



OU ISRAEL IMPACT REPORT

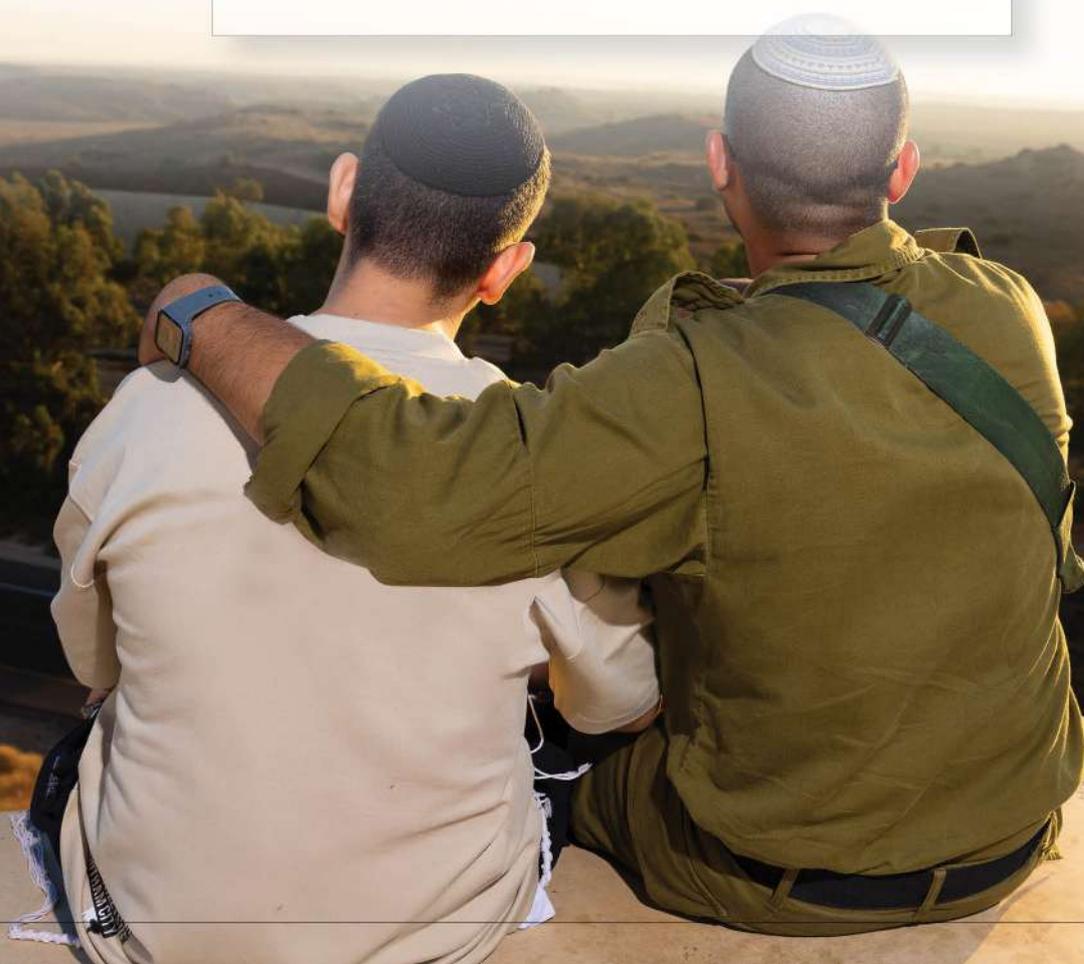
# Light

## After the Sirens

**TWO YEARS OF HEALING  
& HOPE ACROSS ISRAEL**

A reflection on OU Israel's impact since October 7th, 2023 - stories of strength, unity, and the power of community.

תשרי תשפ"ג - תשרי תשפ"ה  
OCTOBER 2023 - OCTOBER 2025



# Strength Built Before the Storm

For over 25 years, OU Israel has built a proven model of transforming the lives of teens at risk across our homeland. In neighborhoods marked by poverty, broken families, and limited opportunity, our Teen Centers and youth programs have become lifelines. They save teens from paths of despair, crime, substance abuse, and emotional isolation, replacing danger with belonging, purpose, and faith. Thousands of young people have grown into confident, responsible adults active in Israeli society whether it be in the workforce, the IDF, or studying because someone believed in them when so many others didn't.

When the world changed on October 7th, OU Israel did not need to invent a new system of response. We already had one. For over two decades, our programs have worked in Israel's most vulnerable cities, earning trust at the street level. We knew the teens, the families, the municipal staff, the educators, the social workers. We knew how to reach the ones who fall through the cracks, the ones at risk of giving up on themselves. That experience became our greatest strength when crisis struck.

Within hours, our staff and volunteers transformed community centers into shelters and hubs of hope. We fed soldiers and evacuees, comforted orphans and widows, and gave teens and young adults a place to cry, sing, pray, and feel safe again. As the months passed, our work evolved from crisis relief to rebuilding lives: mentoring programs, therapy groups, volunteer initiatives, leadership training, and Torah learning that brought light back into daily life.

Since that day, OU Israel's network has reached tens of thousands of Israelis through all of our programs. Teen Centers, The Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center, JLIC Israel, NCSY Israel, Yachad Israel, Torah Tidbits, Torah Initiatives, Camp Dror, the Women's Division, and Taglit OU Israel. Together they have created an unbroken chain of care, community, and faith that continues to strengthen the nation.

Two years later, our mission remains the same—to restore stability, faith, and strength to every corner of Israel. We are moving from emergency response—to long-term renewal, building a future that protects and empowers the next generation.

This report tells that story — your story — of what happens when a movement built over decades meets a moment of historic need. You made this possible. Your generosity allowed them to dance again and turned heartbreak into hope. Our teens know they are not alone; they feel the love and strength of brothers and sisters across the world who believe in them and stand with them. That connection reminds them that *Am Yisrael* is one family, giving them the courage to keep going and the hope to keep growing. Your continued support will determine how this next chapter is written.





## OU Israel Teen Centers

The war did not just touch our Teen Centers; it changed them forever. Two of our 18 centers, in Sderot and Kiryat Shemona, were directly impacted. Both cities were evacuated, leaving hundreds of our teens and staff without homes, schools, or a sense of safety. The teens from Sderot lived in hotels for nearly a year and a half, while Kiryat Shemona's teens only returned home this past summer after months of uncertainty. Many lost their homes to rocket attacks. Some lost mentors, friends, or family members in battle. Around 30 percent of our dedicated staff and *madrachim* were called to *miluim*, leaving the rest of the team to carry entire communities of hurting youth on their shoulders. Through every evacuation, every night of fear, and every loss, our mission never wavered — to make sure every teen knew they were not alone.



Even while displaced, we continued to meet our teens wherever they were. Our staff traveled to the hotels where families were living, bringing light and structure into endless days of uncertainty. We organized *Shabbatonim* and *tiyulim* to help teens reconnect to joy and community. We launched trauma-support programs, reopened our teen hotline, and created emotional first-aid workshops. When so many of our teens felt powerless, we gave them purpose through our **First Responders Program**, which allowed them to volunteer in shelters, assist elderly residents, and distribute food and supplies to evacuees. Each small act of giving helped them rebuild confidence and self-worth.



Today, our 18 Teen Centers serve more than 2,800 teens each week across Israel. Our programs provide safety, mentorship, and a place for emotional and spiritual growth for youth who have endured the unimaginable. We have expanded our outreach to include new groups of immigrant teens from Ukraine and Russia, ensuring that every young person in need can find belonging, purpose, and hope. For over 20 years, OU Israel's Teen Centers have been a lifeline for vulnerable youth — and today, they stand at the heart of Israel's healing, transforming fear into strength and despair into possibility.

# The Peal and Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center

When the war broke families apart and filled Israel's nights with fear, The Zula became a refuge for thousands of young people who had nowhere else to turn. Fathers were called to the front lines, friends were killed, and homes that were already fragile became even more broken. In those dark and uncertain nights, The Zula opened its doors and its heart, giving teens and young adults a safe place to breathe, sing, and reconnect with their souls.

Every Thursday and Saturday night, the guitars come out, the candles are lit, and the air fills with soft music and prayer. Around the circle, teens sit together and remember that they are not alone. As one participant described it, *"The Zula is a moment where it's you in front of the candles and you forget the world around you and have a deep intimate connection to your soul."* Here, Israeli youth are kept off the streets and away from the dangers that await them outside — from drugs, alcohol, and promiscuity, to the predatory threats that prey on their vulnerability. Instead, they find connection, faith, and a sense of belonging that helps them rebuild their strength.

The Zula is more than one space. It is a network of healing that now reaches over 4,000 individuals every year through eight different programs. There is an art room where emotions become expression, and pain turns into creation. There is Midreshet Zusha, which offers support and Torah for young women searching for direction and stability. There is Binaya, a program that strengthens married couples who are alumni of The Zula and who are learning how to build healthy, faith-filled homes. Each initiative gives people what so many in Israel are missing right now: a place to feel seen, safe, and spiritually alive.

The Zula is not just a place; it is a lifeline. Each week, it rescues young people standing at the edge, those who could easily disappear into the darkness of addiction, loneliness, or despair. It gives them something the streets never could: love without judgment, community without condition, and faith without fear. The guitars, the candles, the songs, and the tears around that circle are not simply moments of spirituality; they are moments of survival.

Keeping The Zula alive means keeping these young souls connected to light, to purpose, and to Am Yisrael. It means ensuring that when another teen feels lost, there will always be a place to turn. The impact is not measured in numbers alone, but in the lives reclaimed, the hearts restored, and the futures rewritten. The Zula has become one of Israel's most powerful sanctuaries of healing, and with your continued support, its light will never fade



# OU Israel Women's Division



In the most fragile moments after October 7th, OU Israel's Women's Division became a lifeline for thousands of women searching for strength, connection, and faith. Within days, virtual circles of *chizzuk* were created to help women hold their homes together, guide their children through fear, and find peace within themselves. Renowned educators like Shira Smiles led weekly *parasha* classes that filled living rooms with Torah and comfort. Women volunteered in evacuee hotels, tied *tzitzit* for soldiers, and traveled in groups to the South to help farmers rebuild what was lost. In cities like Efrat and Modi'in, mothers of soldiers found healing through gatherings that blended spiritual inspiration, practical parenting tools, and emotional support. Each initiative was built on one truth: that women are the heartbeat of *Am Yisrael*, and when they stand together, entire families and communities find strength again.



As the months unfolded, the Women's Division became a bridge connecting Jewish women across Israel and around the world. Programs were created to show that we are one nation with one soul, with women in Israel and America studying *Nach Yomi* together, creating friendship bracelets for one another, and celebrating shared *siyumim* that turned Torah learning into unity. Mother-daughter bonding nights, *Rosh Chodesh* musical *Hallel* celebrations, and creative projects such as making *mishloach manot* for bereaved families or crafting tambourines with evacuees became moments of healing, laughter, and spiritual renewal. Each year, more than 2,000 women participate in these programs, with an incredible 85 percent returning for additional learning, volunteerism, or leadership opportunities.



Today, the Women's Division is expanding its reach like never before. Branching into new communities and signing partnerships with local municipalities, OU Israel is ensuring that its programs continue to serve English-speaking *olim* and long-term residents alike. These partnerships guarantee that every woman, no matter where she comes from, can find a place to belong, a warm and consistent community where she can breathe, learn, and reconnect with her *neshama*. When women feel supported and spiritually connected, entire families, neighborhoods, and cities are uplifted.

# OU Israel Torah Initiatives

When the war began and the OU Israel Center could not safely open its doors because it lacked a bomb shelter, the Torah Initiatives team refused to let silence take over. Within hours, daily *Tehillim* gatherings and *chizzuk* sessions were launched online, creating a lifeline of faith and connection for thousands who were desperate for strength. Each session became a small community of hearts beating together in prayer, bringing comfort to people who felt isolated and afraid. Soon after, OU Israel partnered with major Jerusalem communities such as Kehillat Nitzanim to host evenings of music and *tefillah*, filling the air with unity and healing. In that same space, weekly in-person learning quietly began once again, allowing people to come together not only to study Torah, but to feel that they still belonged to something greater than themselves. Even while the Israel Center remained closed, OU Israel continued to act—sending buses of volunteers each week to assist farmers in the South, pack food for evacuees, and deliver supplies to soldiers in *miluim*. Every effort, every gathering, every act of kindness was a declaration that community and Torah cannot be stopped.

As life began to regain rhythm, Torah Initiatives became the beating heart of spiritual renewal for English-speaking *olim* and long-time residents alike. Weekly programs were launched in seven communities across Israel, offering a place to learn, to connect, and to heal together. Two new cities, Efrat and Modi'in, joined the Torah Summit network, bringing hundreds of *olim* together for inspiration, reflection, and unity. A special rabbinic seminar, hosted in partnership with the Barkai Institute and Get Help Israel, provided rabbis and rebbetzins with the tools to guide their communities through trauma, strengthening the bonds of care within each neighborhood. The Men's *Safrut* course continued to meet weekly, providing learners with a sense of stability and purpose; two participants even completed their sacred writing while serving in *miluim*, one finishing a *Megillat Esther* and the other a set of *mezuzot*.

Since October 2023, viewership of OU Israel's online Torah content has risen into the hundreds of thousands, connecting Jews from across Israel and the Diaspora in a shared journey of faith and resilience. In every class, seminar, and *shiur*, Torah Initiatives did more than teach—it rebuilt the community. It reminded people that even in times of uncertainty, the light of Torah and the warmth of belonging can bring the Jewish people together as one.

OU Israel's Torah Initiatives division continues to inspire tens of thousands of anglo-olim each year through our regular weekly programs in Yerushalayim and Modiin, and through special programming throughout the country such as Community Torah Summits, Torah Tidbits Live which brings inspiring Torah to the periphery, and the expansion of our mens Safrut course to multiple locations across the country. In a time when so many are searching for meaning and stability, the Torah Initiatives Division ensures that every *oleh* has a spiritual home, a community of connection, and a source of strength to keep their faith alive in the Land of Israel.

