



KIVUNIM
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KIVUNIM ALUMNI STUDY 2020

Bethamie Horowitz, Ph.D. and Amanda Winer

A comprehensive study of the impact of KIVUNIM's Gap-Year Program over the 13 year period, 2006-2019

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"...If we could only get the network of day schools and of Hebrew schools to internalize (this) vision and communicate it, we would be facing a burgeoning renaissance and not the demographic dwindle that looms. I do fear that missing universal element in Jewish education (then exacerbated by the over-universalistic reaction of many young people when they meet the others) is a key cause of assimilation. If only we could get all the Jewish educators in the system to learn your remarkable embrace of both poles and of humanity in general..."

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, 2019

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Executive Summary

What is the Kivunim Program?

The Kivunim Gap-Year Program, founded in 2006, has just completed its 14th year of operation. Each year, the program brings together approximately 50-60 students for a 9-month course of study that combines rigorous academic and compelling experiential components, a general rubric that may seem familiar, insofar there have been any number of well-known gap-year programs operating in Israel for the past decades. Yet from its inception Kivunim, has forged new ground in conceptualizing how young American Jews in the 21st century ought to be oriented to the world today.

Kivunim seeks to cultivate in students critical thinking about Jews, Judaism, Jewish history and about contemporary Israeli society and culture. Kivunim was the first gap-year program to make travel to Jewish communities around the world an integral counterpart to its mainstay, Israel-focused-program. This framework enables students to explore the past and present of various Jewish communities around the world, and to consider the resilience and creativity of Jewish diaspora experience, in addition to its well-known challenges.

A central commitment of the program is the importance of coexistence and of encountering societies' "others." For this reason, one of its central practices, in addition to the study of Hebrew and Hebrew literature, is the study of Arabic and Arab civilization and culture. This in itself is groundbreaking. The program provides many opportunities for directly grappling with the complexities of present-day Israel, and also for "appreciating the possibilities of Palestinian/Arab-Israeli, Muslim-Jewish and Christian-Jewish co-existence."

What difference does Kivunim make in the lives of its participants?

To answer this question, Kivunim undertook a study of the program, tracing its effects on participants of the first 13 years. The study was designed to reach the 589 alumni who participated in academic years ending in 2007-2019. The data-gathering for this on-line survey took place between January 22 and April 30, 2020. Fully 65% of the 589 alumni answered the survey. With such a high response rate it is remarkable that fully 97% of

alumni say they have or would recommend the program to others. The vast majority (95%) of alumni keep in touch with one another in some way; more than half (53%) keep in touch with staff. What accounts for their enthusiasm?

This report answers the following questions:

- *How do they view the program in retrospect? What is their understanding of the different elements of the program?*
- *In what ways do they see Kivunim's effects in their lives? What effects do we, the researchers, discern based on our analyses?*
- *What are the characteristics of Kivunim alumni? What do we know about their backgrounds prior to attending Kivunim and their lives since completing the program?*

Enthusiasm for Kivunim's Educational Vision

Alumni rated the effectiveness of the program from 35 angles (summarized in italics below). Six important themes emerged:

- 1. Kivunim shaped my appreciation for the importance of coexistence and the bridging of cultural divides as an authentic reading of Jewish historical experience:** *The program emphasized the importance of: interreligious coexistence; empathy for other traditions; engaging with people from other cultures/traditions; the variety of Jewish experience across history and society; bridging cultural divides.*
- 2. The program deepened my understanding of Jewish and Zionist history and helped me to see the roots of key debates that continue today:** *The program portrays the centrality of Zionism in Jewish history; examines the relationship between Zionism, Israel and the Jewish People; conveys key debates in the Zionist movement; deepens knowledge of Jewish history.*
- 3. The program got me to think about the relationship between being a Jew and being attuned to society's "Others":** *The program exposed me to pressing issues in the countries visited; the importance of connecting to society's Others; deepened my connection to Jewish communities visited; expanded my knowledge of other religions and cultures; shaped my sense of what really matters in life; stimulated my thinking about Jewish future.*
- 4. Kivunim fostered critical thinking and question-asking:** *The program emphasized the importance of being a thoughtful listener; critical thinking; asking good questions; being intellectually curious; engaging with viewpoints different from my own.*

5. **Kivunim revealed Israeli life and society in all its complexity:** The program helped me learn about: *Israel's minorities; Palestinian perspectives; a nuanced understanding of Israeli-Palestinian conflict; tensions between a democratic and a Jewish state; the varieties of Jewish religious expression in Israel.*
6. **The program underscored the importance of social justice and my ability to make a difference:** The program emphasized *social justice issues; having a sense of civic responsibility; making connections between being a Jew and one's sense of social responsibility; the capacity of individuals to make a difference.*

Overall, the study showed how much alumni appreciated the educational vision of the program. Their enthusiasm for the program is a theme throughout the study. Indeed, 97% of alumni indicated that they had recommended or would recommend the program to others, The alumni emotional investment in the program is very high: the vast majority (95%) of alumni keep in touch with one another and/or faculty and staff in some way.

Alumni Embody Lessons Learned from Kivunim

In College: Nearly 40% of the alumni reported that they majored in one or more of the following subjects related to key themes related to Kivunim's curriculum: *Conflict Resolution/Peace and Conflict Studies, Hebrew, Arabic, Middle East Studies, Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, Jewish History, History, International Relations, Anthropology, Sociology.* They continued to express these commitments in their extra-curricular activities. Alumni credited *their experience on Kivunim as helping them to be prepared for college-level thinking and communicating with others from different backgrounds.*

Sense of Jewishness: The survey included a space for alumni to share thoughts about the effect of participating in Kivunim on their sense of Jewishness. Fully two-thirds of the respondents shared detailed reflections. Half of those comments mentioned **the global Jewish perspective** they gained from the program. For example:

- *An overarching theme that I took away from the program was the history and resilience of the Jewish people. Learning about my own people's history was a very powerful experience coupled with the intense travel that complemented the learning.*
- *It definitely affected my sense of Jewishness and identity in a way Jewish day school did not for me. Living in Israel and being exposed to Jewish communities all over the world led to me rethinking my sense of Jewishness.*

A second major sentiment expressed by many of the alumni was **the sense of ownership they come to feel about their own Jewishness** as a result of the program: For example:

- *Kivunim was a risk in many ways for me. I'd never been a full-time student at a Jewish education institution. I'd never been to Israel-Palestine. I'd never been apart from my parents for more than a few weeks. Kivunim forced me to confront myself and my position in the world as a 21st century American Jew. Kivunim forced me to be radically vulnerable and open, reevaluating my own responsibilities in my personal relationships, my community and the world at large. What I took from Kivunim continues to impact me everyday.*
- *It helped me be more independent and confident in my own behaviors and helped me make friends that I have stayed in contact with over the years. I learned much about myself, my needs, my priorities, how to manage my wanderlust, and how to be a Jew in a complex world. The lesson “gnothi seauton” (know thyself) stuck with me most of all; I learned much about what form I want my life to take, which is to say a Jewish, global, curious life.*

Current Relationship to Israel: Seventy percent of 355 respondents indicated they've returned to Israel at least once since Kivunim (most to visit family and friends, others to work, study, or volunteer, and a few to make aliyah or serve in the IDF). Alumni relate to Israel in their daily lives, too. Most of the alumni (88%) reported that they maintain their connection with Israel through news and cultural consumption, conversations about Israel, communicating with friends and family in Israel, continuing their study of Israeli history and society. Even still, one-third (of the alumni indicated that at the time of the survey, they felt despairing or alienated regarding Israel. The open-ended comments were revealing in this. Alumni felt that Kivunim gave them a way to address the most troubling challenges of contemporary Israel, while helping them develop profound connections to it.

Civic-Mindedness: Alumni reported about their involvement in the Jewish communal sphere and more broadly in the civic-organizational sector overall. A majority (57%) of alumni said that they had served in a leadership capacity at some point. 26% said that they had initiated or played a role in the founding of a new project or organization. Of those who founded new projects or organizations, the projects included: *Specifically Jewish-related undertakings; Coexistence-related; Projects addressing civic and social issues in the USA; Undertakings with an international focus.*

About the Alumni Prior to Embarking on Kivunim

Place of Residence: Altogether, almost half (47%) the participants came from places in the Northeast United States, 16% from the West Coast, 14% Midwest, 11% Mid-Atlantic, 8% South. Students from places outside of the USA comprise 4% of alumni. Over the lifecourse of the program, the program has drawn students from a wider array of schools and communities than in the earliest years, when 55% were for the Northeast.

High School Type: The majority (54%) of alumni attended Jewish day schools; 34% attended public high schools, and 12% attended independent high schools. More than three-quarters of the alumni had received Jewish schooling during childhood (day school and/or supplementary school); 12% reported having had no formal Jewish education.

Jewish Denominational Affiliation: Three-fifths (59%) alumni reported that they were raised in one of the liberal Jewish denominations (Conservative, Reform or Reconstructionist); 21% came from Orthodox backgrounds. The percentage Orthodox has increased from 16% in the earliest years to 22% most recently. An additional 10% were raised with both liberal and Orthodox denominations; 9% were raised without Jewish denominational affiliation.

About the Alumni Since Completing Kivunim

Education: Nearly all alumni attended college. All of the alumni of the most recent cohorts of the program (2017-2019) were still enrolled in college at the time of the survey.

- **College credits:** Kivunim offers students the option of receiving a college transcript. Almost half of the alumni (45%) reported that they had received some college credit for participating in the program. Of those, 71% reported that they received eleven or more credits from their subsequent undergraduate institution.
- **Graduate degrees:** Twenty-eight per cent of the alumni reported that they have embarked on graduate-level study. 54% have completed their studies and 46% are currently enrolled.

Career, Marriage, Children: The oldest alumni are now in their early 30s, an age when they move from “emerging adulthood” shifts to “adulthood” sociologically. In terms of employment, more than two-thirds (68%) report that they are launched in their careers, rather than being in “a stepping stone to a career” or “just a job.” Almost half (45%) are married; one-fifth (21%) have children. Younger alumni are that much less settled.

It is clear that Kivunim has achieved many of its objectives and has a profound, lasting influence on a significant portion of its participants. The study thus offers compelling evidence about the power of Kivunim’s ideas and its basic educational design. We hope the findings from this study will help Kivunim make its excellent program even better.

Bethamie Horowitz, Ph.D. and Amanda Winer

Kivunim Alumni Study 2020

Bethamie Horowitz, Ph.D. and Amanda Winer¹



KIVUNIM Alumni at the 10th Anniversary celebration in NYC. December, 2015.

Introduction

The Kivunim Gap-Year Program, founded in 2006, has just completed its 14th year of operation. Each year, the program brings together approximately 50-60 students for an 8-month course of study that combines rigorous academic and compelling experiential components, a general rubric that may seem familiar, insofar there have been any number of well-known gap-year programs operating in Israel for the past decades. **Yet from its inception Kivunim, has forged new ground in conceptualizing how young American Jews in the 21st century ought to be oriented to the world today.**

Kivunim seeks to cultivate in its students critical thinking about Jews, Judaism, Jewish history and about contemporary Israeli society and culture. **Kivunim was the first gap-year program to make travel to Jewish communities around the world an integral counterpart to its mainstay, Israel-focused-program.** This framework enables students to explore the past and present of various Jewish communities around the world, and to consider the **resilience and creativity of Jewish diaspora experience**, in addition to its well-known challenges.

A central commitment of the program is the importance of coexistence and of encountering societies' "others." **For this reason, one of its central practices, in addition to the study of Hebrew and Hebrew literature, is the study of Arabic and Arab civilization and culture. This in itself is groundbreaking.** The program provides many opportunities for directly grappling with the complexities of present-day Israel, and also for appreciating the possibilities of Palestinian/Arab-Israeli, Muslim-Jewish and Christian-Jewish co-existence.

Kivunim's guiding idea is that Jewish education for the 21st century must help to minimize fears and maximize comfort with people, cultures and religions that are different from our own, both as Americans and as Jews. A key to accomplishing that is a learning environment that fosters students' curiosity and question-asking, their ability to entertain multiple perspectives, and their sense of themselves as being able to grapple with changing realities of the world today.

This Study

What difference does such a program make in the lives of its participants? With generous funding from one supporter, the Kivunim organization was able to undertake a study of the program and its educational work, to trace its effects on participants of the first 13 years. The study was designed to document the impact of Kivunim's educational approach on various aspects of participants' Jewish identity formation, Jewish identification, and sense of world citizenship (what Kivunim calls "world consciousness"). This report presents findings from that study, carried out in early 2020. This report answers the following questions:

- In what ways do they see Kivunim's effects in their lives? What effects do we, the researchers, discern based on our analyses? These questions are the focus of [Life After Kivunim](#).
- How do they view the program in retrospect? What is their understanding of the different elements of the program? We address these questions in [How Kivunim Alumni View the Program](#).



KIVUNIM 2006-07 in front of the Great Synagogue, Vilna, Lithuania.

- What are the characteristics of Kivunim alumni? What do we know about their backgrounds prior to attending Kivunim and their lives since completing the program? This information appears in [Profile of Alumni](#).

Methodology

The study was designed to reach the 589 alumni who participated in academic years ending in 2007-2019.² In developing this study in the fall of 2019, we met at length with the program's leadership (Founder and President Peter Geffen, Gap Year Program Director Jay Leberman, and Executive Director (and alumna 2008, Elie Lauter) to capture the core features of the program from their point of view (see [Appendix A](#)).

Based on this consultation, we prepared an initial draft of the questionnaire, and refined it through intensive consultations with Kivunim's leadership. In addition, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews and pretests with about 10 alumni from different years. We gained insight as well from our concurrent research about the program, carried out in 2019.³

The survey was designed to be taken online using the survey software Qualtrics. We made it a priority to attain as high a response rate as possible, and therefore we pursued several different methods to reach alumni, including email messages from Bethamie and Amanda, email messages from Kivunim senior staff persons (Lea Landowne Leiter, Peter Geffen, Jay Leberman, and Elie Lauter), and peer-to-peer networking for those who did not reply to the various emails.

Who Answered the Survey?

The data-gathering for this on-line survey took place between January 22 and April 30, 2020.⁴ Fully 65% of the 589 alumni answered the survey. We found no substantial differences in the answers of the alumni who were reached in these different ways and time periods, so we treat the 381 responses as a single dataset.

The 65% completion rate is extremely high. By way of comparison, The Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) conducts surveys of alumni and recent graduates in colleges and universities and the response rates for its recent alumni surveys range from 19-35%.⁵ Similarly, studies of Birthright participants have response rates that range 9-39% (and the higher number was achieved by offering cash incentives). The upshot is two-fold: the high participation rate bespeaks overall goodwill among the majority of Kivunim alumni, and the intensive recruitment effort for this study.

"I think the main takeaway was the way that Kivunim so fundamentally shifted my sense of Jewish identity and sense of Jewishness in the world."

The table below displays the proportion of alumni in each cohort who answered the survey.

Table 1.1 Kivunim Alumni Survey Respondents by Year

	2006 -07	2007 -08	2008 -09	2009 -10	2010 -11	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2015 -16	2016 -17	2017 -18	2018 -19	TOTAL n=381
All Alumni	28	19	50	46	55	58	36	51	54	40	44	55	53	589
Those who answered the survey	25	14	35	31	26	38	23	33	34	24	25	38	35	381
Proportion of each cohort who answered	89%	74%	70%	67%	47%	66%	64%	65%	63%	60%	57%	69%	66%	65%
Each cohort's respondents as a % of all respondents	7%	4%	9%	8%	7%	10%	6%	9%	9%	6%	7%	10%	9%	100%

What do we know about the 35% of alumni who didn't answer the survey? We can say that most (71% of them -- 25% of all alumni) in fact received the survey (i.e. they opened it and for whatever reason, decided not to proceed). Beyond that we can make no particular claims about their feelings about Kivunim.

Things to Keep in Mind While Reading the Tables Below

1. The sample size ("n") reported in the tables below fluctuates depending on how many alumni answered each question, ranging from 321 to 381.
2. We refer to each cohort of alumni by the year in which the alumnus COMPLETED Kivunim (i.e. if someone participated in 2011-2012, they are listed in 2012).
3. We report on alumni using four "eras"- time periods with similar numbers of years (2-3) in each, and that also mirrored the shifts in program leadership.
 - 2007-2010 (Eran Rosenberg)
 - 2011-2013 (Rabbi Dov Lerea)
 - 2014-2016 (Jay Leberman)
 - 2017-2019 (Jay Leberman)⁶

Kivunim Alumni View the Program

A central purpose of the study was to learn about how alumni understood and experienced Kivunim's educational program. The survey included 35 questions about the program's influence on:

1. The participants' thinking;
2. Their personal values orientation;
3. Their Jewish outlooks;
4. Their relationship with Israel and the Jewish People;
5. Their sense of "world consciousness."

The survey also asked alumni to evaluate the opportunities provided to study language (Hebrew and Arabic) Arts and Culture.

We examine each of these aspects of the program separately (**Tables 1.1-1.6**), and then we include all 35 questions together in a multivariate analysis, to assess the ways that alumni viewed the educational program as a whole.

Table 1.1 shows alumni assessments about the influence of the program on **the way they think**, where the higher the mean score, the more the alumni credited the program. **The alumni viewed the program as being especially effective in influencing their intellectual curiosity and their ability to engage with people who had different positions than their own.** While alumni gave positive ratings to all of the elements of the program, they gave the program relatively less credit in shaping their attention to social justice issues, possibly because students had this kind of awareness already.

Table 1.1. Kivunim's Contribution to the Way Respondents Think

"How did participating in Kivunim influence?... Rank ordered:"	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.Your intellectual curiosity	2.57	0.66
2.Your ability to engage with those whose opinions differ from your own	2.46	0.70
3.Your ability to be a thoughtful listener	2.29	0.76
4.Your comfort level in approaching the world beyond the "Jewish bubble"	2.27	0.92
5.Your ability to ask good questions as a central mode of learning	2.19	0.77
6.Your awareness of the capacity of the individual to make an impact on the world	2.14	0.89
7.Your following of social-justice-related issues around the world	2.08	0.87

Table 1.2 shows how alumni viewed Kivunim's contribution to aspects of **their personal outlooks**. The first four questions are about values and orientations, and in all cases alumni view Kivunim's contribution as ranging from "somewhat" to "very much."

Table 1.2. Kivunim's Shaping Role on Values Orientation

"To what extent did your experience on Kivunim help shape your..?" Rank ordered:	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.Interest in bridging cultural divides	2.54	0.72
2.Sense of what really matters in life	2.34	0.84
3.Sense of yourself as a critical thinker	2.30	0.76
4.Sense of civic responsibility	2.12	0.82
5.Sense of what choice(s) to make for your career	1.51	1.15

Alumni viewed Kivunim as especially influential on their interest in bridging cultures, in contributing to their sense of what matters in life, and in shaping their sense of themselves as critical thinkers. At the same time, they considered Kivunim to be less influential in shaping their subsequent career choices. Of course, career choice involves a number of considerations that extend beyond one's outlook on life, the gist of the other items in the question battery.

The survey delved more specifically into the educational program of Kivunim, and here (in the next three tables) we find the highest ratings of alumni across the entire survey. These items are about alumni perceptions of Kivunim's mission. ***The alumni very much believe that the program delivers what its mission describes.*** This finding is important because it shows that alumni also see the mission of Kivunim in ways that correspond to the vision of its educational leaders.

Table 1.3 Kivunim's Influence on Jewish Outlooks

"To what extent did Kivunim's program..?" Rank ordered:	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.Convey the importance of Jews engaging meaningfully with people from other cultures/traditions	2.72	0.60
2.Deepen your knowledge of Jewish history	2.68	0.59
3.Expand your knowledge of other religions and cultures	2.68	0.57
4.Deepen your sense of connection to the Jewish communities Kivunim visited	2.55	0.70
5.Stimulate your thinking about the Jewish future	2.52	0.68
6.Emphasize attending to the condition of society's Others	2.37	0.77

Table 1.4 Kivunim's Influence on Relationship with Israel and the Jewish People

"To what extent did Kivunim's program..?" Rank ordered:	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.Encourage you to examine the relationship between Zionism, the State of Israel, and the Jewish people	2.60	0.69
2.Teach you about the tensions inherent in Israel as both a democracy and Jewish state	2.59	0.69
3.Offer a nuanced understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	2.36	0.80
4.Portray the centrality of modern Zionism in the history of the Jewish people	2.35	0.79
5.Teach you the perspectives and experiences of Israel's minorities	2.34	0.77
6.Expose you to the variety of Jewish religious expressions within Israel (for example, ultra-Orthodox)	2.29	0.82
7.Teach you the perspectives and experiences of the Palestinian people	2.22	0.81
8.Help you understand the key historic debates within the Zionist movement	2.21	0.82

Table 1.5 Kivunim's Influence on "Building World Consciousness"

"To what extent did Kivunim's program..?" Rank ordered:	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.Deepen your awareness of how Jewish experience is shaped by varied societal and historical circumstances	2.80	0.48
2.Develop your empathy for religious and cultural traditions different from your own	2.74	0.49
3.Encourage your appreciation of the importance of inter-religious coexistence	2.68	0.62
4.Draw connections between yourself as a Jew and your sense of intercultural social responsibility	2.38	0.80
5.Help orient you to the current pressing issues facing the countries you visited	2.38	0.74

The final battery of questions about the Kivunim's educational program addressed the program's cultural offerings and language instruction.

Table 1.6 Kivunim's Emphasis on Arts, Language, and Culture

"Kivunim views the study of language, art and culture as windows into a society's soul. To what extent did Kivunim...?" Rank ordered:	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.Provide opportunities to experience Israel's rich cultural offerings	2.42	0.69
2.Encourage visual, cultural, and aesthetic appreciation of the places you visited	2.29	0.82
3.Offer Hebrew instruction that met your level and needs	2.21	0.91
4.Offer Arabic instruction that helped you gain functional use of Arabic	1.90	0.98

Alumni rated three of the four items very highly (between "somewhat" and "very much"). The language instruction aspect of the program deserves more comment. Hebrew instruction was rated higher on the whole than Arabic instruction, but on the low end, relative to the other 33 items in these 6 sets of questions.

What accounts for these lower ratings? First, bear in mind that among the survey questions about the curriculum, this was the only time we directly asked alumni to indicate the effectiveness of the program's instruction. That specificity may have lowered the ratings. In addition, Arabic is often cited as one of the most difficult languages to master, because it involves learning spoken contemporary Arabic on the one hand and also written classical Arabic on the other.

The program is unique among gap-year programs in requiring the study of Arabic as well as Hebrew. We gain more insight about the experience of learning Arabic from reading the many comments of alumni. The open-ended question following this battery yielded almost 200 detailed comments (from more than half of the respondents). By far the most prevalent sentiment was their **appreciation for being exposed to Arabic and Arabic culture, which they understood and appreciated as key to Kivunim's tenet of "coexistence" and intercultural bridging.**

- *I loved learning Arabic. I found it extremely hard (languages are not my strength) but I thought it was a great way to connect to culture and it really speaks to Kivunim's value of co-existence and collaboration. By prioritizing learning Arabic, it reminded me every day that Israel is not just for Jews.*
- *It made it much easier for me to connect to Arabs in Israel since I felt I was making a guided and genuine effort to learn and understand their culture, I felt like I was taking a step towards bridging the gap and divide. The reaction of Arab shop owners, waiters, bus drivers, truly anyone would light up when me or my friends would say thank you or hello in Arabic. It started a connection and an opportunity for conversation. It was incredible to see how much a simple phrase demonstrating we were putting in an effort to understand the other, could really mean.*
- *It was very powerful to be able to read all three languages on the street signs and to experiment with navigating and trespassing the boundaries between different communities in Israel through language.*
- *I just wish it had been emphasized even more. Having a working knowledge of Arabic while living there as a white Jew opened up more doors of connection with Israeli Arabs and Palestinians than any other coexistence programming.*
- *I thought learning Arabic was central to understanding Israel as a whole. A vast number of Israeli citizens and those living in the region speak Arabic natively. To fully understand a person and their background it is important to understand their language.*

- *This was the most powerful aspect of my Kivunim education. Language is the key into a culture, a history, and into the human beings who are living out all those realities. It was an integral vehicle into better understanding the relationship between Jews and Muslims AND became the most authentic way of accessing the Palestinian narrative.*

However, along with the high alumni support for the principle of teaching Arabic, many also expressed some frustration about difficulty in achieving functional use of it. A number of comments suggested that the focus of language instruction should be on achieving speaking ability. Others appreciated the ability to read Arabic.

- *I took in almost no Arabic but I appreciate how important the practice was of learning it-- I think it's an important statement for any Jews living in the State of Israel to be learning Arabic for motives other than military.*
- *Learning Arabic was profoundly useful and enjoyable, though more for its insights into Arab culture and society. Even though most of us were unable to gain a working proficiency in Arabic in just a year, it was still very useful. Perhaps combining this with more in-depth studies in Arab culture would make the language skills even more useful.*

It would seem that their exposure to Arabic on Kivunim whetted their appetites to further their studies. In fact many alumni continued their studies of Arabic in college, including 23 who chose to major in Arabic.

Overall View of the Kivunim Program in the Eyes of Alumni

From examining six central aspects of the educational program, it is evident that Alumni were *overwhelmingly positive about Kivunim's curricular elements*. On a scale ranging from 0 "not at all influential" to 3 "very much influential," the average rating across all 35 items was 2.38.

Next we can ask, *How did the alumni understand the core ideas animating the program? A factor analysis of these questions in [Tables 2.1-2.5](#) revealed six underlying components undergird the alumni view the value of the program's design:*⁷

- 1. Kivunim shaped my appreciation for the importance of coexistence and the bridging of cultural divides as an authentic reading of Jewish historical experience.** The program emphasized the importance of: *interreligious coexistence; empathy for other traditions; engaging with people from other cultures/traditions; the variety of Jewish experience across history and society; bridging cultural divides.*
- 2. The program deepened my understanding "of Jewish and Zionist history and helped me to see the roots of key debates that continue today."** The program: *portrays the centrality of: Zionism in Jewish history; examines the relationship between Zionism, Israel*

and the Jewish People; conveys key debates in the Zionist movement; deepens knowledge of Jewish history.

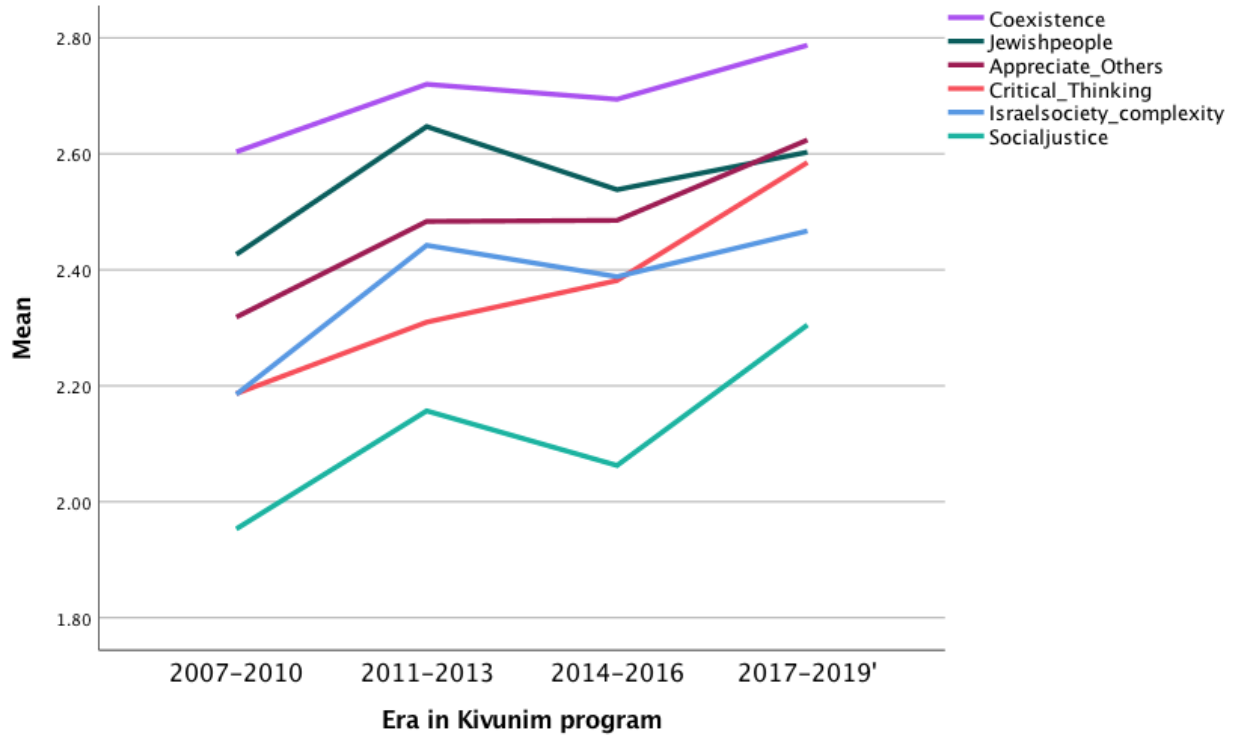
- 3. The program got me to think about the relationship between being a Jew and being attuned to society's "Others."** *The program: exposed me to pressing issues in the countries visited; the importance of connecting to society's Others; deepened my connection to Jewish communities visited; expanded my knowledge of other religions and cultures; shaped my sense of what really matters in life; stimulated my thinking about Jewish future.*
- 4. Kivunim fostered critical thinking and question-asking.** *The program emphasized the importance of: being a thoughtful listener; critical thinking; asking good questions; being intellectually curious; engaging with viewpoints different from my own.*
- 5. Kivunim revealed Israeli life and society in all its complexity.** *The program helped me learn about: Israel's minorities; Palestinian perspectives; a nuanced understanding of Israeli-Palestinian conflict; tensions between a democratic and a Jewish state; the varieties of Jewish religious expression in Israel.*
- 6. The program underscored the importance of social justice and my ability to make a difference.** *The program emphasized: social justice issues; having a sense of civic responsibility; making connections between being a Jew and one's sense of social responsibility; the capacity of individuals to make a difference.*



In the Synagogue in Chalkida, Greece, November, 2017. Chalkida is the oldest continuous Jewish community in Europe going back over 2000 years. Kivunim's annual visit is a celebration as the Jewish population dwindles down to a handful.

Chart A shows that while alumni held all five elements of the program in high regard, the Kivunim teaching about coexistence/bridging worlds element was particularly effective. Relative to their extremely positive views of other four elements, alumni ratings of the social justice aspect of the program are a bit less highly, although still positively. .

Chart A. Alumni Perceptions of Kivunim Impact by Era



Over the past 13 years, alumni ratings of all aspects of the program's educational work have become even more positive, with fluctuations in relation to the program under different directors. Alumni from two periods “ 2011-2013 and 2017-2019“ rated these program elements higher than alumni from the earliest years or from the 2014-2016 period. Perhaps the program leadership and implementation was especially cohesive during these periods.

The one element that has received steadily better marks over the years is the program's influence on students' critical thinking. This could mean two things: 1) the oldest alumni were the least likely to view their present-day critical thinking as influenced by Kivunim; 2) the program's effectiveness in teaching critical thinking skills has sharpened over the years.

**

The exercise of having alumni look back on their experience on Kivunim revealed that alumni appreciated the goals of the program, and there is a very strong sense that the program's message and approach have been well-understood by the participants themselves. The educational vision of the program leaders aligns with views of the participants.

Beyond the Program's Formal Curriculum

Having established that alumni understood and appreciated the core ideas of the program and its educational mission, how do they relate to other aspects of the program's functioning? How well did the program manage to help the adolescent participants thrive?

The Group Atmosphere

We asked alumni to weigh in on their recollection of the program's socio-emotional climate. Did they make friends? Did they find a meaningful connection to program leaders? Did they feel appreciated by the group?

Table 1.7 Kivunim's Group Atmosphere

The rating scale ranging from strongly agree (+2) to strongly disagree (-2), with a 0 in the middle for "neither agree nor disagree."	% Agree
1. Formed friendships with others on the program?	90%
2. Felt the group atmosphere on Kivunim enhanced your own experience?	77
3. Formed a connection with the program leaders?	75
4. Felt that the people were respectful toward each other?	68
5. Felt uncomfortable with some of the people on the program?	51

Table 1.7 shows that the vast majority of alumni reported that they made friends during the program; they felt positive about the group atmosphere; and they formed connections with the program leaders. Although about half of all alumni (51%) indicated that they felt "uncomfortable with some of the people on the program," we imagine that any group setting would include individuals who were not everyone's cup of tea.

But perhaps the individuals' comfort level or sense of belonging to the group was affected by the broader group composition. Individuals may have felt like outliers in the group in one way or another. We asked alumni to reflect on the group composition in terms of its homogeneity or diversity in various regards, shown in **Table 1.8**.

Student Orientation takes place each year at the Field School at Sde Boker, desert home of Paul and David Ben Gurion.



Table 1.8 Alumni Views of the Diversity within the Program

<i>Would you have liked the group to be more diverse or less diverse in terms of...?</i>	Desired more diversity	It was good the way it was	Desired Less diversity	Made no difference to me	I don't recall
Range of racial identities	65%	18%	1%	14%	2%
Socio-economic diversity	63	27	1	8	2
Jewish ethnic composition	58	26	-	13	3
Geographic diversity	55	33	1	11	1
Diversity in Religious practice	38	53	1	7	2
Views about Israeli society politics	36	55	2	4	3
Views about US society Politics	30	57	-	5	7

Overall, barely anyone expressed a desire for a more homogenous group. Around two-thirds of the respondents voiced interest in having a more racially diverse group, greater socio-economic range in the group, and a wider geographic representation. However, when it came to religious practice and political views about politics in Israel in the United States - the more ideological aspects of group composition - more than half of the alumni felt "it was good the way it was." The program leaders continue to work towards a more diversified group, as shown in table 1.1 in relation to place of residence and Jewish denominational affiliation. Over the years the program has included participants from a wider array of backgrounds compared to the program's initial group composition.

Learning Environment

The questionnaire probed alumni views of the program's support for academics; its emotional support; its support of students' sense of intellectual independence; the fairness of the program's approach to academic discipline. Of these four aspects, the alumni had the most favorable views of the program's support for "my sense of intellectual independence."

Table 1.9 Alumni Views of the Program's Learning Environment

Kivunim sees itself as stimulating and growth-oriented. How much do you agree with the following? (0= not at all; 1 = a little; 2 = a moderate amount; 3 = a lot)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Kivunim's environment supported my sense of intellectual independence.	1.94	1.07
The program's approach to academic discipline was thoughtful and fair.	1.81	0.93
Kivunim provided the academic support I felt I needed.	1.77	1.03
The program provided the emotional support I needed.	1.70	1.04

Alumni offered 1017 detailed comments about the program at different points in the survey. Of these, 5% raised specific concerns, including:

1. The need for a senior female staff member.
2. The importance of diversifying the group composition, so that it includes people representing a wider range of backgrounds, experiences.
3. A number of alumni commented on the very high sticker price of the program and were eager to see Kivunim find ways to offset the cost of the program to make it more widely available to a range of participants and not only those who could afford it.
4. The need for more mental health support, and for more staff training or competence in recognizing when help is needed.
5. The need for a code of conduct to lay out program rules about risky behaviors and norms of group life.

Spurred by these observations, the program leadership is addressing these aspects of its staffing and support structure.

All in all, the program garners remarkable approval from its alumni: It is impressive that fully 97% of alumni say they have or would recommend the program to others. The vast majority (95%) of alumni keep in touch with one another in some way; more than half (53%) keep in touch with staff.

Proportion of Respondents in touch with Alumni and/or Staff (*n* = 355)

- 52% of respondents in touch with both staff and alumni
- 43% of respondents in touch with alumni not staff
- 1% of respondents in touch with staff not alumni
- 5% of respondents in touch with neither staff nor alumni.

Life After Kivunim

How did participating in Kivunim influence the lives of alumni after completing the program? In what ways do alumni see Kivunim's effects in their lives? What effects do we, the researchers, discern based on our analyses?

We focus our attention on two different time periods: the college experiences of alumni; and their lives today.

College Years

We asked alumni about the relationship between participating in Kivunim and their lives during college. Nearly 40% of the alumni reported that they majored in one or more of the following subjects related to key themes related to Kivunim's curriculum:

Conflict Resolution/Peace and Conflict Studies, Hebrew, Arabic, Middle East Studies, Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, Jewish History, History, International Relations, Anthropology, Sociology.

Alumni also reported about their extra-curricular activities. More than three-quarters (78%) of alumni reported that participating on Kivunim had contributed to their involvement with at least one of the following extra-curricular activities on campus:

Table 2.1 Alumni Kivunim-related Extra-Curricular Activities

Organized Jewish student life	73%
Social responsibility/Volunteering	47
Middle East Peace-related activities	46
Social justice/advocacy initiatives	42
Creating alternative modes of Jewish community	30
Israel advocacy activities	29

One-third of the alumni (137/381) shared more detail about additional ways that participating in Kivunim affected their college experience. The most prominent sentiment was expressed by 43 people who wrote about how Kivunim affected their preparedness for serious intellectual engagement, cultivated their sense of curiosity; their independence and readiness for college.

- *I came into college with a different mindset than my peers. I was older, more mature.*
- *I found it hard to return to a regular school afterwards. My eyes were opened and it was hard to shut them again.*
- *I wanted different things out of my college experience. I felt like I got way more out of college than I would have if I hadn't gone on Kivunim.*

An additional 29 said that the program sparked or enhanced their commitment to meaningful communication across differences.

- *It definitely helped me understand the importance of asking real questions with the intention of listening, not debating or proving myself right. I came away with an appreciation for the value of talking to people I sternly disagreed with and hearing the reasons behind their stances that were different than mine. Granting legitimacy to opinions that differed greatly from my own made it easier to understand how those I disagreed with came to their stances and allowed for a possibility of future understanding.*
- *I was active in Hillel and in conversations and student organizing around the ways in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict manifested on campus. The approach I took was from an educated standpoint as opposed to a blind faith approach.*
- *My experiences on Kivunim gave me the tools to connect, as the president of Hillel, to the leaders of the Students for Justice in Palestine, and together create a dialogue-based event to replace their existing annual Israel Apartheid Week.*

Sense of Jewishness

Determining the "metrics" to be used in assessing a person's Jewishness is not a simple matter. Over the decades, the standard practice has been for studies to employ a "mitzvah list" of items (lighting candles, observing holidays, keeping kosher, belonging to and attending a synagogue and so on) as an index of a person's Jewish identity. But relying on such measures leads to an underestimation of people whose Jewishness is not expressed through the more conventional religious and communal measures. Furthermore, using these measures in the survey often communicates to respondents that the researchers and the sponsoring organization endorse these measures as the most relevant ones.



Kivunim's annual visit to Morocco includes an intimate lecture and exchange with Hon. André Azoulay, Senior Advisor to King Mohammed VI and internationally recognized and accomplished diplomat. Azoulay's unique experience as a Jew in the service of a Muslim King offers a positive and alternative and challenging view of the relationship between Arabs and Jews and its possible future.

For a program like Kivunim that has an expansive outlook about what Jewish life is about, we needed a more comprehensive way of looking at an individual's Jewishness. We employ a multidimensional approach that has a wider scope about the variations Jewish expression among American Jews.⁸

Table 2.2 Expressions of Jewishness

There are different ways of being Jewish. For you personally, how much does being Jewish involve...? [0 = not at all; 1 = a little; 2 = somewhat; 3 = very much.]	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Leading an ethical and moral life	2.68	0.62
2. Being part of a Jewish community	2.61	0.69
3. Celebrating Jewish holidays	2.59	0.68
4. Giving your children [or those you might have] a Jewish ed.	2.52	0.79
5. Learning about Jewish history and culture	2.32	0.81
6. Countering antisemitism	2.31	0.82
7. Commemorating the Holocaust	2.30	0.82
8. Giving to charity/ <i>tzedakah</i>	2.29	0.86
9. Caring about Israel	2.27	0.88
10. Countering racism	2.22	0.91
11. Working for justice and equality in society	2.18	0.91
12. Creating home-based observances for my friends/family	2.16	1.00
13. Supporting Jewish organizations	2.15	0.89
14. Having a rich spiritual life	1.99	1.01
15. Knowing Hebrew	1.87	0.98
16. Attending religious services	1.58	0.96
17. Studying Jewish sources/Jewish texts	1.43	1.03
18. Reading and studying Israeli history and literature	1.43	0.97
19. Observing halacha/Jewish law	1.29	1.06
20. Believing in God	1.26	1.08
21. Serving the Jewish community as a professional	1.12	1.05

Respondents rated *the importance to their own sense of Jewishness* of 21 practices listed in **Table 2.2**. Leading an ethical and moral life, being part of a Jewish community, and celebrating Jewish holidays received the most assent, while observing *halacha* (Jewish law), believing in God, and serving the Jewish community as a professional were least important to alumni overall.

Next we analyzed alumni ratings of these 21 elements by means of a factor analysis. That analysis revealed an underlying structure of five factors or clusters that together account for 62% of the variation among the alumni.⁹ We can then portray the alumni sense of Jewishness in multidimensional terms, using these five different elements or factors:

- 1. Being Jewish involves leading an ethical, moral life**
Counter racism; Work for justice and equality in society; Lead an ethical and moral life.
- 2. Being Jewish involves a sense of shared fate with the Jewish people**

Commemorate the Holocaust; Care about Israel; Counter antisemitism.

3. Being Jewish involves having a Jewish home and community

Celebrate Jewish Holidays; Be part of Jewish community; Give your children a Jewish education; Support Jewish organizations; Give to tzedakah.

4. Being Jewish is expressed through intellectual engagement studying Jewish texts and subjects

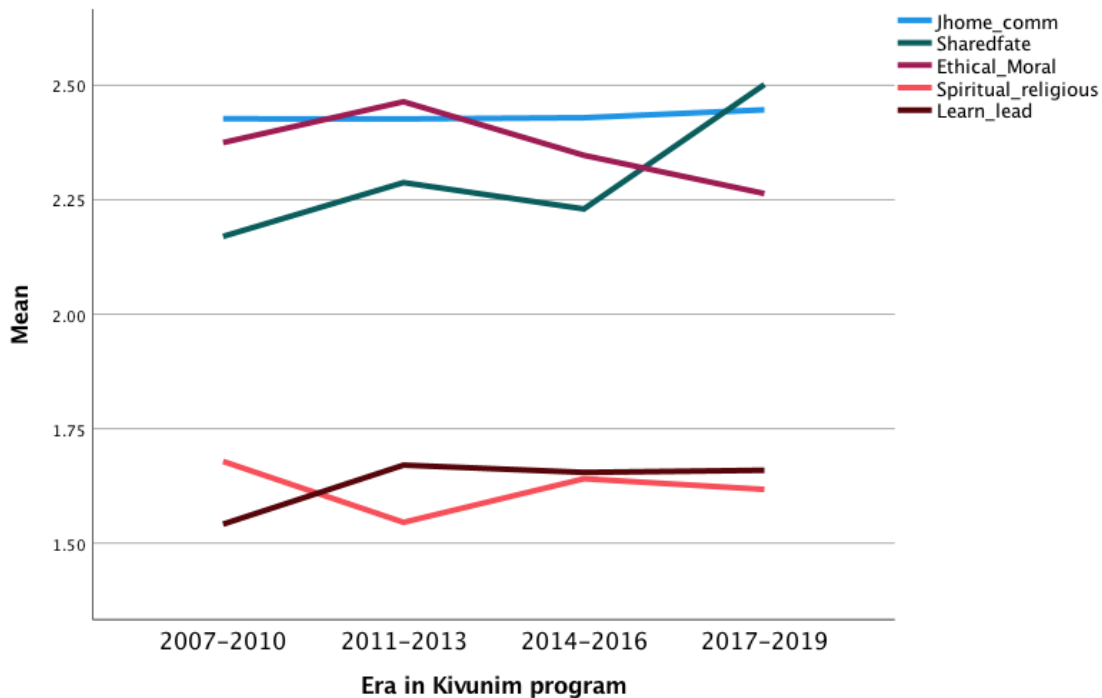
Serving as a Jewish communal professional; Learning Jewish history and culture; Reading and study Israeli history and literature; Study Jewish texts.

5. Being Jewish involves Jewish spiritual and/or religious expression

Believe in God; Have a rich spiritual life; Attend religious services; Observe halacha; Create home based observance.

Chart B shows the patterning among these various elements, over the years: Leading an ethical-moral-socially engaged life; being concerned about the shared fate of Jews and having an Jewish home and being part of a Jewish community received the most assent by alumni. The spiritual-religious aspect and the learning and leading aspects took a secondary position for the group as a whole, comparatively.

Chart B: Aspects of Jewishness by Era in Program



In their own words:

The survey included a space for alumni to share further thoughts about the effect of participating in Kivunim on their sense of Jewishness. **Fully two-thirds of the respondents shared detailed reflections.** Half of those comments mentioned the global dimension they gained from the program. For example:

- *It gave me tools to understand how my Jewish identity fits in the rainbow of identities in the Jewish world and how to develop it. Coming from a very secular background, it opened my eyes to new ideas in Jewish thinking and exposed me to Jewish pluralism.*
- *It affected my sense of Jewishness in a fundamental and frankly earth-shattering way. Prior to Kivunim, I more or less thought all of my Jewish ancestors had lived in a shtetl somewhere in Poland or Russia. Small wonder that despite my extensive Jewish education, I was a bit bummed about a perceived narrowness in 'what it meant to be Jewish.' Kivunim expanded those boundaries enormously, making it clear I was part of a dynamic and diverse people who have been roaming the world engaging in all sorts of amazing learning, doing, and other shenanigans for the past few thousand years. Kivunim expanded my Jewish world beyond even the horizon I could have imagined.*
- *It helped me feel as though I could be part of a global Jewish community. It gave me an understanding of Jewish migration and the ways in which we as a people have continuously had to redefine and reestablish "home" for ourselves, and how this history has contributed to our collective resiliency. It also gave me the chance to define my own relationship to Judaism separate from my family's or home community's.*

A second major sentiment expressed by many of the alumni was the sense of "agency" they developed about their own Jewishness as a result of the program. For example:

- *It opened up a significant conversation about what 'Jewishness' is, and caused me to engage in a lot of dialogue around what constitutes being a Jew, being connected to the culture and how that differentiates from religion, and how those two ideals can coexist.*
- *I found that I was able to explore my Jewish identity and try different practices. Being on Kivunim with students from a variety of religious backgrounds (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) allowed me to see how different Jews practice Judaism and showed me how I can shape my own practices and be proud to be a Jew.*
- *I had a huge revelation about my Jewish identity while on Kivunim. Growing up in a Jewish household I was "forced" to do Jewish things. Whether it was going to synagogue, keeping kosher, and celebrating shabbat dinner with the family I realized that everything Jewish I do was forced by my parents. Compared to my Jewish identity now I would say I was very disconnected to my Jewish identity. Kivunim allowed me to explore my Jewish comfort zone while learning about Jewish history and Jewish communities around the world. I absolutely fell in love with Israel and gained a new connection to my Jewish identity. I have become more culturally Jewish and now I choose to get involved in Jewish community events and engage Jewish people. My love for Judaism is now completely through my Jewish identity and [I] am far more in touch with my Jewish identity because of my love for Israel that Kivunim allowed me to realize.*
- *Yes, before Kivunim I was mostly surrounded by people whose Jewishness was similar to mine. After Kivunim, however, I was fortunate to be a part of a community that*

understood their Jewish identity in different ways than I had. This allowed me to better understand what it means to be Jewish and appreciate the different ways to incorporate it into your life. Also, by being exposed to different cultures and religions, it made me see how Judaism is not only special and separate, but that it is also similar to those different cultures and religions.

Alumni Relationship to Israel Today

What it means to "relate to Israel" is a complex notion that surveys of American Jews typically oversimplify as ranging from nearness to or distance from Israel. In this study we examined a variety of ways that alumni might relate to contemporary Israel (i.e. the state, the society, the people, Israeli culture). We report these in terms of **visiting Israel (Table 2.3)** and also **other ways relating to Israeli life, culture, politics**, etc. aside from travel (Table 2.4).

Travel

Seventy percent of 355 respondents indicated they have returned to Israel at least once since Kivunim. Most have visited more than once: 18% returned once; 19% returned twice; almost one-third (31%) returned more frequently. Not surprisingly, the most recent alumni, who are still in college, reported fewer return visits.

The most common mode of returning to Israel is visiting family and/or friends. Nearly 10% of the alumni became Israeli citizens.

Table 2.3 Alumni Returning to Israel

Purpose of visit	% Answering "Yes" (n = 355)
1. Visited friends	60
2. Visited family	54
3. Went on an organized travel/touring program	29
4. Volunteered or interned for an Israeli organization or company	23
5. Worked for pay in Israel	15
6. Attended a yeshiva or seminary religious study program	11
7. Attended an Israeli university	9
8. Made Aliyah	9
9. Served in the IDF	4

Relating to Israel beyond travel

Table 2.4 shows various ways that alumni relate to Israel, aside from traveling to or living there.

Table 2.4 Alumni Relationship to Israel Today, aside from Travel

Activities related to Israel	% Answering "Yes" (n = 356)
1. I follow the news about Israel	75%
2. I engage in discussions about Israel	71
3. I keep up with friends/family living in Israel	63
4. I keep up with Israeli culture (i.e. music, movies, literature, TV, food, dance)	49
5. I support Israeli non-profit organizations	25
6. I support organizations that oppose Israeli policies I disagree with	21
7. I'm torn; it's difficult; and/or I'm at a loss	20
8. I study Israeli history and society	18
9. I'm engaged in advocacy activities about Israel	17
10. I find it hard to relate to Israel at all	6

- Most of the alumni (88%) reported that they maintain their connection with Israel through news and cultural consumption, having conversations about Israel, communicating with friends and family in Israel, continuing their study of Israeli history and society (items 1,2,3,4,8 above).
- Two-fifths (40%) of the respondents engage in organizational effort related to Israel (support organizations, supporting organizations that oppose Israeli policy, engage in advocacy activities (items 5,6,9).
- 33% express critique of and/or despair about Israel, or support organizations that oppose Israeli policies the respondent disagrees with (items 6,7,10).

The open-ended comments (about "the role your participation in Kivunim had on your relationship to Israel") were also revealing. About half the alumni shared comments. One main cluster of comments (83 people) was that the Kivunim provided a more nuanced and complicated perspective about Israel. For example:

- *Before Kivunim I had a very "Israel is the land of Milk and Honey. Israel can do no wrong!" mentality. Kivunim turned that on its head and I am grateful for that. I still have tremendous love for Israel but I now think of it in terms of gray and not black & white. Israel is far from perfect and there is a lot of work to be done, and I thank Kivunim a great deal for helping expand my views.*

- *In some ways it made me more realistic about the State of Israel. I do not blindly support the governance of their people and territories, so my relationship with the country is like the political climate it faces, complicated. I support the concept of having a Jewish State, but do not support all the policies and practices. That said, I am a Zionist and fully endorse the idea of having a Jewish homeland.*
- *It made me appreciate the complexity of identifying as a Zionist while still sympathizing with Palestinians (this was not addressed well at my high school previously).*
- *Kivunim made me able to confront difficult truths about Israel that I had not been exposed to beforehand. Kivunim pushed me to value the Jewish diaspora in a way that I would not have otherwise.*

A second cluster of comments (73 people) was that participating on Kivunim helped students deepen their relationship with Israel:

- *Kivunim helped me to create a relationship with Israel. I got to know different parts of the country, I lived in Jerusalem, and I befriended Israelis. These friendships are among my most significant takeaways from Kivunim. At the same time, Kivunim was affirming for me a strengthened "diaspora" identity from which I could approach my Israeli friends with pride, rather than guilt that I hadn't made aliyah yet or something like that. When I was in high school and visited Israel for the first time, I had been baffled by the "diaspora-shaming" I encountered from Israelis. Kivunim gave me more context to understand this dynamic as well, and I was able to move beyond confusion to a complex relationship with Israel and its people.*
- *Kivunim allowed me to learn how to critique Israel. That criticism led me to want to see change in Israel, which ultimately led me to make aliyah. I felt that in order to see real change within, I had to be here [in Israel].*
- *Kivunim gave me a real love of Israel, but also made me more comfortable with being openly critical of Israel. I feel less purely Zionist now than I did before I went and now feel more strongly about the need for a two-state solution and about the need to dismantle settlements.*

Civic Leadership and communal involvement of Alumni

Alumni reported about their involvement in the Jewish communal sphere and more broadly in the civic-organizational sector. 12% of alumni describe their work as Jewish-related (ex. working at a Hillel, serving as a rabbi, etc.).

Table 2.5 Alumni who hold a Current Jewish-related Job

Proportion	2007-2010 <i>n</i> =85 16%	2011-2013 <i>n</i> =70 13%	2014-2016 <i>n</i> =70 13%	2017-2019 <i>n</i> =73 4%	TOTAL <i>n</i> =298 12%

A majority (57%) of alumni said that they had served in a leadership capacity, shown in **Table 2.6** below.

Table 2.6 Alumni Leadership Roles Since Kivunim

“We want to learn about your life today. Have you ever...?”	Proportion (<i>n</i> = 334)
Played a leadership role in a volunteer/service effort	57%
Served on the board of a non-profit organization	25
Served on the executive committee of a non-profit organization	15
Initiated or played a role in the founding of a new project or org.	26
None of these	30

Alumni reported about their involvement in civic-organizational activities (**Table 2.6**) A majority (57%) of alumni said that they had served in a leadership capacity. Half (35%) of the alumni reported doing any one of these four things; 20% said they did two of these; 16% indicated doing three of these and 5% reported that they did all four.

Of the 86 people who reported founding a new project or organization, 69 offered more specific details. Two-fifths (41%) of the reports were about college-based undertakings and the remaining three-fifths (nearly 60%) were not college-based. Across both settings the projects included:

1. Specifically Jewish-related undertakings such as: *a progressive Jewish advocacy start-up in NY; Hitoreri: An Orthodox Movement for Social Change; Jewish Farm in Boston; new Minyanim; an oral history project about the Pittsburgh Jewish community; new sites for Moishe House, One Table, Jewish Women's Impact Network (JWI), Challah for Hunger, J-Street. One person relaunched Hillel on campus.*
2. Coexistence- related:
 - *Alif Bet is a language immersion organization that brings Arabic speaking and Hebrew speaking people together to learn; two alumni created Peace House on their campus 'where we lived and hosted events focusing on values we learned on Kivunim.'*

- *I helped found 0202: Points of View from Jerusalem, which translates news and media from Arab, secular, and Haredi Jerusalem to the other sectors. The idea is to burst the echo chamber of each community and expose one another to other perspectives.*
 - *My experiences on Kivunim led me to begin volunteering with IsraAID and helping to develop its humanitarian fellowship program for college students.*
 - *[I'm] in the process of initiating an interfaith fellowship program at my university.*
 - *I set-up a chapter of Sisterhood of Shalom Saalam on my campus.*
3. *Projects addressing social issues in the USA: Voter registration/ grass-roots political action, conservation environmental justice, work with refugees; Equalizing the digital-divide; abortion rights, and hunger/food insecurity.*
 4. *Undertakings with an international focus: LGBTQ rights, various education and social enterprises in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda.*

Profile of Alumni

This section of the report is split into two parts: first, a profile of the family background and prior travel experiences of *alumni before they embarked on the program*; and second, the socio-demographic characteristics of the *alumni today*.

Key Demographics of Participants Upon Entering the Program

Geography, Gender, Schooling, and Jewish Denomination

The **Table 3.1** below shows the characteristics of the Kivunim alumni at the point when they embarked on the program, as reported by those who answered the survey.

A Prayerbook from the Synagogue in Alibaug, India with cover page in Hindi. Kivunim students learn of the remarkable untainted history of the Jews of India dating back before the Common Era.

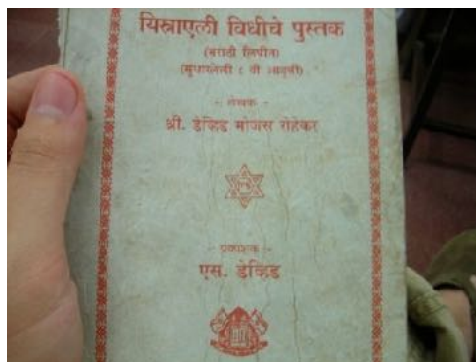


Table 3.1 Demographics of Kivunim Alumni (upon commencing the program)¹⁰

	2007-2010	2011-2013	2014-2016	2017-2019	TOTAL
Place of Residence	<i>n</i> =97	<i>n</i> =82	<i>n</i> =81	<i>n</i> =87	<i>n</i>=347
Northeast	55%	49%	38%	45%	47%
Mid-Atlantic	10	11	10	11	11
South	7	11	9	8	9
West Coast	14	15	15	20	16
Mid West	9	10	23	14	14
International	4	5	5	2	4
Gender Identity	<i>n</i> =97	<i>n</i> =82	<i>n</i> =81	<i>n</i> =86	<i>n</i>=346
Male	40%	44%	37%	38%	40%
Female	60	50	62	58	58
Other	-	6	1	-	2
Schooling	<i>n</i> =97	<i>n</i> =83	<i>n</i> =78	<i>n</i> =85	<i>n</i>=343
Type of High School					
Jewish day school	54%	64%	63%	53%	54%
Private school	12	12	9	13	12
Public school	34	21	23	30	34
Ever attended day school	77%	82%	74%	76%	77%
Ever attended supplementary school	26	22	24	18	26
Received no formal Jewish schooling	12	5	15	13	12
Religion or Denomination Raised	<i>n</i> =100	<i>n</i> =85	<i>n</i> =82	<i>n</i> =90	<i>n</i>=357
Liberal Jewish denominations	62%	56%	59%	57%	59%
Conservative	59	55	55	58	57
Reform	7	7	10	8	9
Reconstructionist	6	3	2	1	3
Orthodox	16%	23%	23%	22%	21%
Both Liberal and Orthodox	9	13	9	9	10
No Denomination Specified	12	7	7	11	9
Another Religion	1	1	2	1	1

Travel and Home-leaving Prior to Embarking on Kivunim

We asked alumni about their travel experiences prior to joining Kivunim (Table 3.2). The vast majority of respondents (99%) had travelled outside of the United States or Canada, and 94% had visited Israel. Additionally, 45% had already visited at least one of the other countries (aside from Israel) on the Kivunim itinerary. Finally, prior to attending Kivunim, 19% of the participants had already lived away from home for more than a summer.

Table 3.2 Alumni's Pre-Kivunim Experiences¹¹

Prior to attending Kivunim had you ever....?	Proportion (n = 364)
Traveled outside of the United States and Canada	99%
Visited Israel	94
Visited other countries on Kivunim's itinerary	45
Lived in Israel for an extended period of time	25
Lived away from home for longer than one summer	19
Attended college	3
Transferred to Kivunim from another program in Israel	1



The encounter with other religions (as here at the Bulgarian Orthodox Buchkovo Monastery outside of Plovdiv, Bulgaria), it is a confrontation with the hopeful side of the Jewish historical experience. Here students pay tribute to the memory of the two Orthodox priests who protected the Jewish community of Bulgaria from deportation. Kivunim students are amazed and moved to learn that the 50,000 Jews of Bulgaria were protected by their Christian neighbors.

Where are the Alumni in their Lives Today?

Family, Household, and Geographic Information

Table 3.3 Demographics of Kivunim Alumni Today¹²

	2007- 2010 <i>n</i> =83	2011- 2013 <i>n</i> =78	2014- 2016 <i>n</i> =70	2017- 2019 <i>n</i> =83	Total <i>n</i> =314
Current Residence					
Northeast	52%	51%	41%	42%	47%
Mid-Atlantic	11	10	14	12	12
South	2	6	7	11	7
West Coast	16	17	11	14	15
Mid West	8	4	17	14	11
International	11	12	9	6	9
Marital Status					
Married	45%	9%	4%	-	16%
Living with a Partner	21	22	5	-	13
Never been married, in a relationship	17	31	32	22%	25
Never been married, single	15	38	60	78	46
Divorced	1	-	-	-	<1
Partner's Religion					
Jewish	80%	72%	74%	74%	76%
No Religion/Atheist/ Agnostic	10	8	11	4	9
Other Religion	11	21	16	22	16
Respondents With Children	21%	1%	-	-	22%
Current Jewish Denominational Affinity					
Liberal Jewish denomination	31%	38%	43%	41%	41%
Orthodox	16	19	16	17	17
No Denomination Specified	11	7	7	10	9
Another Religion	3	-	1	1	1

Educational Attainment

Nearly all alumni attended college. All of the alumni of the most recent cohorts of the program (2017-2019) were still enrolled in college at the time of the survey.

Table 3.4 Year of (Anticipated) College Graduation

Kivunim Cohort:	2007-201 0 n=91	2011-201 3 n=80	2014-2016 n=78	2017- 2019 n=90
2010	5%	-	-	-
2011	18	-	-	-
2012	22	1%	-	-
2013	31	-	-	-
2014	18	9	-	-
2015	3	24	-	-
2016	2	34	-	-
2017	1	25	4%	-
2018	-	1	37	-
2019	-	3	33	-
2020	-	1	22	6%
2021	-	-	4	29
2022	-	-	-	39
2023	-	-	-	27
Other: <i>No idea, Withdraw</i>	-	3	-	-

Additional Findings Regarding Educational Attainment of Alumni

- College credits:** Kivunim offers students the option of receiving a college transcript. Almost half of the alumni (45%) reported that they had received some college credit for participating in the program. Of those, 71% reported that they received eleven or more credits from their subsequent undergraduate institution.¹³
- Undergraduate Degrees:** Of the 238 alumni who had graduated from college by spring 2020
 - 78% received liberal arts degrees (B.A., A.B.).
 - 16% science degrees (B.S., Ba.Sc., B.S.E.).
 - 4% received degrees in fine arts (BFA).
 - 2% received business degrees (BBA).
- Graduate degrees:** 28% of the alumni reported that they have embarked on graduate-level study. The types of degrees are listed in the table below. More than half (54%)

have completed their studies and 46% are currently enrolled. The types of degrees are listed in the table below (table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Alumni’s Graduate Degree Attainment

Types of Graduate Degrees	Count (n=107)
JD	12
MA-Education-related	12
MD	9
MBA	9
MPA /MPP/International/Global	7
Doctorate	7
MSW	7
MPH	5
Rabbinical	4
MS Speech and Language, OT, Nutrition	4
MA/MS degree (no speciality mentioned)	19
Certificates or other post-grad work	5

Professional Life

We asked alumni to indicate if they viewed their current work as a career, as a stepping stone to a career, or as just a job to pay the bills. Overall, 36% of all alumni described their current work as a career, and 32% said they were in stepping stones to a career. Of course, the older the alumni were further along in their career development than more recent alumni.

Table 3.6 Current Job Status by Year Subset

“Do you think of your current job as...?”	2007-2010 n=10	2011-2013 n=87	2014-2016 n=91	2017-2019 n=98	TOTAL n=351
A career	5				
A stepping stone to a career	68%	46%	24%	1%	36%
Just a job to get you by	24	39	47	19	32
None of the above/I am not employed	2	8	8	7	6
	6	6	22	73	26

Conclusions

1. The alumni were overwhelmingly positive about the Kivunim program and its role in their lives. Fully 97% of alumni say they have recommended or would recommend the program to others. They detailed their appreciation for Kivunim in their assessments of the specific elements of the program. Their enthusiasm came through as well in their willingness to participate in the survey: fully 65% of the alumni answered it.
2. Alumni value the core ideas of the program and view them as enduring concerns, ones that many alumni champion in their lives today. They view the program as profoundly shaping their self-understanding as American Jews, in relation to Israel and also regarding Jewish communities in many other places around the world. They share the program's commitment to coexistence and to appreciating diversity; to the importance of encountering society's "Others." There is a strong alignment between the aspirations of the program leaders and its reception by participants.
3. Alumni experienced the program as contributing to their habits of mind: their skill at critical inquiry, their thoughtful question-asking, and their feeling that no question was off-limits. Many commented on how the program prepared them for college and beyond.
4. Alumni look back on the program as a powerful experience in their lives as emerging adults, one that grounded them for their subsequent college experiences, and contributed life-long lessons about Jewish life and contemporary challenges and that they continue to find meaningful in an increasingly complex and changing world.



Kivunim students have the unique opportunity to meet with and learn from The Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India.. This encounter is one of the most moving and profound of each year.

APPENDIX A

How do program leaders view the purposes and goals of the program? What is the underlying logic of the program: what is expected to lead to what?

Logic Model of the Kivunim Gap Year Program

The Kivunim program offers an educational vision, with the following goals:

- ◆ Create a linkage between students' Jewish self-understanding (identities) and their sense of themselves as global citizens in the 21st century by nurturing their intellectual, aesthetic, moral and imaginative capacities.
- ◆ Cultivate students' awareness of diversity:
 - Of Jewish experiences -- both contemporary and historical -- in Israel and in a variety of other countries;
 - Of multiple ethnic, religious and national identities from across the world.
- ◆ Convey to students the importance of encountering the "other" and of *coexistence* (Arab-Israeli, Jewish-Muslim, Jewish-Christian) as a value and as a practice.
- ◆

The Kivunim program includes the following components:

Academic Courses (SAC)

- ◆ Civilization and Society: Homelands in Exile?
- ◆ Land, People, Ideas: The Challenges of Zionism
- ◆ Arabic Language
- ◆ Hebrew Language
- ◆ Visual Thinking: The Art of Seeing
- ◆ Conflict Resolution

Focused Travel (both International and in Israel)

- ◆ 4/5 Overseas Study Trips (totalling 10 weeks)
- ◆ Israel Programming: Encountering the Complexities of Israel

Cross-Cultural Dialogue (CCD)

- ◆ Arab-Jewish Coexistence, Education and Experience
- ◆ Jewish-Muslim; Jewish-Christian; Jewish-Buddhist; Jewish-Hindu coexistence
- ◆ Social Responsibility (volunteering)

NOTES

¹ Elan Holtz (Kivunim 2011-2012) served as research assistant on this study.

² We thank the 589 alumni who participated in the study. We hope the act of completing the survey proved to be worth the investment. We learned a great deal from the many detailed comments and reflections they offered. We read all comments and we shared them (in the aggregate, without attribution, and anonymized if warranted) with the program leaders.

³ That university-based study, "What are the Terms of Engagement? Israel-based Gap Year Programs as Sites for Investigating Complex Israel Education for North American Jews," was funded by the Consortium for Applied Studies in Jewish Education in 2019. As part of this work, Bethamie Horowitz (and her team -- Amanda Winer and Joshua Krug) studied the program's curricular design and conducted field work with the program in Israel and in Berlin and Prague in Jan-June 2019. It also bears mentioning that Bethamie herself is the parent of an 2010-2011 alumnus of the program, and Josh was an Resident Advisor (RA) on the program in 2009.

⁴ We had intended to close the study at the end of March, but the advent of COVID-19 led us to extend our data collection period to April 30th.

⁵ <http://www.hedsconsortium.org>

⁶ Jay continued his work through June 2020, when David Mendelsohn took the program's helm.

⁷ Factor analysis is a way of examining the responses of alumni about the entire set of questions that reveals the underlying structure or clustering among the individual survey items. We ran a PCA Factor analysis with an Equimax rotation. Following each principle are the individual survey items that comprise it. The phrases in bold are our verbal summaries of the clusters of items.

⁸ Bethamie Horowitz developed this "salad bar" approach almost 25 years ago; and versions of it are now routinely employed in studying American Jewry (e.g. Pew 2013 study of Jewish Americans). (Horowitz 2002) <https://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/10004>.

⁹ PCA factor analysis with an equimax rotation.

¹⁰ "International" is based on the location of the respondent's high school. International locations include Canada, Mexico, India, and Australia.

Some respondents reported that they changed high schools or spent time at multiple types of schools. In that case, we report them with the type of school at which they spent the most time. In the case where High School was equally split between two kinds of schools we referred back to middle school to "break the tie."

The percentages of Conservative and Reform/ Reconstructionist exceed the total "liberal" category because some people were raised in more than one denomination.

Among those people categorized as Orthodox, 31% qualified their identification as being "Modern Orthodox," "traditional egalitarian," or "Open Orthodox."

¹¹ Kivunim's travel itinerary has included Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, India, Morocco, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary and Italy. In some years the travel has included Jordan, Russia, Lithuania, Macdeonia, Albania and Azerbaijan.

¹² In Table 3.3: International locales mentioned include Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, and Kenya.

The oldest Kivunim alumni are in their early 30s. The marriage and family formation profile of Kivunim alumni mirrors the trends found among Birthright alumni where at age 30, around 25-30% report being married (women married at a younger age than men), and by age 35, 74% were married. (Saxe et al 2017).

The Pew Research Center's 2013 Survey of Jewish Americans also estimates that the current proportion of Jewish intermarriage was then close to 70%.

¹³ In the first few years Siegel College of Jewish Studies (Cleveland, OH) served as academic sponsor and issued the credits; The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford (UK) served that role for four years; beginning in 2012 The Hebrew College, (Newton, MA) has been the academic institution of record.

“...If we could only get the network of day schools and of Hebrew schools to internalize (this) vision and communicate it, we would be facing a burgeoning renaissance and not the demographic dwindle that looms.

I do fear that missing universal element in Jewish education (then exacerbated by the over-universalistic reaction of many young people when they meet the others) is a key cause of assimilation. If only we could get all the Jewish educators in the system to learn your remarkable embrace of both poles and of humanity in general...”

RABBI YITZ GREENBERG, 2019

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