

THE KIVUNIM INSTITUTE PRESENTS:

(with financial support from the Riane Gruss Charitable Foundation and The Gottesman Fund)

THE MOROCCAN EXPERIENCE

A Model for Inter-Religious and Cross-Cultural Coexistence

**In partnership with Association Mimouna—Morocco*

June 23 - July 4, 2024

A Fellowship for High School Teachers (from Public, Independent, and Jewish Schools)



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The KIVUNIM Institute, the preeminent sponsor of international educational study and travel programs for both teachers and students, with over 20 years of experience across the globe, has designed **a unique fellowship for high school teachers to expand their historical and contemporary understanding of race and religion by an intensive study mission to Morocco.**

High School educators are the front line of defense against growing racism, bigotry, and anti-Semitism. They encounter young minds filled with impressionistic childhood thinking about the divisive social issues of our times. The teacher can both inform and motivate towards more open and expansive views by providing the opportunity for exposure to more complex and nuanced views of history...**IF** they as teachers have accurate and sophisticated knowledge themselves.

In the realm of Jewish-Muslim history and inter-relationships, most of what is known, and therefore most of what is taught, is negative. **The KIVUNIM Fellowship for High School Teachers** will shake things up. It will challenge past assumptions. It will demonstrate a history ignored in the West. It will reveal a coexistence relationship of thousands of years that culminates in statements like the following from the current King Mohammed VI of Morocco, himself a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammed:

“Racism in general—and anti-Semitism in particular—are by no means just a way of thinking. Anti-Semitism is the antithesis of freedom of expression. It implies a denial of the other and is an admission of failure, inadequacy and an inability to coexist. It implies an anachronistic return to a mythicized past.”

“Is this the past we want to bequeath to future generations as a legacy?”¹

Through KIVUNIM’s unique relationship to Morocco and its people, teachers will not only travel extensively, they will encounter fascinating and key personalities in the current manifestation of what Moroccans call “*convivencia*,” the millennia of positive Jewish/Muslim inter-relationship. **The program’s goal is to enable teachers to offer American students an alternative model to one of the (seemingly) greatest divisions of our time: Judaism and Islam, Jews and Arabs.** While the Palestinian-Israeli conflict may *divide*, the Moroccan legacy unites and offers an experience of hopefulness and optimism so desperately needed in today’s challenging social and educational environments.

¹ Royal Message from His Majesty King Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, To the High Level Round Table (of the UNESCO) New York, September 26, 2018, p.1

Apply by March 15th. [CLICK HERE for the Application Form!](#)

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The KIVUNIM Fellowship for High School Teachers, will take place in Morocco, preceded and followed by lecture/discussions on Zoom with some of the world's most noted Morocco scholars. The Moroccan field experience aims to further an educational journey that will allow both teacher and student to see beyond the temptation to implicate, draw ultimate conclusions, and finally exclude those with whom we disagree, even strongly disagree. The ultimate goal of justice must always contain mercy which dictates a recognition that things are not always as "black and white" as they may sometimes seem. **The Moroccan historical encounter is thereby a model for seeing beyond differences towards common ground.**

The KIVUNIM Fellowship for High School Teachers aims to provide inspiration, motivation, experience, and educational content to its participants with the goal of bringing the Moroccan story to students in Public, Independent, and Jewish high schools across the United States. Our goal is to work together with teachers to produce classroom experiences and materials that will allow high school students to recognize the limitation of inter-group stereotypes and seek opportunities to learn from and explore settings in which differences and "otherness" lead to bridge-building—in place of the all-to-common, construction of walls.

Acceptance to **The KIVUNIM Fellowship for High School Teachers** includes a \$4,250 fellowship covering the cost of RT airfare between NYC and Morocco, all hotels, all meals, museum admissions, internal transportation, and preparatory and follow-up educational programs. There is a \$750 application fee required upon acceptance (needs-based scholarships are available for the application fee as well). The program will be led by Peter Geffen, Founder and President of The KIVUNIM Institute (and one of the most knowledgeable and well-traveled experts on Morocco) together with KIVUNIM faculty and gap-year program alumni. (Peter is also the Founder of The Abraham Joshua Heschel School in NYC).

The KIVUNIM Institute's gap-year program has proven to motivate students towards the building of "world consciousness" and an appreciation of multiculturalism operating alongside and respecting inner-group particularism. It's success is reflected in the following tribute offered to KIVUNIM alumni in 2015 by King Mohammed VI:

"...these (KIVUNIM) students, who are members of the American Jewish community, will be different people in their community tomorrow. Not just different, but also valuable, because they have made the effort to see the world in a different light, to better understand our intertwined and unified traditions, paving the way for a different future, for a new, shared destiny full of the promises of history, which, as they have realized in Morocco, is far from being relegated to the past."

We encourage and welcome your application!

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Unlike astronauts who travel to “outer space,” to understand Morocco is to journey into “inner space.” Under every tree and shrub the country reveals a spiritual reality that is unlike anything we have experienced before. We enter an Islamic world that many in the United States have been conditioned to expect as hostile. Instead we find a warmth and welcome that both captivates and inspires. We immediately feel at home and respected as we enter a unique multi-cultural society whose own 2011 constitution states:

“Its unity...is built on the convergence of its Arab-Islamic, Amazigh and Saharan-Hassani components, (and) is nurtured and enriched by African, Andalusian, Hebraic and Mediterranean constituents.”

SAMPLE ITINERARY *(subject to change)*

Sunday, June 23	Departure on Royal Air Maroc from NY’s JFK Airport.
Monday, June 24	Arrival Casablanca, visit to Museum Of Moroccan Jewry, Hassan II Mosque, meeting with leadership of Jewish community and Elmehdi Boudra, the President and Founder of Association Mimouna, Morocco’s major coexistence organization. Lunch and Dinner in two of the city’s Jewish clubs.
Tuesday, June 25	Morning in Casablanca and then departure for Essaouira, historic bi-cultural city on the Atlantic Ocean, meeting with high school teachers and students.
Wednesday, June 26	Visit to historic and contemporary Essaouira. Meeting with local foundation and governmental officials.
Thursday, June 27	Early departure for Taroudant and small Berber village of Arazane for meeting with Harim and visit to the small adobe Synagogue he preserved for 60 years.
Friday, June 28	Departure to Marrakech and afternoon visit to the Mellah, the historic Jewish Quarter of the city. Shabbat services at the 500+ year old Al-azama Synagogue and homemade Moroccan Shabbat dinner in the Synagogue courtyard.
Saturday, June 29	Shabbat Services for those who wish. Traditional home cooked kosher Shabbat lunch followed by visit to the Jardin Majorelle and walking tours of the city. Evening in J’ma del Fna, the world famous Marrakech square and cooking lesson of Moroccan specialties.
Sunday, June 30	Morning visit to the Medinah of Marrakech and departure for Merzouga and the Sahara Desert with its dunes of sands rising 50 stories high.
Monday, July 1	Sunrise over the dunes, departure for Ouarzazat including dinner and Agwash dancing in Telouet with overnight in Ouarzazat.
Tuesday, July 2	Departure for Fes via Marrakech.
Wednesday, July 3	Full-day in the singular Medinah of Fes.
Thursday, July 4	Early departure for Rabat and meeting with senior government official, and then on to Casablanca airport for return flight to NY.

**All served food will be vegetarian and/or kosher and hallal.
There will be no required activity or programming on the Jewish Sabbath that will violate the traditions of Judaism.*

Here in a Muslim land is the story of a Jewish community that traces its history back to Roman times and maybe earlier. Later joined by exiled Jews from Spain, following their expulsion in 1492, the Jewish community of Morocco came to number close to 300,000 in the first part of the 20th century.

Morocco is one of those places that still has romance and exoticism written all over it...and you will be sure to feel it from the moment we arrive. Whatever you are expecting, it will be very different and far more than you can even imagine.

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Some reflections from KIVUNIM Morocco Teacher Fellows (2022 + 2023)

"My time with KIVUNIM has had an irrevocable impact on my teaching and learning. Through our immersive experience in Morocco, I have developed a new appreciation and vision for multicultural community in history and the present. Through carefully orchestrated tours and experiences, Peter Geffen and his team have created a singular learning experience that has expanded my thinking as an educator. We did not just learn history from afar, we discovered new ideas and historical context through face-to-face encounters with local peoples, places, cultures, and customs. All of the fantastic experiences were contextualized in a carefully curated community of devoted educators. With the pre-trip educational sessions and intensity of the experience, our collection of teachers quickly became a strong community of learners and colleagues who continue to support one another back in the United States."

- Edward Maza Head of Humanities, 2022; The Idea School, Tenafly, NJ ('21-'22)

"The trip to Morocco this summer is a life changing experience. I was touched by what I saw and heard each day, and I was inspired to work even harder and become a better person and educator. ...The warmth, welcome and respect of the Moroccan people inspired and touched me. The unique multi-cultural society gave me a new perspective and an alternative view of reality. It presented a real and concrete model for everyone who visited, learned and absorbed to gain a richer and deeper understanding of diversity. For me as an educator, to teach a value structure that enhances personal identity and fights against growing racism, bigotry, and antisemitism isn't an easy task. But I want to be as persevering and devoted as those wonderful and talented people I met during this trip. I can't wait to bring back this amazing experience to my classroom and school community and create opportunities for them to learn and explore different cultures and be humble and respectful."

- Zhenyan Xue Li, 2022; Head of the Chinese Department, Middlesex School, Concord, MA

"The trip had great personal meaning and will be applied in the classroom in direct and indirect ways. As an African-American who struggles with American History (and Government officials) denying the importance of African-American contributions, it was important to me to experience a country that values the contribution of a minority group. The Jewish Moroccan contribution is valued despite the fact that most Jews have migrated to Israel and Middle East politics continue to rage. It is a lesson in "true democracy" from a country that resides in a region rife with political turmoil."

- Petrus Fortune, 2023; Chair of Social Studies Department, Bishop Loughlin High School, Brooklyn, NY

"There is a clear difference between school and education. School is confined to the walls inside of an isolated building. Education exists everywhere outside of these structures. As a teacher, it is my duty to encourage students to seek out this type of experiential learning. Experience and exposure to different people provides us with excellent opportunities to shift our perspectives about humanity. Thank you, to Peter and the Kivunim Institute, for exposing me to this majestic country and reminding me of what is possible when we seek not to judge but rather listen to each other's rich and hopeful stories."

- Lisa Greenbaum, 2023; American & World Literature/Drama, University Heights High School, Bronx, NY

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"...I found listening to Kaoutar Chakir (Director) of the Essaouira Mogador Association, El Mehdi Boudra (Founder and President) of the Mimouna Association and Hon. Andre Azoulay (Senior Advisor to King Mohammed VI) speak about their personal identities to be the most paradigm shifting for me. I was struck by Kaoutar's comment that she feels that she has more in common with a Jew from Morocco than she does with a Muslim Palestinian. Mehdi spoke of the closeness he feels to the Jews of Morocco, and speaks of Jews as his brothers. And Mr. Azoulay, proudly called himself not only a Jew, but also an Arab due to shared language and culture. These examples highlighted for me what was most unusual about Morocco—the expansive identity that does not create an Other, but rather makes room for a multi-layered identity. It is this idea that I look forward to sharing with my students as a model not only for Arab Jewish coexistence, but also as a way to think about identity more broadly. Communities and individuals can retain a strong sense of identity and purpose (Jews and Muslims were not inter-marrying), while also making room for others based on what they share."

- Dr. Adina Shoulson, 2022; Chair, History Department, SAR Academy, Riverdale, NY

"The Kivunim program was one that has led me to deep thinking and a shift in perspective. I came into this program with an openheart and a deep interest to learn about the Moroccan world. But I don't think I realized how profoundly the experience would help me to consider new ideas beyond just Morocco itself. Ultimately, I feel deeply moved and touched by this experience. My thought process has shifted in a profound way and I am changed by what I have seen and participated in."

- Aaron Kohut, 2023; Science Teacher, Leffell School, Hartsdale, NY

"It is with profound gratitude that I offer this reflection on my experience in Morocco with KIVUNIM during the summer of 2023. I learned so much about the rich history of the Jewish faith and tradition and its impact on the history of Morocco and the world. As a teacher of AP World history, the knowledge I acquired through immersion in Moroccan culture and history is incomparable to anything I have ever read or have heard in a scholarly lecture before this experience. Learning came alive from the history books for me without narration!"

- Eileen Postler, 2023; History Teacher, Xaverian High School, Brooklyn, NY

"As a Jewish educator, I constantly encounter gaps in my teaching, be they philosophical, pedagogical, historical, or cultural. I found this trip eye-opening in each and every one of these matters. Traveling to Morocco and encountering its rich Jewish traditions along with its deep history of multiculturalism, presented me with a completely different paradigm for societal living. To see firsthand how the Jews of Morocco lived for thousands of years alongside non-Jewish neighbors, to hear first-person accounts of positive Jewish-Arab relations, and to witness the impact of Jewish culture on modern-day Moroccan culture, enabled me to gain an emotional appreciation for a culture Western Jews are rarely exposed to."

- Rabbi Ayal Robkin, 2022; The Abraham Joshua Heschel School, New York, NY

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KIVUNIM Summer Teachers Program in Morocco with Hon. André Azoulay, Senior Advisor to King Mohammed VI of Morocco—in the Synagogue of Rabat, Morocco, July, 2022.

Front (L-R): Shannon Jin, Chasida Zilbiger, Adi Rapaika; **Center (L-R):** Carolina Aldana, Nadine Rothman, Hani Trubowitz, Rivka Naor, Hon. André Azoulay, Peter Geffen, Erica Diaz, Rebecca Wolf, Oshrat Twito; **Rear (L-R):** Ellen Alt, Xue Zhenyan Li, Nati Golan, Ayal Robkin, Gavriel Brown, Ned Ginsburg, Edward Maza, Avram Mandell, Aviva Adler, Joe Bernstein, Adina Shoulson, Shmuel Afek, **Missing:** Ben Perlstein

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