The Educational Platform

STAGE 3

Standards & Requirements
2012
The Educational Mission & Principles of Taglit-Birthright Israel

I. Core Mission

Taglit-Birthright Israel is a ten-day educational journey in Israel aimed at enriching the lives of young Jews, deepening Jewish communal life, and strengthening the ties of the next generation to the State of Israel --- thus making each participant's Jewish experience more meaningful. One of its primary objectives is to motivate participants to explore their Jewish identity through a peer educational experience of historic and contemporary Israel. It encompasses the opportunity for multi-day shared travel and dialogue with Israeli peers ("mifgash") as a vehicle for deeper insight into contemporary Israeli life and for strengthening the relationship of young Jews worldwide with each other. The Taglit-Birthright Israel educational journey is committed to a culture of open discussion and dialogue about diverse visions and versions of Jewish identity, discourse and living. The program is specifically shaped to meet the lives of young Jews between the ages 18-26, mainly (but not exclusively) from the marginally affiliated sector of contemporary Jewish life. The founders of Taglit-Birthright Israel regard the ten-day educational journey as part of a larger ongoing continuum of Jewish engagement, involvement, learning, and search for personal and communal meaning.

II. Core Educational Principles

1. Person-Centered Education

Taglit-Birthright Israel is rooted in a person-centered educational approach. It regards “people” as the subject matter of the ten days, along with sites, narratives and ideas. Taglit-Birthright Israel views the needs and interests of young people as the starting point of its educational work, and it aims to engage young adults in a meaningful dialogue with Jewish and Israeli contents. It is committed to a teaching and learning approach rooted in the active engagement and involvement of the learner. Such learner-centered education requires staff-members who have mastered the material, have a strong inclusive vision of Jewish peoplehood and are committed to and skilled in person-centered and inter-personal methodologies.

2. An Experiential Approach

Taglit-Birthright Israel believes that an experiential approach is an important dimension of its educational agenda. It regards Israel as a diverse landscape encompassing a rich array of experiences, narratives and places – historical as much as contemporary - that can be effectively presented in ten days.
3. A Culture of Values
Taglit-Birthright Israel enables participants to learn about diverse concepts and values that have been important to Judaism and the Jewish people over the years. These diverse concepts and values include: Jewish Peoplehood; the place of Israel in Jewish life throughout the ages; multi-faceted aesthetic and culture dimensions of Jewish & Israeli life; the importance of the idea of Learning in the Jewish experience; the interaction of Jewish and general culture throughout the ages; ethical and moral issues and Judaism; love of the land; the role of Hebrew in Jewish life; the place of Shabbat in Jewish culture; and appreciation of tradition and accumulated wisdoms throughout the ages.

4. A Culture of Ideas
Taglit-Birthright Israel is committed to a culture of reflective thinking through dialogue, discussion and the exchange of ideas in safe and supportive environments. It aims to enable participants to deliberate on ideas and beliefs in a safe and non-judgmental context that fosters open-ended discussion and critical examination of concepts and viewpoints. This emphasis on ideas requires tour-educators proficient in both Jewish and Israeli contents, along with analytic and interactive educational skills. The task of such tour-educators is to help participants to experience, think, discuss, and feel during their ten-day journey, making their own connections between their experiences in Israel, their daily lives, and their personal goals for the future.

5. An Integrative Approach
Taglit-Birthright Israel endorses an integrative model, which is an educational approach that enables participants to seek and establish connections between the different experiences of their ten-day educational journey in Israel. It calls upon the Trip Organizer to create a comprehensive mosaic of diverse themes, core questions and values whose various associations present a meaningful narrative[s] concerning contemporary Jewish identity, Jewish peoplehood and contemporary Israel.

The purpose of the integrative approach is to guarantee an educational coherence that underlies the diverse experiences of the ten-day Israel educational journey as a whole. It comes to ensure a reflective synthesis of experiences and knowledge as a means to linking the personal story of the participant to the greater story of the Jewish people and the State of Israel.

6. A Social Inter-Actionist Approach
Taglit-Birthright Israel regards the group experience as important to identity development, seeing the community as an essential building block for the Jewish
future. Empirical evaluation of the Taglit-Birthright Israel program, and follow-up research, has led to the understanding that a ten-day peer social environment has the potential to influence subsequent Jewish identity and connections. The participation of Israeli peers is regarded as a valuable component in individual identity development and in social networking for overseas Jews and their Israeli counterparts.

7. An Emotionally Engaging, Intellectually Challenging and Enjoyable Culture

Taglit-Birthright Israel believes that Jewish learning and experiencing can be implemented in enjoyable and gratifying ways that are as emotionally engaging as they are intellectually challenging. An enjoyable, ‘fun’ atmosphere is not seen as the antithesis of education, but rather, if utilized properly, as an essential step toward its facilitation.

8. Tracking Outcomes and Advancing Self-Reflection

Taglit-Birthright Israel is committed to measuring outcomes of educational trips both in terms of long-term impact on individuals, as well as Trip Organizers’ adherence to Taglit-Birthright Israel standards. This concern with outcomes and measurement reflects a commitment to feedback, reflective upgrading, and ongoing change and improvement.

III. Core Themes - נושאים לрабיה

A. The Overall Framework

Rationale

The ten-day Taglit Birthright Israel educational journey encompasses three overarching core themes that are required components of all Taglit-Birthright Israel educational journeys: 1) Narratives of the Jewish People; 2) Contemporary Israel; and 3) Ideas & Values of the Jewish People. Each core theme is further divided into categories which provide Trip Organizers with choices in developing integrated ten-day educational experiences. The ten days are structured so as to both enable implementation of these core themes and also to enable each Trip Organizer to expand prescribed core themes and/or introduce additional themes that are unique to the Trip Organizer.

The Taglit-Birthright Israel core themes are intended to introduce participants to
key ideas, experiences and issues; they come to ‘teach’ rather than ‘preach’. Taglit-Birthright Israel is an affirmation of the value, meaning, and relevance of Jewish life and Israel to the personal and communal lives of Jews, but it in no way comes to inculcate specific ideologies, belief systems, or political positions. A culture of openness and respect for divergent viewpoints underlies the ten day experience as a whole.

Group dialogue, interaction, processing and response are an important part of Taglit-Birthright Israel’s educational approach. The purpose of the educational journey is not simply to present the participants with a list of programs and sites; rather, it aims to enable them to engage in structured and reflective processes – titled Tie-In sessions (שיקוף ושיח) that are to be implemented every third day during the ten-day journey. The objectives of the Tie-In sessions are: 1) the intellectual and analytic ability of the participants to understand and integrate the broader weave of their experiences; 2) the personal reactions of participants to the meaning of these experiences and their impact on their lives as individuals and as group members.

The integrative approach is not driven by the quantity of programs or sites offered each day; rather, it seeks a quality and a flow of experiences that offer participants in-depth engagements with themes, topics, concepts, values and emotions. This approach aims to provide the space, time and expanse to 1) engage sites / programs in deep and meaningful ways; 2) allow different staff members to assume educational roles during the ten-day journey; 3) offer interaction between the group members themselves, and between individuals or the group and the respective sites/programs (see Requirements, clause 5 below).

**Requirements**

In order to facilitate this process, Trip Organizers should:

1. Articulate the Trip Organizer’s core educational vision and the main subjects that are addressed throughout its Taglit-Birthright Israel educational journeys (over and above Taglit-Birthright Israel’s core themes)

2. Present to Taglit-Birthright Israel, and later to the respective participants, the Trip Organizer’s ten-day itinerary, indicating the main subjects / issues / questions to be addressed on each day

3. Engage sites or programs that fall under Taglit-Birthright Israel’s core themes in a comprehensive manner which reflects its depth and significance within the
overall ten-day itinerary. Such comprehensive treatment should include: 1) introduction; 2) in-depth exploration of the subject matter; 3) group processing and deliberation, and; 4) synopsis and questions for further reflection.

4. Facilitate "connecting moments" within certain sites and activities during the ten-day journey, enabling participants to reflect and dialogue with the addressed themes, questions and values.

5. Conduct three Tie-In sessions at the end of each three-day segment of the ten-day journey, enabling participants to a) follow the journey’s thematic structure and better integrate their insights within the journey’s broader educational narrative and framework; b) process and reflect upon their experiences as individuals and as group members (see pamphlet entitled "Talkin’ about Tie-Ins", published by Taglit-Birthright Israel).

6. The role of integration is not the exclusive responsibility of the tour-educator. The entire educational staff should be trained and utilized in its implementation --- tour educator, madrichim and various on-site educators.

B. The General Thematic Structure

The following Taglit-Birthright Israel core themes are incorporated within all the Trip Organizers’ educational itineraries:

1. Narratives of the Jewish People (all mandatory)
   a. A Jewish Heritage Site - אטר מורשת יהודית
   b. A Zionist Heritage Site - אטר מורשת ציונית
   c. A National Heritage Site - אטר מורשת לאומי
   d. A ‘Natural’ Heritage Site - אטר מורשת טבע
   e. A Shoah Heritage Site – אטר מורשת שואה

2. Contemporary Israel (minimum: 2 of 4)
   a. Arts & Culture - תרבות ואומנות
b. Environmentalism & Ecology – מודעות סביבתית ואקולוגיה

c. Science & Technology - מדע וטכנולוגיה

d. Politics, Society & Statehood - פוליטיקה, חברה ומדינת

3. Ideas & Values of the Jewish People – Ideas וערכים של עם היהודי (min.: 1 mandatory + 1)

a. Shabbat (mandatory) - שבת

b. Kehilah and Mutual Responsibility – קהילה וידידות

c. Talmud Torah – Beit Midrash – תלמוד תורה – בית מדרש

d. Hebrew as a Living Language – عبرית כשפה

C. The Detailed Thematic Structure

Core Theme 1: NARRATIVES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

דרסטיים של עם היהודי

Rationale

The experience of Israel offers participants an extraordinary setting suited to facilitate a deep and broad understanding of basic signposts in the Jewish narratives and heritage. This rationale can be achieved by introducing key landmarks of historical, national, archeological or natural significance that have shaped, and continue to shape Jewish life.

An additional unique “landmark” that should be meaningfully explored during the educational journey is the Shoah. This subject falls within the core theme “Narratives of the Jewish People”, as it reflects a significant part of the Jewish experience. Due to its uniqueness, this subject is elaborated in expended detail in this document (see below).

Fulfillment of the Core Theme NARRATIVES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE encompasses all five types of Heritage Sites. The Trip Organizer needs to relate these Heritage Sites to
a broader diversity of experiences throughout the ten-day journey.

**Objectives**

The educational objectives of the Core Theme NARRATIVES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE are to:

1. Present a panoramic view of emerging Jewish narratives throughout the ages

2. Focus on important conceptual and historical signposts in this expansive Jewish journey

3. Present a mosaic of sites, landscapes and institutions which reflect the interplay between past and present in contemporary Israel

4. Present a meaningful and well-contextualized encounter with the Shoah, its place in Jewish life and in Israel, as part of the broader Jewish narrative in the modern era

**Heritage Sites: Outline**

* **A Jewish Heritage Site**

A Jewish Heritage Site features the following characteristics:

1. Reflects the period from antiquity to the end of the 19th century (the Zionist era)

2. Demonstrates a significant Jewish presence during the respective era

3. Reflects an important idea in, or a seminal approach to the emerging Jewish narrative

* **A Zionist Heritage Site**

A Zionist Heritage Site features the following characteristics:

1. Reflects the period from the Zionist era (end of the 19th century) onward

2. Reflects an important idea in, or a seminal approach to the emerging Jewish narrative
* A National Heritage Site - אטר מורשת לאום

A National Heritage Site features the following characteristics:

1. Reflects the period from 1948 onward
2. Represents contemporary institutions and core values which reflect Israel as a Jewish & Democratic State

* A ‘Natural’ Heritage Site - אטר מורשת טבע

A ‘Natural’ Heritage Site is an outdoors landscape that features the following characteristics:

1. A landmark wherein flora, fauna and other natural elements are being continuously preserved for educational, scientific and recreational reasons
2. A natural landmark which reflects significant moments in the emerging narrative of Israel
3. A natural landscape which offers a firsthand encounter with elements such as geology, zoology, botany, and other characteristics which are unique to the region

* A Shoah Heritage Site - אטר מורשת השואה

Rationale

The Shoah is undeniably a defining moment in the history of the Jewish people, and of contemporary Jewry in particular. The philosophies, ideologies and events that gave rise to the Shoah have, and will continue to have profound impact on the Jewish experience and its views regarding a myriad of ethical, theological, social and even political questions. The Shoah has both Jewish and universal implications, whose ethical backbone continues to inform and reshape global discourse on many issues as well. The Shoah also has been playing a notable role in the founding, creation, and daily life of contemporary Israel, as it continues to be an important prism to evaluate Israel’s envisioned trajectory as a Jewish and Democratic state among the family of nations.

The Jewish world has been shaken and transformed by the Shoah, causing
fundamental changes to communal, institutional, social and even political thought in Jewish communities worldwide and in Israel alike. Also, the questions of “Memory & Commemoration” are equally important when we discuss Holocaust-deniers and the manipulation of historic memory. What are the claims of some Holocaust-deniers; how may we treat and respond to them; and what is our responsibility when facing such attempts to undermine or altogether erase the Shoah from memory?

The presentation of the Shoah as a Taglit-Birthright Israel Core Theme should consider two central points: 1) The crucial need to achieve a thoughtful balance between emotional impact and intellectual contextualization and processing. The Shoah is as daunting to the heart as it is perplexing to the mind, and participants should therefore be offered the space, time and platform to intelligently wrestle with the myriad of questions that it raises. 2) The gravity of the Shoah notwithstanding, it should be presented in the greater context of positively-experienced Jewish living (pre and post Holocaust) rather than the culmination of the Jewish experience in the modern era.

Objectives

The educational objectives of the Shoah Heritage Site are to:

1. Familiarize participants with some of the central ideologies, themes and beliefs that gave rise to the Shoah

2. Familiarize participants with the main events that constitute the Shoah

3. Enable participants to hear a personal testimony from a Holocaust survivor

4. Elucidate the place and role of the Shoah in contemporary Israeli life, and its visibility in literary, intellectual, religious, cultural, social and political discourse.

5. Discuss the connection between the Shoah and issues concerning contemporary anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

Requirements

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should offer programs that:

1. Conduct a preparatory discussion preceding the visit to the Shoah commemorative site, and in which the issues and questions mentioned above are introduced. The discussion may also include ‘trigger’ films, clips, poems,
literature, or any other educational tool the Trip Organizer deems constructive for the discussion

2. Visit an established Holocaust commemorative site at Yad Vashem, Lohamei Hagetaot, or Massuah

3. Meet a Holocaust survivor, either in person or by hearing a testimony. In case of a meeting in person, time should be allotted for a discussion between the survivor and the participants

4. Conduct a group Remembrance & Commemoration ceremony at the site (recommended)

5. Offer a post-visit integration session, wherein participants may respond, discuss and integrate this experience within other sites, programs and issues on the ten-day journey

Core Theme 2: CONTEMPORARY ISRAEL

ишראלי העכשווית

Rationale

Contemporary Israel offers participants an extraordinary setting to experience a Jewish society shaping itself within the modern era. The contemporary State constitutes an exciting laboratory wherein Jewish life is created through continuous discussion, reevaluation and reshaping.

The Core Theme CONTEMPORARY ISRAEL expresses itself in a diverse array of topics, which include Arts & Culture; Environmentalism & Ecology; Science & Technology; and Politics, Society & Statehood.

Fulfillment of the Core Theme CONTEMPORARY ISRAEL encompasses a minimum of two of the four topics. The Trip Organizer needs to relate these topics to a broader diversity of experiences throughout the ten-day journey.

Topic 1: Arts & Culture
Rationale

One of the key vehicles for understanding Israel is through its cultural enterprise. Music, poetry, prose, art, dance, drama and architecture reflect some of the expressions of the language, lore, feelings, pulse, values and daily life of Israeli society. These artistic forms articulate historical roots, contemporary realities, and future dreams.

The utilization of arts and culture offers rich opportunities for expanding understanding and appreciation of both historical and contemporary Israel. An engaging experience of Israeli culture is indispensable for a fuller understanding of contemporary Israel.

The goal is to enable Taglit- Birthright Israel participants to take part in a contemporary Israeli cultural experience which at the same time integrates with Taglit- Birthright Israel's core themes. Cultural visits and events should therefore enrich and further elucidate Taglit-Birthright Israel's core themes.

Objectives

The educational objectives of the topic ARTS & CULTURE are to:

1. Demonstrate the importance of Arts & Culture in the life and social fabric of contemporary Israeli society.

2. Address motifs, themes and dynamics reflective of contemporary Israel as a modern, vibrant & creative society.

3. Facilitate engagement with Arts & Culture as an experience reflective of values, lifestyles, worldviews and beliefs in contemporary Israel.

Requirements

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should choose programs that:

1. Relate to and reflect the contemporary Israeli social fabric.

2. Enable interactive engagement with either a work of art, or an artist, or a recognized specialist in the arts, or an artistic or cultural workshop.
3. Constitute an artistic experience which is uniquely connected to actually being in Israel, and is executed by a capable agent, or institution.

4. Invite conceptual and thematic associations with other topics of the ten-day Taglit-Birthright Israel experience.

5. The artistic and cultural aspects of the program cannot be vehicles for promulgating a specific political, ideological and/or religious agenda.

6. The program cannot be rooted in visits to commercial (for profit) venues, nor to solicit any commercial transactions between the artist/specialist/institution and the participants.

**Topic 2: Environmentalism & Ecology**

**מדעי סביבתית ומונגוליה**

**Rationale**

Environmental awareness and ecological accountability have been important items on the Jewish agenda throughout the ages. Several classical Jewish concepts have been concerned with improving, sustaining and protecting the quality of the natural environment.

The desire to influence human attitudes and behaviors in order to protect scarce natural resources and maintain healthy ecosystems has become an important component of contemporary Israel's social discourse --- seen through lobbying, activism, entrepreneurship, and educational settings and initiatives. Thus, Israel is gradually becoming a notable player in the environmental sphere, offering some leading environmental initiatives and contributing to the international discourse on this vital issue.

The importance of this topic in Jewish tradition, the global arena, in contemporary Israel and in the mindset of young Jewish adults renders it an important category for the Taglit-Birthright Israel journey.

**Objectives**

The educational objectives of the topic ENVIRONMENTALISM & ECOLOGY are to:
1. Familiarize the participants with the importance of this subject in the Jewish tradition

2. Familiarize the participants with the place of this subject in contemporary Israeli social discourse

3. Enable participants to experience some exemplary Israeli ventures and projects in this area

4. Enable participants to associate their personal commitment to this cause with the Jewish and Israeli approach to the subject

5. Relate the environmental and ecological values to a broader diversity of experiences throughout the ten-day journey

Requirements

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should choose programs that:

1. Definitively reflect the importance of environmental and ecological values in contemporary Israel, and their leading role in addressing them

2. Include a dynamic and interactive element that engages the participants with the relevant subject matter

3. Thoughtfully link this subject with other experiences, programs or sites on the ten-day journey

Topic 3: Science & Technology
מדעי וטכנולוגיה

Rationale

Science and Technology is an increasingly major cultural, professional and personal dimension in the lives of twenty-first century emerging adults. They live in a world in which technology has dramatically changed communication, social networks, and accessibility to knowledge. Moreover, science and its technological implications have had profound impact on the lives of these young people and in many cases on their academic studies and future professional aspirations. Since science and technology is a significant language for communicating with our young generations --- and given
that global development is shaped by scientific and technological progress — Taglit-Birthright Israel should address this topic in a comprehensive manner.

While Israel is a prominent member of the modern world of science and technology, this is far from being the predominant image that is apparent to contemporary young Jews. Therefore, the arena of science and technology in contemporary Israel is a central Taglit-Birthright Israel topic for several reasons. We wish to raise participants’ awareness of Israel’s leading, and in some cases pioneering role in these subjects as a full-fledged member of the family of nations; show participants the extent to which science and technology is a substantial signpost of contemporary Israel’s socioeconomic infrastructure and discourse; help participants internalize how this sphere stretches the definition of Jewish/Israeli life beyond the conventional approaches; and finally, co-opt a language already spoken by these emerging adults and make it a vehicle for rich interaction between them and contemporary Israeli society.

Objectives

The educational objectives of the topic SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY are to:

1. Challenge preconceived (and often stereotypic) notions of Israeli society by broadening vistas toward a deeper understanding of contemporary Israeli lifestyles.

2. Familiarize the participants with the centrality of this sphere in contemporary Israeli society

3. Familiarize the participants with the importance of this arena in Israel’s role and place in the international community

4. Enable participants to experience some exemplary Israeli ventures and projects in this area

5. Enable an interaction between the participants and this domain in a contemporary Israeli context

6. Relate this subject to a broader diversity of experiences throughout the ten-day journey
Requirements

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should choose programs that:

1. Definitively reflect the importance of science & technology in contemporary Israel
2. Demonstrate some of Israel’s achievements in this sphere, which are path-breaking and pioneering on the global scene
3. Guarantee a dynamic interactive element that engages the participants in a manner that powerfully reshapes their understanding of the subject-matter
4. Thoughtfully link this subject with other experiences, programs or sites on the ten-day journey

Topic 4: Politics, Society & Statehood

Rationale

As presented in the Mission and Vision Statements of Taglit-Birthright Israel, the core focus of this project is personal Jewish identity and meaning-making, alongside a sense of collective Jewish Peoplehood. As part of this mission, issues of Israeli Politics, Society and Statehood are important subjects for examination, given that the political arena permeates all aspects of Israeli life, and is a primary lens to view Israel in the broader international context. While the ten-day experience cannot encompass an advanced study of the complex world of Politics, Society and Statehood, it is nonetheless educationally vital to help our first-time sojourners to learn about and reflect upon core issues in this domain.

Taglit-Birthright Israel does not propagate any specific political stance, but rather introduces and discusses certain key issues critical to understanding the complex nature of Israel’s political reality. This is done in a culture of inquiry and openness, which enables our participants to reflect thoughtfully and critically, as they continue their Jewish journey and association with the State of Israel.

Objectives

The educational objectives of the topic Politics, Society & Statehood are to:
1. Present a well-grounded and panoramic picture of Israel’s executive, legislative, and judicial structure and institutions

2. Present a well-grounded and panoramic picture of the diverse political positions that inform Israeli society and discourse

3. Present a well-grounded and panoramic picture of the complex dynamics between State and Religion in Israeli society

4. Present a well-grounded and panoramic picture of the complexities in Israel’s aspiration to be a Jewish and Democratic state

5. Present a well-grounded overview of the diverse issues, efforts, achievements and challenges regarding Israel’s relations with its non-Jewish minorities.

6. Present a well-grounded overview of the diverse issues, efforts, achievements and challenges regarding Israel’s relations with its neighbors

7. Relate this subject to a broader diversity of experiences throughout the ten-day trip

Requirements

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should choose programs that:

1. Incorporate appropriate framing and contextualization of the addressed issues

2. Use experts and expertise that can address these issues responsibly

3. Use core documents and primary sites as vehicles for explicating these issues

4. Use a diverse cadre of personalities and sites that can convey a mosaic of perspective on these issues

5. Thoughtfully link this subject with other experiences, programs or sites on the ten-day journey

6. Incorporate appropriate time for reflection, deliberation and debriefing among the participants on these issues
Core Theme 3: IDEAS & VALUES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Rationale

Contemporary Israel is rooted in a diversity of idea & value systems, of which Judaism has a significant role. Being in Israel offers participants an extraordinary setting to examine such formative Jewish values and their expressions in shaping a modern Jewish society. The contemporary State constitutes an exciting and challenging opportunity for participants to explore firsthand some of the formative values of their Jewish heritage. Additionally, it offers them deeper understanding of diverse interpretations and controversies concerning certain values and their place in current Jewish life.

The Core Theme IDEAS & VALUES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE expresses itself in a diverse array of topics, four of which Taglit-Birthright Israel currently focuses on: Shabbat; Kehilah & Mutual Responsibility; Talmud Torah - Beit Midrash; and; Hebrew as a Living Language.

Fulfillment of the Core Theme IDEAS & VALUES OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE encompasses SHABBAT as a mandatory topic, and a minimum of one of the remaining three topics. The Trip Organizer needs to relate these topics to a broader diversity of experiences throughout the ten-day journey.

Topic 1: Shabbat

Rationale

Denoted as a “Palace in Time”, Shabbat has always been an exalted moment, a primary legacy and a chief value in Jewish civilization. Taglit-Birthright Israel presents Shabbat as a Core Theme, seeing it as a meaningful, as well as joyous cornerstone of the Jewish calendar and world-view, which may enable young Jews to participate in this “moment in time” in reflective and positive forms. Being in Israel offers unique ways of emphasizing Shabbat within various contexts, such as community, learning, landscape and a sense of spirituality which many participants have not heretofore experienced. Its rich potential should be harnessed by Trip Organizers to create educational experiences in the meaningful, restful and contemplative atmosphere that Shabbat can offer.
Objectives

The educational objectives of the topic SHABBAT are to:

1. Offer participants an experience of Shabbat as an important component of the Jewish calendar

2. Offer participants an experience of the values and concepts associated with Shabbat in the Jewish tradition

3. Offer participants an experience of Shabbat in the contemporary Israeli context

4. Offer participants an experience of the diverse ways of celebrating Shabbat in contemporary Israeli society

5. Enable participants to experience basic rituals and customs associated with Shabbat --- also by allotting time to understand their meaning

6. Engage in reflective discussion concerning the place, meaning and relevance of Shabbat in participants’ own lives

Requirements

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should include in their SHABBAT experience:

1. Kabbalat Shabbat

All educational journeys should create some form of a ‘Kabbalat Shabbat’ experience. It may be at diverse local synagogues; at the hotel; at another venue where the group is staying; or at any location which may assist in creating the atmosphere of ‘preparing for Shabbat’. The program may encompass diverse forms of prayer, contemplation, poetry, liturgy and celebration. Taglit-Birthright Israel wishes for its participants to experience the age old Jewish tradition of welcoming Shabbat through associated rituals and customs, such as candle-lighting, some forms of liturgy, spirituality and a special Shabbat meal.

2. Tefillah

Shabbat is a unique opportunity to allow participants to have some experience with Tefillah, its meaning and its roles in Jewish life. While Taglit-Birthright Israel does
not require any form of prayer from its Trip Organizers or participants, it does maintain that all participants should have options to experience diverse prayer settings; and/or discuss the meanings and roles of prayer, meditation and spirituality in classical and modern Jewish life.

3. Study

Shabbat allows the safe space & time for the group to join together in reflective discussions and dialogues on numerous important topics: discussions over Jewish values; Judaism and contemporary Jewish life in its different shapes, forms and expressions; Shabbat in Israel vs. in the Diaspora; the role of Shabbat in maintaining some sort of Jewish unity; the challenges of Shabbat in modern life; the future of Shabbat in Jewish life; and so forth, also at the Trip Organizer’s discretion. Depending on the scheduling and other demands, Trip Organizers are encouraged to have more than one study/discussion session on Shabbat.

4. Community

Shabbat is a unique opportunity for the group to have quality time together as a community in both formal and informal frameworks. Trip Organizers should utilize the day to facilitate opportunities for the group to share joyful reflective, personal and Shabbat experiences together.

5. Havdallah

All programs should have some form of a Havdallah ceremony at the end of Shabbat, to familiarize Taglit-Birthright Israel participants with this core Jewish ritual and experience. Trip Organizers should also afford the time to explain the meaning of certain customs during the ceremony.

6. The Spirit of Shabbat

While Taglit-Birthright Israel educational journeys are fully sensitive to, and concerned for a pluralistic climate and overall culture, they aim to preserve the spirit of Shabbat as a vital component of the ten-day experience.

a. Organized touring by bus may not be offered on Shabbat

b. Programs that require the use of electronic equipment, writing, or any other form of activity that undermines the spirit of Shabbat may not be offered on Shabbat
c. Families, or relatives of Taglit-Birthright Israel participants, may visit them on Shabbat --- as long as the visit takes place at the hotel, and as long as the visit does not interfere with the Trip Organizer’s pre-scheduled Shabbat program.

**Topic 2: Kehilah & Mutual Responsibility**

חיה וערבות הידידים

**Rationale**

The *communal* experience is one of the cornerstones of Jewish life throughout the ages; the term “Kehilah” appears prominently in the life and literature of the Jewish people from antiquity to contemporary times. “Kehilah” refers to a living organism comprised of shared ideas, values, events, customs and traditions. This communal element does not find expression on the intellectual or mental levels alone, but also expresses itself through shared activities and commitments: celebrations, spaces & times, mutual responsibility, concern for the welfare of certain group-members and so-forth. The communal element has taken many shapes and forms, but in almost all the societies in which Jews have settled, they developed sophisticated communal structures that dealt with education, social welfare, religious and Jewish lifecycle requirements, and a host of other personal and communal needs.

Israel is a striking laboratory of Kehilah and kehilot. It is both made up of diverse communities, as well as a national character which often-times transcends other forms of social, economic or political dispute. While Taglit-Birthright Israel’s educational journey focuses on the personal journey of its participants, it also offers a unique opportunity to experience Kehilah as a contemporary cultural and moral concept whose roots are deeply-seeded in the Jewish tradition.

This unit will enable us to address not only community in Israel, but also the concept of ‘kehilah’ in the participants’ local communities. It presents kehilah as both a continuation of the classic value and a central part of local Jewish life today. It affords the Trip Organizer opportunities to present basic overviews of the communal structure of participant’ local communities, and opportunities for involvement upon return.

**Objectives & Requirements**

In press.
**Topic 3: Talmud Torah --- Beit Midrash**

תלמוד תורה --- בית מדרש

**Rationale**

Study in its various forms (TALMUD TORAH) has long been a hallmark of Jewish life and education. The concept of study has been linked to the institution called BEIT MIDRASH, which is a place of study that constitutes a tangible center for Jews who sought meaning and relevance within the textual legacies of their ancestors. As a concept, the BEIT MIDRASH has devoted itself to deep engagements with the Jewish tradition through textual scrutiny, critical thought, intellectual analysis and emotional investment. Ultimately, the institution of BEIT MIDRASH and the concept of TALMUD TORAH have always been vital components in Jewish living, combining to provide an experience wherein heart and mind turn the students into active players in the evolving Jewish narrative.

**Objectives**

The educational objectives of the topic TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH are to:

1. Facilitate an initial understanding of TALMUD TORAH as a central and ongoing form of Jewish discourse and living

2. Understand that TALMUD TORAH does not only focus on the five books of Moses, but can encompass a wide variety of texts --- from the classical to the contemporary

3. View TALMUD TORAH as an activity which has always complemented the classical writings and sought to infuse them with relevance and meaning

4. Regard TALMUD TORAH as a Jewish activity whose concerns are valid in each generation and across cultural boundaries
5. Consider the BEIT MIDRASH, and its modern forms of expression, as a social-intellectual institution whose activities aim to inform, challenge and wrestle with Jewish ideas, values and beliefs

**Requirements**

A TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH program must be provided by an institution recognized in this field, using its own trained facilitators, and fully proficient in the language and cultural background of the respective Taglit-Birthright Israel group[s].

The following are the responsibilities and requirements of the parties involved in implementing the topic TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH:

1. **Provider:** A suitable provider needs to:

   1.1 Train its relevant staff to correspond with Taglit-Birthright Israel’s educational objectives, requirements and standards.

   1.2 Make available a document entitled "The Essential Jewish Bookshelf", which catalogues the cannon of Jewish texts.

   1.3 Hold a preparatory discussion with the respective Trip Organizer in order to:

      • Become familiar with the demographic, cultural and social background of the respective group, and any other issue that may assist the TALMUD TORAH - BEIT MIDRASH provider to integrate this program into the overall Taglit-Birthright Israel educational experience.

      • Become familiar and correspond with the educational narrative of the respective group: themes, sites, programs, lectures, important questions and concerns, and any other issue that may assist the TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT
MIDRASH provider to integrate this program into the overall Taglit-Birthright Israel educational experience.

- Send the respective group leaders a preparatory document in a timely fashion, including details of the texts to be studied, in order to facilitate possible connections with other aspects of the overall Taglit-Birthright Israel educational experience.

2. **Trip Organizer:** A TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH program requires the following arrangements by the Trip Organizer:

   2.1 Prepare the group for the BEIT MIDRASH session; ensure that the group understands the general objectives of the TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH program in advance.

   2.2 Contact the TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH provider in advance, in order to:

   - Ensure that the TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH provider understands the overall thematic flow of the educational journey: core questions and concerns, sites, programs, lectures, and any other issue that may assist the TALMUD TORAH - BEIT MIDRASH provider to integrate its program into the overall Taglit-Birthright Israel educational experience.

   - Refer and relate to, at opportune moments during the ten-day trip, to the textual resources that either were, or will be taught by the TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH provider.

3. **Location:** Suitable locations for a TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH program are:

   3.1 An adequate study room[s]/space[s] in the BEIT MIDRASH institution itself
Or:

3.2 An authentic field venue or setting, as long as these are conducive to the program's objectives

And:

3.3 A study environment encompassing no more than 25 participants per session. Each group of 25 participants must have its own teacher.

4. **Duration**: The duration of a TALMUD TORAH --- BEIT MIDRASH program should be one and a half to two full hours.

**Topic 4: Hebrew as a Living Language**

**עברית כשפה חיה**

**Rationale**

One of the defining elements of the Zionist Movement that led to the creation of the State of Israel included a profound vision about culture and language as core component of a revitalized Jewish people. The renaissance of Hebrew as a spoken and written language in Israel, and in many other venues in the Jewish world, is one of the most significant achievements of the modern Jewish experience.

For Israel and the Jewish people as a whole, Hebrew is not simply a vehicle of transaction in daily life. Rather, it is seen as a value; that is, a practical dimension both deeply rooted in classical Jewish texts and a modern evolving vernacular which is part of the identity of being Jewish.

The centrality of Hebrew, however, is not universally apparent. In some of the large Diaspora communities, Hebrew is viewed in its (important) roles as the language of
prayer and text-study, but is not necessarily recognized as a definitive cultural value.

One of the powerful effects of the Taglit-Birthright Israel experience has proven to be the participants’ daily and immersive contact with Hebrew as a living language. Indeed, Taglit-Birthright Israel participants react with great excitement, enthusiasm, and wonder at being exposed to a Hebrew-speaking society.

While the Taglit-Birthright Israel ten-day educational experience does not afford a serious immersion in Hebrew, it does provide a firsthand opportunity to experience the central and promising role of language in Jewish identity formation.

Objectives

The educational objectives of the topic HEBREW AS A LIVING LANGUAGE are to:

- Introduce the integral link between Hebrew, Israel and Jewish identity
- Explore through venues and personalities the evolution of Hebrew as a language of the Jewish State
- Excite participants about the remarkable emergence of Hebrew as a modern living language and a social vehicle in Israel
- Introduce opportunities and/or cutting-edge institutions for intensive Hebrew-study and entry into Hebrew upon return to one’s home community

Requirements

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should choose programs that:

- Experientially and creatively present the story of modern Hebrew in Israel
- Enable content-based interaction with sites, institutions or personalities that exemplify this topic
- Devote adequate time and space towards a comprehensive deliberation on
  1) Hebrew as a value
2) The connection between language and identity
3) Options for post-journey studies of Hebrew

IV. Creation of Community

Recreational Group Activity

Rationale

A part of Taglit-Birthright Israel’s educational vision seeks to offer its participants at least one recreational activity which may contribute to group dynamics, bonding and overall cohesion. Programs that may fall under RECREATIONAL GROUP ACTIVITY include “ropes”, camel-rides, jeep-tours, rappelling and so forth.

Requirements

Taglit-Birthright Israel will also recognize as RECREATIONAL GROUP ACTIVITY an additional outdoors sleep-over, as long as the Trip Organizer demonstrates that:

- The outdoors sleep-over site corresponds with a region which is being explored on the journey, and assists in its contextualization
- The outdoors sleep-over is enhanced by a structured recreational activity which associates with the site and / or the explored region

V. Mifgashim

Rationale

“Mifgash” refers to the multi-day (five to ten days) peer-to-peer meeting between young adult Jews from abroad and from Israel. It has been a dimension of Taglit-Birthright Israel since its inception and constitutes a cornerstone of its educational platform. The focus of the mifgash is an authentic and symmetrical interaction, wherein both parties are provided the equal opportunity to examine unique
perspectives, while seeking shared ideas and values. For the Israeli it is an opportunity to understand the nature of Jewish life outside of Israel through the inner worlds of contemporary peers. For the overseas participant it is an opportunity to understand the nature of life in Israel as experienced by their young Israeli peers.

**Objectives**

The educational objectives of the **MIFGASH** are to:

- Enable both parties to explore their personal identity and relationship to Israel by genuine interactions with their respective peers
- Enable both parties to explore their collective identity and relationship to Jewish peoplehood and Israel
- Enable participants to experience the lives and diversity of attitudes as reflected by their respective peers
- Enable participants to build long-lasting friendships, and associations which extend beyond the **Taglit-Birthright Israel** ten-day educational experience

**Requirements**

In order to fulfill the above objectives, Trip Organizers should:

- Appoint a staff person responsible for all aspects of the *mifgash*
- Prepare overseas participants for the *mifgash* experience
- Work with the **Taglit-Birthright Israel** *Mifgashim* coordinator, to implement all the elements of Israelis’ recruitment and participation
- Participate in the preparatory seminar for Israelis, conducted by **Taglit-Birthright Israel**
- Participate in post-journey *mifgash* debriefing with **Taglit-Birthright Israel**

*Mifgashim: Additional Information*
• The Taglit-Birthright Israel Mifgashim coordinator and Trip Organizers work together on recruitment and placement of Israelis

• The prospective Israeli candidates come from diverse sectors. While currently the majority arrives from IDF units, Taglit-Birthright Israel also seeks candidates from universities and private and public sectors.

• Israeli participants must demonstrate reasonable fluency in the vernacular of their respective group

• The equation of Israelis to overseas participants usually is:
  ▪ 5 days mifgash: 1 Israeli participant per 5 overseas participants
  ▪ 10 days mifgash: 1 Israeli participant per 7 overseas participants

• Israeli participants are equal in standing to overseas participants and therefore subject to all regulations, as specified by Taglit-Birthright Israel. Participants on active duty also abide by additional IDF regulations

IVI. Balanced Messages

Rationale

Taglit-Birthright Israel is committed to introducing its participants to the diversities that characterize contemporary Israeli life. It maintains that the unity of the Jewish people does not suggest uniformity of opinions about Judaism and Israel, or about approaches and practices of Jewish living. Taglit-Birthright Israel emphasizes the democratic roots of Israeli society as expressed in Israel’s Declaration of Independence, and the many ethnic, religious, political, ideological and cultural viewpoints that have shaped the formation of Israeli society in the past and in the present. It is committed to a balanced presentation of alternative views on complex issues, and it aims to enable participants to understand the subtleties of diversity within a contemporary democratic Jewish society. Taglit-Birthright Israel does not promulgate any specific ideology about forms of Jewish practice, religion, politics or the conflict between Israel and some of its neighbors; Trip Organizers should therefore introduce the existence of multiple perspectives within the context of the broader discourse in contemporary Israeli society.
Requirements

1. Trip Organizers may not utilize the ten-day educational journey to promulgate, either directly or indirectly, a specific position or stance on the issues presented above.

2. Heads of Trip Organizers, or any staff member, may not utilize sessions to promulgate a specific political or religious ideology, or to advocate a judgmental position towards any participant concerning their individual Jewish identity and practice.

3. When using external presenters, Trip Organizers should guarantee appropriate introduction and summation which frames the discussion by indicating that the presented view[s] do not necessarily constitute the definitive position in contemporary Israeli discourse.

4. A Trip Organizer should provide opportunities for differing positions to be presented within the context of the ten-day educational journey.

5. Trip Organizers should ensure that all participants - both from abroad and Israelis - are given the safe time and space to reflect on and exchange their own views and reactions on the issues presented above.

6. At some point in the first 48 hours of the educational journey, Trip Organizers should present the spirit and the practice of these overall guidelines to the group. This session is an educational opportunity to create a culture of civility and openness that guides the journey as a whole.
VII. Staff

Rationale
The Israeli and overseas staff that accompanies the Taglit - Birthright Israel ten-day educational journey is one of the most important educational factors in the success of the entire experience. Staff plays multiple roles in affecting the trip, and in this section we spell out both the educational rationale and the formal requirements for staff for Taglit - Birthright Israel educational journeys.

A Taglit - Birthright Israel trip is not a blank slate visit to Israel; the staff plays a significant role in framing the visit and offering appropriate contextualization of different experiences. Taglit - Birthright Israel aims to insure the highest quality of its staff, educationally as well as Jewishly. It seeks staff that cares for people and their growth, and makes the participant, his/her connection with the group, with the surrounding community and with Israel their main focus. In addition, Taglit - Birthright Israel seeks staff with deep devotion to its core motifs, themes and values, as well as sound knowledge of Judaism and Israel, and an open and pluralistic approach to framing the overall experience.

The Israeli and oversees professionals who lead Taglit-Birthright Israel educational journeys should function as an organic unit. The synergy between the staff members is essential in insuring smooth functioning of the ten days, intelligent and effective division of labor, a model of group dynamics and a productive use of each staff member.

Objectives
A Taglit - Birthright Israel staff team should reflect the following qualities:

1. Jewish Educator
The Taglit - Birthright Israel staff team are informal Jewish educators whose mission is to guide, teach, explain, and make the educational journey a personally
and collectively meaningful Jewish experience for participants. The educator’s role is the creation of emotionally engaging, intellectually challenging and enjoyable experiences.

2. Knowledgeable about Judaism and Israel
The staff team’s knowledge about Judaism and Israel implies not only the ability to lecture on a subject or a site, but also the ability to enrich the educational process by posing engaging questions, suggesting alternative viewpoints, helping participants to think about larger themes, and by linking certain sites or programs to other venues of the ten-day experience.

3. Accessible and Visible Role-Models
Accessibility and visibility as role-models is reflected by the staff members’ commitment to personal Jewish identity, Jewish communal life and a connection to the State of Israel, while simultaneously being open and responsive to diverse approaches to these issues.

4. People-Centered Facilitator
Taglit -Birthright Israel groups are heterogenic in nature, as they bring together participants from different backgrounds and with various levels of knowledge, commitment and expectations. Therefore, staff needs to have skill and finesse in the ability to work with people, as well as to be sensitive to diverse opinions, learning and behaving styles. The Taglit -Birthright Israel staff also needs to be skilled in group dynamics, since a significant aspect of the ten-day journey is related to group processes.

5. Experiential Educator
The direct engagement of participants with ideas, people and sites is central to the experiential approach in Taglit -Birthright Israel. The educator’s role is not only to create such educational experiences, but to help participants to understand, internalize and wrestle with their meaning.
Requirements

Trip Organizers have the overall responsibility for staff selection, recruitment, training and supervision.

1. All educational journeys must have a Tour-Educator who is licensed as a tour-guide by the Ministry of Tourism of the State of Israel. This individual has overall authority and responsibility for the group. The Tour-Educator must be an Israeli over the age of 24.

2. Every group of 40 participants must have – in addition to the Tour Educator – two full-time staff members that are with the group for the entirety of the program. Staff must include at least one male and one female.

3. The following is the ratio of staff to participants of groups less than forty:
   - Up to 29: 2 staff (at least one Israeli Tour Educator and 1 from abroad)
   - 30-40: 3 Staff (at least one Israeli Tour Educator and 1 from abroad)

4. Israeli staff needs to:
   a. Be fluent and communicative in the language of the respective group
   b. Have the minimum of a Matriculation Diploma (Teudat Bagrut) from the Israeli Ministry of Education
   c. Have proven experience in working with youth or young adults from abroad
   d. Demonstrate core literacy of Jewish and Zionist history, along with knowledge of contemporary issues concerning Israel
   e. Participate in any required seminars or in-service programs, offered by the respective Trip Organizer, and in some cases by Taglit-Birthright Israel
5. Staff from abroad needs to:

a. Be minimally 21 years of age

b. Have a proven prior Israel experience, preferably on an educational journey, and with staffing responsibility

c. Have participated in a training program, offered by the respective Trip Organizer, and in some cases by Taglit-Birthright Israel

d. Have proven experience in working with youth or young adults from abroad, or having held leadership positions in youth or campus organizations

e. Demonstrate core Jewish literacy, as evidenced by, for example, day-school graduation; Hebrew high school studies; Jewish studies at a university or the equivalent

f. The recruitment of new applicants for a trip does not by itself qualify a person to be accepted as a staff member on a Taglit-Birthright Israel educational journey

6. Trip Organizers are responsible for:

a. Employing a Tour-Educator who is licensed as a tour-guide by the Ministry of Tourism of the State of Israel

b. Conduct a pre-journey training program in Israel and abroad for the staff

c. Guarantee a training process that prepares the staff from Israel and abroad to work together as an educational team
d. Guarantee that all training and preparatory programs include the presentation of the Taglit-Birthright Israel Educational Platform, authorized branding, logistical and administrative standards.

VIII. Submitting Itineraries and / or New Activities for Taglit-Birthright Israel’s Approval

Rationale
The educational itinerary is the foundation upon which Taglit-Birthright Israel journeys are built. As such, it aims to adhere to the educational and logistical standards of Taglit-Birthright Israel, without compromising the unique educational rationale and overall character of each Trip Organizer.

Requirements

For Requirements and Instructions for submitting Itineraries for Approval, please refer to LOGISTICAL REQUIREMENTS, Part Four - Section II (Itineraries & New Activities)