



STRENGTHENING DIASPORA JEWRY AND ALIYA ABSORPTION



**THE RELIGIOUS
ZIONIST PARTY** LED BY
BEZALEL
SMOTRICH

The State of Israel is the home and joint patrimony of the entire Jewish people.

Since the early days of the state, Jewish people around the world have worked on behalf of the State of Israel, donated money to purchase land, strengthen Jewish settlement, and support Israel's emerging social infrastructure and security establishment. Beyond this, Jews the world over worked tirelessly to garner political support for the State of Israel in a variety of countries. Their efforts and perseverance demonstrated deep commitment to the Land of Israel, even from a distance.

In the past year (5782/2021-22), more than 60,000 new immigrants moved to Israel, the largest number of immigrants to come in a single year in over two decades. More than a quarter of these new immigrants (27%) are young adults between the ages of 18-35.

The arrival of these new immigrants promotes social and economic growth, strengthens Israel's Jewish demographic, and brings trained professionals, such as doctors and teachers who are much needed in Israel, to help the country develop further and prosper.

Since 2005, the increased Jewish population in Israel has transformed Israeli Jewry into the largest Jewish community in the world. With that, most Jews (more than 8 million Jews) do not live in Israel and live in communities around the world. Given that all Jews bear responsibility for one another, we believe that the State of Israel must assume genuine responsibility for Jewish continuity.

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Informed by a deep sense of responsibility for our fellow Jews around the world, we seek to address the following challenges:

- 1.** Increased apathy toward Jewish identity and detachment from Zionism among many Diaspora Jews, specifically young adults.
- 2.** The struggle to sustain communal institutions and Jewish schools in many Jewish communities abroad.
The negative impact of Antisemitism and the BDS movement and the delegitimization of Israel on Jews around the world, specifically on college campuses (according to studies, 41% of Jewish young adults profess that they do not identify with the State of Israel).
- 3.** The need to strengthen the "infrastructure that makes aliya possible" – which includes both communal institutions and educational initiatives abroad that vocally support Jewish identity and Zionism, as well as communal frameworks in Israel to support recently arrived immigrants.
- 4.** As part of the fallout of these challenges, in many countries around the world, intermarriage (assimilation) rates have skyrocketed and pose a threat to Jewish continuity.



STRENGTHENING "SHLICHUT" IN JEWISH COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE.

At current, many nonprofit organizations work independently and dispatch "shlichim" (emissaries) – young Zionist Israeli informal educators, teachers and families – to different Jewish communities around the world. These shlichim are highly devoted and passionate individuals who do important work strengthening Jewish identity, Zionism and an attachment for the State of Israel. Yet, despite their important contributions, shlichim are not officially recognized by the state and often do not receive proper compensation for their work.

IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET WE WILL TAKE THE FOLLOWING CONCRETE STEPS TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES:

- 1.** We will pass legislation that calls for official state recognition of shlichim who work in Jewish communities around the world.
- 2.** We will conduct round-table discussions with different nonprofit organizations that send shlichim to Jewish communities and encourage the state to recognize these organizations as official service providers.

JEWISH AND ZIONIST EDUCATION.

The high cost of Jewish education in Jewish communities around the world makes it hard for many Jewish families to send their children to Jewish schools. As a result, many Jewish children grow up without a solid Jewish and Zionist identity. Additionally, many Jewish schools struggle to find and retain teachers who can provide their students with a top-rate Jewish and Zionist education.

In the upcoming Knesset we will take the following concrete steps to address these challenges:

- 1.** We will establish ties, cooperation and relationships between Jewish day schools around the world to help these schools develop a core curriculum steeped in Jewish and Zionist values as well as promote joint needs.
- 2.** We will significantly increase the number of Israeli teachers who teach in Jewish day schools abroad, specifically day schools in smaller communities. This initiative will bring teachers to these schools for a few years at a time, enrich the quality of instruction in these institutions, and infuse the surrounding communities with deep Jewish spirit and Zionist values. On their return, their experiences will enhance teaching in the Israeli education system.
- 3.** We will promote educational programming and initiatives that seek to strengthen Jewish identity and Zionist values among communal leaders and people who shape public opinion abroad, specifically in communities with high rates of assimilation.
- 4.** We will assess the possibility of opening English-speaking high schools in Israel that will cater to students from abroad who are interested in receiving a high-quality high school education in Israel at a fraction of the price they would pay in their home countries.



SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN JEWISH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND GLOBAL ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENTS.

Antisemitism, the BDS movement and the delegitimization of Israel on college campuses have become a force to be reckoned with, with direct repercussions not only for the State of Israel, but also for the way young Jewish adults feel toward their Jewish identity and Zionism. The next generation of Jews – the leaders of tomorrow – are the key to strengthening the Jewish and Zionist spirit of the future and we must give them the support and encouragement they need.

Further, many Jewish students from communities around the world come to study in Israel at different points in their lives, and for a variety of reasons their Zionist spirit is often weakened in Israel, as a result of different experiences they undergo in the context of their studies.

In the upcoming Knesset we will take the following concrete steps to address these challenges:

- 1.** We will strengthen Zionist educational activities and support advocacy programs and leadership initiatives that will address these challenges on college campuses.
- 2.** We will promote training programs and leadership initiatives for Jewish students who come to study in Israel and empower them to be agents of change and help spread the truth about Zionism and Israel when they return home.
- 3.** We will work to secure funding for the global Zionist youth movements as part of the state budget.



ENCOURAGING ALIYA AND SUPPORTING NEW IMMIGRANTS

Jewish immigration to Israel is a cornerstone of the State of Israel, as described in the Declaration of Independence. The return of the Jewish people to its ancestral and indigenous land marks the realization of prophecies delivered centuries ago, and serves as a catalyst for the State of Israel's ongoing social development and economic growth.

If one analyzes the data from recent years though, it becomes apparent that aside from extreme events (such as the war in Ukraine), decreased personal security and rising antisemitism alone do not really prompt Jews from around the world to move to Israel. Primarily, Jews are motivated to make aliya for idealistic reasons.

This reality is contingent on two things: a local communal infrastructure that prizes Zionism and supports the State of Israel, as well as optimal support for new immigrants upon their arrival.

IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET WE WILL TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO SUPPORT ALIYA:

1. We will support Jewish communities abroad that run Zionist programming to encourage aliya.

2. We will promote programs in Israeli communities earmarked as "absorption communities" and enable these communities to provide social and personal support for new immigrants.

3. We will work to mitigate the bureaucracy encountered by new immigrants who seek to transfer their academic degrees and professional licenses.

4. We will reassess the benefits included in the 'Absorption Basket' and streamline them to correspond with current needs of new immigrants.

5. We will amend tax statutes and international tax agreements to make things easier for new immigrants and ensure that they do not forfeit social benefits or pension policies when they move to Israel. We will also work to prevent double taxation, which deters potential immigrants.

6. We will work to improve conditions for lone soldiers and young adults from abroad who volunteer to perform national service.

7. We will work to facilitate the aliya of 50,000 French Jews who according to a recent study would like to emigrate but cannot make the move in the absence of a proactive plan to promote their aliya.

8. We will pass a widespread governmental motion that enlists the help of all government ministries to support aliya and optimize the services provided by each ministry to encourage immigrants and immigration.

10. We will establish unique aliya programs that encourage professionals to move to Israel – such as doctors, teachers, and high-tech employees. These programs will be streamlined to address issues that challenge the country as a whole (such as the shortage of trained physicians, the need to develop cities and towns in the periphery, the need to empower the local high-tech industry etc.)

12. For the duration of our tenure in Knesset, we will conduct round-table discussions with organizations that support immigrants in order to identify and address ongoing issues.

9. We will support nonprofit organizations that encourage aliya by enabling these groups to increase their activities abroad and ascertain that the needs of new immigrants are addressed comprehensively throughout the entire process, both prior to their aliya and after they arrive and settle in Israel.

11. We will advance initiatives in both formal and informal educational settings that help new immigrants acculturate by teaching them Hebrew, encouraging them to join youth groups, and enabling them to participate in programming at community centers, among other things.

13. We will amend the Law of Return and its different stipulations to reflect current trends in Israel and ensure Jewish continuity in the land of Israel. (For example, the 'Grandchild Clause' will be annulled.)





STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND DIASPORA JEWRY

The strong feelings of mutual responsibility that link Israel's Jews with Jews who live around the world must be predicated on deep mutual understanding. Most Israeli Jews are entirely unaware of the distinct challenges that face Jewish communities abroad.

Accordingly, we believe that new immigrants to Israel are an important bridge and an incredible resource, and it is important for them and their distinct worldview and understanding of these issues to be represented in government and other leading forums.

IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET WE WILL TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO SUPPORT ALIYA:

- 1.** We will advance educational initiatives to increase the exposure of Israeli students to Jewish communities abroad and enable them to get to know one another.
- 2.** We will include new immigrants in different leading forums that discuss and address important issues. We will also include them in leadership positions in the Religious Zionist Party and in government.

“GAP YEAR” IN ISRAEL.

Every year, tens of thousands Jewish post-high school graduates from around the world come to Israel to study, the vast majority in conjunction with ‘Masa’. Their year-long presence in Israel presents an unparalleled opportunity to reach these students, deepen their connection to the State of Israel, and increase the likelihood that they will remain and chart a course to their future here. Even if they choose to return home after their year of study, these students still have an important role to play. Infused with deeper appreciation for the State of Israel and Zionism, and deeper attachment to Judaism, they can become ambassadors of these values when they return to their communities abroad.

IN THE UPCOMING KNESSET WE WILL TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO SUPPORT THIS PROCESS:

- 1.** In the context of a specialized forum, representatives of the Religious Zionist Party will meet regularly with heads of school and program coordinators who serve this population. This forum will be dedicated to discussing and addressing their students’ distinct challenges and needs.
- 2.** We will work to reverse and revise budget cuts that slashed funding for Masa participants who study at yeshivot and seminaries during the Corona crisis.
- 3.** We will work to secure extra funding for programs that increase Zionist programming.
- 4.** We will work to minimize the bureaucracy involved in securing student visas for all students from abroad, including students under the age of 18 and Israeli citizens who live abroad.
- 5.** We will advance programming and leadership initiatives for this student population, both during their year of study in Israel and after their return home during follow-up, that seek to deepen their connection to Israel and bolster their decision to return here, or alternatively, empower them to function as ambassadors of Zionism and Jewish values in their communities abroad.





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