s. The one area where we totally failed to anticipate the evolution of Birthright Israel was the extent of participation of Israelis and the impact on them and their



Jewishness. In our juvenile 'vanity' we thought that Israelis were to participate in Birthright Israel to influence the Diaspora participants in a one-way manner and that their 'effect' on the overseas Jews will happen in a mere 4-hour 'mifgash'. In reality, Israeli participants are fully embedded in the program and are going through transformative experiences themselves. — **Gidi Grinstein**

From an idea to a transformative and dynamic movement — that's quite a journey! — **Mark Charendoff**

Well a lot has changed, the magnitude of it has changed. I mean to be sending over 43,000 a year, is beyond anything we dreamt of in the first year or two and to have developed the facility, the resources, the busses, the hotels, the Madrichim, has been a great growth event. — **Michael Steinhardt**

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL'S GREATEST SUCCESS?

I think the greatest success is the sophistication of the trips and the continued popularity. This is not a fad, this is something that many Jewish young adults say to themselves, I've got to do this, this is important to me as a human being, I've got to find out where my roots are, and what to make it, and let's see if I qualify in my own heart, and my own soul, my own mind, to be Jewish. — **Charles Bronfman**

One of the wonderful things about Birthright Israel is that the organization is continuously looking to improve, always striving to be more impactful. One of many examples is the programming continues to evolve and change with the geo-political situation of our broader world. Zohar Raviv and his team are working to ensure that there is meaningful programming on every single Birthright Israel trip to address the geo-political situation and show participants first hand, how Israel is striving to deal with these challenges. In Birthright Israel style, no one is telling these participants how they should think - the trip offers them experiences and helps them ask important questions and process very difficult topics. — **Laurie Blitzer**

I meet with alumni frequently and they tell me their stories. I meet kids that had no concern for Israel who suddenly begin to realize this little place in the Middle East, the most democratic, most successful in every single metric and so different from the rest of the Middle East, and be proud of it. I think it is a great experience. They discovered Israel and they are Jewish. They are proud. — **Bernie Marcus**

The greatest achievement is a renaissance of the Jewish people. — **Avraham Infeld**

I consider the health of the program being how little time I have to spend in it. And certainly over the course of the past 3 years, I am spending much, much less time in it because there is great management, great staff on both sides of the ocean and there is now great governance in place and the role of the founders, appropriately, is far less. The greatest success is 500,000 who have been through a program that has overwhelmingly changed the course of their lives and has left them more connected to Jewish life and to Israel. — **Jeff Solomon**

WHAT ARE BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL'S CHALLENGES?

Raising money is always a challenge. A lot of people take us for granted and say you've got all these philanthropists, you don't need me, but the truth is we do. It's important that the Jewish community sees the value in the Birthright Israel program and feels that they want to be part, whatever they can contribute, of the most successful new endeavor in the last quarter of the last century, and this century. — **Marlene Post**

The challenge for us is how we ensure that Birthright Israel continues to resonate across geographic and, especially, political lines. In this time of heated debate and negative narratives seeking to delegitimize and isolate Israel, how do we make the experience as inclusive as possible? How do we reach young Jews from all different persuasions and perspectives so that they might form a vital, authentic connection to each other and our homeland and, in turn, bring that connection back to their campuses and communities? — **Lynn Schusterman**

The biggest challenge is to overcome the image of a success and get people to understand for every \$3k that comes in, another young person can go and we can see that impact. When people look at the success and the record numbers this year, there is a great risk of complacency. — **Jeff Solomon**

WHEN YOU THINK OF 15 YEARS, AND 500,000 PARTICIPANTS, WHAT COMES TO MIND?

What I've been thinking of is the fact that this many Birthright Israel participants impacts the Jewish future and impacts these young people becoming deeply Jewish, becoming committedly Jewish, becoming Jewishly educated. Birthright Israel has been, without doubt, the most impactful program in the last quarter century in the Jewish world, but it's not over yet, and we have a long way to go. — **Michael Steinhardt**

I want much more, it's not enough. For years the idea was to get 50% of young Jews to go, but this is a very arbitrary

idea, we should get much more than that. What we have to do is reach out to more young Jew all over the world and we are still far from that target. — **Dr. Yossi Bellin**

WHY DO YOU SUPPORT BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL?

It is important for me to support Birthright Israel because I want to do my part to help ensure a bright Jewish future. I love Jewish peoplehood and Birthright Israel is an incredible expression of global peoplehood. This program is a gift, not just to its direct participants, but to Israel more broadly. Most importantly, I support Birthright Israel because it works! There is nothing like seeing young people back from their trip, talking excitedly about their Jewish identity that they have begun to discover or deepen and the feeling they now have for Israel and their Israeli "brothers and sisters". — **Laurie Blitzer**

Without Birthright Israel which has been proven to be the most effective continuity program, there is no Jewish future. Jewish life is at an existential crossroad. We must show young Jews our traditions and how to live a Jewish life. The fact that every participant that goes says it changed my life is quite an accomplishment. — **Sheldon G. Adelson**

WHY SHOULD OTHERS SUPPORT BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL?

The lifeblood of American Judaism starts to flow from Israel, and therefore if you want to keep American Judaism, you've got to expose young people to the Israeli experience. — **Madlyn and Len Abramson**

A strong Israel is great for Jews around the world. Let me tell you a story. I am 86. Early on I wanted to go to medical school and I couldn't get in because they had a quota on Jews. There were no Jews in banks, or law firms, there was discrimination until the state of Israel was born. Then the attitude changed. It had an effect on my life. I felt it in my bones. If Israel doesn't survive it will effect Jews all over the world. Should people support Birthright Israel? Without a question. For your own survival, for your children, for your grandchildren. — **Bernie Marcus**

There are lots of good efforts that are worthy of support and they should not be neglected. But if you are concerned about the future of the Jewish people there are few efforts that have the ability to meaningfully touch tens of thousands of Jews each year for such a low cost. I'd be hard pressed to find a better use of funds. — **Mark Charendoff**

If you care about the Jewish future, don't rely on others, just do it because there are facts, there's a half million facts, you're supporting. — **Becky and Art Samberg**

Birthright Israel deserves the support of the Jewish community because it is the only platform that fills the ranks of Jewish Communities and Institutions with a consistent flow of talent and passion. It is the gift that keeps on giving not only because of the proven record of effect on the lives of Birthright Israel participants across all aspects of involvement in Jewish life, but also because participants will increasingly fill all and any positions of lay and professional leadership across the Jewish community. — **Gidi Grinstein**

It is a very young organization and idea. It is successful. If you invest in a new venture, you have a risk of failure. Here you have no risk of failure. — **Leslie Wexner**

Though the Birthright Israel program lasts for just 10 days, the impact of the experience has no end. Participants return to their college campuses and communities more connected to their own Jewish identity, the Jewish people and the state of Israel. They will take this connection and passion and share it with their families, their friends, and their future children. They will be the next great Jewish leaders in our communities. If we care about our communities it is necessary to support Birthright Israel Foundation so we will have future generations to share them with and keep them as strong and important as they are to each and every one of us today. — **Dan Och**

It is vitally important to both of us to continue supporting Birthright Israel as one of the main tenets of our philanthropic mission is to support and nurture young Jews in their 20's and 30's as an essential means to assuring a bright and vibrant Jewish future worldwide. As we all know from both statistical and empirical evidence, Birthright Israel has evolved to be THE primary program connecting young Jews to both their Jewish identities and to a strong affinity with Israel. — **Susie and Michael Gelman**

WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO SEE FOR BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL IN THE NEXT 15 YEARS?

I hope that participants will look at their experience as a gift from one generation to the next and will perpetuate the concept of connecting with Israel. I love Birthright Israel and it is, in my mind, the finest new, innovative thing and remains today as the one creative and brilliant, way to connect people to Israel. 500,000 young people have gone to Israel when they never would have gone before, and that has impacted the world. — **Marlene Post**

Looking forward to reaching a million participants by 2030, if not before! — **Susie and Michael Gelman**

I hope we will continue to make progress on our efforts to engage young people in Jewish life, inspiring them to draw on Jewish values to inform their worldviews and take on leadership roles in their communities. I hope their journeys will be supported by a strong communal ecosystem that is equipped to meet the diverse needs of the Jewish people in the 21st century. — **Lynn Schusterman**

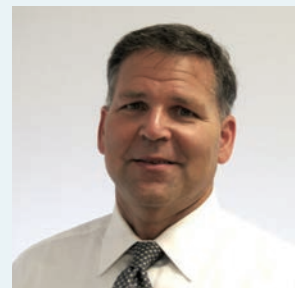
If Birthright Israel continues to grow at its current pace, 15 years from now we will be able to celebrate 1.5 million young Jewish adults who have experienced the gift of a lifetime. With that experience, we will see growing and thriving Jewish connections and communities wherever Jews are in the world. — **Dan Och**

I hope in those 15 years, Birthright Israel takes the community from where it is now to a genuinely strong, broad based, committed Jewish community, here and in the rest of the world. — **Michael Steinhardt**

I hope that there are more young adults from around the world who join in this remarkable program. I can't wait for the first young adult children of the people who went on the trip in the beginning to go on Birthright Israel. One of the great things in the Jewish world is l'dor v'dor, from generation to generation. So when we get into the second generation of Birthright Israel participants, then we'll know that we've not only hit a home run, but a grand slam. — **Charles Bronfman**



PARTNERS IN SUPPORT



Birthright Israel Foundation and the Jewish Federations of North America have built a strong partnership. Together they educate the Jewish community about Birthright Israel, raise the necessary funds to support the program, fund local buses and create a welcoming environment for participants to embrace upon their return. Today, we reflect back on this incredible partnership spanning 15 years.

SPOTLIGHT: JERRY SILVERMAN CEO OF THE JEWISH FEDERATIONS OF NORTH AMERICA

What were your initial thoughts when you first heard about Birthright Israel?

When Birthright Israel started in 1999, I was still working for Stride Rite in Massachusetts, so I received the news just like any other lay leader. At the time, I remember thinking, "Wow, what a tremendous opportunity to connect young Jews with Israel!" and I was very eager to keep an eye on the program and monitor its growth and successes. I was also proud that my Federation in Boston, CJP, was an early Birthright Israel supporter.

Why was it important for JFNA to support Birthright Israel?

Federations support Birthright Israel because the experience it provides is integral to our mission of connecting young Jews with Israel. Birthright Israel takes young Jews out of their comfort zones on campus or in the workplace, puts them on a plane, and immerses them in a whole new reality for 10 days.

These young Jews then come back transformed in the way they think about Israel—it's no longer a place they hear about in the news, but something personal, a place where they have friends and memories. A place where they've learned something about themselves as members of the Jewish People.

When participants return from their trips, they are hungry to stay connected. As the largest supporter of Jewish life in North America, the entire Federation movement, in conjunction with our partners on campus such as Hillel, is no less hungry to help them do just that in any way possible. In fact, Federations have refocused their young adult programming to better support follow-up and to bolster initiatives such as Moishe House that are making a difference.

Did you have any initial reservations about supporting Birthright Israel? If so, what were they?

When I came into this position in 2009, Birthright Israel was the fastest growing program on the continent, and I have always been a huge supporter.

Why does JFNA continue to support Birthright Israel Foundation?

Federations throughout North America provide the Birthright Israel Foundation with significant financial support, both through fair share allocations and local fundraising. We support Birthright Israel's immersion trips to Israel because we believe these investments strengthen our communities and will have an immeasurable impact on the Jewish future. There is no substitute for personal experience—this is where lifelong connections to people and a cause are made. Birthright Israel helps us to build and strengthen Jewish community, to take care of those in need, to bring people together for a sacred purpose. It is all connected in a meaningful way; the key is how we follow up.

How have you seen the Birthright Israel program change over the years?

Perhaps the most exciting changes I've seen are the development of Birthright Israel trips for Jewish affinity groups, such as trips for LGBTQ Jews or Jews involved in various professions or interests, as well as all the wonderful trips for Jews with special needs. Statistically, these cohorts are more likely to stay connected post-trip, which makes these efforts essential to engaging niches of our population and welcoming them into the community.

What do you see as Birthright Israel's greatest success? Greatest challenge?

I think Birthright Israel's greatest success is also its greatest challenge. For all the brouhaha surrounding the recent Pew survey of American Jewish life, I think one of the most important statistics was too often overlooked: Regardless of whatever else they're doing or whatever else they believe, around 90 percent of American Jews say that being Jewish is important to them. Ninety percent! Birthright Israel offers a special opportunity for the Jewish community to come together and build on that fact. The challenge for Birthright Israel is also a challenge for Federations and the Jewish community at large: How can we all work together to turn that newfound sense of connection into action? From where I sit, to do it well, we must all work together.

Why should the Jewish community support Birthright Israel Foundation?

When I was the director of the Foundation for Jewish Camp, I saw every day how getting young people excited by their Jewishness is the best guarantor of our future. And just as study after study proves that camp is one of the best ways to ensure a strong Jewish identity for our youth, so can Birthright Israel ensure that young Jewish adults are inspired to feel a strong connection to Israel for life.

Yet because the trip is only 10 days, the follow-up and second trip are critical. That is why we are excited about the Onward Israel internship program. It gets them back.

One last thing I want to say is that for me, Birthright Israel is a model of Jewish engagement. Birthright Israel has shown us that as a community, when we work together, our potential is limitless.



THEN 2000

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

9,462

CAMERA FILM
CALLING CARD
DISC MAN
TOP PACKING ITEMS



WHAT A
GIRL WANTS
CHRISTINA AGUILERA

NUMBER
ONE SONG



OUR MARK

NUMBER OF
COUNTRIES

11

AMERICAN
BEAUTY
BEST PICTURE



EXCHANGE
RATE

\$1 =
4.124
NIS

NOW 2015

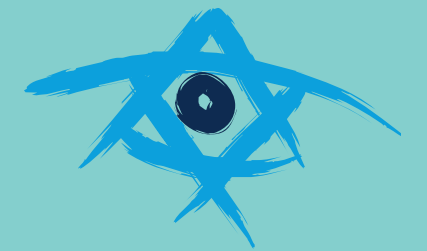
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

43,000*

PORTABLE CHARGER
IPHONE
INT'L ADAPTERS
TOP PACKING ITEMS

UPTOWN FUNK
MARK RONSON
FT. BRUNO MARS

NUMBER
ONE SONG



OUR MARK

NUMBER OF
COUNTRIES

66*

BIRDMAN
BEST PICTURE



EXCHANGE
RATE

\$1 =
3.918
NIS

*Projected for 2015

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS WITH BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL FOUNDATION

As we celebrate the 15th year of Birthright Israel, we are grateful for our loyal friends, whose support is ensuring this life-changing program remains a gift for generations to come. To date, we are proud to report Birthright Israel Foundation has raised over \$32 million from more than 17,400 committed donors. This does not include the generous support from the Adelson Family Foundation. We are excited to see where 2016 takes us!

JANUARY 11-16: ISRAEL BENEFACTORS CIRCLE MISSION

Chaired by Tom & Denise Stern. In January, Birthright Israel Foundation kicked off Birthright Israel's 15th year by leading its second Benefactors Circle Mission to Israel. The mission brought together 18 dedicated donors at an annual giving level of \$100,000 and over with Foundation staff David Fisher, Shira Hutt and Serena Young for a remarkable four day experience. We were lucky to have Foundation Board of Directors members Mark Charendoff and Tom Stern, and Board Chair, Josh Nash join us. A special thank you to Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson for the use of their private plane.

MARCH 19: BOCA RATON, FL PARLOR MEETING

Hosted by Andrea & Mike Leven. Birthright Israel Foundation supporters enjoyed a special reception at the home of Andrea & Mike Leven, a member of the Foundation's Board of Directors. The 57 guests in attendance had the unique opportunity to hear from Ambassador Ron Prosor, as well as local Birthright Israel alumni and a former *Mifgash* participant.

MARCH 24: HIGHLAND PARK, IL COMMUNITY EVENT

80 members of the greater Chicago community attended Birthright Israel Foundation's "Birthright Israel's Impact on College Campuses" panel event at the Highland Park Arts Center. The panel, moderated by Shira Hutt, included Jacob Baime, Executive Director of Israel Campus Coalition and 2005 Taglit-Birthright Israel alumnus; Dr. Barry Chazan, Founding International Director of Education for Birthright Israel; and Andrea Hoffman, Executive Director of the Newberger Hillel at University of Chicago.

MARCH 24: PALM BEACH, FL PARLOR MEETING

Hosted by Rita & Charles Bronfman, Ann & Robert Fromer, and Judith & Allyn Levy. Birthright Israel Foundation supporters joined us in Palm Beach at the home of Ann & Robert Fromer for an evening co-hosted by Rita & Charles Bronfman, Birthright Israel co-founder, and Board of Directors member, Judith & Allyn Levy. Guests enjoyed remarks from Brett Stephens, Deputy Editorial Page Editor of *The Wall Street Journal*.



MARCH 31: PALM SPRINGS, CA PARLOR MEETING

Hosted by Sandy & Bob Borns and Jane & Larry Sherman. Over 100 members of the Palm Springs community came together for a special evening at the home of hosts Sandy & Bob Borns. Guests had the privilege of hearing from Rachel Cohen Gerrol who participated in Birthright Israel during its flagship season and joined Birthright Israel Foundation's Board of Directors this year.

MAY 5: AUSTIN, TX PARLOR MEETING

Hosted by Wendi & Brian Kushner. With regional fundraising staff now on the ground in Texas, Birthright Israel Foundation supporters gathered at the Kushner's home this spring.



MAY 14: LOS ANGELES, CA COMMUNITY EVENT

Hosted by Gila & Adam Milstein. Over 200 guests from the Los Angeles community joined Birthright Israel Foundation at the Milstein's home for a special evening of support and celebration. Highlights included a performance from comedian Mark Schiff as well as remarks from nationally syndicated radio host, columnist and author, Dennis Prager, and Sheldon G. Adelson.

MAY 18: NEW YORK, NY ANNUAL GIVING CIRCLES EVENT

Hosted by Laurie Blitzer & Sam Levine, Raquel & Steve Herz, Beth & Joshua Nash, Meredith & Elliot Rubenzahl, and Samantha Wolofsky & Evan Feinberg. In May, Birthright Israel Foundation held its Annual Giving Circles event at the Museum of Tolerance in New York City. The evening featured a panel moderated by Foundation President, David Fisher, with Birthright Israel VP of International Education, Dr. Zohar Raviv, and President and CEO of Hillel, Eric Fingerhut.

JUNE 4: GREAT NECK, NY COMMUNITY EVENT

Hosted by Amy Fromer. Guests gathered at the home of Amy Fromer for the annual Long Island event. The evening included remarks from Ambassador Dennis Ross, Birthright Israel Foundation Board of Directors member Wendy Shenfeld and a local Birthright Israel alumna who staffed her fifth trip this summer.

JUNE 4: NEW YORK, NY TASTE OF ISRAEL

Birthright Israel Foundation kicked off the summer with a 'Taste of Israel' for young leadership at SONY Wonder Lab. 100 young leaders came together to hear Remy Roizen Weinstein and Rachel Cohen Gerrol, both Birthright Israel alumni and current Birthright Israel Foundation Board of Directors members, share their stories.

JULY 17: WATERMILL, NY BRIF IN THE HAMPTONS

Hosted by Shelly & Howard Kivell. 100 donors joined us in the Hamptons this summer for an incredible evening at the home of Shelly & Howard Kivell. Guests had the pleasure of hearing from Gidi Grinstein, Founder and Honorary President of the Reut Institute, and Dan Och, former Chair of Birthright Israel Foundation's Board of Directors.

AUGUST 16: DETROIT, MI FEDERATION EVENT

This summer we came together with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit to support Birthright Israel Foundation. The event included remarks from Lyna Giles, Scott Kaufman, Executive Director of JFMD, local alumni and a *Mifgash* participant.

SEPTEMBER 9: SCARSDALE, NY PARLOR MEETING

Hosted by Marci & Jeremy Cohen. Birthright Israel Foundation supporters gathered at the home of Marci & Jeremy Cohen for a unique opportunity to hear from Birthright Israel Co-Founder, Charles Bronfman.

SEPTEMBER 24: ARMONK, NY PARLOR MEETING

Hosted by Beth & Alan Waldenberg. An intimate group of guests, many of whom are parents of Birthright Israel alumni, gathered at the home of Beth & Alan Waldenberg in September. They had the pleasure of hearing from Izzy Ezagui, First Sergeant in the Israeli Defense Forces and Birthright Israel Alumnus.



BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL FOUNDATION GOES DIGITAL

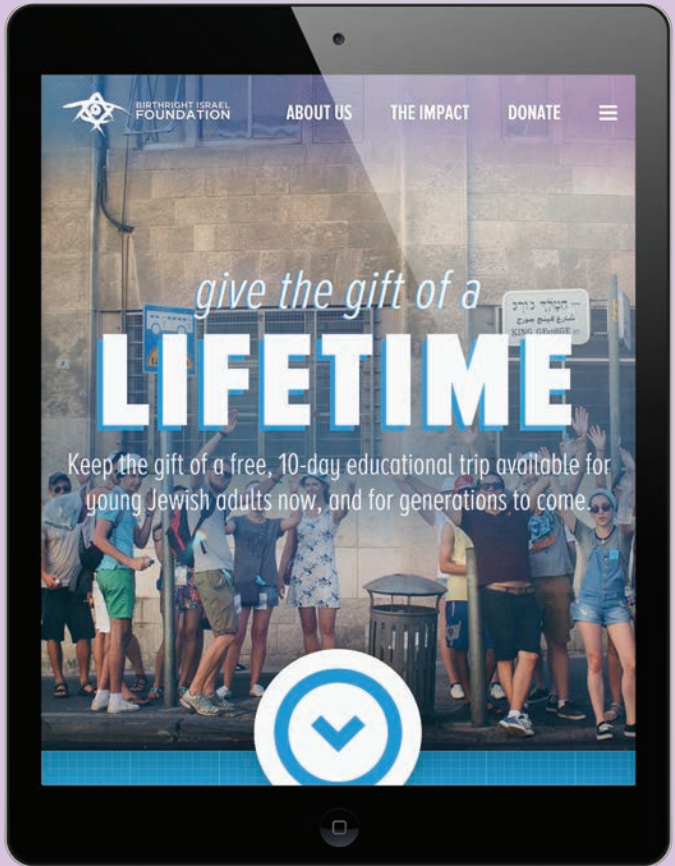
IT'S BEEN AN EXCITING YEAR FOR BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL FOUNDATION AS WE TOOK ON MANY NEW DIGITAL ENDEAVORS.

A NEW LOOK

In October, we debuted our new website which enabled our supporters to engage with the Foundation in an interactive way and learn more about our fundraising efforts, Foundation staff, giving opportunities, and donor stories.

#BRIFGOESSOCIAL

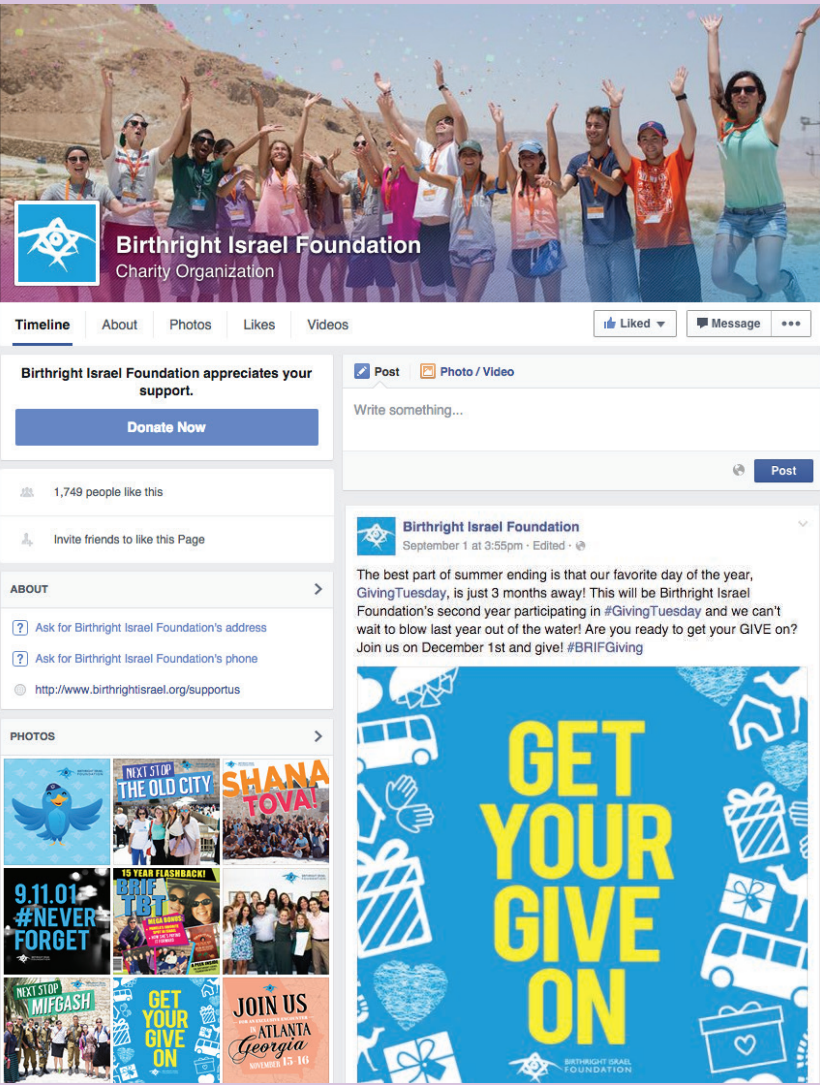
In August, we joined our millennial friends and the rest of the 21st century when we launched our first ever Birthright Israel Foundation Facebook page! Bitten by the social media bug, we joined Twitter in September to give our followers an inside look into our campaign goals.



BE SURE TO KEEP AN EYE ON OUR FACEBOOK & TWITTER PAGES

as **#GivingTuesday**, a global day dedicated to giving, is quickly approaching!

Join us on **December 1st** and give the gift of Birthright Israel to another young Jewish adult this year!



TRAVEL WITH US



Birthright Israel Foundation, Andrea & Mike Leven, and Lori Komisar & Morrie Silverman invite you to join us on an

UNFORGETTABLE MISSION TO ISRAEL WITH THE BENEFACTORS CIRCLE

JANUARY 10-15, 2016

- * Experience Birthright Israel through the eyes of our participants with the unique opportunity to join a Birthright Israel bus for a day
- * Engage with Birthright Israel and Foundation leadership to better understand why the trip has been so effective in changing the lives of the next generation
- * Round trip transportation by private plane between New York and Tel Aviv, generously provided by Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson
- * Five star accommodations at The King David Hotel in Jerusalem, and all ground accommodations provided
- * Private meetings with high-ranking IDF and Government officials, elite opinion makers, and other dignitaries

Space is limited. If you have any questions or would like to register, please email [Serena Young at serena.young@birthrightisrael.org](mailto:serena.young@birthrightisrael.org) or call (646) 833-1331.

The Benefactors Circle Mission is intended for existing or prospective donors who contribute a minimum of \$100,000 annually to the Birthright Israel Foundation



CAN'T MAKE IT IN JANUARY?

Join us for our Annual Giving Circles Mission May 15-20, 2016!*

If you are interested in traveling with us, please contact Rachel Zolna: rachel.zolna@birthrightisrael.org or (212) 419-2879

**The mission is intended for Birthright Israel Foundation Annual Giving Circle Supporters (\$3,000 or above to our 2015 Annual Campaign)*