

# Massa– Masar 2016

## "JOURNEY" PROGRAM

MARCH 13 - 16

From March 13th–16th, a group of 30 Israeli teenagers embarked on a Journey to engage with diversity and become closer together. The unique opportunity of this Journey rests in the fact that our teenagers represent Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faiths. Their experiences and identities center around the diverse cultures and environments through which they have been raised.



Like the land of Israel itself, our teenagers embody separate yet overlapping identities—it is the goal of the Massa–Masar program to expose our students to multiple narratives regarding the complexity of living in conflict. Through our Journey to towns and villages that practice living together—in both peace and conflict—and our conversations with leaders in social justice, we were able to illustrate to our students that change is possible.



Oasis of  
Peace



DAFNA KARTA SCHWARTZ  
HEAD OF PLURALISTIC SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY CENTER,  
WAHAT AL-SALAM - NEVE SHALOM

“The focus throughout the Journey was on finding places where we can meet, respect each other, discover ways that we can enrich each other and create a reality in which there is hope for everyone. The message is that we can dare to create structures that can bring people together in equality. As we moved between different locations, between different communities and met people, we again and again returned to the core question of what we learned from the encounter that we can bring into our lives.”



## WHO WE ARE

The Massa–Masar program was founded through collaboration between the Pluralistic Spiritual Community Center of Wahat al–Salam – Neve Shalom, the “Open House” located in the Jewish–Arab mixed town of Ramle, the Christian Orthodox School and Terra Santa School of Ramle, and Givat Brenner High School. For many of these students, particularly those of the Jewish Givat Brenner High School, joining the Journey would be the first time they would be able to interact with the “Other.” It is through this unique interaction that we aim to foster values of respect for oneself and one another, social justice, and appreciation for nature and the environment among our students. In helping achieve this goal of integration and tolerance, the Journey is also facilitated by two young adults experienced in the field of dialogue facilitation between Arabs and Jews of Israel. For the students, these young facilitators serve as role models who illustrate the reality of living together in peace. This year, we also had the pleasure of learning with students who participated in last year's Journey.

*“I knew that there would be magic with the collection of people because I came on the Journey last year. It held true, but my personal experience changed because I was with my friends and in my comfort zone last year. Now, I’m seeing it from the outside and I see that it’s their time. It’s amazing to see this.”*

*17-year-old Arab student that participated in both this and last years' Journey*



## HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Created by experienced leaders in Jewish–Arab relations, the Journey began early in 2016 when students were recruited for the program at their respective high schools. All tenth–grade students of the Christian Orthodox School, Terra Santa School, and Givat Brenner High School were invited to join us in an exploration of self–identity within the Israeli Jewish–Arab context. After presentations of the Massa–Masar program were given separately at each high school, the students then received the opportunity to come along on the Journey. Those who took on the exciting challenge came together a week before the Journey to meet for the first time—the anticipation and apprehension of the mixed group was palpable. This first meeting represents a critical step in the process of coming together, and it allowed our students to work through their initial social anxieties. The Journey itself is a field trip to various locations in Israel that demonstrate the possibility of coexistence. The program includes seminars with leaders of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, interviews with those who lead sustainable lives, happenstance meetings with Jewish and Arab citizens that live in mixed environments, communal social activities, and explorations of nature.

## OUR STUDENTS

"First, I came for fun, but now I see a connection with the Jewish people. I am very happiness because first I came here with my friends and now I have even more friends."

16–year–old Arab student

"With our reality, we didn't think that we would have a connection with the other side. But, our reality is covering the truth. I believe that there is no such thing as all people being bad, and that there is no difference between Arabs and Jews."

16–year–old Jewish student



"I was a little afraid that someone [Jewish] would insult me. I've heard other voices that I had not heard before, and I didn't know that Jewish people want to live together too."

16–year–old Arab student

# THE JOURNEY - PART I

After much anticipation, our group of students finally met for the 4-day Journey into Israel's complex mixed heritage on March 13th. We convened outside the Christian Orthodox School in Ramle in the early afternoon. At this point, any observer would be able to sense the mixed emotions of our students: confusion, excitement, fear, shyness, and laughter.



Our first stop in Ramle was the studio and home of local artist Nihad Dabeet. Here, the students were able to learn about the creative and communal powers of art. After the visit to Nihad Dabeet's studio, we were welcomed into the "Open House"—an exceptional model of Jewish-Arab coexistence. The "Open House" functions as a preschool that embraces young children of all communities (in fact, some of our students attended this preschool themselves). Dalia Eshkenazi who grew up with her Israeli Jewish family in what is now the "Open House" founded this center for peace education. Dalia explained to our students how one day, in July 1967, she answered a knock on her front door only to find three exceptional Arab men asking to visit inside the home. The men told Dalia of their own journey and revealed that the home had belonged to their family for several generations years before; at that moment, Dalia faced a choice and she decided to accept the men inside. Ultimately, a strong friendship developed between the two families who together decided to consecrate the home as a center for social justice and integration within Israel. Dalia's story clearly struck a chord within the hearts of both our Jewish and Arab students—again, this experience represented a first step on their Journey to discovering the possibility of peace. The night was spent at Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom where we enjoyed a delicious dinner, played interactive games, and began to know and understand one another.

The next day was spent in Jerusalem where the students had the opportunity to visit cultural and historical sites of significance to both Arabs and Jews. Through this dual platform, our students began to see how their seemingly separate identities could be easily bridged together through a common history. In Jerusalem, we spontaneously met three women soldiers who told of the struggles serving in a conflict zone, and a male soldier who expressed admiration for our project. Additionally, we spoke with a Jewish woman of a mixed neighborhood that blessed our mission, and an Orthodox Jewish man who prayed with his infant child. That night, we all came together to celebrate Shabbat dinner at the ecological Essene Farm located in the mountains of Jerusalem. Before resting for the night at the farm, our youth participated in an activity where they were able to share symbols of their own identities with one another.

# THE JOURNEY - PART II

Our third day was spent in the beautiful nature of Israel. We began the morning with a relaxed hike through the nature surrounding the Essene Farm, and in doing so, learned the value of appreciation for the environment. After the hike, we returned to Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom for our last evening together where we enjoyed a beautiful, traditional Arabic dinner and came together for an exhilarating drum circle. We began our final day with a seminar on the relation of the Abrahamic religions held within the Spiritual Center of Wahat al-Salam – Neve Shalom. Dafna Karta Schwartz spoke of the ways in which our students' respective religious identities demonstrate a universal human bond.



Our last day ended in the Jewish village of Nataf with bittersweet emotion. Earlier in the day, we had visited a mosque in the Arab village of Abu Ghosh and later a synagogue in Nataf. Here, the students observed how despite differences in customs and beliefs, fundamental ideas of spirituality could be connected. The Journey ended with a picnic in a local park of Nataf. After eating, we broke out into small groups with the students to discuss their feelings on ending the Journey. Our final goodbyes were made as we all took turns telling what we loved of one another and how we had impacted each other through the Journey. Because we had heard many stories of the injustices and suffering associated with living in a conflict zone, the students eyes opened beyond their typical experience. This change in perception allowed the young adults to connect with one another despite their previous biases. Ultimately, it was through the process of connection, this Journey with one another, that they reached a vision for Jewish-Arab peace.

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

We invite you to please visit the following links in order to learn more about the Massa-Masar program, view images of this year's Journey, and learn how you can become involved with the movement for coexistence.

[Massa-Masar 2016 Image Gallery](#)

[Massa-Masar 2015 Video](#)

[Massa-Masar 2016 Article](#)

[Massa-Masar 2015 Report](#)

[Massa-Masar 2015 Image Gallery](#)

[Massa-Masar 2015 Article](#)

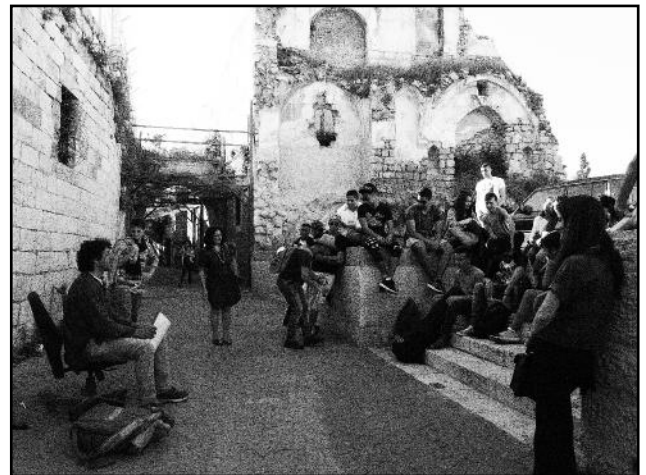
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“We connected with the other team very quickly. We really feel like friends now. In the moshav, we never see non-Jewish people. It’s not something I thought I could ever experience.”

16-year-old Jewish student

“I didn’t think there would be a connection with the Jewish kids, but they got involved with us very quickly. It turned out to be so much fun.”

16-year-old Arab student



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## ELAD VAZANA

MASSA-MASAR CO-MANAGER, DIALOGUE FACILITATOR  
TOUR GUIDE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE, TOUR FOR CHANGE  
[WWW.TOUR4CHANGE.COM](http://WWW.TOUR4CHANGE.COM)

"We give a lot of attention to see every one of the participants as a leader who can change his life and the lives of others. We are investing in hope. If there will be peace in this region in 5 or 50 years from now, then there should be people now who plant the seeds of building trust and communication between the people of this land."