



# **What is the outcome of Israel Experience on a young person's Jewish identity and relationship to Israel?**

**REPORT**

January 2013

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*"I loved Israel tour it was so much fun touring the land and I felt such a strong connection to that and going to places that you have never been and meeting amazing friends that shape your outlook and what you believe in my decision to make Aliyah".*

Female, 21

*"Someone who shouldn't go on Tour – and it's rare – is someone who doesn't want to spend four weeks with their friends".*

Male, 24

*"Israel Tour was an amazing experience that I'll never forget. I would especially like to thank UJIA for supporting me with a very generous bursary and I really appreciate it. The month in Israel was so full of experiences that it has filled me with an even bigger love for Israel and has taught me so much about the culture and also about the religious aspect. The political views were varied from place to place but they got us thinking and really opened our eyes to other people's opinions. The views were amazing and the madrichim -first class. THANK YOU!!!"*

Female, 16

*"The madrichim make tour. Their passion was passed onto me".*

Female, 20

*"...in a rush so will keep this short , currently I am studying in Israel and to be honest never want to leave this probably due to going on Ezra tour and I am planning on making aliya".*

Male, 19

*"I loved tour! Best experience ever".*

Female 17

*"Israel Tour 2011 was the most amazing experience I made some amazing friends and I learnt so much".*

Male 17

*"I went with RSY. I had an amazing time ....I love RSY and am planning on going on shnat with them!!!!".*

Female, 17

*"Great experience and it made me want to tour around Israel more and always be proud to be Jewish".*

Male, 16

*"Amazing experience on FZY, made friends for life who I go and see regularly despite living four hours away. Brilliant leaders as well".*

Male, 16

*"An unbelievable opportunity to explore the diversities of Israel with Habonim in a close group".*

Female, 25

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## **Executive Summary**

- 1000 respondents completed the on-line survey, 184 written reflections were received and 36 interviews took place.
- The survey respondents were between 16 and 24 year olds, with approximately 50% between 16 and 18 years of age. Interviewees were between 16 and 27 years old.
- For the overwhelming majority of respondents, Israel Tour is an extremely positive experience.
- A very small minority of respondents did not enjoy their experience on Israel Tour.
- Over 80% of respondents state that their Youth Movement experiences have had a positive degree of importance in shaping their Jewish lives.
- All Youth Movements show some increase in participant involvement as a result of Israel Tours.
- 78% of respondents had been to Israel previously, mostly for family holidays.
- Tour gives the opportunity to develop a previously family relationship with Israel into an individual relationship.
- Israel Tour has had a stronger impact on participants than previous family trips.
- 24% of respondents had previously been on a year 9 trip to Israel, half of whom cite that as a positive contributory factor towards going on Israel Tour.
- As a direct result of going on Tour, the majority of respondents stated that they would be more likely to engage in activities and life choices which further develop their Jewish identity and their relationship with Israel.
- Almost 60% of respondents have returned to Israel at least once since Israel Tour.

## Introduction

The high level of engagement with, and commitment to, Israel by young people in the UK through involvement with the Zionist Youth Movements has been recognized for years. For example, we send more than 50% of our 16 year olds to Israel with the UK Youth Movements every year, and remarkably that number has not diminished with the worsening economic situation or with the challenging international political scene. This is the highest world-wide percentage, with the exception of Mexico.

Israel travel experience is a unique brand of experiential learning, and as Copeland (2011) states, at its best it develops compelling educational expressions of Israel's foundational place in Jewish life, with all the celebration and the challenges this entails. The extent and depth of this engagement is open to question. On the one hand, we are told that young Jews are often challenged by the actions of the Jewish State and feel embarrassed and angry, distancing themselves from any relationship with Israel. On the other hand, many connect to the Zionist youth movements and maintain levels of identification that continue into adulthood. We have data for example (Miller and Pomson 2012) that shows that more than 70% of parents of children who entered Jewish Secondary schools in 2011 have visited Israel. 55% of those have visited more than once.

The purpose of this research has been to explore the outcomes and impact of UJIA Israel Tour on the Jewish and Israel identity on the young people who have participated in this programme.

Our objectives:

1. To obtain quantitative and qualitative feedback from Israel Tour participants
2. To understand the successes and challenges of Israel Tour through the prism of the participants' experiences
3. To make recommendations leading to the further development of Tour
4. To make recommendations for future data collection which will enable on-going and regular reflection and evaluation of the programme, leading to development.

There is a growing body of research pointing to the positive impact of Israel travel experiences on the Jewish identifications of programme participants.

The impact of the Israel travel experience is both about the visit to Israel itself and about participation in, and development of, thickening layers of Jewish living. Israel as a physical place represents an embodiment of Jewish memory, experience, and community that is unique both because of the status of Israel for Jews throughout the ages and because of the modern State of Israel as an embodiment of Jewish sovereignty.

Isaacs (2011) observes that the question: "how can we use Israel to connect the next generation of Jews to their heritage?" is the wrong question because it is making an assumption that every young person will *want* to connect with Israel, whilst in reality they

have every opportunity to evaluate the experience negatively for themselves. We expect them to embrace it as if it were an optimistic dream-come-true. Whilst the educational coherence of teaching about Israel is not the main focus of this research, the experience that young people undergo during Israel Tour does relate to their on-going relationship with Israel, as the results of the survey and interviews show.

Sasson, Kadushin and Saxe (2008) wrote:

*“There is no consistent evidence in surveys conducted among national samples of American Jews that either younger individuals, or adults, have grown more distant from Israel. On the contrary, the survey evidence reveals surprising resilience in American Jewry's connection to Israel.”*

Saxe was referring to the extensive research he undertook on the Birthright trips to Israel. His work, as a study of ethnic identity formation in postmodern society, illuminates important lessons about how intensive exposure to Jewish heritage can be a catalyst for identity formation, as well as how educational programmes can be made more engaging and effective.

Chazan and Saxe (2008) analysed Birthright Israel and showed how the programme's effects may well last far beyond the time they spend together in Israel. Together with the report that Cohen and Kopelowitz wrote (2010), their findings show that the combination of a short term programme, by way of Birthright, followed by a longer, return trip with Masa for example, is a very effective pathway to move Jews of all levels of Jewish background to a more intensive Jewish and Israel involvement. We saw from our respondents that for some, gap year was more influential than Tour.

Pomson, Deitcher and Held (2012) interviewed 40 adolescents in America and 40 in Australian Jewish day schools to explore attitudes towards, and education about, Israel. They found that despite the greater geographical distance, young Australian Jews feel more connected to Israel than their American counterparts. Many express a view of Israel as a haven and a homeland; they see it as a place to escape from anti-semitism and as Jews entitled to a Jewish homeland. They found that this was a widespread view in Australia, and far less so than in America. Australians also more often spoke about schools as an influence on how they think about Israel, which is surprising considering that in Australia a far higher proportion than in America belong to Jewish youth movements, whose influence one would have imagined would overshadow the school influence.

In addition, the research methodology drew on the Maccabi GB Review (Terret and Miller March 2011) undertaken by UJIA to explore the outcome of Maccabi GB's sports and cultural programmes on the young people who participate in them. In that survey, we identified the extent to which Maccabi GB Israel based programmes enhanced participants' connections with Israel. The relevant results of that survey, sent to 950 participants in Maccabi GB's Israel programmes, were compared to the equivalent questions on this UJIA survey. Very similar themes emerged, in terms of the effect of the visit to Israel with Maccabi GB, and the following quote was one of many similar ones

received: *“the best month of my life”*. Engagement with Israel through the development of a love for the country, an interest in following Israel through the media, and in returning to Israel for a short or long term programme, mirrors what we found in the survey on these pages.

## Methodology

### a) Desk research:

This included a scrutiny of Israel Tour papers related to the objectives and content of Tour, together with a review of the relevant academic literature. Previously collected reports and data will inform the analysis of the current review. The data from Israel Tour application forms and from feedback forms have added to the information forming the report of this research.

### b) Quantitative Data:

Our experience of having worked with UJS and JPR recently, and with teenagers over the years, shows that a quantitative approach can be challenging. Young people do not usually respond in large numbers to on-line surveys, and incentives rarely yield substantially additional responses. We felt, however that some quantitative data will give us a baseline of information to introduce the more in depth qualitative research.

Our quantitative data was generated from an on-line survey sent to the data base of approximately 1200 young people who participated in Israel Tour each year for the past seven years, making a total of approximately 8000 people.

An on-line survey was launched through Survey Monkey on 4<sup>th</sup> December and within twenty four hours, 700 responses had been received. This was far more positive than we had hoped for. Responses then continued to be received, although more slowly. One week later, the survey was sent out for a second time, as a reminder. By the closure of the survey, two weeks after initial launch, we had received 1000 responses. This was approximately 12.5% of the original data base and we considered that a reasonable rate of response.

Data related to the following areas was gathered:

- i) Profile of the young person: gender/age/postcode/school/university/youth movement/previous visits to Israel
- ii) Mapping the ways in which the young person has engaged over the past 5 years with Jewish life (expressions of Jewish identity): Youth Movement/synagogue/school/Limmud/UJS/Jeneration/Tribe/social life
- iii) Mapping the ways in which the young person has engaged over the past 5 years specifically with UJIA: bursary for Shnat or other Masa programme/Magic Moments/Youth Movement eg Movement worker/etc
- iv) Mapping the ways in which the young person has engaged over the past 5 years with Israel: how many times visited/purpose of visit/duration of visit.
- v) Illustration of the outcomes of Israel engagement on the young person (expressions of Israel identity): how does the young person feel about Israel? How does s/he describe Israel? How does s/he know about Israel? How does s/he engage with Israel?



The full survey can be found in Appendix One.

c) Qualitative Data:

We wanted to explore the outcome of participating in an Israel experience programme on a young person's ongoing identity-building and subsequent relationship to Israel. To do this, we asked a selection of young people who have visited Israel what they think and feel about Israel. 122 respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they were willing to be interviewed. 23 participants of Israel tour were interviewed as follows:

All interviewees were between 16 and 24 years old. Of the 122 survey respondents willing to be interviewed, we selected individuals to ensure a range of ages, an equal gender balance, geographical balance and variety of Youth Movements represented. We also ensured a balance between those who did, and did not attend Jewish schools, as well as a range of religious background.

The interviews evaluated in depth the impact of Israel Tour on the Jewish lives and Israel engagement of young people. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix Two.

In addition, we interviewed a control group. These were young people who did not go on Tour. In this group, we interviewed thirteen young adults between 17 and 27 years old. Of the thirteen, eight had participated in a Birthright programme and five had not been on Israel Tour or on a Birthright programme. Please see Appendix Three for the interview schedule for this group.

The connection between visiting Israel and a young person's attitude to Israel is not isolated or linear. We knew we would have to reflect on the extent to which family settings, culture, school, University and peers all impact on thoughts about Israel. We also recognised that data from young people of different ages may reflect very different emotional responses – a relationship with Israel may be described quite differently in the weeks after returning from Tour than three years later. We had to acknowledge the differences between the emotional and sentimental responses, as opposed to the intellectual, cognitive ones. We also had to take account of the variety of backgrounds of the young people - religious, school and youth movement.

The profiles of our interviewees can be found in Appendix Four.

As well as interview data, we received 184 written statements related to the impact that Israel Tour had on an individual's life.

## **General demographic information**

Of the 1000 survey respondents 57% were female and 43% were male. This is consistent with what one would expect of a survey of this sort for this age group – generally more females answer than males, and the response is similar to the gender response of the JPR Student Survey (Graham and Boyd 2011). The inequality of gender is balanced by a consistent proportion of male and female respondents in each year band (+- 3%). The gender balance of those actually participating in Israel Tour varies from year to year. In the past four years the gender balance has also varied (+ - 2%).

Approximately 34% of survey respondents live in North/North-west London, followed by 15% living in Harrow, 11% in Hertfordshire and 9% in the greater Manchester area. Again, these are representative samples of those who participate in Israel Tour.

Although 7% of those surveyed are Israeli citizens, 67% of respondents stated they have family in Israel. Whilst “family” is a broad definition, this percentage is almost identical to the 66% of students across the Jewish schools who state that they have family in Israel (Miller and Pomson 2012).

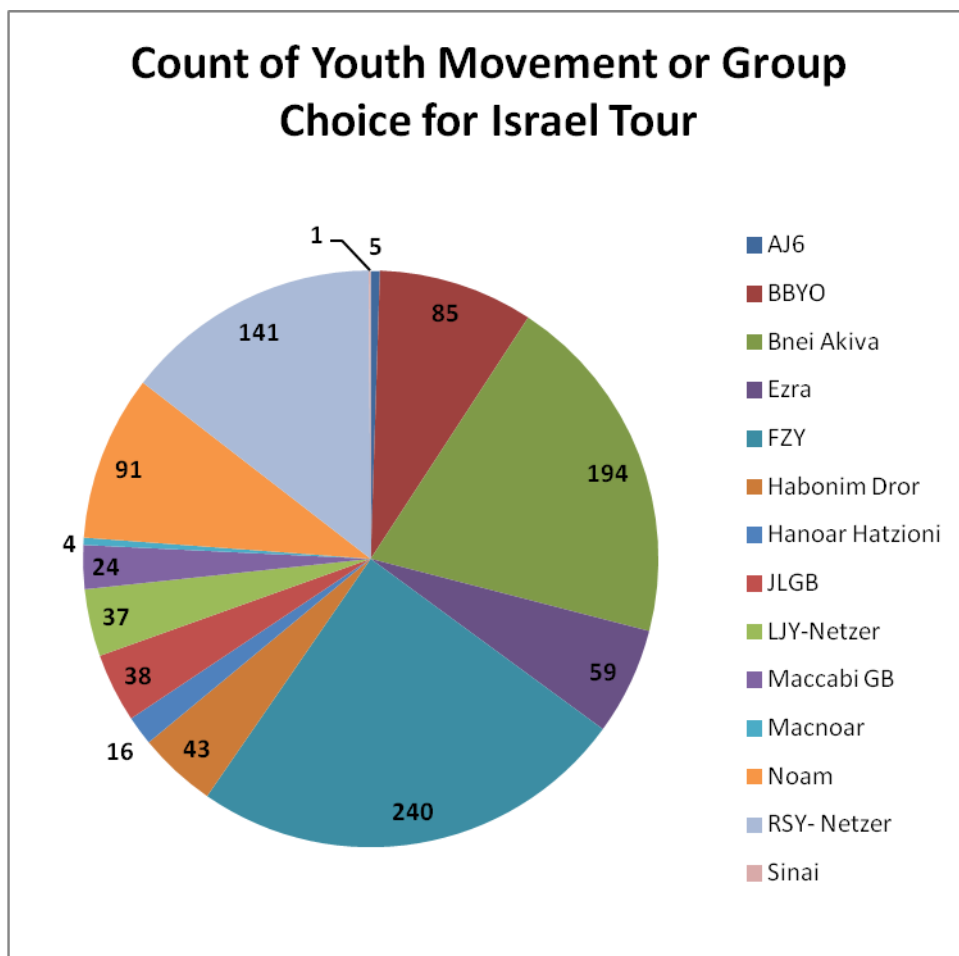
51% of respondents attend, or did attend a Jewish Secondary school. Again, this is consistent with the data from UJIA which asks Israel Tour participants to state their school.

Just over half the respondents were between the ages of 16-18, with just under half being between 19 and 24. Only 19% are neither at school or university, and almost all of this group were over 22 years old. This did not surprise us – general experience of event related surveys is that the longer ago an event was attended, the less likely a participant is to complete a survey.

In summary, we can see that we are reassured that the respondents were by and large representative of those who participated on Israel Tour over the past seven years, although the responses were somewhat skewed towards those who had participated in the past three years.

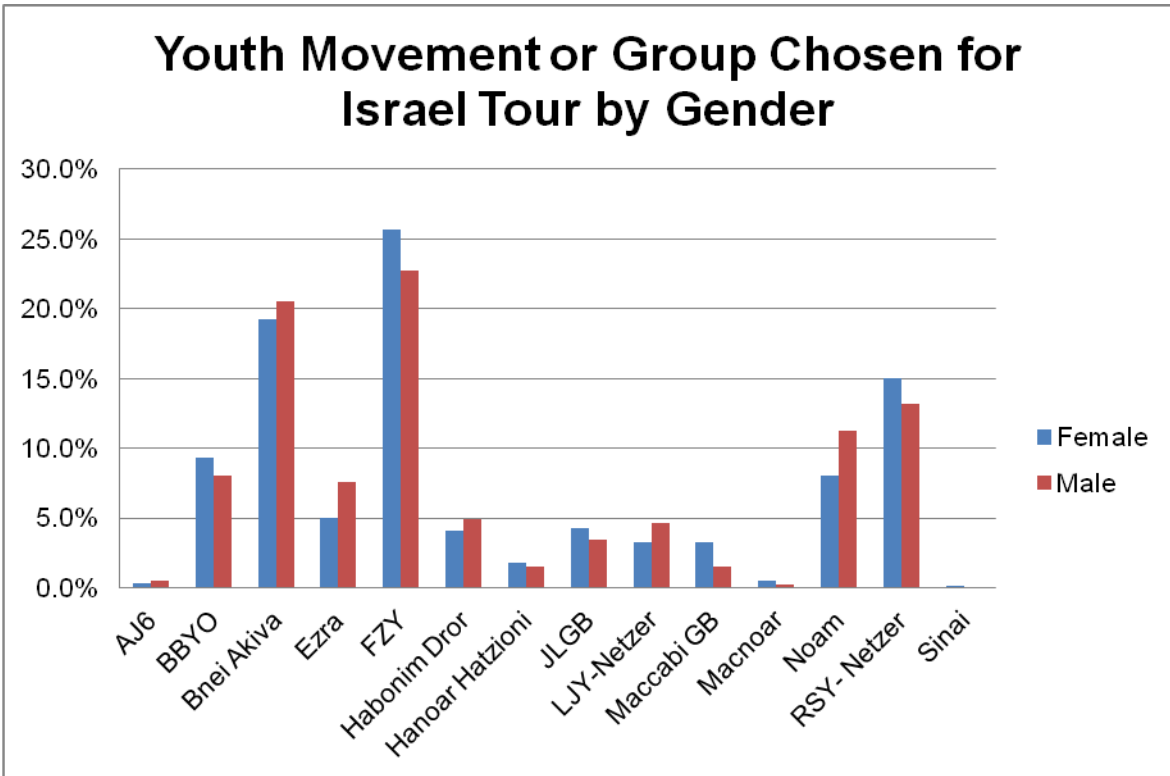
## Youth Movement involvement and impact

The following charts show the numbers and percentages participating on Israel Tour by Youth Movement<sup>1</sup>.



Over the years, popularity of certain Youth Movements vary (e.g. RSY-Netzer who have varied between two and five Tour buses over the past seven years), and have retained consistent in the case of other Youth Movements (e.g. FZY, who have consistently attracted the largest number of participants year on year. Two Movements did not run Tour every year during the data collection period: AJ6, who last ran Tour in 2007 and MacNoar, a hybrid of Maccabi GB and Hanoar, which was run once.

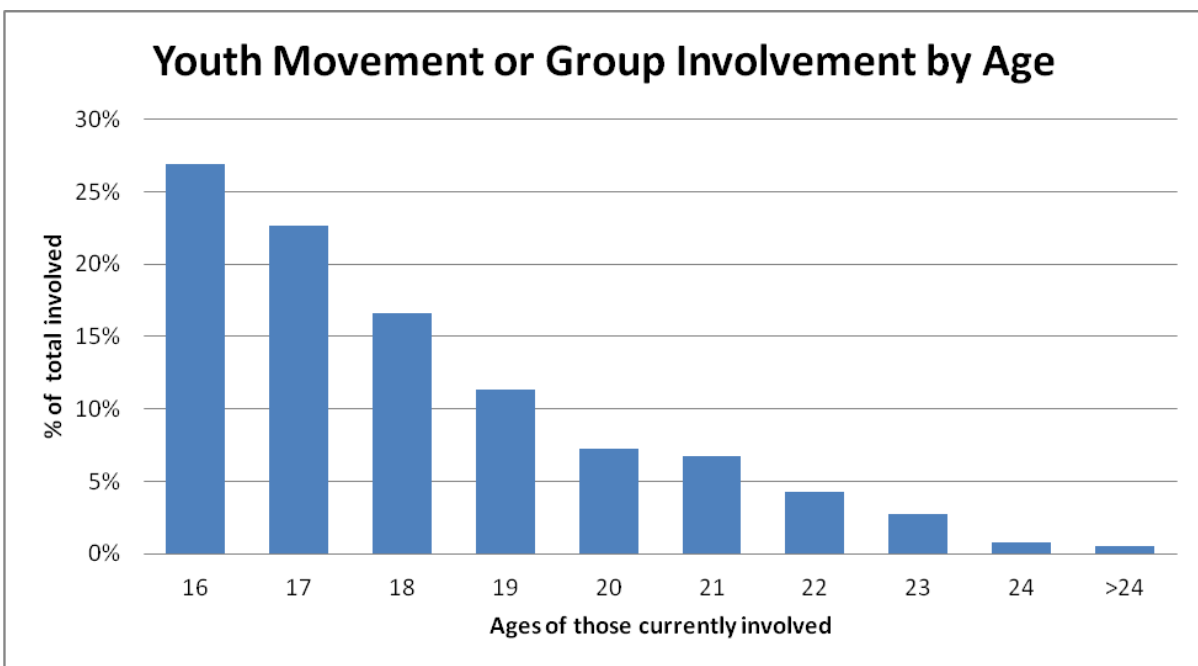
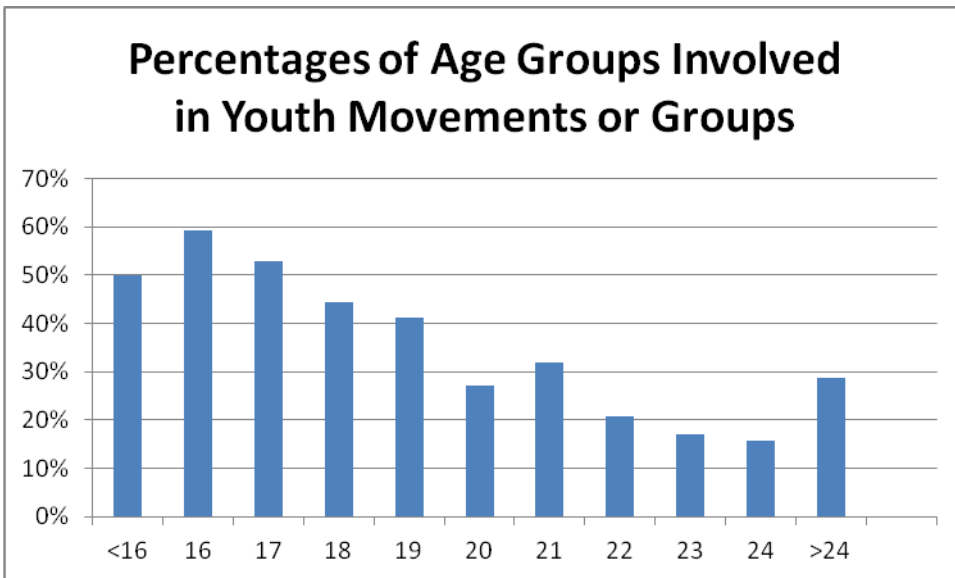
<sup>1</sup> Maccabi GB & JLGB each consider themselves a Youth Organisation and not a Youth Movement. Please note this throughout this report.



Almost 25% of respondents went on Israel Tour with FZY, followed by Bnei Akiva and then RSY-Netzer. You can see from the lists below that our respondents' Youth Movements align well with the frequency of participation provided by the UJIA database.

UJIA Database (Highest frequency At top of list)	Survey respondents (Highest frequency At top of list)
-----	
FZY	FZY
RSY-Netzer	Bnei Akiva
Bnei Akiva	RSY-Netzer
BBYO	Noam
Noam	BBYO
Ezra	Ezra
Habonim	Habonim
LJY	JLGB
Maccabi	LJY-Netzer
JLGB	Maccabi
Hanoar	Hanoar
AJ6	AJ6

Our survey respondents show a high level of engagement in their Youth Movement. Over 80% of respondents stated that their Youth Movement experiences have had a positive degree of importance in shaping their Jewish lives up to this point. Whilst nationally for example, only 23% of those involved in youth movements are 17 years old, 52% of 17 year olds who answered our survey stated they were involved in a Youth Movement. This is only one example, but this is replicated across every age group. This shows that the survey attracted respondents who were more likely to be engaged in their Youth Movement, than many Israel tour participants. The two charts below illustrate this point.



41% of respondents are currently involved with the Youth Movement with which they went on Israel Tour. Of the 59% of respondents who are not currently involved in the Youth Movement or group with which they went on Tour, almost half indicated that their involvement was unchanged as a result of going on Tour. This implies that a significant minority chose a particular Youth Movement for the sole purpose of going on Tour and had little or no prior or post involvement with that Movement.

The most common reasons stated for not being currently involved with the Movement with which they went on Tour were a lack of time and lack of interest in being involved in a Youth Movement.

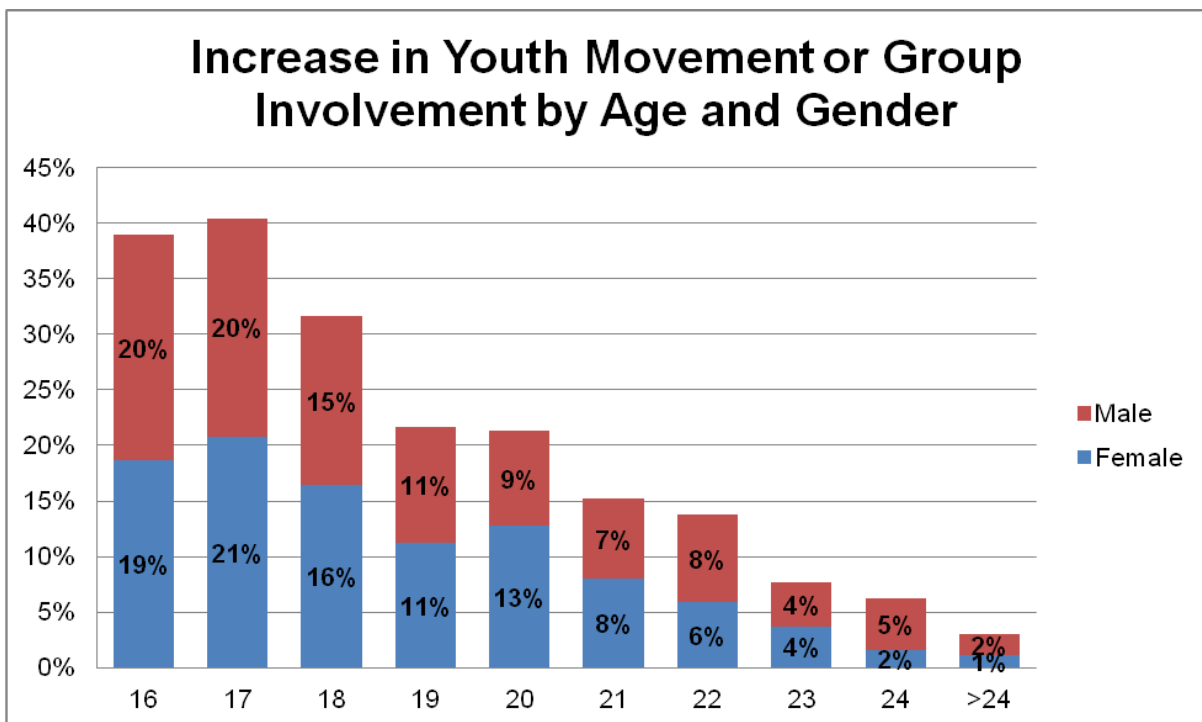
Approximately one third of respondents stated that their involvement in a Youth Movement has increased since Israel Tour. The following quote is one of many examples received:

*“Tour was my first formative Israel experience, after which I stood for the national leadership team of BBYO. I attended every leadership course that BBYO offers and*

*as a madrich have staffed and roshed every machane offered by the organisation. I took israel tour this year and after finishing my degree - I plan to become a movement worker for BBYO before making Aliyah". Male, 22*

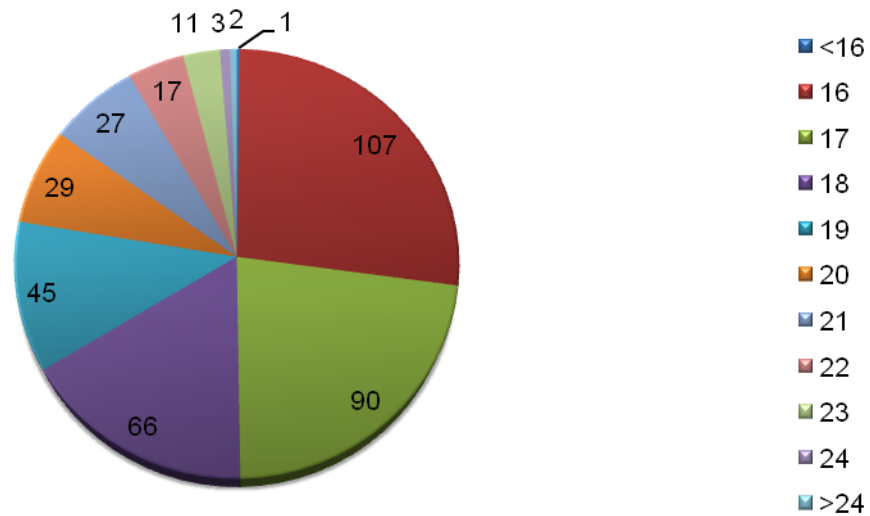
and approximately one third stated that involvement has remained the same. Of those currently involved two thirds cited their “positive Israel experience” and their “positive group experience” as reasons for their continued involvement. At this point, both programmatic and social elements seem fairly evenly responsible for retention by Youth Movements.

*“Since Tour and because of Hanoar, my Israel education has increased so much...what I know now and how I view Israel and my knowledge has come from my Youth Movement”, Female, 20*



The younger the respondent, the more likely it seems to be that he or she has remained involved in a Youth Movement and the above graph shows that approximately 50% of those remaining involved are 16 or 17 years old. The percentage then reduces year on year, as the following pie chart shows. The gender differences are not significant at any age. The following quote shows that Israel Tour can lead to Youth Movement involvement

## Current Involvement in Youth Movement or Group by Age



The Youth Movements have a degree of influence on the lives of young people. A remarkable 80% of respondents indicated that their Youth Movement had helped shape their Jewish life.

*“Maccabi [GB] helped me to develop a Jewish identity as I finally had Jewish friends. It helped me feel I belonged amongst Jewish people”, Female 23*

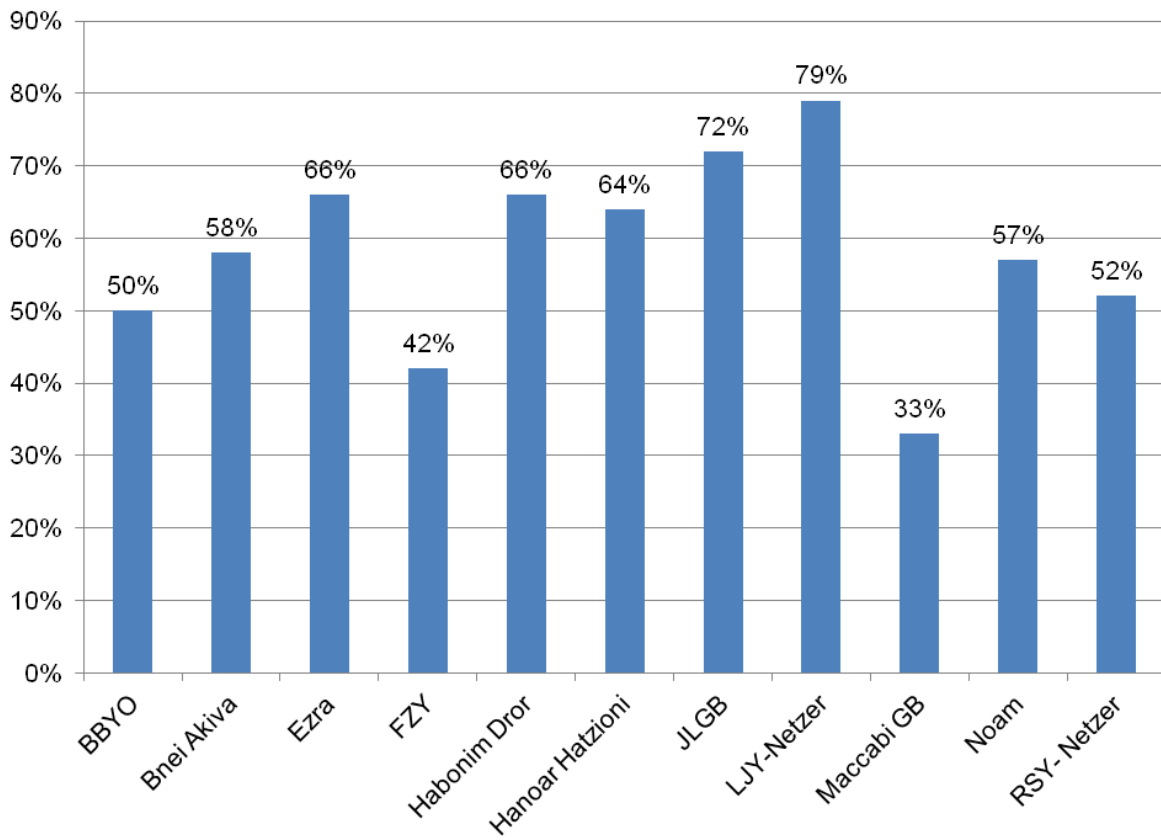
All Youth Movements can boast that participants on their Israel Tours become more involved in the Movement after Tour. The chart below, which shows increase in involvement after Israel Tour by each Youth Movement seems to suggest that all the youth Movements experience some increase in involvement after Tour, with FZY and Maccabi GB showing the least increase in involvement. This appears to be unrelated to either the absolute number of participants on Tour or the number of respondents to the survey.

FZY have been hugely successful in attracting the less engaged on Tour. One of the unsurprising outcomes of this is that they also have the lowest retention rate. The retention rate for all the Movements relates not only to the young person’s individual experiences and Jewish and Israel identity development. It also has direct consequences for the Youth Movements, who rely on graduates of Israel tour to staff summer camps in the UK and in future years to become madrichim themselves for Israel Tour . To balance this finding, we did have many positive comments related to FZY, of which the following is representative:

*“On tour I started thinking about year course and am now filling this in from my new apartment in Bat Yam...it all comes down to the inspiration the madrichim can instil at the end of the day. I had amazing leaders along my FZY journey and hence I'm here following their footsteps now...” Female, 18*

*“FZY TOUR 2012 was one of the best experiences of my life-the people made it!” Male, 16*

## Increased Involvement in Youth Movements or Groups by Participants After Israel Tour





## Previous Israel Experiences and Engagement

For only 22% of our respondents, Israel Tour was their first visit to Israel. This correlates with the high number of those who have family in Israel and the high percentage of families who state they visit Israel regularly (Graham and Boyd 2010 and Miller and Pomson 2012). For 25% of our sample, Israel has been an embedded aspect of their lives, with ten or more visits prior to Tour. The majority of these visits were for family holidays although almost half had visited family in addition to that. We are seeing here a community who are highly engaged with Israel, even before their children go on Israel Tour. Graham and Boyd (2010) reported that 95% of British Jews have visited Israel at some point in their lives. In itself that is a very high percentage. Compared to the United States, the largest Diaspora community, with a 35% percentage visiting Israel (Wertheimer 2009), we are doing very well. We obviously need to acknowledge the fact that we are geographically much closer to Israel, flights are cheaper, and the time difference is small, but even taking all those factors into account, this is positive.

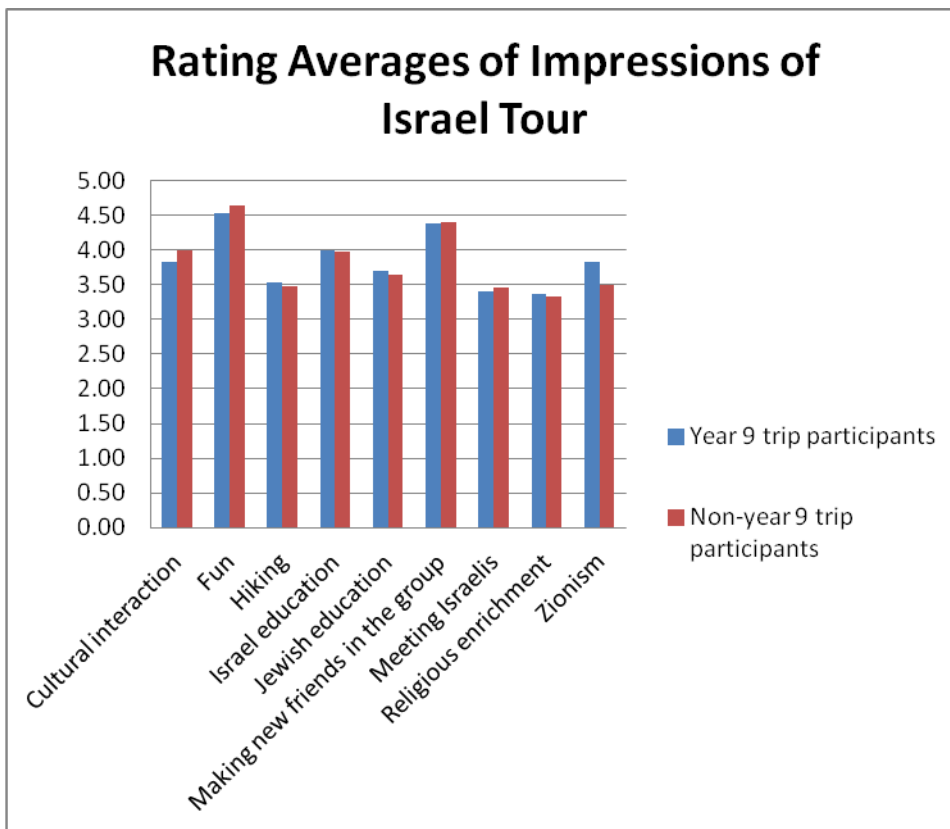
24% of respondents had also previously been on a Year nine trip to Israel with their Secondary school. Half of those who had participated in a year nine trip to Israel cited that as a positive contributing factor towards their decision to go on Israel Tour.

Participants who had been on a Year nine trip to Israel with school are slightly more likely to remain involved in the Youth Movement with which they went on Israel Tour at age 16 (+4.0%). Response to the survey indicated that the Year nine trip was a richer experience than Israel Tour, and that Israel Tour then reinforced participants' connection to Israel, rather than providing new connections. It may be the case that whichever is the *first* organised trip, then this is the seminal experience for the young person. For one school, the year nine trip is three months in length, and the length and immersive nature of that might also be a contributory factor.

*“Most likely effect would have been to refresh commitments already made from year nine trip, which was for 3 months and the first time I'd been to Israel. By comparison Tour wasn't going to ever have as much of an effect, but was still worthwhile” Male, 22*

*“It didn't change my Jewish life at all because I went to Israel for three months prior [on a school year nine trip]...but it was still great” Female, 21*

On the other hand, as the chart below shows, previously going on a year nine trip to Israel does not affect your enjoyment of Israel Tour at age 16.



Overall, those who did go on a Year nine trip and also on Israel Tour at 16 stated that they were more likely to remain involved in the Jewish community and with Israel than those who did not go on a year nine trip. Conversely, those who did not go on a Year nine trip to Israel are more likely to go on a Gap year to Israel (+9%) and more likely to be involved in their JSoc at University (+16%).

Only approximately one third of respondents were very interested in learning and knowing about Israel prior to Tour. This included conversations about Israel, keeping up with the news about Israel and learning Hebrew.

Israel Tour seems to give participants the opportunity to develop a *family* relationship with Israel into a *personal* and *individual* relationship of the young person with Israel. These quotes, from participants who had been previously to Israel many times with their families illustrate that point:

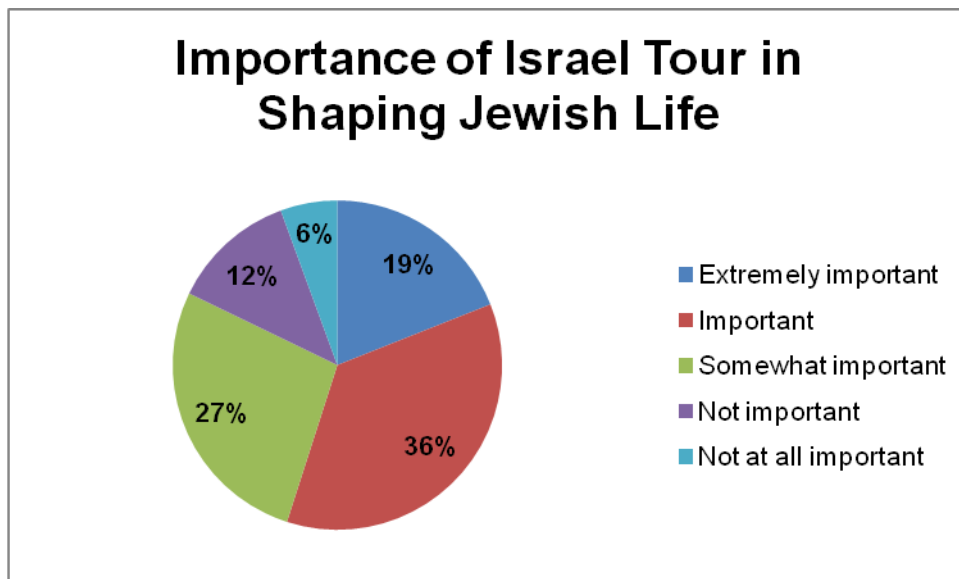
*“Tour was my first experience of "real Israel". Pre tour I had only been on pool side holidays in Eilat. Post tour, after learning about Zionism both me and my brother live in Israel and voluntarily serve in the IDF with our parents planning on making aliyah. Female, 18*

*“I have always stated that Tour was MY turning point; it brought me a religious and social change that has caused such an impact it’s unbelievable”. Male, 19*

*“I think it’s [Tour] such a massive growing experience. It’s the first long period of time away from your parents, so it’s a really good step to take in learning who you are”, Female, 20.*

## Shaping Jewish lives

More than 80% of all respondents stated that Israel Tour has contributed to shaping their Jewish lives. This was evenly distributed amongst the ages of the survey respondents.



We looked at the programme on the Tour itself and then at the impact of Tour. When asked what aspects of Tour were relevant to the decision they had made to go on Tour, the social aspects – having fun and making new friends/travelling with friends – were the most often cited. Beyond that, there was a broad spread – with sightseeing, hiking, cultural interaction, education, all scoring highly. When asked about how the experiences on Tour had met expectations, we found that Tour met, and often exceeded the participants’ expectations. In particular, meeting Israelis, Israel education and religious enrichment exceeded expectations, as well as hiking. The following quotes are a small sample of the very many that we received:

*“Israel Tour with Noam was one of the best experiences of my life so far. I highly recommend to anyone considering and only have good things to say about Tour”  
Female, 18*

*“Israel Tour was a wonderful experience that helped connect my UK Jewish community and experience to Israel by attending with my Youth Movement, adding to my previous experience of and relationship with Israel” Female, 23*

*“BA [Israel tour] gave me some of the best holiday memories, and friends for life who I still see out here on my Gap Year in Yeshivah”, Male, 19*

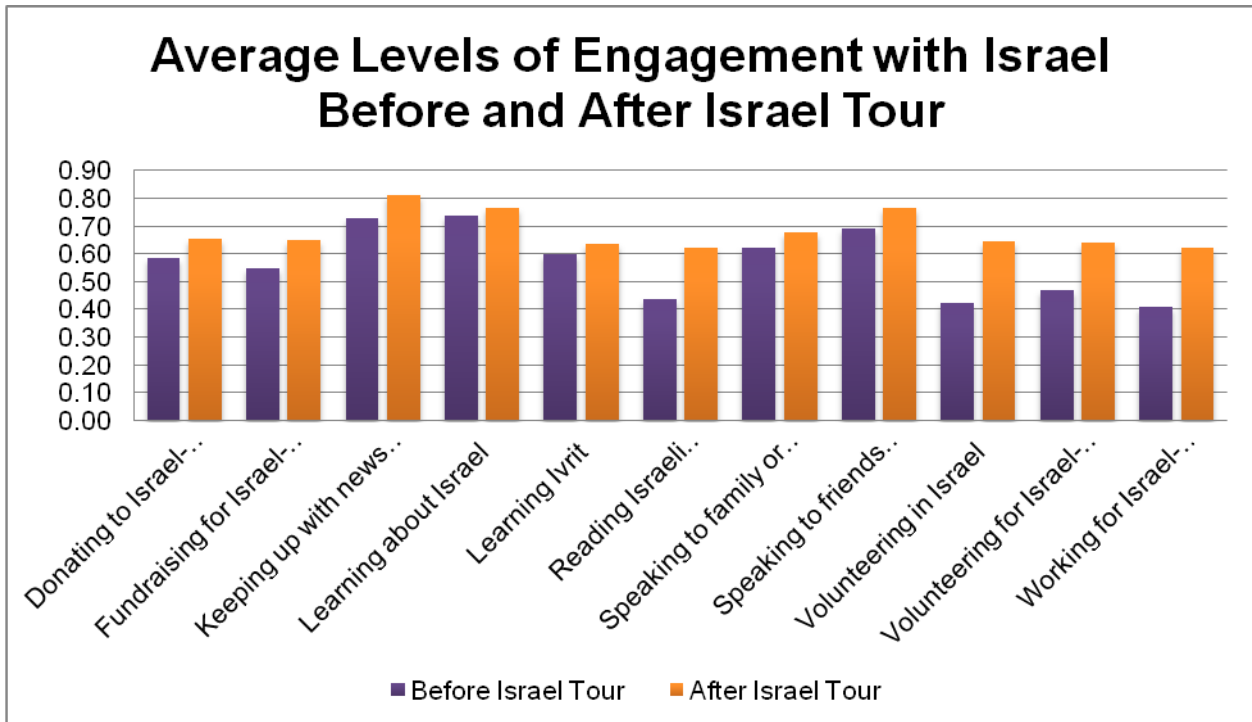
Expectations of Israel Tour are high. This could be because for those involved in Youth Movements, they hear about how amazing Israel Tour is for many years, and the anticipation is built up over a period of time. It is therefore a very positive finding of this research that not only are those expectations met, but exceeded.

We looked at the extent to which respondents’ levels of engagement with Israel were changed as a result of going on Israel Tour. In every single category identified, respondents’ engagement had increased after going on Israel Tour. The most noticeable

areas of impact were in being more interested in Israel in the media: reading about Israel and Israeli news and watching Israeli films.

*“After Tour, I remember wanting to read more Israeli news...I even changed by homepage to Ynet”, Female, 20*

There was also a marked rise in the interest in volunteering for and about Israel and some increase in fund-raising for Israel. Again, the age of respondents was not significant to the way this question was answered.



Looking back, respondents stated that Israel Tour has had a stronger impact on them than their previous visits to Israel. The relationship to Israel changes after Israel Tour. Almost 50% of respondents said that Israel is “extremely important” to them now as compared to 32% who maintain that Israel had been extremely important to them before Israel Tour. To further strengthen this finding, survey data suggests that respondents’ engagement with Israel increases in every aspect investigated.

*“I didn’t have a relationship with Israel before. I knew and heard of it but never visited there. It didn’t mean anything special. Now it is much more personal and I feel much more connected”, Male 16.*

As a direct result of going on Israel Tour, the majority of respondents stated that they would be more likely to engage in activities and life choices which further develop their Jewish identity, as well as their relationship with Israel.

- 61% are more likely to attend Jewish programmes or social events
- 77% are more likely to follow Israel in the news
- 25% are more likely to read Israeli literature/watch more Israeli films
- 51% are more likely to fundraise for Israel
- 35% are more likely to take part in Jewish learning events

- 32% are more likely to take Israel advocacy courses
- 42% are more likely to learn Hebrew
- 54% are more likely to take a leadership role in the Jewish community
- 28% are more likely to attend synagogue more often
- 39% are more likely to keep Jewish customs and traditions
- 55% are more likely to have Jewish friends
- 46% are more likely to have a Jewish boyfriend/girlfriend (25% of these are ‘much more likely’)
- 45% are more likely to marry someone Jewish (26% of these are ‘much more likely’)

These very highly positive findings should be balanced with an appreciation of the other impacts on a young person over time, including peer and work experiences that may override these currently enthusiastic responses. It is clear, however, that the *intentions* of these young people are strongly and positively impacted upon by their engagement with Israel at the time of Israel Tour.

Many of our respondents related to Israel in a political way. They reflected on the way the political landscape impacted on the content of their Israel Tour:

*“I think the most important thing we learnt was about the Israel/Palestine conflict and hearing both sides of the story, and being aware of what is going on”, Female, 17.*

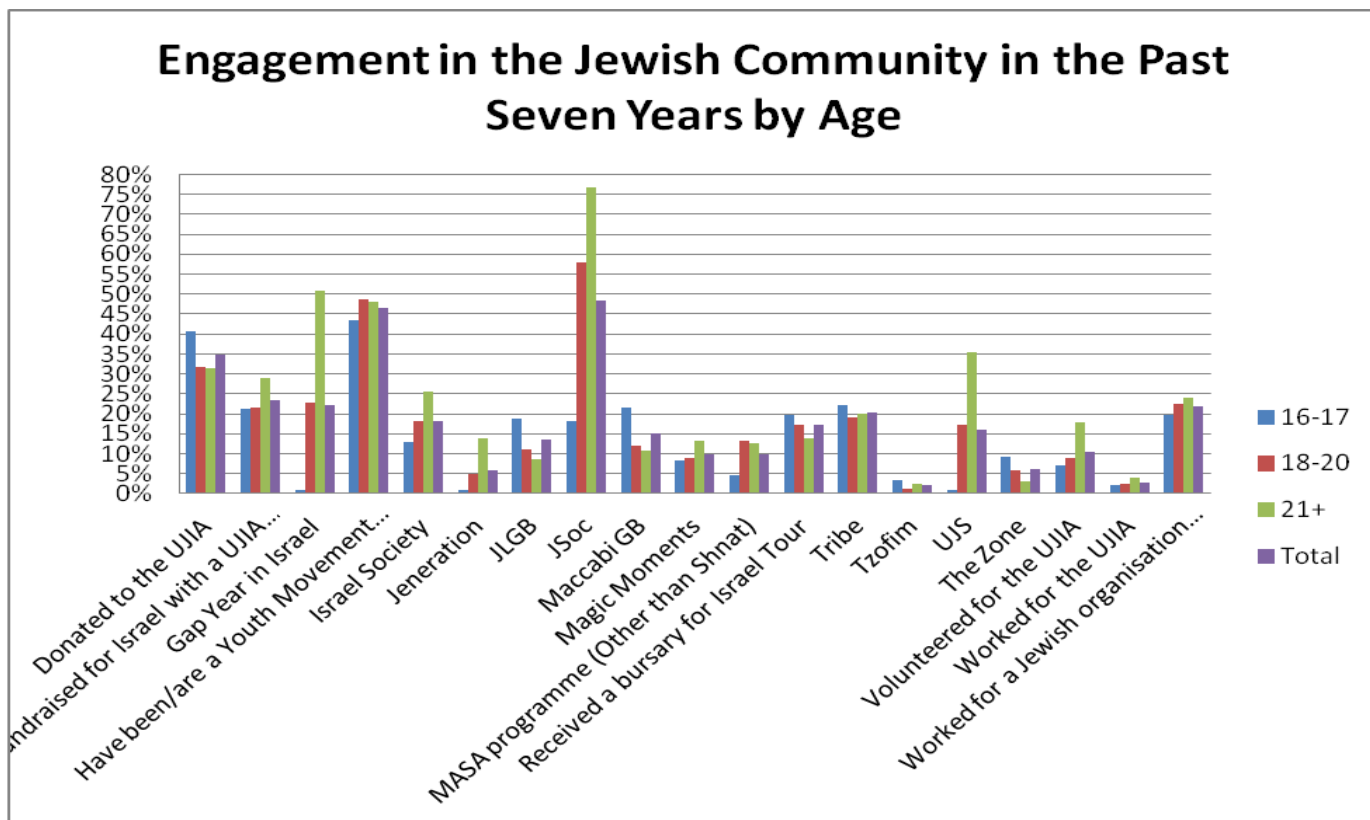
*LJY[-Netzer] promoted the idea that you do not have to support everything that Israel does with blind eyes, you are entitled to your own opinion. That is a very different concept than what school had taught me”, Female, 17*

Whilst only a minority of respondents mentioned the politics of Israel, there were equal numbers of respondents who felt that Tour had or had not given them a balanced and helpful picture of the political landscape.

Respondents also reflected on how their views of the political complexities of Israel affects their on-going relationship with the country.

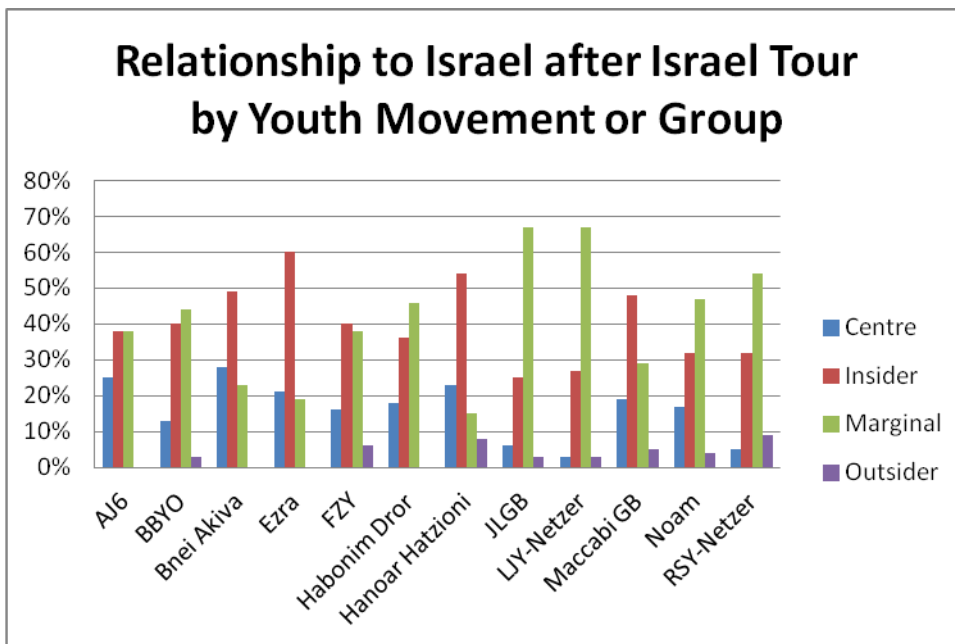
*“I ideologically believe in a Jewish homeland for Jewish people, whilst I don't agree with many policies of the government and the army. Israel is an integral part of my everyday life. Israel is an integral part of my Jewish identity”, Male, 22*

We asked respondents to tell us about their involvement in the Jewish community since going on Israel Tour. (note: Tzofim are the Israeli Scouts, and The Zone is the Youth Centre in Leeds)



*“I went with FZY Israel tour, mainly to make friends. I loved the trip... it got me ignited, in wanting to make a difference in life, which got developed more when I went to AJ6 and then on their Europe Tour. Israel tour was the start of the process of me being involved in: various Jewish charities/causes, Limmud, UJS, Manhigut, political activism” Male 22*

Survey respondents were asked to put themselves on a scale which related to how centrally they perceived Israel with regard to their own lives.



56% saw themselves as “insiders” or more central. There were marked Youth Movement differences: the majority of Bnei Akiva, Ezra, FZY, Hanoar and Maccabi GB respondents saw themselves as insiders in relation to Israel as opposed to the other Movements, who were more likely to see their relationship as “marginal”. All the above Youth Movements see themselves as broadly Zionist, and those whose members feel less like “insiders” or “central” may think about strategies to develop to address this issue.

60% of respondents feel they have relationships with Israel, and one third of all respondents feel that the relationship is “complicated”. Only 4% of respondents say that they have none, or very little relationship with Israel.

56% of respondents have been back to Israel since Tour. This percentage rises according to age, with more than 70% of 18+ year olds having returned to Israel at least once.

How many times have you been to Israel?	Before Israel Tour	After Israel Tour
<b>0</b>	22%	44%
<b>1</b>	16%	20%
<b>2</b>	13%	10%
<b>3</b>	7%	6%
<b>4</b>	6%	3%
<b>5</b>	4%	3%
<b>More than 5</b>	20%	7%
<b>More than 10</b>	12%	7%

Looking back, respondents stated that Israel Tour has had a stronger impact on them than their previous visits to Israel.

We also had several respondents who felt that whilst Israel Tour had been “amazing”, their Gap Year experience in Israel had been more impactful on their lives. This is not surprising as the immersion of living in Israel for nearly a year cannot be underestimated:

*“I believe that tour gave me my love to Israel! It gave me a fun exciting month travelling but it did not engrave my love for Israel like my gap year did”.* Female, 23

*“My connection to Israel was more Coz of gap year not really tour”.* Male, 24

The relationship to Israel changes after Israel Tour. Almost 50% of respondents said that Israel is “extremely important” to them now as compared to 32% who maintain that Israel had been extremely important to them before Israel Tour. We had many quotes to support this, for example:

*“I kept a diary of my trip so I will be able to look back and remember the fab memories of Tour. I connected better towards Israel after spending 4 weeks there”.* Female, 19

*“Tour engaged me in a more active relationship with Israel...it opened me up to want to educate myself...”* Female 20

*“I am the madrich for a school year six Israel trip now”,* Male 24

To further strengthen this finding, analysis of survey data also suggests that respondents’ engagement with Israel increases in every aspect investigated.



## Challenges of Israel Tour

We did have examples of where young people felt critical about the content and outcomes of Tour. These examples could mostly be divided into three categories:

- a) Those for whom Israel Tour had been a poor social experience, or who had felt that their madrichim were not good leaders, for example:

*“The groups were a bit cliquey and it wasn't as amazing as everyone said it would be. That said, it was actually a brilliant trip, and suppose I only remember the negative, looking back now it was actually really fun- but only with a select few people who accepted me”*. Female, 17

*“I think my experience/feedback will be somewhat of an anomaly, as I did not grow up in the close-knit North London Jewish community, and the whole tour/youth group involvement was a novelty for me. I very much regret not getting more involved and following on with the relationships made, however this was hard for me as I felt a bit of an outsider”*. Female, 22

This comment above, however, was balanced by the following:

*“I would recommend anyone to go on tour. I hardly had any Jewish friends living in Liverpool with such a small community, but now go over to see other Jewish people around the UK”*. Male, 16

Comments related to the poor social experience were spread amongst the Movements and the ages of respondents, and there was no specific pattern to the responses.

- b) Those for whom the programme was not as they would have wished it. Most of those comments related to Tour feeling rushed, or poorly organised:

*“I would have liked to have more direct Hebrew learning activities and spend more time at important sites rather than a whistle stop tour”*.

*“As much as I enjoyed Israel tour I felt that we spent too little time in one place to really form a connection”* Female, 19

- c) Comments related to the way the Tour leaders related to the politics of Israel. Of all the critical comments (which represented only a very small percentage of all the comments received), this category received the largest number of responses:

*“There was little discussion of Zionism or questioning of it. I felt as those the organisers of my tour completely avoided certain social or political issues or if they were discussed it was only covered at face value”* Female, 18

*“while I look back on tour with the fondest of memories socially, the political context that runs as a backdrop to that experience really troubled me for many of my years afterwards”*. Male, 23

*“...I feel whilst they were trying to show two sides to Israel sometimes they forgot they were a Zionist youth movement and tried to get us to overly criticise the country e.g. taking us to a poor Palestinian village on the green line and making us feel guilty, however not educating us on the Palestinian authority, who's responsibility the village was. I did have a great time though...”*, Female, 17

The comments related to the politics included those who felt that an over-positive position was put forward during Tour, and those who felt that an over-negative position was put forward. Particular political views of participants' are very varied and the emphasis on the political really just illustrates the level of interest in the topic overall.

Whilst critical comments were a minority of the many hundreds received, UJIA and the Movements must not be complacent and must address the issues raised to further improve the quality of Israel Tour.

## Those who did not go on Israel Tour

We asked the thirteen interviewees in our control group why they didn't go on Tour. For the majority, the reason was a lack of connection to a Youth Movement or to a Jewish peer group. For three people, the cost was a prohibiting factor, and for another it was the chance that summer to "*go on another trip to Honduras with school World Challenge*". One had previously lived in Israel and felt that Tour "*wasn't right for me*". Most of the non-Tour group had not attended Jewish schools. Of the three ex-Jewish school attendees, one had been on a Year 9 trip and couldn't afford another trip. For others, Israel Tour was just not a factor in their lives at that time. Seven of the thirteen had been to Israel with their families during their childhood.

8 of the 13 had subsequently participated in a Birthright UK trip and one had since gone on a Gap Year with RSY-Netzer. Of the Birthright UK participants, 7 of the 8 feel their relationship to Israel has "*changed significantly*" and they are "*keen to visit again*". It is a place to "*care about far more now*". One is planning on making Aliyah. When asked, none of the Birthright participants said that the lure of a free trip (Birthright costs nothing for the participant) at 20 years old was a contributory factor for them not going on Israel Tour at 16.

It is clear from this small sample that the influence of the Youth Movements is a key factor in terms of attracting 16 year olds onto Israel Tour. Responses from our interviewees also show the importance of Birthright, as a "second chance", a way of enabling those who do miss out on Israel tour at 16 to have a further opportunity to experience Israel on an organised trip.

## Conclusion

*“Israel Tour was one of the best experiences of my life. I loved it and am telling everyone to go. It was life changing and I will always remember it. It was a once in a lifetime experience and it was my best decision to go. I have a much greater desire to go back to Israel frequently and to carry on exploring the intricate and beautiful detailed of Israel that I got a real insight into on Tour”.* Female, 16

From both the survey and the interviews, it is absolutely clear that for the vast majority, participants have a wonderful experience on Israel Tour. The outcomes of Tour relate to both intellectual and emotional factors - knowledge and understanding of the country; friendships formed and developed. Israel Tour relies on the Youth Movements and in turn, the Youth Movements rely on the participants to become further involved as a result of Tour. Most importantly, Israel Tour is the springboard for many to develop a strong, warm, abiding relationship with the State and the people of Israel. It is also, for many, an influence on that young person's Jewish journey.

## **Recommendations from this Research**

1. Use the very positive data from this research project to help market Israel Tour in the future.
2. Use the data from this project to help market Gap year experiences in Israel.
3. Meet with the Youth Movements to feed back a) the generic report and b) specific information related to the individual Movements.
4. Use the data from this project to impact on the content of Israel Tour for Summer 2013.
5. Use this research as a springboard to begin a data analysis of the UJIA Israel Tour data.
6. Whilst the critical comments were in the minority, those responsible for organising Israel Tour should review the programme content and structure. Particular attention should be paid to madrichim training for pastoral care and group dynamics and integration.
7. Very few respondents mentioned UJIA. Should our involvement be more explicitly recognised by participants?

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# Appendix One: On-Line Survey

Page 1

Are you male or female?  
How old are you?  
Please choose your postcode:  
Are you an Israeli citizen?  
Do you currently have family in Israel?  
Please state your current level of education:  
Do you/did you attend a Jewish secondary school?

Page 2

With which youth movement/group did you go on Israel Tour?  
Are you currently involved in the youth movement/group with which you went on Israel Tour?

BBYO  
Bnei Akiva  
Ezra  
FZY  
Habonim Dror  
Hanoar Hatzioni  
JLGB  
LJYNetzer  
Maccabi GB  
Noam  
RSYNetzer  
Sinai  
Other (please specify)  
Yes  
No

Page 3

To what extent has your involvement in your youth movement/group changed since Israel Tour?  
Much more involved/ A little more involved/ Stayed the same/ Less involved/ Much less involved

Page 4

Which of the following reasons best explain the change in your involvement? (Tick all that apply)

Change in political views  
Change in religious views  
Positive Israel experience  
Negative Israel experience  
Positive group experience  
Negative group experience  
Not enough time  
Not interested  
Other (please specify)

Page 5

How important have the following been in shaping your Jewish life?

Extremely important/Important/ Somewhat important/ Not important /Not at all important/ N/A

Family  
Friends  
School  
Local Community  
Synagogue  
Youth Movement  
Israel Tour  
Gap Year in Israel

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Had you been to Israel BEFORE you went on Israel Tour?

Page 7

How many times had you been to Israel BEFORE going on Israel Tour?

Page 8

Why had you been to Israel previously? (Tick all that apply)

Lived there  
On a year 6 school trip  
On a year 9 school trip  
On holiday  
On an organised tour  
To visit family  
To study  
To volunteer  
To work

Page 9

If you attended a year 9 school trip to Israel, was this a contributing factor to your decision to go on Israel Tour?

How important were the following outcomes of previous visits to Israel for you?

In what ways did you engage with Israel BEFORE going on Israel Tour?

Extremely important/ Important/ Somewhat important/ Not important/ Not at all important/ N/A

Cultural interaction  
Fun  
Furthering my Zionism  
Furthering my Israel education  
Furthering my Jewish education  
Making new friends in the group  
Meeting Israelis  
Religious enrichment  
Very involved/engaged Somewhat involved/engaged Not at all involved/engaged  
Donating to Israel related charities  
Fundraising for Israel related charities  
Keeping up with news in Israel  
Learning about Israel  
Learning Ivrit  
Reading Israeli literature/watching Israeli films  
Speaking to family or friends in Israel  
Speaking to friends about Israel



Volunteering in Israel  
Volunteering for Israel related charities  
Working for Israel related charities

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How important was Israel to you BEFORE you went on Israel Tour?  
Extremely important  
Important  
Somewhat important  
Not at all important

Page 11

How relevant were the following reasons towards your DECISION TO GO on Israel Tour?  
How important were the following OUTCOMES of attending Israel Tour for you?

Extremely relevant/ Relevant/ Somewhat relevant/ Not at all relevant

Cultural interaction  
Fun  
Hiking  
Israel education  
Jewish education  
Making new friends in the group  
Meeting Israelis  
Religious enrichment  
Sightseeing  
Travelling with friends  
Zionism

Extremely important/ Important /Somewhat important /Not important /Not at all important

Cultural interaction  
Fun  
Hiking  
Israel education  
Jewish education  
Making new friends in the group  
Meeting Israelis  
Religious enrichment  
Zionism

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In what ways did your engagement with Israel change AFTER going on Tour?

Much more/ Slightly more/ About the same /Slightly less/ Much less

Donating to Israel related charities  
Fundraising for Israel related charities  
Keeping up with news in Israel  
Learning about Israel  
Learning Ivrit  
Reading Israeli literature/watching Israeli films  
Speaking to family or friends in Israel  
Speaking to friends about Israel  
Visiting Israel  
Volunteering in Israel  
Volunteering for Israel related charities  
Working for Israel related charities

As a DIRECT or INDIRECT result of going on Israel Tour, how likely are you to do the following? (Consider how important your Israel Tour experience has been to your choices if any of these have already occurred)

Much more likely/ More likely/ No change/ Less likely/ Much less likely

Attend other Jewish programmes or social events  
Encourage others to go on Israel Tour  
Follow Israel in the news  
Read more Israeli literature/watch more Israeli films  
Fundraise for Israel  
Take part in Jewish learning events (e.g. Limmud, Jewish Book Week)  
Take Israel advocacy courses  
Learn Ivrit  
Take a leadership role in the Jewish community  
Attend synagogue more often  
Keep more Jewish customs and traditions (e.g. lighting candles, fasting on Yom Kippur, keeping kosher)  
Have Jewish friends  
Have a Jewish boyfriend/girlfriend  
Marry someone Jewish  
Live in Israel

In the past seven years, have you been involved in/done any of the following? (Tick all that apply)  
How many times have you been to Israel AFTER going on Tour?

Donated to the UJIA  
Fundraised for Israel with a UJIA programme  
Gap Year in Israel  
Have been/are a Youth Movement worker  
Israel Society  
Jeneration  
JLGB  
JSoc  
Maccabi GB  
Magic Moments  
MASA programme (Other than Shnat)  
Received a bursary for Israel Tour  
Tribe  
Tzofim  
UJS  
The Zone  
Volunteered for the UJIA  
Worked for the UJIA  
Worked for a Jewish organisation other than the UJIA

What was/were the purpose for your visit(s)? (Tick all that apply)

Lived there  
On a Gap Year  
On a school trip  
On holiday  
On an organised tour  
To visit family

To study  
To volunteer  
To work

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Each group has a CENTRE, INSIDERS, MARGINS, and OUTSIDERS. For example, in the category of football fans:

THE CENTRE GROUP are the dedicated fans that never miss a game, fill their homes with the team's collectibles, t shirts, etc.

THE INSIDER GROUP are fans of the team who keep up to date with how their team is doing, they occasionally go to games, and are happy when their team wins and sad when they lose.

THE MARGINAL GROUP are those fans who like one team more than all the others, show some interest in it, but hardly ever watch games

THE OUTSIDER GROUP are those people who are not interested in football and don't follow how any teams are doing

Page 17

Which of the following best describes your relationship with Israel?

1. CENTRE

am ALWAYS involved in Israel related learning, advocacy, or charity, keeping up to date with the news, visiting Israel, thinking of Israel, etc. I may think of Israel as a home away from home, strongly support Israel while living in the UK, or plan to move to Israel in the future.

2. INSIDER

OFTEN get involved in Israel related learning, advocacy, or charity, keep up to date with the news, visit Israel, think of Israel, etc. I support Israel while living in the UK. I plan on visiting Israel in the near future and would consider spending a long time there.

3. MARGINAL

am OCCASIONALLY involved in Israel related learning, advocacy, or charity, keeping up to date with the news, thinking of Israel, etc. I sometimes support Israel while living in the UK and care about it more than other countries. I may visit Israel in the future but I do not feel like it is somewhere I belong.

4. OUTSIDER

feel disconnected from Israel and RARELY or NEVER get involved in Israel related learning, advocacy, or charity, keep up to date with the news, visit Israel, think of Israel, etc. I may consider Israel a nice holiday spot but do not see it as a particularly important place to me.

Please take a moment to explain your choice.

Where my family lives

A country we should support

A fun holiday spot

A spiritual/religious place

A home away from home

A future home

My current home

If Israel were in your relationship status on Facebook, the two of you would be

Married

In a relationship

It's complicated

Not friends

How important is Israel to you?

Extremely important

Important

Somewhat important

Not at all important

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Please feel free to leave any comments which will help us to better understand your experience of Israel Tour and/or your connection with Israel.

Page 19

If you would you be willing to participate in a 20-30 minute interview with a member of our research team to tell us about your Israel Tour experience, please leave your name, telephone number, and email address here and a member of the research team will be in touch with you shortly.

Thank you very much in advance.

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This completes our survey. Thank you very much for taking the time to provide your invaluable input.

## **Appendix Two: Interview Schedule – those who had participated on Israel tour**

**Interview Questions for Israel Tour follow up:**

**Questions for those who went on Tour:**

- i) Profile of the young person: gender/age/postcode/school/university/youth movement/family in Israel
- ii) Did you go on a Y9 Israel tour with school?
- iii) How did that affect your decision to go on Tour?
- iv) With which Movement did you go on Tour? Why?  
(friends/price/programme/ideology etc)
- v) Tell me about how your youth movement has been a part of your life (interest in Jewish/Israel identity development)
- vi) Who or what influenced your decision to go on Tour?  
Friends/parents/shul/school/Movement/no one
- vii) What is your best memory of Israel Tour?
- viii) What was challenging about Tour?
- ix) Would you recommend Tour to others? How would you “sell” it?
- x) Have you been back to Israel since Tour? Shnat/independently/family trip/etc
- xi) To what extent did Israel Tour change your Jewish life?
- xii) To what extent did Israel Tour change your relationship to Israel?
- xiii) How do you describe your current relationship to Israel?
- xiv) Anything you want to add?

## **Appendix Three: Interview Schedule: those who did not participate in Israel Tour**

### **Questions for those who did not go on Tour:**

- i) Profile of the young person: gender/age/postcode/school/university/youth movement/family in Israel
- ii) Why did you not go on Israel Tour?
- iii) Who or what influenced your decision not to go on Tour?  
Friends/parents/shul/school/Movement/no one
- iv) Had you been to Israel prior to the year you could have gone on Tour? (eg Y9 trip)
- v) Have you subsequently visited Israel?
- vi) If yes: tell us when, how and why.
- vii) If no: tell us why you have not.
- viii) To what extent did visiting Israel change your Jewish life?
- ix) To what extent did visiting Israel change your relationship to Israel?
- x) How do you describe your current relationship to Israel?
- xi) Anything you want to add?

## Appendix Four: Profile of interviewees

Interviewee T=Israel Tour B= Birthright N=non Tour or Birthright	Gender F= Female M= Male	age	Home Postcode/district	Y Movt	Secondary School J=Jewish NJ=Non-Jewish
1 T	F	20	NW4	FZY	NJ
2 T	F	23	Dublin	BBYO	NJ
3 T	M	23	NW11	Noam	NJ
4 T	M	22	Watford	BBYO	NJ
5 T	F	22	Nottingham	AJ6	NJ
6 T	F	23	Tel Aviv	FZY	NJ
7 T	M	19	E Anglia	LJY-Netzer	NJ
8 T	M	22	HA7	FZY	NJ
9 T	F	20	HA8	FZY	J
10 T	M	23	HA8	FZY	J
11 T	M	19	NW11	Noam	J
12 T	F	23	Manchester	FZY	NJ
13 T	M	17	NW4	Ezra	J
14 T	F	17	Borehamwood	LJY-Netzer	J
15 T	F	22	Manchester	JLGB	NJ
16 T	F	18	Manchester	FZY	J
17 T	M	16	SE London	LJY-Netzer	NJ
18 T	F	21	Redbridge	FZY	J
19 T	F	24	N10	Noam	J
20 T	F	21	Borehamwood	Hanoar	J
21 T	F	18	Redbridge	Macnoar	J
22 T	F	20	Redbridge	Hanoar	J
23 T	M	24	N10	RSY-Netzer	J
24 B	F	21	Hampshire	-	NJ
25 B	F	25	Scotland	-	NJ
26 B	M	26	Guildford	-	NJ
27 B	F	23	N3	-	NJ
28 B	F	21	Manchester	-	NJ
29 B	F	26	Hereford	-	NJ
30 B	F	23	Manchester	-	NJ
31 B	M	27	HA3	-	NJ
32 N	M	23	Bushey	-	NJ
33 N	F	21	HA8	-	J
34 N	F	21	NW11	RSY-Netzer	NJ
35 N	M	25	NW4	RSY-Netzer	J
36 N	F	21	Redbridge	-	J

*"for the first time ever, Israel felt like a homeland to me".*

Female, 23

*Unbelievable trip made some good friends .... being in Israel at the Western Wall is something that I will never forget.*

Male, 17

*"TOUR WAS AMAZING IT WAS THE BEST SUMMER OF MY ENTIRE LIFE!!!!"*

Female, 17

*"Zionism, fantastic memories and good friends. Felt like a growing of age event that I took part in".*

Male, 21

*"Bnei Akiva did an exceptional job of providing a fun upbeat interactive bundle of fun, at the same time providing an educational element as well. I feel that Bnei Akiva Israel tour had the perfect balance".*

Male, 17

*"...Thanks UJIA for such a fabulous, special and memorable experience"*

Female, 16

*"I know that people say it a lot but tour was the best experience of my life and I really mean it, I feel like I know a lot more about Israel and I feel like I have a really good connection with it now and I feel passionately about it. I'll never forget my tour experience".*

Female, 16

*"Israel Tour with Noam was one of the best experiences of my life so far. I highly recommend to anyone considering and only have good things to say about tour".*

Female, 18

*"After going on tour I was a madrich on tour in summer 2011. It made me see the full circle and understand a lot of things I might not have been old enough to do when I was 16. Thanks for giving me this opportunity".*

Male, 23

*"I loved Israel Tour with JLGB. It was an important part of my life, I got to make new friends and learn all about Israel, the culture and history. It is extremely important, in my opinion for Israel Tour to continue to be offered to kids, and for them to experience Israel with their peers".*

Female, 20