



**BronfmanIM
Magazine**

Winter 2013-2014

BronfmanIM Magazine

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SHALOM

Every once in a while, in the middle of a day's work at the office or when spending the day with Bronfmanim of any age, we find ourselves looking at each other and recalling: the Bronfman Fellowships is simply not a normal endeavor. It's slightly crazy to try and change Jewish life 46 teenagers at a time (that's 26 fellows and 20 amitim each year). It's somewhat crazy that so many of those 46 teenagers become a community of adults - networking, arguing and inspiring each other long into their thirties and forties. And it is rather ludicrous to try and run these two communities – one in North America and one in Israel – which are so very different, and yet the same, and different again...

This year we celebrated 15 years of our Israeli Bronfman community, Amitei Bronfman. Today we can proudly say that Israeli Bronfmanim can be found in some of the most crucial and creative intersections of Israeli society. From the Israeli Supreme Court to an underprivileged highschool in Beer Sheva, from innovative theater in Tel Aviv to medical research in Rehovot, from the secular elites to Orthodox yeshivas – and most interestingly in the growing creative middle space of “non-denominational” Israeli-Jewish identity – Israeli Bronfmanim are deepening the discourse, enriching people's perspectives and creating new solutions. It's been riveting to watch, and the comparisons to our North American community abound.

One of the questions constantly on our minds is how we bring these two adult communities to learn from and be inspired by each other? Of the many things we do, this is perhaps our most challenging task. Our earliest years of the American fellowship did not include an Israeli counterpart. And when Amitei Bronfman was created it took many years before the Mifgash with Israeli Bronfmanim was anywhere near as impactful as the rest of the Fellowship experience. It is not easy to bridge cultural divides and language differences in ten days.... not to mention as adults where the other community might feel even more distant.

Yet the potential is huge. We have an enormous amount to learn from each other, and it often resides outside what the organized Jewish community tells us about the other. It is a daunting task, but we believe that as long as we strive for relevancy, authenticity and mutuality in the Israeli-American Bronfman relationship, we can achieve a surprising impact. We have begun this process with our two Alumni Advisory Boards, and plan to expand the collaboration further in the coming years.

When Edgar Bronfman founded the Fellowships in 1987, the big rift in Judaism was denominational, and it was there that pluralism, learning and mutual understanding were most needed. Today we believe it is the Israeli/American Jewry relationships that can benefit most from “Bronfman values”.

We are only at the beginning of exploring this new way of thinking about the relationship, and welcome your thoughts, questions and ideas. This magazine, which opens a wider window into the lives of Israeli Bronfmanim, is part of that endeavor. We're excited to bring our communities to bear on this challenge, and look forward to doing it with you.

Yours,
Mish and Becky

Rabbi Mishael Zion, Rebecca Voorwinde
Co-Directors, The Bronfman Fellowships

Amitei Bronfman in Numbers:



1998 Year of first Israeli Bronfman cohort **20** Amitim selected each year **8** Fellowship Year Seminars, consisting of **43** Days of speakers, learning, group experiences across Israel and including **12** Days spent on the America seminar **300** Amitim Alumni since 1998, ranging from **18** year olds to **32** Age of oldest Amitim **10** Members of the Israeli Alumni Advisory Board



A Blank Page

Playwrights in Conversation



Lior Soroka (Amitim '99)
..... **and Itamar Moses (Fellow '94)**

Lior: What are you working on these days?

It's a musical adaptation of a novel "The Fortress of Solitude" by Jonathan Lethem. It's about a friendship between two boys, one white and one black growing up in the Gowanus section of Brooklyn in the 1970's. The author looks at how the neighborhood transformed over the years and the different styles of art and music that emerged in the neighborhood during that time. It's a 400 page novel so we had to throw out tons and tons of scenes and characters and still adapt to the essence of the story and make it work.

So you're doing the workshops now?

We'll do some public presentations because when you are working on something for so long and you're so close, it's

hard to see clearly what you still need to fix. So it's good to put in front of people.

Do you always find yourself in the characters you are writing?

I think that everything that I write, and I suspect that this is true for a lot of writers, has to be in some way autobiographical. That is, it could be literally true, something that really happened to you, or something that is emotionally or psychologically autobiographical. Otherwise you are writing from the outside in, it's harder to give characters life that way. But even if you're writing about something that really happened to you and is completely autobiographical, it's usually a mistake to stick to exactly what happened because it will probably not work as a story.

So the answer is always sort of yes and no. It has to be some combination of autobiography and invention. Peoples' understanding of what is autobiographical tends to be really shallow, they look at the most obvious signs. If I would write a play about a writer who acted totally differently then me and does things I have never done, I would be asked all the time if it was autobiographical. The answer would be yes, but in a deeper way.

It's similar to your play "Bach in Leipzig", I read it and I thought "What the hell!" It's so far from you, but can you still find yourself in it?

The argument is that incorporating pure creativity, in spite of all the things that happen to us in our lives, is what distinguishes someone who is able to create great work and someone who is not. When I wrote that play, I was very young, I was questioning if I could do work as great as I dreamed, though right now I'm just worried about getting work done at all. Just to finish and get it out there. Does that mean it's autobiographical- I don't know. But I think any good play will wrestle with the question the writer himself is wrestling with.

You're writing for different mediums, television and theater. Do you find them to be different?

The biggest difference is that when working for television, I've always been on the set of someone else's show. I have never had the privilege of creating my own. I had someone telling me what to do, which is very different. You're writing about characters someone else invented, about a universe someone else created and then you come up with your own ideas for stories that can happen to those people in that universe. We are all sort of thrown together in the writers room, every writer can contribute an idea and then we decide what the best stories are. By the time you begin to write, you have an outline that 5-6 people created together. You're a player on a team. You figure out how your skill can best contribute to helping the team win. Which is great and actually why I like alternating between the two. It's good for the ego to spend some time working for someone else's vision.

Where do you usually write?

When I'm at home I almost never write at my desk. The place where I am officially supposed to write is the hardest place to write. I'll write while lying on my couch. For some reason it's easiest to write when you feel like you're getting away with something. Like you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing.

Some say the hardest part is to start- sitting in front of blank page. Where do you start?

It depends, I think sometimes it is easiest to start with whatever part of the script I am most excited to write. If I

know there is a very exciting thing that is going to happen in scene three and I can't wait to get there- just write that first. Sometimes I don't know what the first scene of the play should be, or what should happen in it until I finish. Just write what you're most excited about. As I move through, I don't know what happens in the next five pages, but I know what's happening a bit later. So I just skip to that point and write the next thing you're sure of. Sometimes, you're surprised that things you're sure of start to line up and you don't need as much in between as you thought.

When I wrote my first play I found it really interesting meeting the actors, they had a lot of new ideas, things that they thought I should add and change. What is this like for you?

It's always interesting. Everyone will have ideas, and sometimes those ideas can be very good and sometimes less good. The better your understanding is of what you want to do with the play the easier time you will have distinguishing between the useful ideas and the not useful ideas. You have to be very careful making sure that everyone is contributing to the same vision. An idea might be a good one, but not a good one for the play overall..

How do you decide when you are done writing a play. With other arts- like painting- there is a time when you know you won't touch it anymore, but with writing it seems endless.

It can be, especially with theater. I guess once the play has been published and produced then you say- I should stop working on it. Almost never because you actually think it's perfect. After enough time goes by, I find that I have grown enough as an artist, not that I have gotten better, I have gotten different, and then I play begins to feel like it was written by somebody else and I am not interested in working on it anymore. If you're the writer there is always going to be something you are not satisfied with. You can work obsessively on one play and never write anything else. You need to tell yourself you'll come back to it later, but move on at a certain point.

Do you see a new wave of young Jewish writers in America?

It's funny because three of the writers associated with this wave, Jonathan Safran Foer, Dara Horn and I were all on the same BYFI year. Like in every generation of young American writers, a bunch of them are Jewish. It doesn't seem like a new phenomena- every culture produces its artists. Unlike the other writers in that group I don't write very directly about Jewishness or Israeliness. Bua After I wrote about baseball players, pipe organists and scientists, maybe I'm finally ready to write about my Israeli parents.

Layman's Terms

Three Bronfmanim share terminology and inspirations in their fields of action



1 Louisa Kornblatt | BYFI 2009 The Writing Shelter at the Women's Safe House

The Writing Shelter merges two different populations: students from Washington University in St. Louis and women living in a domestic violence shelter. Every Monday night women of all ages and backgrounds congregate in the main meeting space of The Women's Safe House to journal, share life stories, and discuss poetry and prose. The program provides a safe space where volunteers and women can develop their own voice and offers transformation for women who have suppressed their narratives of abuse in order to survive. Each session includes an introduction of sorts, an examination of a text, and a writing activity. Mentors are both active writers and trained in the sensitive topic of domestic violence. I began working on this project in the summer of 2011 during my year as a BYFI-Repair the World Campus Ambassador.

My understanding of domestic violence and sexual assault developed first in the classroom. My frustration with

structures of oppression quickly rose and encouraged me to expand my learning beyond the classroom. I encourage the use of sensitive discourse, but ultimately I stress the need to get up and volunteer. Scholarship must be paired with service. We cannot isolate ourselves within a classroom just as we should check our service work off a to do list with no reflection.

Personal Challenges:

My personal privilege has been enemy ever since the beginning of this project. When brainstorming I was intoxicated by the big ideas swarming around in my head. However, I often worried that my dreams were only going to reinforce stereotypes. I was worried that my mainly white, middle-class, female, young volunteers would not be able to connect with the population at the shelter who are primarily African American, lower-class, and vary in age. However, I set up a system in which we embrace diversity instead of trying to pretend like we are all exactly the same. Every person sitting around the table comes

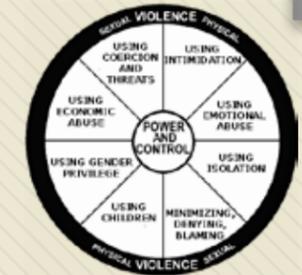
from somewhere distinctly different and as a result has something unique to say.

After two years of pushing to get The Writing Shelter fully off the ground, the program has finally found its wings. There has been an explosion of interest in the project and our

number of volunteers this semester has almost quadrupled, growing from six to 22 volunteers, not counting many more interested and supporting the project from the outside. Since joining the Campus Y last fall, The Writing Shelter now has an infrastructure to rely on and a means of sustainability. This program has grown far beyond me.

* Layman's terms

The Power and Control Wheel: The power and control wheel was developed by DAIP (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs) in Duluth, Minnesota in 1984 and illustrates the range of experiences in abusive relationships. The misconception is that domestic violence (DV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) is only about physical violence. However, this wheel demonstrates that DV is about power and an abusive partner may use any of these tactics to manipulate and control.



Intersectionality: This term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and revolutionized the way feminists understand the relationship between identities and oppressive systems. Crenshaw used the word to describe how race oppression and gender oppression interact. An African American woman experiences sexism in a unique way because she is both a woman and is black. It is impossible to separate one identity from another. Oppressions do not act independently, but instead connect to create a system of oppression.

Structural violence: Dr. Paul Farmer explains, "Structural violence is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way... The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people ... Structural violence is visited upon all those whose social status denies them access to the fruits of scientific and social progress."

The term is used to refer to institutions such as the legal system or the health care system that victimize and oppress marginalized populations. There is no visible agent because the infrastructure of the institution itself prevents an individual from gaining access, getting assistance, or expressing an opinion.

Inspirations – people, places, or moments

My parents are and have always the most important supporting force in my life. They are my cheerleaders, encouraging me to do good and listen to my instincts. My father—an elementary school teacher, a children's book author and playwright, a film maker, a musician, an artist, an actor, and a jokester—has taught me to be passionate, creative, and not take myself too seriously. My mother—a Russian literature Professor, a previous dean of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's graduate school and chair of the Slavic Department, and now a nursing student—has taught me how to handle all kinds of personalities, be reliable, see projects all the way through, and put up with my father.

Carla Falasco - he volunteer coordinator of The Women's Safe House during the incubation and creation of The Writing Shelter—has been my biggest advocate. When I was searching for community partners she immediately expressed interest and has stuck with me these past few years. She has given me a voice within the bureaucratic shelter system that can be resistant to change and supported my lofty plans. She is an idealist like me and has kept me grounded, while always pushing me to think big. I am so grateful for her guidance and friendship that she so willingly offered from the start despite my naivety and lack of experience.



2

Ben Guido | Amitim 2001

Building an elementary school - Waaree, Ethiopia

Over the course of the past year, I received an AVF grant to lead a project to complete the construction of an

Elementary school in rural Ethiopia under the auspices of Engineers Without Borders. I had already spent time working in Ethiopia after my army service, and knew that this school was began six years ago and never finished. The school is in Warree, a tiny village two and a half hours drive on a dirt road from the nearest town, Harar, and a further ten hour drive from Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

We spent two months planning the strategy for our project so that we would be able to bring six people to Waaree and finish the building within a month. We would plaster the existing walls, add a tile floor, build an acoustic ceiling, paint the entire space, and equip the classrooms with desks, blackboards and shelves. We also planned to add solar panels on the school roof to provide electricity so that

the school could have night classes for adults. Lastly, we devised a plan for a system to collect rain water from the school's roof, as the village has no running water.

Unfortunately, as we all know too well, good intentions and planning do not always mean that we succeed. Two of us arrived in Ethiopia early in order to liaise with the local government and obtain the appropriate permits for our work. However, the office of the local governor ordered us to stop working, claiming that we did not hold appropriate licenses for humanitarian work in Ethiopia. Over the course of a month we tried to work with various bureaucratic agencies, but had no success. It turned out that the company I had previously worked for in Ethiopia was worried about us doing independent work in the region, and had persuaded the governor's office that our work wouldn't be advantageous for the residents of the region. We were subsequently returned to Israel and are currently reevaluating our plans and goals.

* Layman's terms

Oromia - Ethiopia is a federal state divided into separate states, the largest, and poorest, of which is called Oromia. Their culture is referred to as Oromo, and they speak the Oromo language.

Bureaucracy (from French Bureau (office) + Greek Kratos control).

1. Control by office workers who only refer to written rules when making decisions and act punctiliously in accordance with these rules.
2. "Foot-dragging" or "paperwork" that takes no notice of the urgent needs of those dependent on that office (From the Even Shushan dictionary)

Solar system - A system which is designed to convert the sun's energy into electricity. This type of system has three components:

- A. **solar panel** - this absorbs the sunrays and creates the voltage necessary to charge the system
- B. **battery** - which is capable of being charged and unloaded.
- C. **Solar Charge Controlle** - this element maintains a balance between the voltages and the currents, ensuring that nothing becomes overcharged.

Inspirations – people, places, or moments

Motti Yazi - Motti is my original inspiration in pursuing this project, as he had the original idea for the school and started the building project. It was a telephone conversation with him about his dream of completing the school that spurred me to initially think about becoming involved with the project.

Basha Jamal - Basha serves as a source of inspiration for my life, as well as for the project itself. He is a young Ethiopian man who works for the CARE organization – which promotes and implements various microfinance initiatives. He is also very active in promoting the status of women, and equality between the sexes.



3

Noga Or-Geva | Amitim 2000

PhD Immunology Department | Faculty of Biology Wiezmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel

MIX and Match: Bone marrow transplatation made easy.

Most cells of the body have finite, defined jobs, but stem cells are those cells that can still decide what to do when they "grow-up". Bone marrow transplatation (BMT) makes use of transplanting blood stem cells (Hematopoietic stem cells) by essentially substituting diseased cells of the patient with healthy stem cells from the donor. In some cases, the patient can act as his/her own donor (i.e. autologous transplantation), mainly prior to chemotherapy or radiation treatment, where after treatment stem cells can be re-infused. However, in many cases separate donors are used (i.e. allogeneic transplantation), which requires matching of patient-donor tissue types. Any mismatches will increase chances of the graft being rejected and of graft-versus-host disease. Graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) is unique to BMT, it occurs because the bone marrow graft contains immune cells as well as stem cells. When the tissue of patient and donor are mismatched the immune cells of the donor recognize the patients' body as foreign, like they would a virus, and start attacking the body of the patient. This illness can often cause death. The process of finding a match is tedious and it takes months to find a matched unrelated donor in different registries. About 20% of patients do not find a match and many patients die waiting.

After finding a good donor, and collecting stem cells, the patient must undergo conditioning therapy – using either high dose of chemotherapy and/or radiation to kill unhealthy cells. After the transplantation, to prevent

rejection of the graft, medications to weaken the immune system (i.e. immunosuppressant) are used as well. These treatments are very harsh and leave the body of the patient very vulnerable to different diseases. Some older or very sick patients are not eligible for transplantations because their bodies cannot withstand these treatments. I've conducted research at the Wiezmann Institute of Science for the last 5 years, and am currently in the 3rd year of my PhD. The ultimate goal of our studies is to transfer bone marrow without tissue matching, meaning anyone can be your donor. My studies aim to solve the two problems raised here:

1. The need for tissue matching
2. The harsh conditioning prior to BMT.

Luckily we have been successful at overcoming the need for tissue matching in our experiments in mouse models and are now beginning translation into humans. In these experiments we transplant bone marrow from a completely mismatched mouse donor into a conditioned mouse host, mimicking what would happen in the clinic. In order to prevent GVHD, we remove the immune cells from the graft before transplantation. Our main innovation is the transplantation of uniquely engineered immune cells. These cells have the capacity to promote tolerance to the graft but do not cause GVHD, even though they are immune cells. Moreover, we have been successful in transplanting mismatched bone marrow under reduced intensity conditioning, so that the patients' immune system remains intact and the patient is less vulnerable to infections. We are improving our protocols to make them safe for treatment of less severe illnesses, such as anemia.

* Layman's terms

Stem cells - are undifferentiated cells, which are not committed to a specific tissue type or activity. This is what all our cells began as with during embryonic development. These cells can differentiate into specialized cells and can also divide to produce more stem cells.

Bone marrow transplatation (BMT) - makes use of transplanting blood stem cells (Hematopoietic stem cells - HSCs) that reside in the bones. These HSCs can form three different types of blood cells:

1. red blood cells that carry oxygen
2. white blood cells that fight infection
3. platelets that help blood to clot. BMT is used for treating severe blood or immune system illnesses.

Immune Cells (white blood cells) - are cells of the immune system involved in defending the body against both infectious disease and foreign materials. These cells are derived from hematopoietic stem cells and have different roles in the immune response. The number of these cells in the blood stream is often used as an indicator of disease.

Bronfman Homes

The people for whom BYFI occupies their daily routine tell us about the home they return to at the end of the day



The Voorwinde Home

Becky (33), Co-Director of BYFI program in Israel and the U.S., BYFI 1997, Mick (33) and Miriam (20 Months) New York

Becky

Becky was born in Connecticut until age 12, when she moved to Massachusetts with her mother and stepfather. Her parents divorced when she was 5. Every other Shabbat, at her father's, was an Orthodox one. Her mother, who was born in Israel but grew up in the US, led a secular life. During her Bronfman summer, she could suddenly answer questions from both perspectives. It was both exciting and confusing. She studied at Barnard, a women's only college, which she loved. Her senior thesis was about Jewish American Identity and the New York Teachers' Strike of 1968, which was led by Jewish teachers.

Mick (Michael)

Grew up in Australia in a town by Melbourne, in a devout Christian home with a Dutch father and an American mother. Works as an Engineer. Currently planning a new Subway line. In his free time, he enjoys working with wood and mountain biking.

How they met...

Becky came to Australia for a semester. The two met at a social event on a boat (they do that kind of thing in Australia). There was an immediate connection. She went back home at the end of the semester. A year later, he came



for a two month visit. After college, she moved to Australia. Five years later, they were married. Before the wedding they backpacked for six months in South America.

The Move

The American symbols of success had no meaning in Australia. She had to be herself – a humbling experience. As far as Jewish life was concerned it was difficult for Becky, which is why they came back to New York in 2006. The Community in Australia wasn't creative and their identity was based largely on the Holocaust. Also, it is important for Becky to live close to her sister who has Down Syndrome. Becky worked at an NGO that advised businesses and government agencies about Employee Diversity.

Question at hand

Where is Home? For them, Home is comprised of several factors – being close to their family, a meaningful job and living in a just and equal society. The first two criteria exist in New York. But the third is lacking – money plays a huge part and the social gaps are growing all the time. Since Miriam was born they've become much more politically active, which surprised them. They suddenly feel there's someone who will inherit the reality they leave behind. Living in Australia is a confusing alternative. The need for

a creative Jewish community alienates them from there. Besides, America has more models of interfaith marriages. It's important to them that they have decided to raise Miriam as a Jew and that Mick isn't planning on converting. Miriam calls Becky Ima and Mick Dad.

A typical Friday

There's always a Shabbat moment – They light candles in candlesticks Becky got from her Grandmother, who Miriam is named after. Sometimes there is a quiet prayer or a silent

family moment.

Specialty of the house

Pasta – can't mess it up. Everyone works late and the house is vegetarian.

How Mick defines Bronfman in one sentence

The Bronfman Youth Fellowships allow precocious young Jews to explore their identity and realize their potential through an enduring dialogue with a dynamic and diverse group of their peers.



The Zion - Golombick Home

Mishael (32, Co-Director of BYFI), Ilana (34), Zohar (6.5), Shai (4.5) Missing: Three month old Elya, who had fallen asleep, and Zohar's front teeth which had fallen out that morning at school
Jerusalem

Mishael (Mish)

Mish grew up in a number of homes in the Talpiyot neighborhood, always close to the author Agnon' House. The area is an important part of his family's heritage. Rabbi Moshe Sachs, Mishael's grandfather, was a Relief Officer for the Haganah movement during the War of Independence. When Agnon refused to leave his home in Talpiyot during the war, Moshe was sent to protect him. When Moshe died, his family found an old Passover Haggadah which Moshe had put together and Agnon had edited. Mish studied at Maaleh Gilboa Yeshiva for three years, and then served for three years in the army. He enjoyed his time at Yeshiva, but the army was difficult. This was mostly because he was in a position that, at first, sounded interesting, but ended up being disappointing - the Foreign Forces Liaison Division. After his military service, Mish co-authored "Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices" with his father

Ilana

Ilana is originally from Haifa, where her mother made history by beginning the first environmental movement in the city. She began her crusade against pollution because her daughter had asthma. Ilana served in the intelligence unit. She is older than Mish and was a first lieutenant while Mish was only a first sergeant. After they moved back to Israel, she started a cognitive research laboratory at Bar Ilan University.

How they first met...

When they were teenagers. Ilana and Mish were dating other people. Their boyfriend and girlfriend happened to be neighbors, so they also got to know each other. They met again during their army service. Mish had to spend a year and a half trying to convince Ilana to be his girlfriend. But nine years later, it seems to have worked.

New York

After four years of marriage they moved to New York. Ilana

began a post doctorate in neuroscience. Mish started Rabbinical studies at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. They always blamed one another for leaving Israel. Now they blame each other for returning. Their first apartment was in Harlem – tiny with brown walls and windows facing their neighbors. Two years later they moved to the Upper West Side.

Returning to Israel

They moved back to Israel last summer. The label "return" is quite irritating – mainly because the years in New York were good ones. When they were deciding to move back, it was like they were standing in the middle, looking at themselves living both lives. In the German Colony, where they live now, Mish has memories of every street corner and he knows exactly where you will be able to smell jasmine during the summer. But, sometimes, they wish that they were in a new, unknown, place that they could explore and discover.

Question at hand

How to keep an open household, bringing in guests and interacting with the outside world, while still creating a strong nuclear family. Can you keep the door wide open and still make sure that the walls of the house are thick and protective?

A typical Shabbat

They only just returned so nothing is typical yet. Friday night they pray at home or at synagogue, but they like it best when they pray at home. When they're not home, they divide their time between the three different synagogues.

How does Ilana define Bronfman in one sentence?

Great program, great people, she is especially fond of the educational director. If only she could understand what type of Rabbi he is...



The Serkin – Yehuda Home

Tova (33), Program Director of Amitei Bronfman, BYFI 1997.
Yair (38), Noam (3), and Gil Yehuda (6 months).
Modiin

Tova

Tova was born in Brooklyn, New York and grew up in an Orthodox neighborhood. People around her spoke Hebrew and a bit of Yiddish, they even had a kosher gym. The first time she met non Orthodox Jews was at BYFI. She left home to attend Harvard, which started one of the most significant experiences of her life, due mainly to her extracurricular activities – editing the Harvard Crimson, participating in Hillel, and being the stage manager of many theatrical productions. Even now, she likes making things happen from behind the scene. She originally had plans to work in public health. Her senior thesis was on swine flu and she still enjoys reading about diseases. Just before she planned to start her career in public health, she went to Israel for a year as part of the Otzma program, volunteering with children. She decided to stay. She made the decision for two reasons, her attachment to the atmosphere, language, food and culture and because of Zionism according to her definition- the aspiration to build a better place, bringing justice and openness to Israeli society. But she was worried that she had chosen to stay because of a fleeting enthusiasm, and so she returned to the United States for a year to work for Hillel as the assistant to the CEO. Her experience taught her a lot about the non-profit world. She returned to Israel and in the last ten years she has worked in a variety of jobs, including philanthropies, volunteer leadership and organizational development.

Yair

Yair was born in Holon, the son of Iraqi immigrants. His mother is a traditional in her perspectives and opinions, but his late father was a communist. He served in the 8200 intelligence unit, studied at the Technion in Haifa and is currently a software engineer for WebCollage. He is a typical computer geek and loves his work and Neil Young. Surprisingly, he is an excellent Scrabble player, in English!

How they met...

They met through JDate. They moved to Herzliya and got married after two years.

The Wedding

They were married at Kibbutz Galil Yam. They wanted Shimon Felix, BYFI's former Executive Director, to marry them, but the Israeli rabbinate wouldn't give him a permit to officiate at the wedding. Tova almost gave up getting married in Israel, but in the end they got married by a rabbi from the Tzohar Organization. Their largest arguments were over the music. Tova wanted the traditional Jewish wedding music that she was used to, and Yair thought that it was ridiculous. But he agreed in the end, and Tova also let him play Iraqi music.

Question at hand

Where to live? At the moment they live in Modiin, trying it out and seeing how it goes. They are searching for a community, a way to experience a diverse Jewish lifestyle. They also want everything young parents always look for – a good education and a good life for the kids. But they would be really happy if it didn't take them two hours to get to work.

A Typical Shabbat

They eat at home or with Yair's family. They usually eat Sabich, a custom from Yair's family – a traditional dish consisting of pita stuffed with fried eggplant, hard boiled eggs, hummus, tahini, Israeli salad, potato, parsley and amba. All the ingredients are spread out on the table and each person makes their own sandwich.

How would Yair describe Bronfman in one sentence?

It is an attempt, naive perhaps, but necessary, to create dialogue and pluralism in an increasingly divided country.



The Ezrahi – Landes Home

Daphi (24), project coordinator at Amitei Bronfman, Amitim 2005. Yitz (25), BYFI 2005 Jerusalem

Daphi

Daphi was born in Jerusalem and grew up in a Reform family, attending a Reform Hebrew School and synagogue. She went to an arts high school, and focused on dance. She was also a counselor for the Telem (Movement for Progressive Judaism) youth movement. Her time dancing and working as a counselor form a "large part of who she is today". Before going into the army she spent a year in the Reform pre-army program in Jaffa, which was a "building and intensifying" experience. In the army she served as a commander at the Havat Hashomer basic training army base, for soldiers with serious behavioral problems. Her service was a "difficult and amazing" time. After the army, she took a bartending course, took odd jobs, and travelled in North and South America for eight months. After she got back, she began working at Amitei Bronfman in a variety of roles. She's also studying History at Hebrew University. In her spare time she volunteers for Encounter, organizing meetings between groups of Israelis and Palestinians (with the help of the Alumni Venture Fund Grant she received last year!). She also works with a clinic run through the Jerusalem "Open House" that tests for HIV and leads an interfaith youth group.

Yitz

Yitz was born in the United States and grew up in Teaneck, New Jersey. It was pretty much a shtetl, 60% of his neighbors were Orthodox Jews. Even the deputy mayor is Jewish, even though the shtetl rabbis "would have been disappointed by this show of materialism and the capitalism". He went to a fantastic elementary school with an open floor plan where they encouraged artistic creativity and informal play. He played the saxophone, sitar and the bass. He went to High School at Ramaz, in New York City, which had a stricter framework. He even had to wear a tie every day. When everyone around him was completely stressed about college, he already knew he wanted to go to Israel. He decided to study at the Otniel yeshiva, mainly because it has a different and opened mindset. While at Yeshiva he became involved in anti-occupation

activity and used his American citizenship to travel and meet Palestinians. He then enlisted in the army and was a commander and platoon sergeant. Yitz has known since he was in high school that he wanted to be a Talmud scholar, and is currently a Masters' student in the Talmud and Jewish Law Department at Hebrew University. He is writing a thesis on alternatives to animal sacrifices in Talmudic literature in the context of the broader religious discourse at the end of the ancient period.

How they met...

At Camp Ramah at the Israel Goldstein Youth Village (!) in the summer between sixth and seventh grade. Daphi remembers a chubby boy with a strange name who already had the fourth book in the Harry Potter series. Their paths crossed again during the BYFI Mifgash when Daphi was an Amit and Yitz a fellow. Yitz came to Israel for a visit during Sukkot the following year, and they finally got together. They had a long distance relationship until Yitz moved to Israel.

The wedding

In May 2013. The discussions about the wedding began with a difficult conversation about Halacha that took place on the banks of the Hudson River, New York. They both decided that they wanted to have a home that incorporated Halacha with sensitivity and compromise. They had trouble finding a ceremony that would mirror these ideas, so decided to build one themselves. Though the ceremony wasn't completely comfortable for either of their families, Yitz's family felt comfortable Halachically and Daphi's family felt that their values were being represented. Daphi and Yitz felt that they had created something significant.

Question at hand

What community should they belong to, if any? Yitz "I knew that this question would come up after the wedding, and it has, big time". There is a problem of Americans going to Israel for a short time and creating insular communities. **They want to be part of a grounded community, not one in a constant state of unrest. But they're also just not sure if they're even community people in the first place.**

A typical Friday

Clean the house, finish cooking for Shabbat and then talk



Yigal and Dor's Home

Daphi (24), project coordinator at Yigal (President of the Va'ad, the Israeli Alumni Advisory Board, Amitim 2000) and his partner Dor (both are thirty) On the borders of Tel Aviv, Givatayim and Ramat Gan

Yigal

Yigal was born and raised in Kfar Saba. He was a student at the Nachshon pre-army academy. His time at the academy was a formative one, when he was exploring his identity and coming out as gay. After graduating, he served in the Nahal Infantry Brigade and then in field intelligence. After completing his military service he hiked the Israel National Trail and then returned to the Nachshon academy, this time as a counselor, for two years. He then studied law at Hebrew University and he is currently completing a legal internship with the Deputy Attorney General. He volunteers for the Hoshen (Education & Change) Organization, an information center for the LGBT community.

Dor

Dor was born in Kiryat Bialik but spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Rishon Lezion. He served in the Nahal Infantry Brigade, and after completing his military service he toured across South America. Over the course of his trip he realized that he wanted to be involved in education and teaching. When he returned began his degree at the Ofakim Program for Educational Academic Excellence at Tel Aviv University. For the past two years he has taught Bible and Israeli culture and been a home room teacher at a middle school.

How they met...

Through a dating website, when Dor lived in Tel Aviv and Yigal lived in Jerusalem. But by chance both of them spent their weekends in Kfar Saba and so they began to chat online. Dor saw immediately that this was his destiny. It took Yigal until the end of the weekend to come to the same conclusion, only after Dor volunteered to tutor him for a test (though he didn't know anything about the material) and spoiled him with an exceptionally good breakfast (this, it seems was a hint of things to come). They started living together after dating for eight months.

Their home

They live in Ramat Tayasim on a block bordering Tel Aviv, Givatayim and Ramat Gan. This is their second apartment in this area. They found the apartment within two days of searching and they fell in love with its tranquility and spaciousness. It's a proper home, especially in comparison to their last apartment. They recently got back from a trip to Ireland and London in celebration of their 30th birthdays, and brought back a lot of little things to decorate their new apartment. Now they just have to deal the weak water flow in the shower.

Their biggest question right now?

How are they going to continue celebrating their 30th birthdays? After touring Ireland and London, Dor and Yigal are thinking of going on a joint skydiving ride.

A Typical Friday

They have a fixed ritual – they wake up late, go and do their shopping and then clean. They eat a late breakfast with fresh rolls from the neighborhood bakery, fruit juice, Israeli salad and "incredible" tehina prepared by Dor. They eat dinner either with Yigal's parents or Dor's mother.

The House Speciality

They love tuna cutlets, potatoes and sweet potatoes cooked in the oven in a bonfire style. Yigal says that Dor is a fantastic cook. Lately they have tried to eat fewer animal products – so tuna cutlets haven't been on the menu so often.

How does Dor describe The Bronfman Fellowship in one sentence?

It's something Yigal was involved with when he was in high school and now he's involved with its alumni committee. Basically – he has no clue.

Amitim Blessing Draft

When I founded The Bronfman Fellowships in 1987 to bring Jewish teenagers in America and Canada to Israel, my goal was to provide an unprecedented educational opportunity for the best and brightest young Jewish minds. By engaging deeply with Israel, I hoped they would learn about themselves as Jews and form the basis of a lifetime of committed Jewish learning. When we began the Amitim program 15 years ago, I had similar aspirations for young Israelis -- a concept perhaps even rarer for young Israelis than their American counterparts.

What I have come to find among the most rewarding aspects of the Fellowships, is the exchange between these two groups. Judaism is a global enterprise and each of us in our complexity as a Jew has a stake in the outcome of that endeavor. The scroll of the Jewish people's story continues to unfurl before us. The greater our understanding that we are interconnected, and are invested in that connection, the more rewarding our continuing story will be.

I have been asked to write a blessing for you to commemorate the past 15 years, but the truth is that you have been the blessing to me. As a Jew who does not believe in God, but very strongly believes in Jewish peoplehood, the idea of a prayer or blessing does not resonate in a traditional sense. For me, a blessing is a statement of intention of purpose and an expression of gratitude.

It is traditional for Jewish parents to bless their children each Shabbat with the words: [Hebrew] "May the Lord bless you and keep you, shine his light upon you and give you peace." When I reflect upon those words, they are less about the prayer and more about the communication of love and pride. Each of you has given me much cause to be proud, and you have also taught me a great deal in my conversations with you over the years. Thank you for being my teachers. In gratitude for that, here are my blessings for you:

May you be a blessing to every person you encounter with your compassion, curiosity, wisdom and ability to seek truth and justice.

May you bless Israel with a strong sense of what is possible through the practice of Jewish pluralism and provide an example through your actions for what it means to live together in mutual respect.

May you live to infuse Judaism with vibrancy, creativity and vitality. May you ask questions and use them as a source of growth and not as a basis for alienation.

May you expand the boundaries of Jewishness for all and do it from a place of informed and thoughtful consideration.

May you be blessed to experience a lifetime of connection to each other, your communities, and the Jewish people as you grow throughout your lives.

May you be confident in the knowledge that you always have a place in the tent of the Jewish people no matter where life's journey takes you.

May you be blessed in claiming that place and creating it for others.



And I, in turn, will be blessed to see you thrive.

Edgar M. Bronfman



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