

Kol Bogrei Rambam is the Alumni Council's monthly e-newsletter for and about Maimonides School graduates. Each month we share information on individual graduates' ventures and accomplishments, as well as general news notes, all reflecting the school's mission of preparing educated, observant Jews to be contributing members of society. Your ideas and accomplishments will help sustain and strengthen this key communications tool; please forward to alumni@maimonides.org.

Veteran Birthright Israel Coordinator to Pursue Dream of Teaching

After leading 12 Birthright Israel trips in fewer than five years, **Nomi Mitchell '06** is going back to school. This summer— after two more Birthright Israel trips— she will embark on a new program that includes a track toward a master's degree in Jewish education at Hebrew University.

"The hardest part about leaving this job is I love staffing Birthright Israel trips," Nomi said. "Having this experience with young Jewish adults has been the most inspiring part of my entire journey. Watching them grow during and after their Israel experience has been really inspiring." She acknowledged that "the job definitely has a shelf life — most coordinators don't stay longer than three years."

The 18-year-old Birthright Israel program says its mission is "to give every Jewish young adult around the world, especially the unaffiliated, the opportunity to visit Israel."

After graduating from Maimonides, Nomi took part in Young Judea's Year Course in Israel, then immediately enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces for two years. She returned to the U.S. and received a bachelor's degree in religion and Jewish studies from Northeastern University, which is where she became involved with recruiting for NU's Birthright Israel program.

"I always knew about it — and I knew I wasn't eligible." She ended up helping staff a Northeastern Birthright Israel trip in the winter of 2012. "It was definitely an eye-opener for me, in terms of understanding who Birthright Israel is targeting, what the goals are and what people get out of it. For a lot of

people it was the first time to Israel — and a completely life-changing experience for some of them."

Nomi accepted a position as engagement associate with Cornell University Hillel, staffed another Birthright Israel trip in the winter of 2013, and then was put in charge of recruitment for the campus. Then in May 2014 she returned to New England as the Birthright Israel/CJP Campus Initiative coordinator at Boston University Hillel.

Birthright Israel trips, which are free to participants, last 10 to 12 days, and the Boston University campus trip usually sends about 80 students. Leadership is by Nomi, a male staff member, and a tour guide. The itinerary is full, so "everything on the Birthright Israel trip is just a taste," Nomi acknowledged.

"Every Birthright Israel trip has a template, but the trip organizer, Israel Outdoors, always leaves wiggle room to put in things that are different," she said. "They do let me make special requests and customize the campus trips as much as possible. It's definitely not a cookie-cutter itinerary," although there are some activities that are standard, including visits to Masada, the Dead Sea and the *Kotel*.

"Every campus culture is different, and Birthright Israel coordinators all have to figure out how we incorporate that into



Nomi Mitchell '06

the trip," she continued. Boston-based itineraries always include the local federation's partnership with the city of Haifa — not only a visit but also some kind of service activity. She especially enjoys stopping at the Yemin Orde youth village, the home and school for at-risk youths located south of the city. "The BU students really loved it there."

Inspired by Birthright, "A lot of BU alumni have had subsequent Israel experiences, continuing to explore their relationships with Israel and their Jewish identities," Nomi said. "That's really inspiring." She advises the participants: "This is just the beginning. Don't go into your Birthright Israel trip thinking that this will be the only

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Recent Graduate Exploring a Different Aspect of Life in Israel

Sarah Jacobs '11 is exploring an aspect of life in Israel that she did not encounter in her 12th grade advocacy classes or during her post-graduate year of learning at Nishmat.



Sarah Jacobs '11

As the 2016-2017 Israel Institute research fellow with the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, a non-partisan interdisciplinary research center, the Princeton University graduate's primary focus is the issue of the absence of female judges in Israel's Islamic Courts.

It's ground-breaking research, she said, "based on field interviews with practitioners and academic experts, as well as documentary primary and secondary sources. I've interviewed Islamic court judges, lawyers, and experts on this topic and have just finished writing up my research."

During her post-graduate year at Nishmat, Sarah started working part-time for an organization called Na'am: Arab Women in the Center. "I was inspired by the women who ran

Na'am, and realized that I wanted to learn to speak Arabic in college," she said. (Maimonides now offers Arabic beginning in Grade 8; "I think that's really fantastic," Sarah remarked.)

She began studying Arabic at Princeton, where "I found myself naturally drawn to Middle Eastern Studies classes, and ended up majoring in Near Eastern Studies with a minor in African Studies."

As an undergraduate, Sarah also served as an intern for the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, contributing Middle East research to the annual human rights report. "I wrote my thesis on Tunisian Islamic State fighters. I studied and worked in Jordan for a summer, conducted research in Tunisia, and travelled to Morocco after graduation," she said

Sarah landed the position with the Dayan Center because of her work on Middle East security studies, applying through the Israel Institute Internship, a selective fellowship that funds recent graduates to work at think tanks in Israel. The center's guiding principle is that "in order to understand the region, one must understand its cultures, peoples, languages, religions, and history, alongside more traditional diplomatic and political factors."

"My research has allowed me to meet many really interesting people, and go into parts of the country I was not exposed to when I lived in Israel during my gap year," Sarah related. "Nishmat is in the Pat neighborhood, next to Beit Safafa. This year, I finally went into Beit Safafa. It was amazing to see what it looked like, and meet the people who lived there."

Sarah said her research showed that women judges serve in *shari'a* courts in several Muslim countries as well as the Palestinian Authority, but not in Israel. "The Israeli *shari'a* courts' jurisdiction over family law, a field of law which engages in women's issues, makes their absence particularly salient," she said.

Her other internship responsibilities include working on the editorial staff of Dayan Center publications like *Turkeyscope*; *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review*; and *Beehive: Middle East Social Media*. Sarah also is a research assistant for the organization's director and a senior researcher on North Africa, and serves as a contributor to Newsbrief and the Moshe Dayan Center Twitter account. "I've also been able to attend many conferences and talks on political and societal developments in the Middle East," she added.

After her internship concludes later this year, Sarah said she would like to work in Jordan or Morocco for the next year or two before beginning graduate work. Meanwhile, she shares an apartment in Tel Aviv with her classmate and friend, **Yael Toren**.

Birthright Coordinator

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opportunity you will have to go to Israel. Keep going back to learn, explore, and widen your horizons."

Nomi, who is from Providence, began her Maimonides career in Grade 6. There were teachers "who saw potential in me and encouraged me to believe in myself," she said, including her eighth grade English teacher, Sharon Steiff, z"l, and her high school social studies teacher, Carlo DiNota. She added that she hopes to teach like Rabbi David Ehrenkranz. "Talmud was really hard for me and he made it fun. I want to make Judaism enjoyable and relevant for my students."

"My grandma used to say to me, 'I think you would be a great teacher.' Education is definitely where I find my passion, even though it has not been in a formal setting," Nomi related. "For me, education has been experiential — we are touching things, feeling things, smelling things, all very relatable for the Birthright demographic."

Maimonides School Alumni Here and There...

Following his latest milestone in his quest for Winter Olympics skeleton qualification representing Israel, **AJ Edelman '09** feels "confident for the future."

There has been huge progress when comparing his performances this year and a year earlier, AJ said after finishing 35th in the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation world championships on Feb. 26 in Koenigssee, Germany. "To be considering the 2018 Olympics after two and a half years is a huge accomplishment, and to know that 2022 will more than likely happen is terrific."

He noted that Israel skeleton has competed for more than eight years, and "in the past two years I've broken every Israeli record at the tracks I've raced on... I am very proud Israel was well represented in this race. Every day there is clear improvement." AJ is heading for South Korea, host of the 2018 Winter Olympics "to test the track in case I'm there next year. Beijing '22 is a more than terrific shot."

Sarah Bronson '90 of Jerusalem wants everyone to know that she has launched a costume *gemach*, to be located at the home of a friend in the East Talpiot neighborhood. "We'd appreciate donations of clean, reasonable-condition costumes and accessories after Purim, so that next year we can open up the *gemach* before the holiday," she said. "We are also looking for a better storage solution, so if anyone in southern Jerusalem has a storage room they can donate to the cause, we'd greatly appreciate it." Those interested in donating costumes or accessories for children or adults may write sarahbronson@gmail.com. She will reply with dropoff times and location.

Three members of the Class of 2012, **Avinoam Stillman** and **Sarah Ricklan** (Columbia University) and **Yonina Frim** (Barnard University), have been elected to the Phi Beta Kappa academic honorary society.



Rachel (Lightman) Wiederkehr '66 (left) and Leah (Rosenfield) Lightman '78 pose after meeting at the Orthodox Union's Torah in the City at Citi Field in Queens on Jan. 15. Leah recounted: "As I was sitting down for the final session, the woman behind me saw my name tag and exclaimed, 'Lightman— that's my maiden name.' I answered, 'By any chance are you from the Lightman family from Lowell that went to Maimonides School?' She was — and she was thrilled, as I was. And we talked all about Maimonides."



Tatiana Hasson '10 speaks to students in Refael Fadlon's Israel advocacy classes during a recent visit to Maimonides. Tatiana, a campus professional with The David Project, pointed out that 80 percent of all college students don't care about Israel. The David Project's approach of "relational advocacy" focuses on Jewish students' building meaningful connections with their non-Jewish counterparts as the starting point for engaging them about Israel, she said.



Rabbi Chaim Tabasky '67 shares his *safrut* expertise with a Maimonides sixth grade class. Rabbi Tabasky, who teaches at Bar-Ilan University and other institutions in Israel, visits his alma mater every February.

PATRIOTS NATION IN ISRAEL AND THE REGION CELEBRATE THE SUPER BOWL VICTORY



Alexander '13 and Ariel Kahan and their father David '79 at a large Super Bowl party in Tel Aviv. "You know you are watching the game in Israel when your hosts serve shakshuka for breakfast as the game ends," David observed.



Yehuda, right, son of Gila Betesh-Maresky '02, and his friend Adam enjoy a tailgate lunch at Gan Shelanu, the Jerusalem pre-school that Gila operates with Rebecca Zibman '02. "I told the kids that on Super Bowl Sunday we eat special foods so we have energy to watch the football game," Rebecca said.



Rabbi Noam Shapiro '97 with sons Akiva and Doron, watching the game at 1:30 a.m. in Efrat. "Adi Krohn '94 and his boys, as well as Danny Fax '93 and his son, were there too," Noam reported.



Dov Lerner '05: "This is my celebration at 6 a.m. in Tel Aviv."



Tuv Schultz, son of 1997 graduates Rabbi Michael and Rachael (Gelfman) Schultz of Moreshet, Israel.



U.S. Army First Lt. Moshe Bension '05 (right) watching with Sgt. Trevion Jarmon of Culver City, CA while deployed in the Middle East. Moshe said the sergeant "became a Patriots fan around the time Drew Bledsoe joined the team and Robert Kraft purchased the Patriots outright."



Renee Blechner-Hirsch '76 in Yerushalayim. She said classmates Ahron and Sheera (Kessler) Solomont gave her the sweatshirt over 15 years ago.



Ezra Waxman '06 (center) with former students Ariel Halevy and Yaakov Simkovich in Tel Aviv.



Steven Epstein '83 (center) celebrating at 5:30 a.m. in Chashmonaim with his kids and those of neighbor and classmate Judah Richman.



Matt Brenner '93 and nephews Natani and Zechariah Zivotofsky watch the winning touchdown at the home of his sister Jenny (Brenner) Zivotofsky '90 in Efrat.

PATRIOTS NATION AT THE GAME, AND POINTS WEST AND SOUTH



Reuven Harow '86 at NRG Stadium. The shirt was a gift from Rabbi Mendel Fogelman of Central Mass. Chabad; Reuven said Patriots owner Robert Kraft asked for one.



Mark Levenson '74 before the game at NRG Stadium with daughters Hadassa Levenson and Jessica Levenson Mirsky.



Pre-game outside the stadium: Ari Shrage '96 (left) with his father Barry, and Ari Katz '99 with his father Naty '73.



Sam Wald '92 at the game with his sons.



Jeremy Salzberg '05 and his father Mark at NRG stadium.



Sarah (Lamport) Lee '03 in Los Angeles.



Eli and Leslie Hartman '01 and kids "still reppin' Boston all the way out in LA!"



In Boca Raton, the gathering included (rear, center, from left) Drs. Raphael Wald '99, Danny Aghion '99, and Chanoch Harow, formerly of the Class of 1989.



Shuli (Gertel) Bossewitch '97 with sons Avrumi and Moshe in Miami.

FAMILIES AND FRIENDS CELEBRATE THE VICTORY



Gabe Kahn '96 with his son and nephew Ariel Goldman '15.



Yoni Lieber '93 with sons Azi (number 11) and Akiva. "We were Whats-Apping with my son, Nafi, who is studying in Israel at Lev Hatorah, where he was watching with his classmates," Yoni reported.



The Schiff family Super Bowl extravaganza in Teaneck, including David '85, parents Dr. Seymour and Judy Schiff, and daughters Ilana and Avigail.



Henry, Jack and Freddy, sons of Jessica (Salzberg) Steinberg '01.



Lori (Michaelson) Salkin '00 and children.



Elisha, son of Leah and Yiriel Liss '10.



Tova Katz Jotkowitz '01 and children.



Sara (Dalezman) '97 and Elisha Blechner '96 and children; Sara and Elisha with Ben Pick '97 and Josh Blechner '99 (right); and Josh '99 and his wife Sarah Blechner and their children. "I watched the first half with Ben at my house, then we needed to 'mix things up' because they were losing so we finished watching at Elisha's," said Josh. That obviously was the key to the Patriots' ultimate success.



MORE SUPER BOWL CELEBRATIONS AMONG GRADUATES AND THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS



Meir Weinberg '00 and Sara Pultman, wife of Avi '00, salute Tom Brady on the big screen in the Pultmans' basement, where several graduates and family members enjoyed the comeback.



Dr. Benjy Lopkin '91 and his twin sons Jack and Judah.



Drs. Eric Banks '94 and Tamara Katz and kids.



Azi Cutter '87 and family, along with guest Azriel Chelst, son of Dr. Tamy (Simon) Chelst '66.



Rabbi Allan Houben '98 and Lisa Bergman and family.



A Super Bowl photo collage featuring Dr. Laurie Lebowitz '80, husband Hal Klestzick and children Rebecca, Amanda and Benjamin, watching respectively in New Rochelle, NY, Boston University and Midreshet Lindenbaum, Jerusalem.



Viewing in Riverdale: from left, Daniel Bloom '98 and 2000 graduates Ben Kohanim, Dovid Green and Noah Liben. "The crowd has changed over the years," Noah said, "but it never gets old!"



Adam Dalezman hosted fellow members of the class of 2002: from left, Yoni Spiewak, Ilan Lastoff, Raphi Toubian, Zvi Dubitzky, Adam with his son Ben, and Matt Wolfe.