



Congregation Olam Tikvah's Experience Israel Program

Sponsored by the Stahl Experience Israel Fund



Olam Tikvah's Experience Israel Program provides an incentive for all teens to take an in-depth trip to Israel during or immediately following their high school years. The grants are not based on need, they are funded by generous donations to the Stahl Experience Israel Fund. The amount of each grant depends on the length of time an eligible program spends in Israel.

Eligibility and Requirements:

1. The student's parent(s) must have had a regular family membership at Olam Tikvah in good standing for a minimum of three years and must be a member in good standing at the time funds are requested. Families with special arrangements are eligible.
2. The travel must take place any time from the summer following ninth grade through the summer following twelfth grade, or as a gap year program in the first year after high school graduation before attending college.
3. Only one grant will be provided per child for travel to Israel.
4. The program must include a minimum of 3 weeks in Israel (19 days excluding travel).
5. The program must be sponsored by a Jewish or Israeli organization and provide for the observance of Shabbat and kashrut.
6. Funds will be paid directly to the program. Requests for funding should be made as early as possible and must be made at least 1 month before payment is due.
7. Depending on availability of funds, subsidies will be as follows:

<u>Israel Program Length*</u>	<u>2023-24 Subsidy**</u>
3 weeks	\$500
4 - 5 weeks	\$1250
6 - 10 weeks	\$1750
Semester	\$2000
Academic/Gap Year	\$2500

**Does not include time outside Israel other than 2 travel days.*

***Olam Tikvah will not provide subsidies in excess of the participant's net cost.*

8. The Youth Committee Chair, Director of Education and Youth Activities, and Executive Director will set subsidy levels by November 15 each year based on availability of funds for the coming season. The subsidy level set shall apply to all trips beginning January through December of the following year.

Continued on reverse

9. Parents should apply for funding only after the student has been accepted to a program. Parents are encouraged to discuss with the Executive Director whether their selected program meets the required criteria and what the anticipated funding levels are before committing to a program.
10. Parents should apply by submitting the application form, a copy of the program's acceptance letter/email, and a billing statement to the Executive Director. Submissions may be by email or paper copy.
11. The Executive Director will confirm to parents when funds are sent to the program office, and the amount of funding.
12. Parents should discuss with the Executive Director any special circumstances that are not covered above.



Planning for Your Child's Israel Experience: FAQs



We hope that sometime during your child's high school years you will consider sending him or her on a peer trip to Israel. Here are a few questions and answers that will help you start the planning process.

People

Who can help me at OT? Debra Beland Ackerman, Director of Education and Youth Activities, can help you with getting information about different programs. She'll be happy to talk to you about your child's interests and needs. Contact Debra at 703-425-3237 or dbeland@olamtikvah.org.

Rochelle Goldberg, Executive Director, can help you with reviewing the eligibility requirements for OT's Experience Israel grants. She will receive your application and arrange for the funds to be paid to your chosen program. Speak with Rochelle about any financial concerns, questions about timing and procedures, and any other special circumstances not answered in these pages. Contact Rochelle at 703-425-1880 or rgoldberg@olamtikvah.org.

Debra, Rochelle, and Rabbi Kalender can put you in touch with OT families who have participated in programs you are considering.

General Information

What's a peer trip? A peer trip is a program where the primary participants are all teens of a similar age. In other words, it is not a family trip or a mixed-age tour of adults and children.

When do I need to begin planning? You probably want to look at summer programs during the previous autumn (such as October/November 2023 for summer 2024 programs). School year programs should be considered the year before, to give you plenty of time to work out details with your child's guidance counselor. Think about gap year programs during the fall or winter of senior year, if not before. Due to the cost of these programs, you might want to start your financial planning even earlier.

What's a gap year? A gap year is a year in between finishing high school and starting college when a student chooses to explore new experiences. There are many programs offered that allow students to fill a year before college constructively.

I've picked a program. What do I do next? You should confirm with the OT Executive Director that the program is eligible for funding. Talk to your guidance counselor as soon as you begin considering a school-year program. Be sure to follow program instructions about applying. Pay attention to all deadlines, recommendations, and other requirements. Once you have applied and your child has been accepted, submit your application for OT's Experience Israel subsidy.

Eligibility

When can my child go on such a program? Your child is eligible for funding if he or she participates in an eligible program any time from the summer following 9th grade through the end of high school, and before beginning college.

Are only summer programs eligible? No, summer programs are just one type of peer trip. Other programs take place during the school year for a semester, trimester or partial semester, or even a full school year.

My child wants to do a gap year before college. Is that eligible for funding? Yes, a gap year program immediately following high school graduation and before beginning college is eligible.

What types of programs are eligible for funding? Any Jewish or Israeli program that spends at least 3 weeks in Israel, including travel days, and provides for the observance of Shabbat and kashrut may be eligible for funding.

Are only Conservative-affiliated programs eligible for funding from OT? No, programs sponsored by a variety of Jewish and Israeli organizations are eligible.

I just joined OT this year. Can my child participate? Your child is eligible for funding when you have been a member in good standing for at least three years, and if your child is in high school when participating in an eligible peer trip.

I have been a member of OT for a long time, but my child's bar/bat mitzvah was not at OT. Does this matter? No, it does not matter where you celebrated your child's simcha.

My child's other parent is not an OT member. Does this affect my child's eligibility? No, it does not.

Finances

How much will it cost me? It depends on the program you choose, and other sources of scholarships available to you.

How much funding can I expect from Olam Tikvah? That changes each year depending on funds available. Please check with the Executive Director to determine current levels.

How do I apply for funding through OT's Experience Israel program? Once you have selected a program, speak to the Executive Director to verify the program's eligibility for funding and the expected grant levels. Your next step is to complete the program's application process. Once the program has accepted your child, apply by for OT's Experience Israel grant by submitting the application form, a copy of the program's acceptance letter/email, and a billing statement to the Executive Director. Submissions may be by email, or paper copy.

Programs

What if the program also includes travel to other places? As long as at least 3 weeks are spent in Israel, any additional travel is fine. Funding is based only on time spent in Israel.

Does the program have to observe Shabbat? Yes, recognition of the special nature of Shabbat is required of all programs.

How do I find out about different programs? Start by considering your child's interests, comfort levels with new experiences, budget, and your personal observance levels. Does your child prefer outdoor activities and sports, community service, or simply touring? Speak with Debra Beland Ackerman, OT's Director of Education and Youth Activities. You can reach Debra at 703-425-3237 or dbeland@olamtikvah.org.

Some places to start looking online are:

USY (<http://www.usy.org/escape/> and <https://www.usy.org/summer>) for both summer programs and Nativ, a gap-year program

Ramah Israel Seminar (<http://campramah.org/content/israelprograms.php>) for summer programs as well as two and four-month school year programs.

BBYO (<http://passport.bbyo.org/destination/Israel/>) for an extensive variety of summer programs

Young Judea (www.youngjudea.org) for summer programs and its Year Course

Alexander Muss High School in Israel (<http://www.amhsi.org/>) for school-year programs

Nesiya (<http://www.nesiya.org>) focuses on arts and culture in Israel.

The Jewish Agency for Israel lists many more programs on its website:

<http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Experiences+In+Israel/Short+term+Programs/Teen+Summer+Programs>

My child wants to spend part of a school year in Israel. How do we deal with that?

The public schools can accommodate you. Start by talking to your child's guidance counselor. Ask about making up work, planning in advance to take books or work to Israel, and taking standardized tests. Many programs are able to offer A.P. testing if your child is there in the spring, and even provide tutoring.

Can my child do a gap year and still apply to college? Students considering a gap year program typically apply to colleges in their senior year of high school, just like everyone else. Enrollment is deferred for a year, with the college's permission, while the student is on a gap year program. Please check with any colleges you are considering to find out their policies on deferring enrollment.

Can my child get high school or college credit for these trips? Sometimes. Speak to the program coordinator, your child's counselor, and college admissions/registrar personnel to find out the answers for your specific situation. Check with your high school or college BEFORE you go!

My child has special needs. Are there appropriate programs for him/her? There are many programs these days that can accommodate special needs or are exclusively geared toward assisting with specific needs or conditions. Please discuss this with either of the rabbis or with Debra Beland Ackerman, Director of Education and Youth Activities.



CONGREGATION OLAM TIKVAH

3800 Glenbrook Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22031
phone 703-425-1880
www.olamtikvah.org

Experience Israel Program Application

Participant name	
Parent name	
Parent e-mail	Parent's daytime telephone
Program sponsor and name	
Dates in Israel (from/to):	Total days in Israel
Total cost of program, including airfare but excluding personal expenses \$	
Please list all other subsidies or financial aid requested:	
Program Contact Name	Telephone or e-mail
Program's billing/payment address	
Payment deadline	
Parent: Please initial each line: _____ This program observes Shabbat and Kashrut. _____ I understand that if my child does not complete the program for any reason, I am required to reimburse Congregation Olam Tikvah for the amount of the subsidy. _____ I understand that Congregation Olam Tikvah will not provide subsidies in excess of my net cost, and I will reimburse Olam Tikvah for any excess subsidy that I receive.	
Parent's signature	Date
Participant: Please initial the following line: _____ I understand that I will be expected to share my experiences with the Congregation upon my return from Israel.	
Participant's signature	Date

Please provide a copy of the program's acceptance letter/e-mail and a billing statement with this application.

Submit all documents to: Rochelle Goldberg, Executive Director, by mail, or e-mail to rgoldberg@olamtikvah.org at least 30 days before payment deadline.