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Wexner Heritage Foundation

REPORT OF ISRAEL INTERVIEWS



31 January - 11 February 1993

Tel Aviv - Haifa - Jerusalem

Herb Freedman  
Nathan Laufer  
Haim Shaked  
Jonathan Porath (recorder)

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Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau  
January 31, 1993

1. He acknowledged the need for a program such as Wexner in Israel. "They [the Israelis] think they know. I know they don't." He noted the very successful programs conducted by the Department of Adult Education of the Ministry of Education in the 1950's and '60's.
2. He was extremely interested in the proposed Wexner visits to communities in the U.S. and Europe.
3. He strongly recommended that such a program be undertaken first in the Diaspora, and only then in Israel. "There [in the Diaspora] they have nearly nothing - here [Israel] they have almost everything."
4. Even Israelis who are themselves not observant are challenged by the presence of Kippot, by various university courses (especially the Bar Ilan Basic Judaism requirement), etc. He felt that the quality of the instruction would determine the success of the program.
5. He recommended the following lecturers:
  - Rabbi Dr. Meir Gruzman, Bar Ilan University
  - Rabbi Mordecai Piron, Jerusalem
  - Rabbi Shmuel HaCohen Avidor
  - MK Chanan Porat
  - Prof. Ariel Rozen-Zvi, Tel Aviv University Law School
  - Prof. Zvi Bachrach, Bar Ilan University (Jewish History)
  - Prof. Yosef Ben-Shlomo, Tel Aviv U. (Philosophy, Kabbala)

Address: Heichal Shlomo, Jerusalem

Uri Lubrani  
February 1, 1993

1. He felt that the proposed Wexner Program would appeal to the type of person still searching for an identity in Israel, in spite of the successes of 20 adult years.
2. The central question is how to integrate into the Middle East without assimilating.
3. He cautioned that the spectrum of worries and daily tribulations are a stumbling block for prospective participants.
4. In terms of the curriculum, he recommends the following:
  - Judaism vs. Islam
  - confronting Israelis with the fundamentalist hatred and intolerance of Islam
5. He notes that many issues expose raw emotions and are rife with political orientations and overtones.
6. If the target number is realistic (2 groups of 20 each) - he "would certainly give it a try". Can find out quickly if it is working or not.
7. Israeli leadership is more diverse than in US. He recommends the 30-40 age group.
8. He, upon reflection, could devise guidelines for such a program.

The challenge is how to mold guidelines for the program which encompass the diversity of Israeli society. "I will give the guidelines serious thought," and will see about doing them alone or with Chaim Shaked.

9. He mentioned the Talpiot program of Tzahal - for those with a high IQ.
10. Thoughts on Leadership  
He makes a distinction between a "leadership program" which would start at age 24-25, and an "enrichment program" as presented for the 45+ age range. You would have to start at a younger age in Israel. "Beyond age 45 you don't start anything". People emerge from the army (mid-20s) on a leadership track. In the US there are great opportunities in the mid-40s; in Israel only exceptions rise at that stage.

11. With a selection process you would find people in a "launching pad" for leadership, but not with all the other necessary qualifications.
12. He doesn't know of any similar programs in Israel.
13. He suggests to focus on diaspora relation (without a particularly Jewish emphasis).

Address: 34 Shamgar, Tzahala, Tel Aviv



Yigal Simon  
February 1, 1993

1. He recommends starting in the mid-30's and not at 40. Officers and pilots courses are good indications. Consider a candidate's army career to determine leadership character.
2. He noted the local leaders from Eidot Hamizrach who have no contact with diaspora Jewry, no knowledge of US Jewry or of Eastern Europe. A worthy target would be to get them involved since they are moving from local to national leadership. They in particular need this understanding.
3. In terms of curriculum, he would add:
  - economics
  - Middle Eastern studies including chapters in Islamic fundamentalism
  - developing a dialogue between Diaspora and Israelis (the "Moriah Process")
  - democratic values
4. Screening methods are possible through organizations such as the universities and the army. YaYa would be a good contact. Also local municipalities and governmental companies. It would be no problem to find reservoirs of good people.
5. "If you look into the record of the Israeli cabinet, you are not aware that they are a part of the Jewish nation". Intelligent Israelis need such a program. They don't get it in other places.
6. He recommends that a BA be a precondition.

Shula Wardinon  
February 1, 1993

1. She has a Ph.D. in Hebrew Literature and has been involved in a family textile business for the past 15 years. She proudly showed her towels on the cover of a Bloomingdale's catalog.
2. The curriculum should contain literature and art in addition to Judaism. The purpose should be to widen the horizons of the participants.
3. She assumes Israelis are familiar with Bible and Jewish history. Put more emphasis on democracy, how to influence public opinion, involvement in governmental decisions, to understand the system and to influence it.
4. It would be "wonderful" to understand Judaism for the non-religious and to forge relations with the diaspora; not for financial reasons - for "romantic" reasons; the importance of feeling who we are and for self-pride.
5. Israel is very career oriented - school, work, children - the people move very fast. At age 45 there is time to be involved in communal life, in addition to a career. She would like to produce a Renaissance Man ("Ish Haeshkolot") like the Rambam.
6. "I don't think we have to understand more Judaism - we're Israelis, we're Jews. Don't need more depth." After high school "the Bible is a hated topic".
7. She believes the program could find 40 individuals who would want to participate. She would be willing to recommend five candidates.
8. Should look for "open, curious people, who want to widen their horizons for no particular goal - for fun and for love of studies". We should emphasize the chance to meet Jews from all around the world in a deeper way.
9. We should look for the top Israeli women. Globes magazine recognizes the top businesswoman in the country. Political organizations such as Tzeiri Meretz should be approached - to make them understand more about Judaism.
10. There are good reasons why the program should be done, "if you can convince people who are far from us to come closer".

11. A BA should not be a requirement. "The person themselves will matter."

Address POB 3013, Petach Tikva 49130  
Tel. 03-923-2778 (office); Fax 03-922-5030



A.B. Yehoshua  
February 1, 1993

1. Israeli children know more about our complex 3000 year old history than does a comparable American. US history is only 200 years old!
2. He directed us to focus on the Russian olim - a group that is totally unschooled in Judaism. They are the elite and it would be a mitzva. No one is dealing with them now. It would be giving them a wonderful bonus ("sukariya").
3. It wouldn't hurt the Israelis but would be far more welcomed by the Russians. It would help their klita and would engender a very warm feeling in Israel. You could give the Russians an indepth program and they would want it.
4. The Russians are not entering Israeli culture. They are deprecated. The Russians respond by calling the Israeli "provincial". This would give the Russians a strong boost and would "focus Russian autonomy in Israel".
5. It is vital to take the Russian intelligencia - it would be a wonderful service to their community and to Israel. There already exist many programs for Israelis. Machon Hartman, Shorashim, study group (chugim) etc.
6. In terms of the program, he would recommend focusing on the diaspora and how it works.
7. He hopes that with President Clinton, the super egoism of the Reagan years will give way to humanity. "Peace is soon to come." After peace the Jewish people should teach the world How to Learn. That should be the project of the Jewish people - a World Learning Corps. "The Swiss have neither Isaiah nor Jeremiah, but they promote the world by being neutral intermediaries." Our task should be to build a bridge to the Third World in the 21st century.
8. What are the needs of Israeli leadership:
  - A lack of knowledge of the mechanism of democracy; the conduct of public debate, the rights of the individual. America is the world's oldest democratic society and has a lot to teach Israel.
  - Legal knowledge - How the Bagatz functions, etc.

- Knowledge of religion. People know nothing about Judaism and there is a deeply felt hatred.
  - Islam and the Arab-Israeli political issues.
9. He asked whether Les Wexner really exists or is he "a heritage" (sic)!
  10. Returning to his opening theme, he stated that a teacher of the Russians must be able to speak in their "codes".
  11. Foolish Israelis won't come; and those who want to attend seminars are already going! Israelis are already too busy and too pressured. This would be a mitzva for the Russians. He would recommend a group of 35-40 year olds on a very high level for the intellectual leadership, and a second Russian group to go out to the masses.



Ephraim Lapid  
February 2, 1993

1. He cited the beneficial experience of Israel's National Defense College where 400 officers and senior officials participate in an intensive one year study program (he attended 10 years ago). Attendees were exposed to the spectrum of Israeli life. The atmosphere created was as important as the actual knowledge.
2. He recommended starting at age 25 but did not want to limit the age; rather select the best candidates regardless of age. He finally focused on ages 25-43 (if the older group is exceptional).
3. He raised the question of a 20% drop-out rate.
4. He was in favor of the program.

Address: Rehov Dresner 10, Tel Aviv  
03-642-9988, 646-9497

Uri Menasse  
February 2, 1993

1. Although not an educator, he was very much in favor of the project. He focused on a series of practical aspects.
2. He emphasized the importance of the selection process. "If you choose the wrong group it is a waste of time."
3. He raised the question of the best locale: Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.
4. He lamented the fact that industrialists have not been taking leadership roles in Israeli communal life.
5. The program must be given prestige. We need to emphasize the honor to be "selected" (rather than "accepted"). We should play "hard to get". Herb recalled Ben Gurion's Bible Study Group.
6. He would not limit the ages from 25-40, though asked if 40 was too old. He was concerned about the generation gap of a 25 and a 40 year old. It might be hard to bond them into a group. Israelis age faster than Americans.
7. Site visits are very important - "Israelis don't know the Diaspora". They don't understand the feeling of Jews who don't live here. They are losing touch with the younger generation abroad. Trips and visits are one of the ways to restore mutual understanding and fostering affinity.
8. Evening hours would be suitable for meetings.
9. At later stages, spouses of group members should be involved, especially on trips abroad.
10. A study of economics would be a major attraction to Israelis. He mentioned Dov Lautman, Prof. Asaf Razin, Chabash and the Bank of Israel's Frankel as potential speakers.
11. He did not know if the project would work. The possibility of potential drop outs should not be ignored. Initial enthusiasm can fall short, often for reasons beyond the power of the participant (change jobs, new business ventures, etc.) Chaim Shaked noted that Israelis change commitments on short notice.

12. "I'm for it!" It is a good idea. Have to try it even if it doesn't work.
13. Must have a "good man" running it here. A well known figure "to put some fire" into it.
14. We owe it to the Wexner Heritage Foundation to try. "If you try it in Seattle - why not in Jerusalem?" "It's a natural" ("ze mitbakesh").

Address: Cargal Ltd., Lod, Israel  
03-220-660 (office), Fax 08-230-450



Prof. Uriel Reichman  
February 2, 1993

1. His opening comment: "This enterprise is enormously important."
2. He detailed the long and elaborate process he led (the Israeli constitutional movement). It involved: research, total dedication, mass education, fund raising, influencing public opinion, and waiting for the "wave of events" and the propitious moment.
3. Regarding the issue of Jewish identity and content he stated "that there exists today in Israel a desire to touch the past without identification with the despised Haredim." Israelis do not have sufficient knowledge of their own past. "A person can't divorce himself from his own roots" - there is a growing understanding within the Israeli elite of that fact.
4. An element that US Jewry can contribute to Israel: "Democracy and the Jewish State". (Medina Yehudit Udemokratya). "Democracy" needs to be clarified to Israelis. Early Israelis had Bolshevik tendencies.
5. A free market economy is part of democracy. The goal of the State is to serve the individual. The individual is the center of rights.
6. It is vital that the intellectual future of the country be based on the twin pillars of democracy and Judaism ("touching the past"). Jewish tradition itself is important, but insufficient - have to confront tradition. Sometimes Judaism will have to give in and sometimes democracy will have to give in.
7. This program is not for the general public, rather we must reach out to the leadership and opinion makers, and then to the masses. The Israeli opinion makers are in Gush Dan. This should be an elite program. Look for people with access to the media: top journalists, TV people, rising in the business community, public volunteers. Look in local communities - at Matnasim (JCC's), mayors, deputy mayors. Forget the rank and file politicians - they are cynical and self-interested.
8. The program needs to be interesting, relevant, selective and very prestigious. Include "bonanzas" - trip to US for meeting with Jewish leadership.

9. Involve as faculty people who have internalized free enterprise: Milton Friedman and Les Wexner.
10. Wexner is interested in the intellectual milieu of new leadership but not in the specifics. This is an intellectual process program not a training program. It should help to create the "will", the right attitude, the desire, the readiness to fight: the Histadrut, the Kibbutzim, the support for Haredim ("parasites who take away our oxygen").
11. He recommends Prof. Rozen-Zvi - orthodox and a reformer. He will make it to the Supreme Court, currently Dean of Tel Aviv University Law School. In a small group (20) he is a wonderful and inspiring teacher. Also highly recommends David Krechmar from Hebrew University.

Address: Rehov Mishmar Hayarden 37, Tel Aviv



Sara Shadmi  
February 2, 1993

1. Sara directs the Midrasha at Oranim, a group of mostly Kibbutz educated Israelis who aim at changing Israeli society. Most of their friends have either left Israel or have become Hozrei Bitshuva. "Jewish culture belongs to us even though we are not datiim." They take local leaders from Kibbutzim, the university, olim, etc. and study one day a week. Students can open Jewish texts without being Haredim. They have 100 participants per year. The main objective of the Midrasha is to provide a framework for young leaders striving to establish their Jewish identity in order to influence Israeli society. They must connect with being Jewish (create own Jewish wedding ceremony). Their purpose is to shape Jewish society in Israel. They are called "Workshops for Jewish Identity for Young Leadership" (Sadnaot LeZehut Yehudit LeManhigut Tzeirah).
2. They make Jewish text study attractive: three hours chevruta on a page of Talmud about civil rights.
3. Most of other current participants come from the northern border settlements. They would like to set up an additional center in the Negev but don't have enough money.
4. She recommends the 30+ age group; two groups (Gush Dan and periphery). These groups should be heterogeneous - development towns, young olim, kibbutzniks.
5. One of their responsibilities would be to create their own project in their home community.
6. They should share Jewish holidays together, a joint Kabbalat Shabbat, Seder Tu Bishvat - emphasize how to create groups for change within Israeli society.
7. She mentioned her own experience of using as texts the diaries of early Halutzim.
8. Her teachers are Mukki Tzur and Yariv Ben-Aharon. The Midrasha is her "life's project".
9. To Chaim Shaked's comment (in the name of Avraham Infeld): "Judaism is a letter from God to the Haredim - and we don't read other people's mail." Sara responded: "It's my mail also."

Address: Hamidrasha, Oranim  
POB 36910, Tivon

Amira Dotan  
February 2, 1993

1. In Israeli schools she learned history and Bible, but not Yiddishkeit. She became more Jewish from her diaspora experience. The Israelis have to go through that experience. She felt crippled without the Jewish knowledge. She did not know how to have an intelligent Jewish conversation with a friend from America.
2. The name of the program is very important - it should be "sexy".
3. The program should be accessible without long commutes. The meeting site should be physically comfortable.
4. She would aim at two groups: a) 25-30 within an existing organizational framework (Tzahal?). Take a group who has a desire to learn. Easily organized through the army's Katzin Chinuch Roshi ("YaYa has a real Jewish heart"). b) 45-50 - who are already a vibrant part of Israeli life - those who have come to a decision making age (including Amira herself!).
5. Teaching approach: analysis in depth, role playing, application to modern age. Need different angles. Standard academics are not adequate.
6. She would prefer learning Judaism (Siddur, etc.) and history. "I feel that I am a part of a tradition that I don't know anything about. I approached the JTS here to find out my roots in a feminist way."
7. The right participants and the right faculty will bring prestige. Don't compromise.
8. The American Jewry connection is very important. Even after hosting UJA missions every week, she had no connection with them. She knew nothing about US Jews.
9. Give the Israeli students a joint project with the Wexner graduates in the States. There is a need to make connections on different levels.
10. Perhaps go to Europe first with American Wexnerites - a joint US-Israeli group. For the summer of 1995 - 180 people - 3 US and 2 Israeli groups travelling together.
11. Need for flexibility and openmindedness - "go with the flow".

12. Need leadership skills - how to make a presentation, the ability to present a point of view.
13. Regarding the suggestion of a Wexner group in Russia she said we would only confuse them. They are dealing with survival concerns.
14. She strongly supported the project. "If we don't do the program in Israel now we will lose a generation."

Address: Tel Chai 1, Kfar Sabba  
052-952-718



Maj. Gen. Yoram Yair ("YaYa")  
February 2, 1993

1. YaYa articulated the goal for the prospective program: to strengthen Judaism (knowledge, heritage, background) within the future leadership in Israel. The question is how to recruit them and what to give them once they are in. "I am for it - who can fight motherhood?"
2. The problem is that in Israel where people have a very deep knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history and Israeli history, what common base of knowledge do they have. Some have yeshiva backgrounds, others studied at universities, others are from Shomer Hatzair. They may know much less about Judaism from a religious viewpoint, but they are none the less very good leaders.
3. He discussed the differences between Israeli and diaspora Jewry. In the US, synagogues serve as the social center for group identification. "If you don't belong to a synagogue, you don't belong." In Israel one doesn't have the problem of identifying with Judaism in spite of not "belonging" to a synagogue.
4. He emphasized "the Jewish message". "I am sure they will benefit from it. Another daf, another amud, another sugiya - whole oceans you can dive in."
5. The question is whether Israelis would recognize the need - would they give it priority. YaYa doesn't think that you will find among leaders those who have a problem with their Jewish identity.
6. Crux of problem of Wexner in Israel: Young leaders (ages 25-30) need other subjects to study. However, if you change the curriculum you are changing the message. To know more about Judaism around the world - that's not Judaism! If your goal is to strengthen the connection between the diaspora and Israel, then you are taking one element of the Jewish message. There will be Israelis who will know little save this element (diaspora relations).
7. He cited the Moriah Process and the Israel Forum as one concrete example of learning about American Jewry.
8. YaYa: You have to put more challenge to the participants. They have to contribute something, to give something. "Judaism is 'Naaseh veNishma' - first let's do!"

9. The goal should be not only to enlarge knowledge. Not frontal speakers and meeting big shots; rather how to improve, how to focus, how to change - not just to travel.
10. Recommends one pilot group, ages 40-50, of real leaders. When making a military breakthrough, you concentrate your forces and strike deeply. This initial group will create the prestige so you can organize 3 groups the next time. "Here in Israel where everyone knows each other that's the right way."
11. He offered to contribute one or two generals to the program.



Oren Sadiv  
February 3, 1993

1. 30 years old, married plus one child. MBA (finance) and PhD candidate. Captain in Air Force. Advisor to MK Dan Tichon. General Manager of Young Business Forum.
2. He felt that the key factor would be to build a program that will contribute to their career plans.
3. Need to adjust the program to the Israeli personality. The army service is the major difference between Israelis and Americans. 40% of the Young Business Forum are army officers.
4. People who live here are Israelis first and then Jews. Yom Hazikaron is more important than Yom Kippur. An American Jew can't feel the 11 AM sound of the siren on Yom Hazikaron.

Address: Young Business Forum  
8 Rosenblum Street, Tel Aviv 64079



Guy Gissin  
February 3, 1993

1. A lawyer, Captain in Navy, 31 years old, married plus one and a half.
2. Israelis are very cynical, very practical. They want "tachlis". "Jewish history doesn't interest me."
3. The great-grandson of the former Chief Rabbi of Jaffo and now anti-religious. Having a strong Jewish identity and a strong Israeli identity are very different. How does the Wexner program see this?

Address: J. Zaltzman and Co.  
1 Ben Yehuda, Tel Aviv 63801



Yoram Cohen  
February 3, 1993

1. 30 years old, married with two children. Director of Shachal - Emergency Medical Service. Officer in Army Spokesman's office.
2. There is a place for this project. The problem is how to sell it to young Israelis. At this age everybody is in a rush. We're working 10+ hours a day and need family time. If the marketing is good, people will come. He would consider participating.

Address: Young Business Forum  
8 Rosenbaum Street, Tel Aviv 64079



Mukki Zur  
February 3, 1993

1. He is currently the secretary of the Kibbutz Movement, and a teacher at Haifa University in Kabbala and the History of the Yishuv.
2. The decision to bring Wexner to Israel has to do with your ideas of future Jewish leadership. There has been a dramatic decline in Jewish studies at Israeli universities. Only 211 (sic) university students are majoring in Jewish studies. He raised the question of the Jewish dimension of the leadership of the Jewish state.
3. He strongly advises an interdisciplinary approach involving Judaism, Zionism and leadership/psychology. He has group teaching of students. His conclusion: the biggest school for the teaching of Jewish identity is Israel. He would like to create a formal Israeli school for teaching Jewish identity to Jews from abroad. He would like to integrate creating a dialogue, content education (via books and literature) with community planning. For this you need a core of sensitive economists, politicians and other Israeli leaders who would serve as a pilot for Jews from the diaspora. He would create ulpanim for Jewish art, Jewish history, problems of Israel, etc.
4. The main problem has to do with the nature of teachers and leaders. There have been different models of leaders throughout Jewish history: rabbis, Halutzim, UJA/public relations leaders. We are missing new leaders. Israel used to have politicians who were teachers. Politics was not a profession. Now politicians are not spiritual leaders. The leaders would be writers, artists, professors - mainly via their charismatic qualities.
5. Currently we are undergoing a change. Different circles have their own leaders, such as Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, Amos Oz, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, A.B. Yehoshua.
6. At ages 25-32 one cannot identify leaders. At ages 32-45 leaders are identifiable.
7. The main problem of the Wexner proposal is the program/curriculum and the methodology. In Israel one can already study Jewish studies on a high level. He mentioned the methodology of the Midrasha at Oranim (Sara Shadmi) once it crosses into the 32+ age group. They are at "a romantic stage". "They can't move without a midrash." To become leaders they need more than that.

8. He noted that the universities failed. They did not create communities.
9. The program should be interdisciplinary: professors of history and professors of economics and planning. They will sit and listen to each other and will come to the students with questions.

Address: Takam, 10 Dubnov, Tel Aviv



Haim Rosow  
February 3, 1993

1. Israelis have a lack of connection with the diaspora. Most Israelis are ignorant and really don't care. He described his own education via the Moriah Process and the Israel Forum.
2. Plan the Wexner meetings for the evening hours. Friday is family time.
3. Haim questioned whether participants would be able to commit themselves for two years. Try to make certain during the screening process that they will keep their promise.
4. Very much in favor of doing the program in Israel. There is a great deal of education that Israelis are missing; so much so that they don't even know they are missing it!
5. It's worth trying. Start with one pilot group and then assess.
6. Israelis know very little about Jewish history. They are very vague about Jewish intellectual movements (Hassidim, Lita'im). He didn't even know that Havdala existed! They are connected to Judaism through the holidays - Hannuka, Yom Kippur, Pesach.
7. It is not true that Israelis are not paying attention to their local communities. There is a public response and growing involvement, only it is different than in America..
8. Regarding religious life in Israel: We are screwed up by the political-religious system. A rabbi is a very scary thing to Israelis (Mukki Zur: "Like a dentist!"). The first "normal" rabbi he met was an American Rabbi. "A Rabbi is not a leader for us. We have no connection with them."

Address: 60 Rehov Haeshel, Hertzaliya Pituach

Ohad Zmora  
February 3, 1993

1. His initial response is enthusiastically "yes" to bring the program to Israel. He has some questions due to the underlying differences between Israeli and American Jews. He doesn't think Israeli Jews have a sense of community.
2. The goal of the program should be to direct those with the qualities of leadership to go into politics and public service. As of today, people in business, academics, the military "devote themselves to themselves". They are more concerned with finances than the public welfare. Most members of Knesset lack Jewish learning or Jewish understanding.
3. Age 25 is too early. Wexner should make a natural selection between those potential participants expecting immediate rewards and those in for the long haul. You will have to rekindle their enthusiasm and idealism. Here people work for immediate gratification and without reference to values. Those who will choose to accept the challenge of the program will self-select. Perhaps there are those who are searching for this opportunity but currently have no path of entry.
4. Herb asked if he was thinking of 45 year olds who are more settled. Ohad responded that 45 is too late to enter political life. This kind of work should start with ages 30-35 - not later.
5. He suggests that the curriculum contain more general material to dilute the impression that participants are coming for religious training.
6. He supports strongly a deeper understanding of the diaspora. There is a great lack of understanding of Judaism, an alienation from the peoplehood of world Jewry.
7. He is apprehensive about getting into economics or security issues in great detail. Education is more important.
8. Meet with Yisrael Tal ("Talik") - he is a thinking general. He speaks in original and deep ways about security matters. Ohad is publishing his book *Torat Habitachon*.
9. "I like the program". I see the problem of Israel as the problem of leadership. The top leadership pool is "innocent of culture" (chafim mitarbut). There is a real

hunger for these subjects in Israel. There is a waiting list in Israel for the Shorashim program.

10. Question of Haim Shaked: What are the most attractive themes to Israelis?

- books on Eretz Yisrael
- Israeli historical events
- biographies of important Israelis

There are too few books of analysis of contemporary problems.

Address: Moshav Nir Zvi, Rehov Eitan 15



Shlomo Lahat  
February 3, 1993

1. He opened by posing a critical question for the future of Israel (after peace): "What should be the cultural orientation of Israel - European or Middle Eastern?"
2. Regarding the proposed curriculum, he would erase the word "Israeli" and only refer to "Jews". The major place where Judaism might disappear is Israel! - due to a lack of understanding. We should concentrate on education here.
3. He noted the Israeli tendency to escape from critical problems by saying "Yihyeh tov!". Israelis deal with the solvable and the pragmatic.
4. There is a need to orient the younger age group - the 25 year olds. They should mature with values. You can't change the values of a 40 year old. We should teach the 25 year olds that citizens take the responsibility to lead.
5. If there would be one Wexner group, he would favor the metropolis (Tel Aviv), so that the seminar would be integrated and not isolated.
6. The problem of leadership is low self-esteem, especially in deprived neighborhoods. Regarding the location of the seminar you should ask where will it be the most successful and useful, and where will it attract the most people.
7. One pilot group would be easier to implement.
8. It is vitally important to do the program. Israelis are so narrowminded. Israel produces leaders for Tzahal which is a mistake. "We want to educate people in schools and not in army camps."
9. He recommends seeing Mr. Shoshani, the Director General of the Ministry of Education.
10. He suggests organizing an Honorary Advisory Committee to give prestige and which would have an active role in making recommendations regarding the program.

Zeev Bielski  
February 3, 1993

1. Initially Zeev gave the program only a 50-50 chance of success. He was concerned whether prospective participants would sacrifice their free time. Israelis need to learn the American sense of time and follow through.
2. The age is less important than the type of people you attract. The 20's are too young. Ages 30-40 with flexibility would be good. He prefers evenings over Fridays.
3. "If the right people will come it will be really worth while." Many people lack the necessary knowledge.
4. He hadn't anticipated the extensive Wexner selection process (a 2 hour personal interview) and felt that we would get 20 committed participants. With the right 20 people the program could make a great contribution to Israel. He noted that the Moriah Process did not really sustain itself in the long run. Only a relative few received a 10-year certificate.
5. The way of selection will give the program prestige. The lecturers are very important. He mentioned the Army Chief of Staff, Abba Eban, and top Americans, also Avi Ravitzky, Itamar Rabinovitch, and from the American side, the chairman of the UJA. We don't have many service programs in Israel. Most are lightweight.

Prof. Chaim Ben Shachar (Chabash)  
February 3, 1993

1. He contrasted Israelis and Americans. Israeli Jews have more Jewish education than Americans. Even if Israelis may not be attracted to Judaism, something sunk in.
2. Israelis have no knowledge of diaspora Jewry. Only a select group of Israelis have had exposure to the diaspora. This should be the most important part of the program - that would be a major contribution.
3. The Wexner Israel program does not have to be the same length as in the States since Israelis don't have to cover so many basics in Judaism.
4. We should create an interrelationship between the Israel group and the US alumni.
5. He recommended an alternate model for the program: 50 Israelis would attend three weekend retreats plus 10 days in Aspen. This would not require a major curriculum or program. The focus should be on diaspora relations. The weekend seminars would start on Wednesday evening and go through Shabbat. Participants would come from different cities from all over Israel to the Dead Sea. The participants should be highly educated with degrees, from different professions (law, medicine, academics). The first round should be the elite in their 30's and early 40's.
6. His orientation was not to expect this group to influence the Israeli scene, rather to create a bridge to the diaspora. Israeli society is far more difficult to change than American. Preaching to Israelis will not help. Behavior is rooted in everyday life here. The avenue of change is via politics.
7. He suggests bringing Wexner alumni to Israel to meet with Israelis who have been prepared. That would produce an impact on Israeli-diaspora relations.
8. Give the program a two year initial effort and then evaluate what has been achieved.

Nissim Zvili  
February 4, 1993

1. His initial reaction was that the program was very interesting and could be implemented in Israel with minor changes. Israelis have no connection with world Jewry. They don't understand what Jews are doing there.
2. He reported on the plans of the Labor Party to train future leadership in the 25-35 age range one day a week. The goal is to develop political leadership and to enlarge the horizons and education of the participants.
3. Age 45 is too late to start. He suggests 25. The problem of insuring continuity of participation is a real concern. The main problem is identifying participants. "People won't come to a program like this unless they are unemployed (sic!)".
4. We should involve the Israeli universities in including the program as part of their studies or approach existing leadership training programs.
5. He again insisted that people will not come to such a program. The current curriculum is not attractive to Israelis. To implement this program we should bring an Israeli group to the US for one or two months and interact there. We don't understand why Israelis wouldn't devote an evening per week to this program.
6. Modern Israeli history is far more relevant than Jewish history. Here people learn history through the media, such as the television specials "Yerushalayim Shebisfarad" or "Amud Haesh". There is a process of cultural osmosis.
7. There is a need for an intensive month-long study program for Israelis in the US to learn what "peoplehood" means, why are the Jews "there" and not "here", what connections are there between us, and why do they support us. That is far preferable than sitting here in class in Israel.
8. Chaim Shaked asked if we should offer "preparatory lessons" for such a trip on Jewish peoplehood, etc. Mr. Zvilli thought that would not be attractive enough to draw busy Israelis.

Haim Kuberski  
February 4, 1993

1. There is a great difference between Israelis and Americans:
  - Israelis think they know everything
  - Israelis are not lacking a sense of identification
  - There is far greater polarization in Israel. "The art of living together is a problem." Minor points are converted into ideology.
  - There are unlimited opportunities to learn in Israel, within a narrow focus.
2. There is a need for a Wexner program in Israel with a heterogenic approach, but it would be very hard. The two year commitment, particular with many working in auxiliary jobs, would be a problem. A less risky framework would be not to spread it over two years. Three-day weekends could be utilized in addition to regular meetings. We should be open to a change in the frequency of meetings ("Time is not a kedusha!")
3. Israelis are very snobbish, therefore we should start with the highest level possible, with good students and lecturers with reputations.
4. A pilot program should focus on one locality so the participants have some prior acquaintance. Involve the local mayor in the first meeting. Use locals from the community to help form the group. Jerusalem is a problem since it is so polarized.
5. It is very important to bring the diaspora closer to the Jews here - when Israelis travel to Europe or the US they shop but don't meet local Jews.
6. There is a major difference in the structures of communal life in Israel and abroad. Lay leaders don't exist here. Here the entire system is very centralized, from the top down. In Israel the government nominates a director and then democracy begins.
7. There is some local leadership: from the Matnasim (JCCs), Vaadei Shchunah, youth movements, young political leaders (Tzeirei Herut, Tzeirei HaAvodah), among teachers. He noted the thirst among Russian oleh intellectuals for Jewish knowledge.
8. One of the tasks of the program should be to activate citizenship (Golda: "A government can do much but it can't bring a cup of tea!").

9. Don't expect to change Israeli society by such a program - Israelis believe they know better. He still recommends the project - to create interaction and to overcome the disconnection between diaspora and Israeli Jewry. He cautions not to over develop expectations.
10. He recommends the 25-35 age group. A pilot program is worth doing. Good topics and good lectures will bring results. He is more optimistic of the willingness of many Israelis to learn Jewish studies.
11. He mentioned a list of Israeli support institutions: Israeli Historical Society, Yad Ben Zvi, Merkaz Shazar, Merkaz HaMatnasim, Menachem Ravivi, Amnon Cohen.

Address: Itamar Ben Avi 14, Jerusalem



David Rotlevi  
February 4, 1993

1. He fully agrees with Haim Kuberski. He is very much in favor of the program and feels it should be done.
2. He recommends a different study focus - Israeli economics or management skills, and to use that as a vehicle to the diaspora. He is not optimistic that the current curriculum is sufficiently attractive.
3. He suggests a younger age group 25-30 or 27-32. We would be looking for future leaders. Look for young lawyers and business people. The young politicians are not independent.
4. It is important for Israelis to identify with Judaism and with the diaspora. The task here is to train leadership so as not to rely on the government.

Address: 2 Ibn Gabriel, Tel Aviv

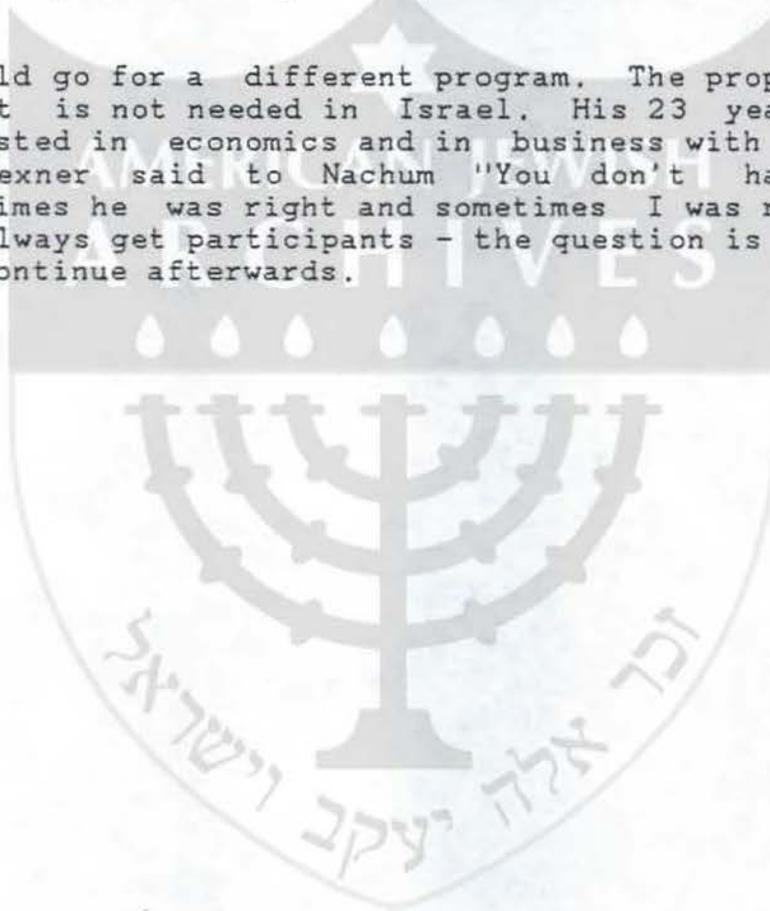


Anita Shapira  
February 4, 1993

1. She is not certain that the current program is right for an Israeli audience. The question of Jewish identity is not relevant to Israelis. It is part of their being. There is need for emphasis on Jewish solidarity and Israel-diaspora relations. For these, Israelis have neither information nor empathy. Jewish values are associated with religion and won't go well here. There is a need to become better acquainted with how the US Jewish community works.
2. There is a need to develop in Israel a new communal consciousness.
3. She cited some potential sources of students:
  - a) Officers training graduates at the end of their army service - ages 25-26.
  - b) Student leaders, even though they have been tainted by politics they are young enough to be influenced.
  - c) Municipalities. Future political roles begin within communities.It would be to our advantage to go through local rather than national politics.
4. Regular attendance can be a problem. The attendees need something concrete out of the program. They should be awarded a certificate. Don't call the program "Jewish study". For the past seven years there has been a decline in Jewish studies at the universities. The students will ask: What's in it for me?
5. A prestige program will attract older people to Jewish study. For younger people it will not make an impression.
6. She asks whether the students will be required to perform communal work.
7. She has doubts but thinks the program is worth trying. Her reservations are based on her knowing the local climate.
8. Placing Israel-diaspora relations as the center of the program is preferable to emphasizing Jewish studies.

Nachum Peleg  
February 4, 1993

1. This program will not interest Israelis. Israeli children don't care about the diaspora. They see themselves as Israelis first, then as Jews. Investigating roots is not important. Trips to the US or Europe will recruit participants. He doesn't think we will achieve results.
2. We will have better success with participants in their 40's. The younger group is too busy. The subject has no interest to Israelis but will have a better chance with the 40 year olds.
3. Personally he woke up at age 45 and returned to yeshiva study.
4. He would go for a different program. The proposed Wexner project is not needed in Israel. His 23 year old son is interested in economics and in business with world Jews. Les Wexner said to Nachum "You don't have vision." "Sometimes he was right and sometimes I was right!" You will always get participants - the question is whether they will continue afterwards.



David Kulitz  
February 4, 1993

1. His opening question: What are the student's obligations after the program?
2. He disagrees with Anita Shapira. The program should be called Jewish studies. That's the purpose of the group. If you have to hide it - don't do it! The objective is to enrich their basic Jewish knowledge. The Israel Forum had the same discussion in 1983.
3. Consider offering Israeli graduate credits for the program. If the program has enough status people will stand in line to study.
4. The "coming of age" in Israel is around 35. Yaya gave legitimacy to the Israel Forum. Accept his offer of officers to participate.
5. Amita's views reflect her perspective as Dean of Humanities. David feels that people do care and cited the example of the 10,000 families the Forum organized for the absorption of new olim.
6. If the program is prestigious it will sell. You need a starting group of a "super 5 or 6" participants and the rest will push their way in.
7. He recommended trying this program "with all my heart". Israel needs a program like this. Others have given up. It needs correct marketing. "I will be honored to participate in scouting the group."

Maj. General Amnon Shachak  
February 4, 1993

1. It is very, very important to make more Israelis aware of world Jewry. Israeli businessmen don't have real connections with Jewish communities. The diaspora element of the program should certainly be done. He feels Israel is more open to the diaspora than previously.
2. 25-35 is the right age spectrum. It would be a mistake to have a group with a majority of young officers - not more than a quarter of the group. There are many good volunteers who would contribute their time, including some women.
3. American groups should be brought to Israel to fertilize their roots. This can't be done without meeting here.
4. Discipline (for attendance) can be improved if you choose the right people.
5. The group meetings should take place a year before the trip to the US. Those who attend 95% of the sessions can go.
6. Life is more difficult in Israel. The weekend is shorter. If you want serious people they will be busy, so keep a flexible program. Look for those who want to be part of the program.
7. Roots of modern history is not necessary. Connection with other Jews is fine. Picture of diaspora Jewry is very important. Something should be done with the subject of Jewish values. He can understand why secular Israelis are turned off by Judaism. For them living in Israel is enough. You don't have to discuss it every day; in any event, there is no one with whom to discuss it.
8. He suggests one or two meetings on Judaism on an optional basis. Offer optional electives.
9. He suggested having meetings with young army officers of the ages of US Wexner participants during the forthcoming summer seminars. He could also arrange meeting with West Bank Palestinians or with Israeli Arabs.
10. He closed with the story of Operation Solomon, when he ordered the Sochnut to permit some suspected Falashmura family members into the departing planes: "I am authorized to bring them to Israel."

Shlomo Avineri  
February 8, 1993

1. "There should be a pilot program." He raised some concerns:
  - a) Communal and leadership structures differ between the US and Israel.
  - b) You need to define more clearly what the motivation will be for the participants. What will the program give them?
  - c) There is a danger that this will be viewed as an American program. We have to think seriously about that. We have to give something that is specifically different than what is available in Israel.
  - d) There is a problem with the Israeli time schedule. Many are holding two jobs. Perhaps weekends should be utilized?
2. The title would put people off. In Israel, Judaism is seen as a variation of religion. "Ha'am HaYehudi Be'Doreinu" rather than Judaism. Grab people's imagination. Run a unique program to teach Israelis about the Jewish people today.
3. Who will commit themselves to hearing Shlomo Avineri? They can see him on TV! "Israel is a shtetl that masquerades as a state." What are the faculty going to give that you already can't see? Herb's response: We would bring from abroad the best talent and you can't interact with someone on TV.
4. There is a lacuna in Israeli leadership, therefore there is a need.
5. He recommends ages 35-40 (He later raised this to 35-45).
6. If you would start in the Galil or Ofakim you would have a wonderful marginal program! The development towns are 5% of Israel. They are a highly political population. The smaller the place the more patronage. Aim at lawyers and school principals - not at professional politicians. Mix the local with the national. Check with the Manufacturer's Association and the Law Society.
7. In Israel the existential experience is Jewish - Hamas kills Jews (not Israelis).

8. It would be catastrophic to juxtapose the US experience to Israel. Learn from small Jewish communities as well - Dutch or Italian Jewry.
9. Recruitment for the program should be done not only by former Americans living in Israel, but by native-born Israelis and by those from Europe as well.

Address: Rehov Gedud HaIvri 10, Jerusalem



Amos Mar-Chaim  
February 8, 1993

1. Civil activities do exist: immigrant absorption, the Israel Forum, Minhalot - local communally elected organizations. Jerusalem has 11 Minhalot and 20 Matnasim (JCC's).
2. Issues for discussion include:
  - How to talk to people
  - Organizing communal life
  - Raising funds through volunteers
  - Local urban planning
  - Local institutionsThe participants would gain knowledge, make contacts and raise their status.
3. He would shorten the program to one year (Shlomo Avineri agrees).
4. The question of Jewish identity is partially solved in Israel. You have to tempt them to listen by offering Jewish current affairs or Jewish art.
5. National and local leaders are the same type of people.
6. He is not optimistic as to the success of the program, but it is worth a try.

Elad Peled  
February 8, 1993

1. He recommends the mid-30's through mid-40's. People who are still young, on track, who are still open.
2. He's more inclined to "pessimism" regarding the program. (Avineri: "Skepticism" rather.) Different problems bother Israeli Jews. The Israelis live in a different environment and face other difficulties. One problem not faced in Israel is: Why am I a Jew?
3. There is a need for a program provided it can respond to real needs. Israelis who want to do something public outside of politics do so locally - in professional groups, dealing with local problems (like schools), or local security. Use the local environment as the arena for recruiting candidates and for issues that will be of interest.
4. The goal should be to help educate local leaders to better understand their problems.
5. This should be a leadership training program. Start with two groups - no more. One in a rural area - Negev or Galil; the second in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem (he prefers Jerusalem).
6. He would include the knowledge of today's Jewish communities in the US, former-USSR, Europe, France, Argentina. You will find that some problems are similar (drugs, violence, education) and others are unique (Jewish identity).
7. He is skeptical but reasonably optimistic. A retreat creates a very constructive learning environment, either long weekends (from Thursday evening) or weeklong. The site should not be in an urban hotel, rather in a more isolated location. Spouses should be invited but not children.
8. Don't treat the local Israelis as "Indian natives". Be certain not to patronize.

Address: Ramat Hagolan 24/7, Jerusalem

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin  
February 8, 1993

1. It is more important to understand what is needed rather than what people want. What worked well in the States will work equally well with Israelis - if properly presented. You don't have to be overly self-conscious. Israelis have to know what their traditions are; they don't begin with Ben Gurion in Sde Boker!
2. Israelis have an antipathy towards the religious establishment. There is tremendous receptivity to the message of Jewish history.
3. The Wexner program should be for the top professionals in Israel, the pace setters in Gush Dan, ages 30-40. "What happens in Yerucham won't effect Israel at large."
4. He would call it: An "International Leadership Program". All Israelis aspire to that. He noted the names Yaakov Ne'eman, David Kulitz and Zeev Bielski. These are pacesetters. We should try to develop an Israeli leadership that will see itself as worldwide Jewish leaders.
5. He would develop the US-Israel Wexner connection via an "international forum" (during the summer), with Israelis and Wexner graduates coming together. Israelis want to meet their mirror images from America.
6. The question is what is necessary for an international Jewish leader: Judaism in its broadest sense, not in a narrow focus. The average Israeli Jew has more in common with an Israeli Arab than with a resident of Meah Shearim!
7. He quoted Rabbi Soloveichik on the necessity for "turning fate (goral) into destiny (ya'ad)". Don't put the "problem" under the rug. Develop US leaders who profoundly understand Israel, as well as Israeli leaders who understand the diaspora experience. Utilize and maximize who you are. You want to grab thinking people.

Address: Efrat 90983

Naftali Lavi  
February 8, 1993

1. Locals will feel patronized by Americans. Most feel proud of being Israeli.
2. You require the initial group to set the tone.
3. The theme should be "Jewish Continuity". The elite people you are recruiting will have to understand that message. Cater the curriculum to the group. Merge American intellectualism and Israel.

Address: Rehov Mechalkei Hamayim 17, Jerusalem 93222  
Telephone: 02-666-546  
Fax: 02-633-288



David Grossman  
February 8, 1993

1. It would be a good idea for the Wexner program to come to Israel. It would create "spiritual bubbles" within Israel that would improve the public arena. You should stress the Jewish aspect - but not only its religious dimension.
2. Israelis are crystallizing a new Israeli Jewish identity. "We know what we are not more than what we are." Israelis must know more: How to read a page of Talmud, and other Jewish and Israeli literature.
3. He raised the question of Israeli Arabs as students.
4. The participants should turn into elite units who are proud to serve in spite of requirements and discipline. Don't lower the standards for Israelis. This would create an aura of prestige and quality.
5. There is a powerful void, a vacuum in the identity of Israelis. There is a thirst and a search for significance in life. "I am a very religious secular person." If you will meet their needs and give significance in a modern way it will succeed.
6. There are many university people. He could recommend five or ten names. The early 40's is a good age, when people are more established.
7. "Dialogue with our history." - to give symmetry to Judaism and Israelism.

Address: Nof Harim 95, Mevaseret Zion 90805

Menachem Ravivi  
February 8, 1993

1. There exists a wide cultural gap between Israelis and Americans. Israelis need relations with US Jewry. The current agenda is aliya, money and lobbying. We should work together to create one Jewish agenda and mutual concern. Where can Israelis work with Americans on issues of Jewish identity and continuity?
2. Shlichim would return to Israel more Zionist and more Jewish. "Judaism is wider than what we were taught or experienced. We realized the nature of being a minority and fighting against the tide in the US." Use shlichim as bridges.
3. Israelis are unable to express Jewish connections with world Jewry. He seeks to contextualize the diaspora experience within Israeli reality.
4. Participants should study not only Israel-diaspora relations, but how do we practice Jewish responsibility in our homes, work, etc.
5. For prestige, invite Prof. Zamir (former attorney general of Israel) to serve as head of the steering committee. His gut feeling is that Wexner would find interested participants. Presidential sponsorship depends on who the president is.
6. Potential sources of students include associations of lawyers, engineers, teachers, principals, industrialists. The program can have a great impact on Israeli society.
7. What is the ultimate goal? To produce Jewish leaders with Jewish responsibility. You are looking for people who will take Judaism seriously and are ready to learn with or without a kippa.
8. The course for Shlichim taught "Jewish dilemmas" from different perspectives (Schweid, Tzaban, Rosenack, Kalcheim). Wexner should be interdisciplinary, exploring topics through different angles, utilizing Jewish sources. Try to integrate them. For example: Soldiers trapped in a mine field. How to respond from sources. This creates bridges and is not anachronistic. Mike Rosenack was very successful in showing the relevance of Judaism to modern Israelis. Tackle issues multidimensionally.
9. Lay leadership is developing currently in Israel in Minhalot and in volunteers groups. The Hevra LaMatnassim

sponsors a course with Bar Ilan University on how to supervise professionals.

10. 30-40 would be a good age group, in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. The groups could join for retreats. You only want busy people.
11. Decide what dilemmas should be discussed and collect source material.



Ora Namir  
February 8, 1993

1. The US and Israel are entirely different in attitude and atmosphere. Here you don't have to be reminded every day about being a Jew. Religious politicians make people anti-religious. They are the most corrupt politicians. They cause non-religious young people to hate religion.
2. I doubt if you'll be successful but it is worth the try. By far it is more important to run a program in Denver. With the high intermarriage rate, without work to strengthen Judaism, there will be no Judaism in 30-50 years.
3. Pick a small Israeli town. That will increase the chances of success. Carmiel would be a fine choice (excellent mayor, healthy population, mix of olim and Israelis). Try it in one place as a pilot. Carmiel leaders can work on future programs. The towns in the south (Arad) are not as strong.
4. Israeli leadership doesn't know about US Jewish communities. There is a need for communal connections. Don't promise a trip to the US until the end of the program, otherwise you will be mobbed by would-be participants.
5. Israelis become adults at a young age. Take them into a program at a young age (post army). That is where you should invest in creating leadership.
6. She was familiar with the Makpel Co. She would be happy to help regarding Carmiel.

Lee Levine  
February 9, 1993

1. The meeting opened with a discussion of the Conservative Movement's role and strategy in Israel. Nathan offered Lee a place on the summer faculty. Lee suggested a one day trip to the Galil to investigate the creation of the synagogue. He recommended Aryeh Routenberg as a wonderful guide-teacher.
2. Nathan offered to send a copy of the Summer Israel binder to Lee.
3. Lee and Benjy Segal focused on describing the grandeur and vitality of ancient Jerusalem (a visit to the Holyland Hotel?). Lee outlined a Galil trip, including Kfar Nahum and Hamat Tverya (musts), Meron and Hirbat Shamma (?) for fun, Beit Alfa and the Beit Shean Valley. Some time would be spent studying texts. He also mentioned the possibility of a slide presentation at the Laromme.
4. Benjy Segal presented us with a copy of his book *Returning* (WZO, 1987).
5. Lee offered to help in filling out the faculty. He felt that we could build an exciting and uplifting program with the failures and successes of Israel (including Klita).
6. The real Zionist Revolution is that within 20 years most of the world's Jews will be living in Israel.
7. If the goal of the Summer Wexner program is to develop ties to Israel than you have to know the gut feelings of Israelis. US Jews should support openness and pluralism of this society.
8. The challenge of Israel is how to make Jewish life meaningful in a modern, open society. US Jews can make a tremendous contribution to Israel through models of successful administration, educational frameworks (Tali schools). More than money can be gained.
9. Herb and Lee discussed the Wexner Harvard Program.
10. Herb mentioned the Wexner Israel probe. Lee hoped the discussion would be positive. He hoped that the training of Israeli lay leaders would be followed by rabbis, educators and civil servants.

Ephraim Sneh  
February 10, 1993

1. He is in favor of the early to mid 30's for participants.
2. There is a necessity for such a program. Look at the low intellectual level of the Knesset, especially those from small towns. The best group are local leadership in these small towns - not in the big cities: Shderot, Dimona, Ashdod, Ashkelon (perhaps), Afula, Tiberias. "You can't imagine how low the quality is."
3. If you identify the right people, they will contribute to the public culture of Israel. They should be exposed to the broader Jewish and general world. Gush Dan and the periphery have different needs.
4. Israel-diaspora relations are a great concern. If Wexner will succeed in strengthening only this it would be enough.
5. It is important to include educators; principals and teachers, in the program.
6. Curriculum:
  - Israel-Diaspora relations
  - Diversity in US Jewry
  - Europe as an emerging economic unit
  - Better knowledge of Arab world
  - American democracy. Questions include checks and balances, presidential power and limitations, accountability of elected officials.
7. A similar project was undertaken last year in the northern Negev. Similar criterion of selection was utilized: local promising leaders in their 30's. They studied one full day a week. It was sponsored by Michlelet Sapir (Ben Gurion University) with some funding from the Golda Meir Association.
8. Herb discussed using the Golda Meir Association to visit the complex and diverse elements of Israel: olim, Kibbutz, Moshav, Yeshiva, Israeli Arab village, Beit Shmuel.
9. Ephraim suggested running a program in Gush Dan but not central Tel Aviv: the cities of the Sharon (Givataim, Raanana, Ramat Hasharon, Hertzliya, Kfar Saba). These are the better commuter towns of Tel Aviv, the best quality of people. Zeev Bielski is one of the few mayors who belongs to the elite of his own constituency. Take from local Kibbutzim. You could have 2 or 3 Arabs as well (from Tirah).

Alouph Hareven  
February 10, 1993

1. The purpose of the Wexner program is to empower leadership. Many Israelis have lost meaningful contact with their Jewish roots. They don't comprehend that Judaism does not require only a strictly Orthodox interpretation. The essence of Judaism is constant reinterpretation - midrash.
2. How do we respond to the challenge of reawakening the Jewish roots in meaningful terms? What does it mean to you as a Jewish leader in Israel in your daily dealings?
3. We need to consult with those few who are involved in creative ways, those on the border between Orthodoxy and secularism:
  - Elul - Ruth Calderon
  - David Hartman
  - Oranim
4. Success will depend on who will lead the project. You need a first rate leader to develop the program.
5. He discussed his activities with Jewish-Arab relations. He established Sikkuy for relating to Israeli Arabs. How to develop civic leadership ("shared civility") in Israel?
6. Will you include Arabs in the program in parallel or overlapping groups?
7. The only topic not fitting for a joint group would be Jewish diaspora relations. The biggest fear is that leadership sinks into provinciality. He would use America as a model for shared civility and explore common problems (crime, drugs, fundamentalism, etc.). He suggested having Jewish and Arab members present their own beliefs to other participants.
8. Don't overextend the program regarding national security question. These issues are already popularly debated.
9. He is in favor of a program providing the goals are redefined. In a group of 20 you would need at least 3 Arabs. There are many frameworks where Arabs and Jews come together in Israel.
10. Eli Reches is respected by Arabs. Chaim Shaked would be a very good choice as the potential leader of the program. He is familiar with the Arab and Jewish side.

Address Rehov Davidson 2, Nayot, Jerusalem 93706  
02-665663, 639185 (work)

Hirsh Goodman  
February 10, 1993

1. We in Israel haven't had the time to deal with the important periphery, such as ecology, the professionalization of the civil service. Leadership developed through the army and politics. There is no real moral leadership. It would be a good concept to train the top 2% and let it trickle down.
2. There is a definite need for the Wexner enrichment program for 35 to 50 year olds, for people who can do things for the community. There is not enough social awareness. There is no tradition of citizen participation. There is a need to heighten the civic consciousness of the country beyond our own narrow world.
3. There are individuals and voluntary groups such as WIZO and Yad Sarah that do good work, but they are not pervasive enough.
4. In a word: to enrich the civil consciousness of the top 2% of the country towards community service.
5. The real problem of Judaism is the way it is taught in schools. It is shoved down the student's throats. There is a need to make Judaism humanistic and fun, and to divorce it from religion. To start an adult education program in Judaism would be doomed to failure. Judaism should be "smuggled" into the program.
6. The curriculum should bring cultural enrichment, dimensions they aren't getting anywhere else. A weekly Talmud class with Adin Steinsaltz? One focus should be on "Love thy neighbor" - there is tremendous animosity among Israelis. Mutual respect should be fostered. He would include 3 or 4 Israeli Arabs in the group (educators, doctors, lawyers, businessmen). Arab participation depends on the goals of the program. Hirsh would suggest keeping an open mind.
7. The goal should be to get Israelis to care about the community here, in Israel. The real thing is not Israel-diaspora relations; it is to create a better quality of life here.
8. All potential candidates will already have travelled extensively. It is arrogant to call Israeli leadership provincial. "I went to the Bolshoi in Moscow and half the crowd was Israeli!"
9. He admitted that most leaders are Jewishly provincial. Most are vitriolic anti-Semites!! "My kid doesn't consider

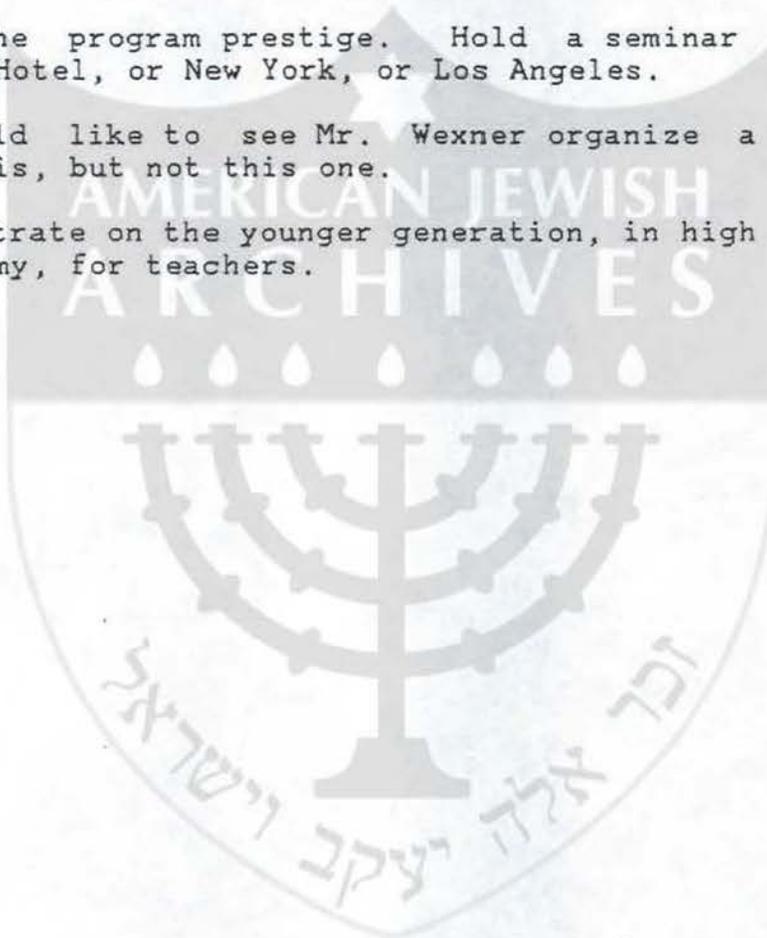
himself Jewish. He had Tanach rammed down his throat like Arabic."

10. Israel is a safe haven for anyone with one Jewish grandparent. How do you interact with nothing in common? By creating a common destiny. You must build a common life and civic mindedness.
11. He sees Judaism as much broader than religion - culture, literature, language, history. He goes to Levi Kelmen's shul but doesn't like the revised siddur - there is too much militant feminism.
12. The need to share a past, present and future is endemic - that's why we're here!
13. The program should aim at the mayoral level. They can make a local difference.



Ronnie Milo  
February 10, 1993

1. The Hebrew word "manhig" is used only for political or spiritual leaders. He suggested something like "Matzlichan".
2. The Israeli Forum are the people Wexner should be approaching - all the rest is a waste of time. MKs or mayors don't need such a program. It will not be successful. They won't attend.
3. There is no need to educate towards Judaism here since they have it in school. Management is the name of the game.
4. Give the program prestige. Hold a seminar in the King David Hotel, or New York, or Los Angeles.
5. He would like to see Mr. Wexner organize a program for Israelis, but not this one.
6. Concentrate on the younger generation, in high schools, in the army, for teachers.



David Golinkin  
February 10, 1993

1. David is Dean of Academic Affairs of the Beit Midrash (JTS). Nathan discussed with him the summer institute.
2. How do you teach Judaism to Israelis?
  - Take it out of the synagogue ("Never be caught dead in shul!"). Study in homes. Change the setting.
  - Start in the school system. There are 36 Tali schools with 10,000 children.
  - Hold groups in Matnassim on holidays, Tanach, Kabbala.
3. Possible curriculum for Israelis include Sefer Aggada, Tanach with commentaries, Eretz Yisrael studies.
4. There is a huge group who will study Judaism if you don't call it that! Successful courses the Beit Midrash has offered:
  - Pilgrimages to Israel in the Middle Ages
  - Israel in Biblical Thought
  - Midrashei Aggada of Eretz Yisrael
  - Jerusalem from the Destruction Until the 18th Century
  - Israel in the SiddurPeople in Israel are concerned by Jewish thought - Rambam, Maharal, Buber.
5. Knowledgeable Americans are accepted by Israelis as teachers. American trained JTS graduates are the most successful and most sought after lecturers in the army.
6. There is a need to create a non-compulsive framework for Russian olim to learn Judaism. If there was money they could set up 50 Tali schools in Russia!

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Avraham Burg  
February 11, 1993

1. Israel is thirsty for spiritual leadership - someone who symbolizes the internal forces we feel we've lost. Israelis are desperate for religious/non-religious cooperation. They want cooperation between our roots and modernity. The country is looking for an alternative to a dry spiritual message. The faculties of Israeli universities are emptying of Jewish studies students. It is the result of a lack of teachers which yields a lack of students.
2. The Wexner program needs to be a mixed group. Age is less important than the person involved.
3. In the State of Israel (as opposed to the Diaspora), the community got lost. You see now the beginnings of the restoration of the community through local mayors and direct elections. That is the agenda for the next decade.
4. There is a lack of a public dialogue on serious issues. There is a need for a "supervised process" (like a Wexner) where people could interact. There is a need for more information in order to widen horizons. The public agenda has been taken up by war and peace and the territories. After peace there will be a different civilian agenda. We should prepare for it now.
5. In terms of this interview process (the Wexner Israel probe), select the most constructive participants and invite them back for a followup discussion in depth. You need interaction to go deeper into your self. Avraham would devote a weekend to such a purpose.
6. Leadership needs some essential topics to broaden its perspective:
  - Few MKs know anything about Jewish origins
  - The nature of religious fundamentalism
  - The essence of violence (Jew-Arab, in streets [car accidents], child abuse)
  - Mass communication - the role of the media is not understood in Israel
  - The culture of conflict resolution: How to solve problemsLocal leaders need to be taught as well.
7. He is a great believer in "process". These seminars will bring understanding to other walks of life. Wexner will create a nucleus of people which will enable the walls of suspicion to fall and will engender friendly communication. Intense contact brings greater understanding (he cited the

speaking tour he and Dan Meridor took where they spent a great deal of time together).

8. The program must be high quality.



Dan Meridor  
February 11, 1993

1. He doesn't have a formula for making leaders. You should choose something lacking in leadership and focus on that. He is not certain if Jewish content should be that area.
2. An understanding of world and Israeli economics is missing. Israel has been so focused on survival that it never related to the cost. There is a lack of understanding of the importance of accountability in all aspects of Israeli life. People believe the exact opposite of what is right (protectionism vs free markets). You could devote a year to two to that topic. (Avraham Burg: There are deeper layers to what he says. People aren't attached to finance).
3. The Van Leer Institute conducted a series of 10 seminars involved 7 Israelis from across the Israeli political spectrum on the question: "What are the costs of our solutions to the Arab Israel conflict?" This led to building a rationale for our position and for mutual understanding.
4. Another issue: With the Americanization of Israeli politics public relations has taken hold. Politicians are increasingly conscious of how things will look. There should be public recognition and approval for the politician who does research and isn't afraid of being unpopular. (Avraham Burg disagrees. His new politics were a result of his attacking the "church-state" issue openly and directly).
5. The system should create incentives to do what is correct. Only Rabin and the Hamas spokesman were in favor of the deportations - no one in the cabinet objected!
6. Dan himself was attacked within his party for following up human rights issues. More is often invested in the press office and PR than in the merits of an issue. In normal political life one can't act against one's own party interest. There is a need to create a system that will try to counterbalance these forces.
7. Another issue: the rule of law and democracy: the limits on the majority and what limits have to be followed. Even the government and the prime minister are not above the law. Israel is undergoing a constitutional revolution. The role of the Supreme Court in judicial review is still not firmly entrenched. The system of checks and balances has to be taught to its depth.
8. The media was not elected. To whom do they answer?

9. It is important to understand the roots of the problem, to raise consciousness. It is not a hopeless situation.

