

A JNFuture's Journey

By Sam Goldberg

MY JEWISH NATIONAL Fund journey began after college. Following the Israel-Lebanon War of 2006, JNF organized an Alternative Spring Break trip to replant trees burned in Israel's forests during the campaign. While we were only in Israel a week, it was one of the most productive and meaningful seven days of my life. We helped rebuild what was lost.

Returning home I felt renewed Jewish purpose and joined JNFuture—a newly formed group for young professionals ages 23-40. Ready to make a difference with my fellow Futures, I attended my first JNF National Conference in Philadelphia in 2009. Looking around the room, I felt disheartened seeing too few young people. Something had to be done.

At the 2010 JNF National Conference in Atlanta, JNFuture members pitched the idea of bringing leaders from across the country together on a trip to Israel. We thought to find ways for these new leaders to build relationships with one another regardless of where they lived, and promote them to work together while seeing firsthand the various projects they were helping support. Lay leader Dr. Toby Mower, a strong believer in the vital role of the next generation, immediately committed to fund the Jewish Leadership Institute Mission (JLIM). Without Dr. Mower, this endeavor could not have happened.

Our inaugural JLIM trip in 2011 had 27 participants, including myself. The trip was eye-opening; invigorating our Zionist commitment to the current, and future, State of Israel. Friendships were formed, and more

importantly, a community of like-minded and like-hearted individuals willing to make personal investments into our homeland was created. I witnessed this again when I participated in the first JNF Leadership Development Program in Los Angeles. These JNF programs made a big difference in my life, providing me with a means to protect Israel and help her thrive—an important goal in my life.

Donors invest in JNFuture for the same reasons Jews have survived through millennia. No matter how difficult or inconvenient—we stick together. Our ancestors dreamed of returning to our homeland and now we must

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protect and build it. But this is an ongoing endeavor. We can never be complacent, and we must always invest in our future. In prayer, we say *L'dor V'dor* [from generation to generation], so too must we do in our efforts.

There is nothing I am more passionate about than the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Yet, if not for the community of JNF donors who paved the way before me, this might only be expressed through my words in passing conversation. But, thankfully, this is not the case. I have an example to follow.

Without JNF, there would be no forum for me to channel the feelings in my heart into reality on the ground.

The JLIM trip is now entering its 7th year, and JNFuture has over 22 of chapters across the U.S. and Israel, with 830 members. We have built an incredible cadre of individuals who are committed to Israel and we continue to grow.

There is something about the Jewish community that compels us to contribute. Granted, *tzedekah* is something many of us were taught as young children—often with JNF's little Blue Boxes, but it is also a great feeling to invest in our purpose. JNF projects and programs have

contributed to all of humanity. Our *chesed* [kindness] is what makes us special—our contributions are what make me proud to be Jewish.

Hundreds of years from now, Jews will speak about our time as the time of Israel's rebirth...I am honored to be a part of our living history.

In my life, I have experienced personal difficulties and tragedies.



I watched my home and all my possessions be engulfed by fire. I suffered indescribably painful injuries. I faced intense anti-Semitism at a young age. My Jewish values keep me going and I am driven to contribute. *I cherish celebrating our collective success.*

On that first JLIM trip in 2011, I made a commitment. I shared this commitment with our group of young leaders as we visited Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem. I then pledged: To use my best judgment in decision making, be ethical and righteous; listen to my community, family, and friends; do my best to advance humanity to become more righteous, decent, and law abiding; teach the foundation of our Jewish heritage to my children—if I am blessed to have them; love G-d and the life I was given, which is the greatest gift; stand by my people, the Jewish people; and to preserve and protect Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Jewish people.

Join me in doing more for our people. Join me in leaving a stronger, better Israel for generations to come, surpassing any dream our ancestors could have ever had. Join me in making JNF impactful beyond measure. Join me in building Israel not as we know it, but with the vision of how great it can truly be.

“If you will it, it is no dream” - Theodor Herzl

Sam Goldberg is an entrepreneur and the first JNFuture member to donate \$1 million and become a World Chairman's Council Member. With special thanks to Karen Springer. To learn more about joining JNFuture, please contact Sharon David at sdavid@jnf.org or call 212.879.9305 x242.



The 2014 JLIM Mission group in Halutza