

## **Hebrew College Statement on Israel**

Throughout its history, Hebrew College has had a strong and vibrant relationship to Zionism and the state of Israel. Founded as part of the Hebraist movement, we have remained deeply and consistently committed to fostering a connection to the people, land, language and culture of Israel as a cornerstone of our educational mission. We are particularly passionate about nurturing relationships that grow in the fertile ground of lived experience – immersive programs for our students in Israel, and intensive collaborations with Israeli partner institutions and individuals.

Our attachment to Israel, and our commitment to its significance in contemporary Jewish life, continue to make a profound claim on us as Jews living in North America. We feel a sense of responsibility to help our students cultivate a connection to Israel that is rooted in a love of the Jewish people, a deep understanding of Jewish history and contemporary Israeli society, and a commitment to democracy, pluralism, and human rights.

As a pluralistic educational institution nurturing learners of all ages and training Jewish leaders for the next generation, we engage a diversity of views and seek to promote dialogue and education about Israel in a spirit of shared inquiry and mutual respect.

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*\*Links will direct people to specific program webpages that describe their Israel education goals and curricula. A sample of these descriptions is on the following pages.*

## Rabbinical School

### **Our Approach to Israel Education and Engagement**

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### **Preparing Rabbis for Leadership about Israel in the Twenty-First Century**

Whether they serve on college campuses or in congregations, in schools or in other communal organizations, today's rabbis are called upon to provide intellectual, moral, and spiritual leadership about Israel in an increasingly complex and often divisive political environment. A thoughtful, informed, and deep relationship with Israel – rooted in personal experience and nuanced study of Israeli history, culture, and society – is therefore an essential part of our training for the twenty-first century rabbinate.

The heart of our approach to Israel education and engagement is our year-in-Israel program. During their third year of rabbinical school, students live and study in Jerusalem, cultivating a personal relationship with the land and people of Israel, and engaging with the richness and complexity of contemporary Israeli life. Through a combination of Hebrew

language instruction, intensive text study, *mifgashim* (structured encounters) with Israelis, special seminars and tiyulim, volunteer work in Israeli organizations, spiritual direction, and mentorship with leading Israeli rabbis, our students explore the place of Israel in their own religious lives and in their emerging visions of rabbinic leadership.

In addition to our year-in-Israel program, we offer intensive dialogue and education about Israel as part of our ongoing curricular and co-curricular activities – including special week-long and day-long seminars, lectures and courses with visiting Israeli scholars, public programs on Israeli arts and culture, and annual communal observances of Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzma'ut.

### Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education

The Shoolman School fosters strong connections to the people, land and culture of Israel through immersive programs, nurturing relationships, collaborative partnerships and substantial curricular focus.

#### **Activities:**

**The Pardes Day School Educators Program** – training outstanding Jewish studies teachers for day schools since 2000 –two-year program in Jerusalem that combines intensive text study at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies with a Master of Jewish Education from Hebrew College.

**Visiting Israeli Scholars** including faculty from Oranim College (*the largest and leading academic college of education in the North of Israel, catering to thousands of students enrolled in bachelor's and master's degree programs in education, teaching certification courses, and advanced career training.*)

#### **Boston-Haifa Early Childhood Educators Connection**

Facilitated by Hebrew College in Newton, MA and the Department of Education in Haifa, this program strengthens leadership and Jewish identity by creating personal connections among early childhood educators in Boston and Haifa. The exchange program matches 20 preschool teachers from Boston with their counterparts in Haifa to collaborate on professional development programs and personal connections.

**The iFellows Master's Concentration in Israel Education** nurtures and challenges the next generation of knowledgeable and passionate educational leaders committed to the integral role of Israel in contemporary Jewish life. Its goal is to develop an approach to Israel education rooted in a sophisticated understanding of contemporary Israel and its history, combined with an innovative educational strategy and practice.

### Prozdor

#### Building Transformative Relationships Between Israeli and American Jews Through Youth and Young-Adult Engagement

Hebrew College and Prozdor are at the forefront of innovation and creation in the area of American-Israeli learning and collaboration for youth. Through numerous programmatic and curricular options, along with Israel travel experiences, participants in our programs and courses on both sides of the partnerships are able to co-create a new reality for Jewish youth in American and Israel informed by a deeper understanding of the particular cultural frameworks in which their identities have developed.

Our programs create a deeper mutual understanding that contributes to a cooperative global initiative in addressing the challenges that face the Jewish people which will, in the process, mold the evolution of a new and comprehensive identity for themselves and Am Yisrael. The power of this partnership between American and Israeli youth, working together on equal footing, is a dramatic transformation of the traditional dynamic that has informed Israel-Diaspora relationships, and is shaping a new reality for how Jews on both sides of that partnership trust and learn from each other, and work as partners in creating a bright Jewish future.

#### **Prozdor-Reali Partnership**

Hebrew College and the Hebrew Reali School in Haifa have developed a meaningful sister-school partnership. Through a combination of curriculum development, immersive travel experiences, staff exchanges, technology-based learning, and project development, we are creating new best practices for twenty-first-century Israel-Diaspora education and collaboration, while forging intense connections between hundreds of students and families in both communities.

Through our leading-edge curricula, Prozdor and Reali students jointly examine their particularly Jewish perspectives on pressing societal challenges that are not being solved by political structures that seem to be ineffective and increasingly polarized.

Critical issues surrounding freedom of speech, economic policy, environmental advocacy and regulation, the boundaries of government surveillance, and the separation of church and state are studied by students in both schools through an innovative case study model co-developed by educators at Prozdor and Reali. Students from Haifa and Boston evolve their own, original suggestions towards new solutions to these challenges.

Each month-long module begins in an online platform with a shared case study, continues with student-led investigation and inquiry, and concludes with a real-time videoconference session in which student groups make presentations as a result of the online collaborative work.

In the process of studying this curriculum, the students begin to understand the different perspectives each has of the other, as well as their own self-image. This contributes to a deeper understanding of the contexts out of which their ideas of their Jewish identity differ.

### **Hevruta Gap-Year Program**

The Hevruta Partnership in Global Jewish Learning and Leadership, a collaboration of Hebrew College and the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, is the first fully integrated and balanced gap-year program for North American and Israeli student leaders from a diverse range of Jewish backgrounds and perspectives. Hevruta students study, learn, and live together in Jerusalem for ten months, strengthening ties between the individuals participating in the program and, in turn, their countries. The program addresses both Israeli and North American cultures and contexts as compelling centers of contemporary Jewish leadership and discovery.

### **Teen Travel to Israel**

Prozdor sponsors regular trips to Israel, where students have the opportunity to explore the Jewish homeland through a host of meaningful activities and programs. The power of peer travel has been proven over the years; those who go on trips through Prozdor tend to be the most committed and passionate students.

### **Certificate in Jewish Teen Leadership**

Hebrew College and the Cohen Camps offer a joint Certificate in Jewish Teen Leadership to prepare teens for their immersive Israel leadership experience. This nine-month program trains participants in the Cohen Camps' Dor L'Dor Israel program to become reflective leaders and practitioners. Instruction takes place both online and in classrooms in Israel and the United States.