

# Empowering Lives & Communities **IN OUR HOMELAND**

2025 Impact Report

תשפ"ה - תשלפ"א





# OU ISRAEL

## EMPOWERING JEWISH PEOPLE IN OUR HOMELAND

Empowering Jewish people in our homeland is not a slogan. It is a responsibility.

It means understanding that building a life in Israel is not simple, not uniform, and not always easy. It means recognizing that the challenges Jews face here do not look the same at every age, in every home, or in every community. Sometimes they are loud and visible. Sometimes they are quiet and hidden. But they are real, and they shape lives.

OU Israel exists in those spaces.

For decades, OU Israel has been present wherever Jewish life in Israel is complex. In neighborhoods where teenagers are growing up one step away from danger. In homes where young couples are trying to build stability while carrying emotional history. In communities of *olim* navigating language, culture, and belonging. On university campuses where young adults are forming identity far from home. In synagogues, classrooms, community centers, and living rooms across the country.

Empowerment, we have learned, does not look the same for everyone. But the obligation to empower is the same.

For a teen at risk, empowerment means having one adult who refuses to give up on them. It means intervention before the streets decide their future. It means learning life skills, building confidence, and discovering that their life has value. For a young woman with nowhere else to go, this means being welcomed into a framework that sees her, holds her, and gives her the time and space to rebuild her identity. For an *oleh*, it means not being alone in a new land. It means finding people who speak your language, understand your journey, and welcome you into the community. It means

building a life of meaning and connection without having to explain yourself at every step.

For a student, a couple, a family, or a community, empowerment means stability, connection, guidance, and continuity.



OU Israel does not approach these needs as isolated problems. We see them as stages along the same journey: Jews building lives in Israel. Our role is not to simplify that journey, but to walk alongside people through it with consistency, wisdom, and care.

This is why OU Israel's work spans teens, young adulthood, family life, and community life. This is why our programs look different from one another, yet are deeply connected. Each one is a response to the same question, asked again and again in different forms:

What does it take for a Jewish person to live with strength, dignity, and belonging in their homeland?

The programs that follow are not independent initiatives. They are expressions of one mission, carried out in many places, at many moments, for many people. Together, they form a national network of presence, support, and empowerment.

### This is OU Israel.

And this is the work of empowering Jewish people in our homeland.

The pages that follow introduce the programs that live under the OU Israel umbrella. Each one responds to a real need at a real moment. Together, they reflect OU Israel's ongoing commitment to empowering Jewish people to build lives of strength, dignity, and belonging in their homeland. ■

# TEEN CENTERS

**2,800**

teens  
supported

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**18**

centers across  
Israel

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**73**

volunteers



## What This Program Is

Many teens in Israel's periphery grow up without stability and without clear direction, and the path can become dangerous fast. Without consistent support, teens drift toward the streets, negative influences, and a quiet loss of belief in their own future.

OU Israel's Teen Centers step in with long-term guidance and real help. Teens are met by mentors who know their stories, stay with them over time, and give them the life skills, structure, and belonging that allow them to choose a healthier path. This is where a teen begins to see a future again.

“

When the police showed up to tell us that my parents home was being taken away from the bank due to my fathers debts within gang activity, the first place I ran to was my Teen Center. There, I knew that I would be heard, cared for, and supported.

- Ron\*

(Name changed for privacy reasons)



# ACHIM

**148**

families received  
mezuzot

**3**

cities in israel-  
netanya, nahariya,  
akko

**210**

Teens  
participating  
in weekly  
programming

**650+**

Families  
participating  
in holidays,  
Shabbatonim,  
and events

## About the program

Achim supports Ukrainian teens and families who arrived in Israel after the Russia-Ukraine war carrying trauma, instability, and the shock of starting over without a community. In those early months, the risk was not only logistical, but emotional, teens drifting, families overwhelmed, and belonging feeling out of reach.

OU Israel stepped in immediately with practical help, steady guidance, and clear direction, supporting integration into schools and connecting families to Jewish life and community. Achim became the framework that anchored teens on a safer, healthier path and gave families stability, belonging, and hope as they rebuilt their lives in Israel.

“

As a single parent, the period of war greatly affected my economic situation. Many thanks to the "Achim" community, and to Koranit in particular, for the financial assistance I received. Without it, I don't know how I would have survived. Thank you to the "Achim" community, which has become a family for me and my children.

- Inna Berger, Nahariya



# LEGACY CAMPS

## About the program

For teens already living at high risk, summer can be the most vulnerable season. Structure disappears, supervision drops, and too many teens are left without direction, exposed to negative influences and risk.

Legacy Camps give Israeli teens safety, guidance, and a different environment entirely. In a short time they build healthy friendships, confidence, and the sense that they are capable of more. Teens return home stronger, steadier, and with a new picture of what life can look like.

“

In the camp I felt for the first time in a long time that I have a place to breathe, to laugh freely, and to be me without thinking about everything that is happening, about the fear and the war.

- Avi Katz, Nahariya

**800**

campers

**9**

camps this year

**Over**

**50%**

from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds



# CHAVERIM MAKSHIVIM

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**40+**  
trained  
volunteers

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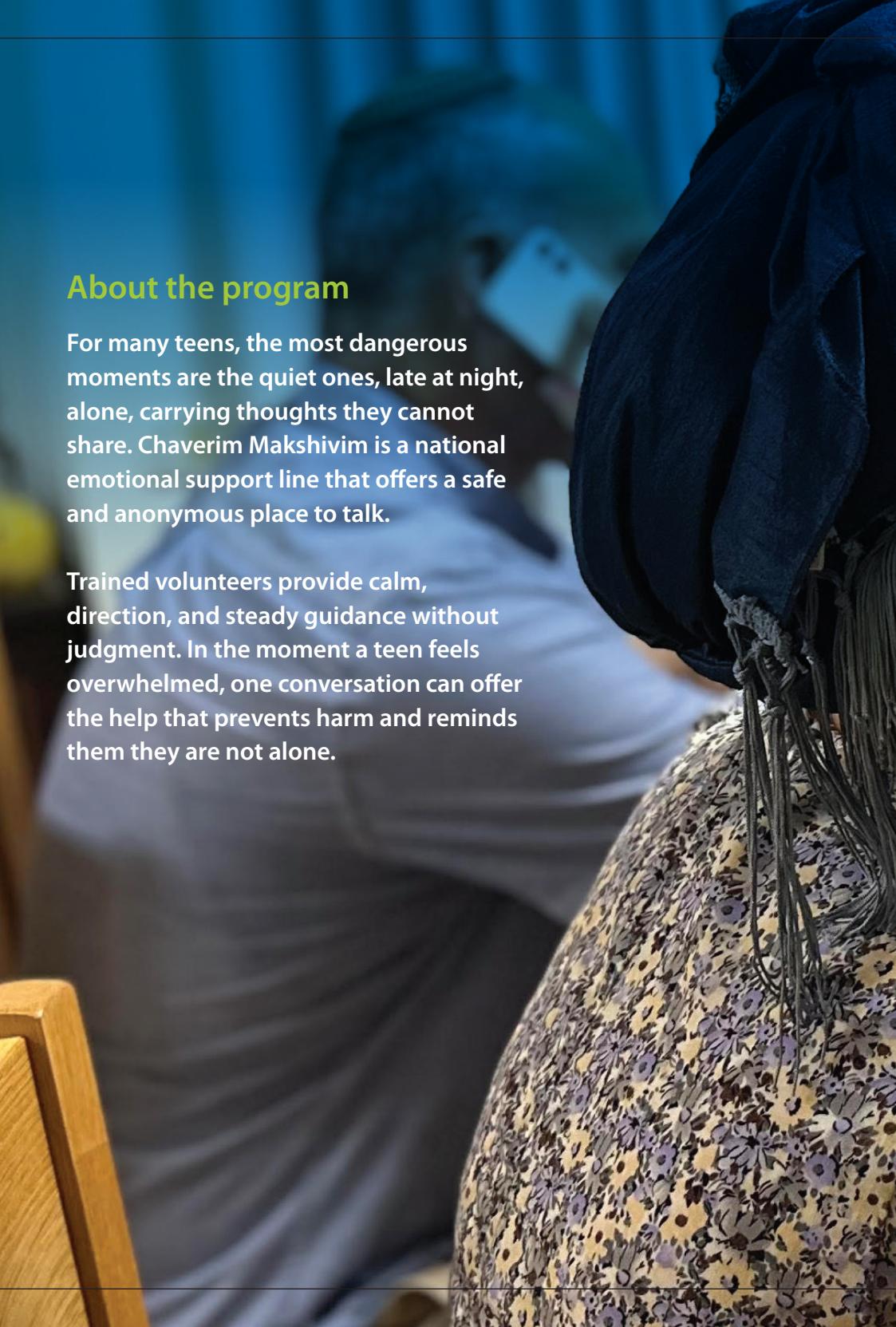
**440**  
calls  
per month

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## About the program

For many teens, the most dangerous moments are the quiet ones, late at night, alone, carrying thoughts they cannot share. Chaverim Makshivim is a national emotional support line that offers a safe and anonymous place to talk.

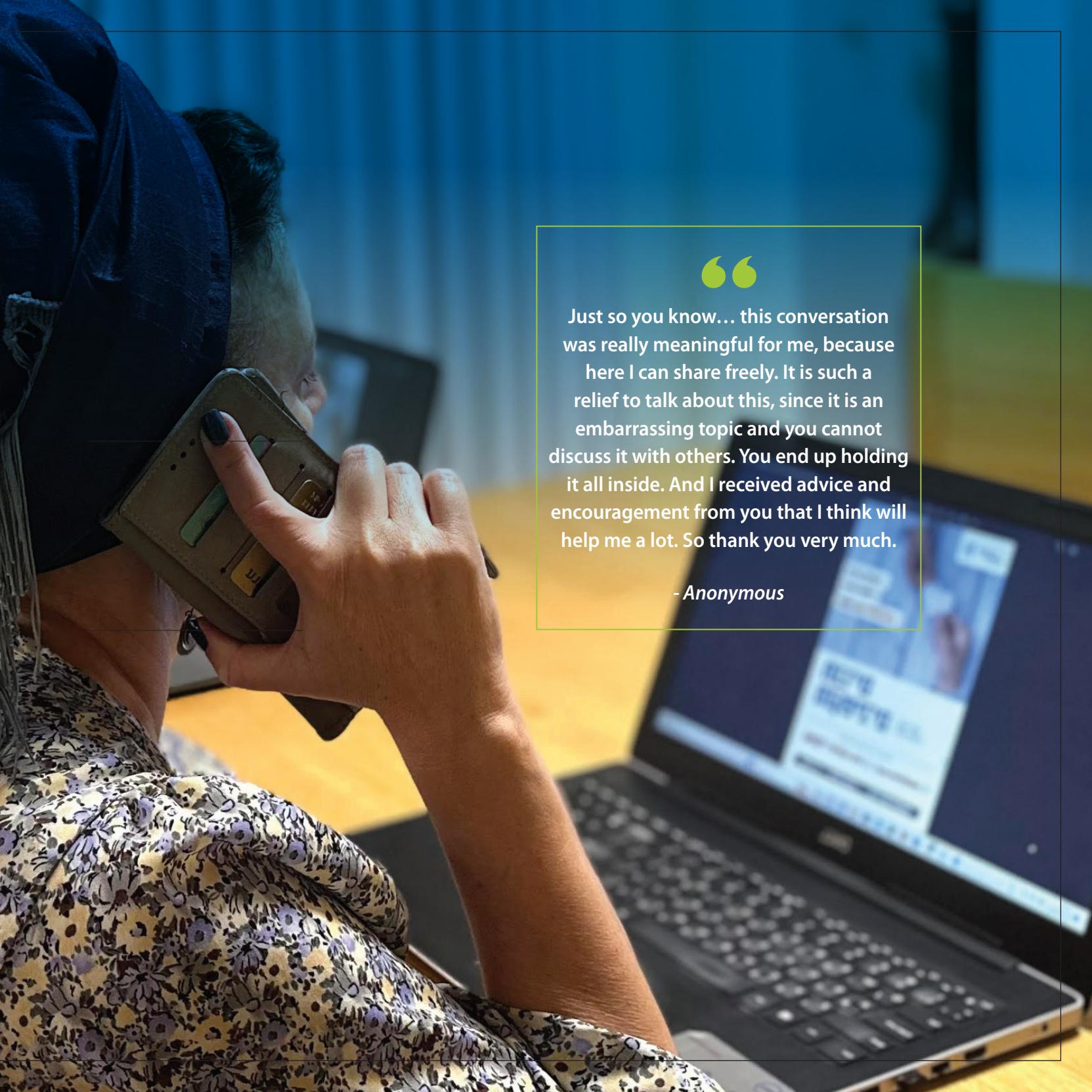
Trained volunteers provide calm, direction, and steady guidance without judgment. In the moment a teen feels overwhelmed, one conversation can offer the help that prevents harm and reminds them they are not alone.



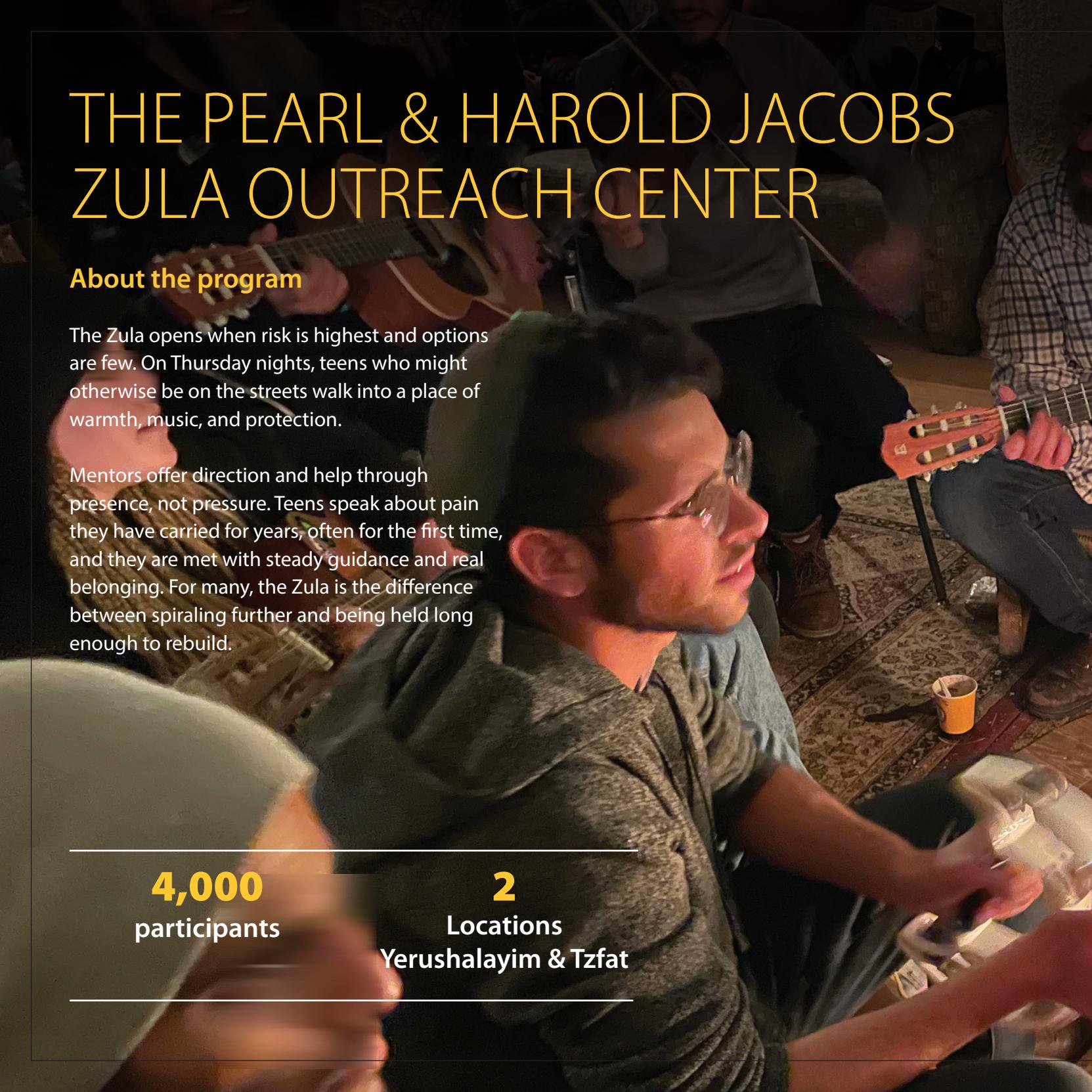
“

Just so you know... this conversation was really meaningful for me, because here I can share freely. It is such a relief to talk about this, since it is an embarrassing topic and you cannot discuss it with others. You end up holding it all inside. And I received advice and encouragement from you that I think will help me a lot. So thank you very much.

-Anonymous



# THE PEARL & HAROLD JACOBS ZULA OUTREACH CENTER



## About the program

The Zula opens when risk is highest and options are few. On Thursday nights, teens who might otherwise be on the streets walk into a place of warmth, music, and protection.

Mentors offer direction and help through presence, not pressure. Teens speak about pain they have carried for years, often for the first time, and they are met with steady guidance and real belonging. For many, the Zula is the difference between spiraling further and being held long enough to rebuild.

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**4,000**  
participants

**2**  
Locations  
Yerushalayim & Tzfat

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“

While I was traveling in India after the army, I found myself surrounded by my past of drugs and abuse. The first thing I did was call my mentor from The Zula and they navigated me through the situation and ended up helping me come home and get on the right track again. They never left my side, and I know they never will.

- Shira

# BENAYA

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**60**  
couples in 2025

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“

I know that when I come to Benaya again and again and that I will be given the support that we need in order to make our marriage work. During the finance sessions it really helped us understand what we need to do in order to live a smart life.”

- Dvir

## About the program

Benaya supports married couples where one or both spouses are alumni of the Zula, entering marriage while carrying emotional history. The program provides guidance, support circles, and practical direction that strengthens communication, stability, and trust.

With the right help early on, couples can break old patterns and build a healthy home rooted in strength. This is how healing continues into adulthood and shapes the next generation



# MESHIVAT NEFESH

**100**  
participants  
trained annually

## About the program

Meshivat Nefesh trains compassionate women to become emotional anchors in their communities, equipped to offer guidance and help to girls who struggle quietly. Participants learn how to listen deeply, respond responsibly, and provide direction without judgment.

Graduates return to their communities prepared to notice what others miss and to support girls before pain becomes crisis. This is empowerment that multiplies, strengthening entire circles of care.

“

Meshivat Nefesh is not only a place to learn tools for helping others, but first and foremost a place for personal growth and connecting to the divine spark within me. I am a social worker and psychotherapist, and today I use the approaches and tools I learned here with the understanding that this is what reaches the root.”

- Suzy BenShova, Alumni



# MIDRESHET ZUSHA

“

“There aren't really words to contain the creation that happened within me this year. I can only say that I simply became.

I had the privilege of being planted for a year beside streams of water, absorbing a holy truth that is pure and precise. A gift.”

- Tamar\* name changed for privacy reasons.

## About the program

Midreshet Zusha is a one-year learning program for young women who would otherwise have nowhere to go. Many arrive after being turned away from other frameworks, carrying instability and the feeling that they do not belong.

Zusha offers structure, sisterhood, and guidance that rebuilds identity from the inside out. Through learning, mentorship, and consistent help, young women begin to trust themselves again and build a future that once felt closed to them.

25

girls in 2025



# TORAH INITIATIVES

**500**  
recurring  
participants

**6,000**  
one-time  
participants

**500,000+**  
online views

**20**  
Communities  
Nationwide



## About the program

For English-speaking olim, access to meaningful Torah learning in their own language can be the difference between feeling disconnected and feeling rooted. Without it, many struggle to find direction in their spiritual and communal lives.

OU Israel's Torah Initiatives deliver high-level English Torah learning and community programming directly into cities and neighborhoods across Israel. Through accessible classes, gatherings, and partnerships, olim receive guidance, connection, and help in building a Jewish life that feels both serious and welcoming. These initiatives ensure that Torah is not distant, but present and lived.



“

People often ask me why I travel so far every week for the O. U. classes, and I reply that all the lectures are not only good, they are inspirational. Thank you for making these important programs available to our english speaking Olim community...

- Avram Berniger

# WOMEN'S DIVISION

## About the program

OU Israel's Women's Division brings women together and turns community into something you can feel. Through Torah learning and genuine sisterhood, women connect, uplift one another, and build relationships that carry into everyday life.

By bringing programming into neighborhoods across Israel, we create community-based circles where women find direction, guidance, and support, while strengthening one another through shared experiences. These gatherings transform isolation into belonging, turning local communities into connected spiritual homes.



**800+**

active  
participants

**12**

communities  
nationwide

New Beit Shemesh  
municipality  
partnership



“

I'm still just so happy and so uplifted from this past Rosh Chodesh. It was so beautiful and such an amazing experience of Tefilla and togetherness and **כח נשים** (strength of women). I wanted to thank you so much for this opportunity.

- Jordan Reich

# CAMP DROR



“  
She made amazing connections with her camp mates and counselors. This made the experience a significantly deeper and more meaningful one, especially after the year they've had here in Israel”- parent of camper.

- Shoshana Levi

## About the program

For many *olim* teens, summer can feel long, isolating, and disconnected. Without structure or a familiar environment, teens often lack direction during the months when school support disappears.

Camp Dror is a separated American-style

English-speaking summer camp in Israel, offering teens structure, guidance, and a place where they feel understood culturally and linguistically. Instead of being sent abroad, campers stay in Israel and receive the help, friendships, and confidence that allow them to feel rooted and engaged. Camp Dror gives *olim* teens a summer that strengthens identity and belonging.

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207  
campers

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54  
counselors

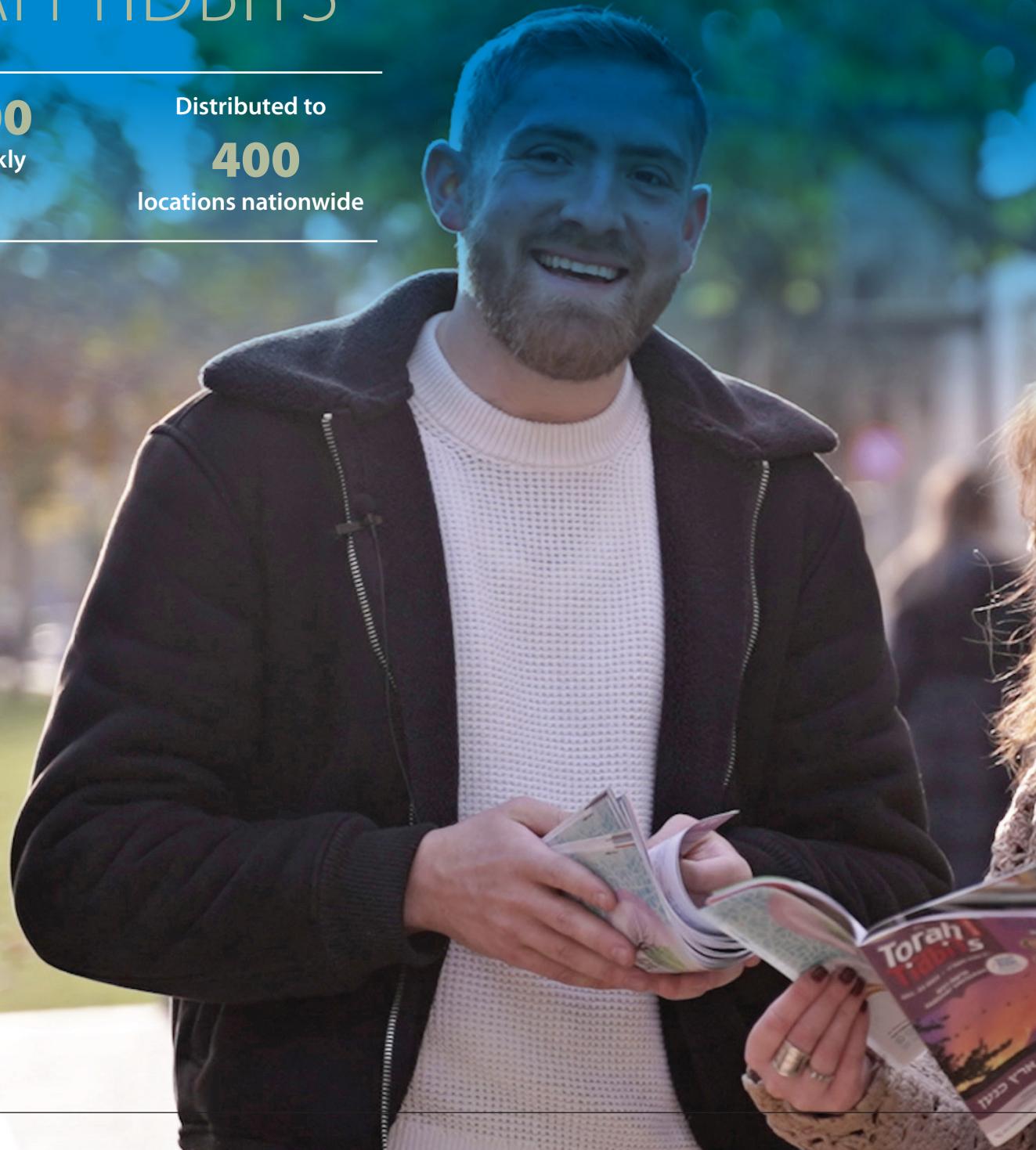
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# TORAH TIDBITS

**14,000**  
copies weekly

Distributed to  
**400**  
locations nationwide



## About the program

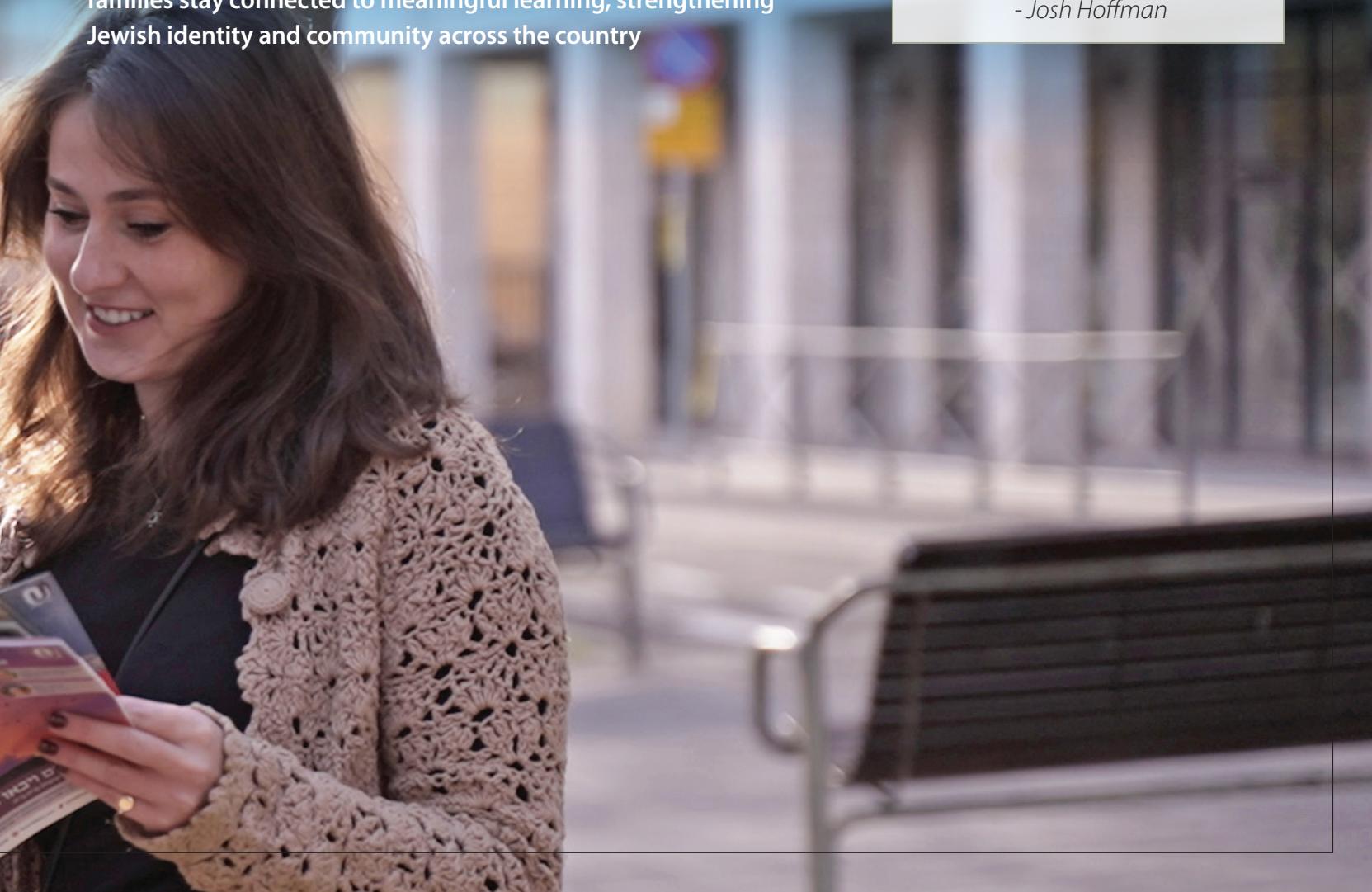
**Torah Tidbits brings high-level English Torah learning into the weekly rhythm of life for thousands of people across Israel. For English-speaking olim, it offers clarity, depth, and a sense of continuity in a language that feels familiar and accessible.**

**Distributed nationwide, Torah Tidbits provides direction and guidance through thoughtful Torah content that speaks to real life in Israel today. Week after week, it helps individuals and families stay connected to meaningful learning, strengthening Jewish identity and community across the country**

“

Going to shul you always see tens of different divrei Torah in Hebrew, it can be intimidating, knowing that Torah Tidbits is available to me each week to connect to the week's parsha elevates my shabbos tenfold.

- *Josh Hoffman*



# KASHRUT DIVISION

A photograph of two Orthodox Jewish men in a large greenhouse. They are both wearing dark suits, white shirts, and black hats. The man on the left is wearing glasses and has a beard. They are looking down at a row of green plants, possibly mint or basil, growing in a tray. The greenhouse has a high ceiling with a metal frame and translucent panels. In the background, more rows of plants and a large industrial fan are visible.

“

I was so confused by the different kashrut symbols on the snacks in Israel, I asked Rav Ezra and was given an answer on if it was something I ate”

- Shifra P.

**180**  
certified sites  
across Israel

**11,000+**  
questions answered by our  
Kashrut Education Department

A photograph of a man with glasses and a dark jacket standing in a large greenhouse. The greenhouse is filled with rows of green plants growing in raised beds. The structure has a blue translucent roof and a metal frame. A circular vent is visible in the roof.

## About the program

OU Israel's Kashrut Division upholds the highest level of halachic supervision, providing trusted certification for restaurants, kitchens, and businesses across Israel with unparalleled professionalism. Families and travelers rely on this standard for clarity, confidence, and consistency in the food they eat every day. Beyond certification, OU Israel is deeply committed to kashrut education, helping individuals and communities understand the "why" behind the practice, not only the rules. Through guidance, practical tools, and accessible learning, we give people direction in navigating complex kashrut questions, from everyday decision-making to seasonal and life-cycle needs. This work strengthens Jewish life in Israel by ensuring that kashrut is not only reliable, but understood.

# NCSY ISRAEL

## About the program

Teens from *olim* families often struggle to find their place within Israeli society, caught between languages, cultures, and expectations. Many feel unseen and unsure where they belong.

**NCSY** Israel provides direction, guidance, and consistent help through mentors and peers who understand their experience. In a space where language and mentality align, teens can relax, build friendships, and grow with confidence. NCSY helps *olim* teens navigate life in Israel with clarity, support, and belonging.



**803**  
participants

**37**  
advisors

**8**  
of different programs  
ran in 2025

“  
You feel at place when you’re sitting with them, you don’t feel like you’re sitting with your mechanech in school, you feel like you’re sitting with a madrich, someone who’s meant to guide you, someone who’s meant to help you, someone who feels you, someone who genuinely wants the best for you... So having that kind of role model in NCSY to look up to, someone who genuinely wants the best for everyone, it makes the whole experience that much better.

- Eli, Beit Shemesh



# YACHAD ISRAEL



**135**  
participants

**100**  
volunteers

**3**  
Chapters

## About the program

Individuals with disabilities and their families often face social isolation and limited opportunities for meaningful connection. Without inclusive frameworks, too many are left on the margins of community life.

Yachad Israel supports Anglo Olim with special needs through inclusive friendships and social programs, building confidence, belonging, and strong communities where everyone is valued.

“

I love Yachad Israel because it helps me become a better person

- Eli Schwartz





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**3,500**  
students

**11**  
campuses

**6**  
young  
professional  
communities

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## About the program

As more English-speaking students choose to study at Israeli universities, many face the challenge of building a life far from home without clear direction or support systems.

**JLIC** provides guidance, mentorship, and community for students navigating academics, identity, and independence in a new country. Through relationships, shared experiences, and consistent help, students find stability and belonging during formative years. JLIC becomes the place where students feel grounded, supported, and able to thrive.





“

JLIC has really made my move to Israel as seamless as possible. The amazing Shabbat programs have helped me meet friends and my support system.

- Sophie

# BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL FREE SPIRIT

**20,000**

lifetime  
participants

**800**

American classic  
participants

**200**

Israeli classic  
participants

**900**

volunteer  
participants

**70**

volunteer  
guides



## About the program

OU Israel's Birthright department, Israel Free Spirit, creates transformative 7 to 10 day Israel experiences for young adults and communities from around the world. Through both classic exploratory trips and volunteer programs that support communities impacted by the war and strengthen local chessed initiatives, participants connect deeply to Jewish identity, peoplehood, and the story of Israel. For many, it is their first experience of true belonging, and on classic trips it is often their first exposure to Israel and meaningful Jewish content.

Guided by dedicated staff from Israel and North America, each journey is shaped by care, professionalism, and purpose. From the first day to the final goodbye, participants are supported to engage fully, returning home with pride, lifelong friendships, and a lasting bond with Israel, along with a stronger commitment to their Jewish identity long after the trip ends.

“

Volunteering in Israel during such a challenging time made my Jewish identity feel active and meaningful.

It wasn't just something I inherited, it became something I chose.

- Talia



Miriam  
Mendlowitz  
Group # 812-177  
Group Leader 092-579 3889  
#birthright #israelfreespirit  
TAGLIT-BETAR ISRAEL  
ISRAEL FREE SPIRIT



# CARRYING THE RESPONSIBILITY FORWARD

Some of those lives are shaped early, when the right direction and guidance can change the course of adolescence. Others are shaped later, when community, help, and belonging determine whether someone feels rooted or alone. Some of this work happens quietly, through relationships built over years. Some of it happens urgently, in moments when support cannot wait.

OU Israel's work  
is measured in lives,  
not in moments.

What unites all of it is consistency. OU Israel does not step in and step away. We remain present as needs evolve, as people grow, and as communities change. We carry responsibility across stages of life, ensuring that empowerment is not temporary, but sustained. Taken together, this work does more than support individuals. It

strengthens families, stabilizes communities, and contributes to the long, ongoing healing of Israeli society. When people feel guided, supported, and connected, the nation itself becomes stronger.

As Israel continues to face complexity, uncertainty, and change, the need for steady guidance, meaningful connection, and trusted support only grows. OU Israel will continue to meet that need with care, professionalism, and deep commitment.

**THIS IS OU ISRAEL.**

And this is the responsibility we carry forward.





Thank you for helping transform  
lives across Israel



#THE OU ISRAEL