

Project SSNAP and Kumah – Americans Return to Zion
Present

The First Students' Zionist Congress

Canaan, New York

February 15th - 18th

Friday, February 15:

11:00 – 3:00 pm **Zionist Screening Room Open** – effective films and documentaries by Israeli students

12:00 – 3:20 pm **Registration** – *Sandwiches and drinks available*

3:20 – 3:40 pm **Mincha** – Afternoon prayer

3:45 pm **Prepare for Shabbat**

5:00 pm Sharp **Kindling the Lights of Shabbat** with Leah Kahn (Kent State University) and Melissa Bernath, (Cardozo Law School CHAI)

5:20 pm **Welcome to the First Students' Zionist Congress:** Ezra Levine, Conference Co-Coordinator and Director, Kumah–Americans Return to Zion
Communication Workshop: Rabbi Charles Lebow, Director, Project SSNAP (Jerusalem)

6:15 pm **Welcoming Shabbat With Joy** (*Kaballat Shabbat and Maariv*)

7:20 pm **Shabbat Feast**
Introduction/Mission
Kineret Fischer, Conference Co-Coordinator (Columbia University)

Keynote address: "*What needs to be done on our campuses. Now.*"
Bertram Korn, PR Consultant, former Director of the Zionist Organization of America

9:00 pm **Kumah Oneg Shabbat** – "*My Heart is in the East, but I am in the West*"
Dayana Habib (Cornell University)
Alex Traiman (Yeshiva University)
Leah Kahn (Kent State University)
Daniel Farahan (University of Indiana)
Summation: "*Neo-Zionism*" Yishai Fleisher, Founder, Kumah–Americans Return to Zion

12 Midnight **Silent Walk** with Ingram Paperny, Innkeeper and former UN consultant

Shabbat, February 16

7:30–10:30 am **Shacharit service** – Morning prayers

9:30–10:30 am **Alternative Meditation session**

10:45 am **Kiddush**

11:00–12:00 pm **Choice Text Sessions:**

"Looking to our past for paradigms of Jewish leadership"

a) Reb Judah Mischel – Teshuatam Hayitah L'netzach: *Viva la Revolut'ion!!*

- b) Yehudah Sarna – "*Biblical adulthood and the mark of a leader*"
 c) Michelle Sarna – "*From taxi drivers to soldiers to members of Knesset: the power of the question*"

- 12:15 pm **Shabbat Lunch**
 Speaker: Buddy Korn
 "*From Palestinian Solidarity to Israel Activist*"
- Shabbat Menucha** –to rest, to talk, to meander through the forest, to explore the old mill
- 3:45 pm **Mincha service** – afternoon service
- 4:00–4:50 **"Hot Seat" Press conference – Grill the Zionist know-it-alls**
 Nathan Gessner (NYU)
 Bertam "Buddy" Korn
 Allen E. Oirich
- 5:00 pm **Seuda Shlishit**, the Third Meal
 Rav Bennie Eisner, IDF Officer, contemporary Zionist figure and proponent of Aliya
- 6:10 pm **Maariv and Musical Havdala**
 Shower. Change. Get ready to rock.
- 8:00–9:50 pm **Plenary Session # 1: Mobilizing Students for Israel**
 Moderator: Kineret Fischer
 Speakers:
 Yishai Fleisher, Birthright Israel organizer and Kumah Founder
 How can we get 10,000 students to Israel this summer?
 How to recruit for Birthright and othe Israel programs.
- Jason Orenstein, Israel Aliya Center
 Israel programs to fit (almost) every interest of (nearly) every kind of Jew
- Bram Bregman, Student Internship Program
 Internships in Israel
- K'dai Documentary – Filmed in Israel this past summer by Project SSNAP, asking the question "What made you decide it was k'dai to come to Israel now?"*
- 10:00 pm **SSNAP Dinner Reception**
- 11:30 pm **Melaveh Malka** – Break out the musical instruments and hot spiced cider
 Abe Friedman (Boston University) *Fast Times at Ridgemont High – The power of the fast as a mode of solidarity*

Sunday, February 17:

- 8:00 – 8:30am **Shacharit** – Morning prayer
- 8:40 – 10:00am **Continental Breakfast**
- 9:15 – 10:00am **Optional self–defense demonstration:** *The potent spiritual side of martial arts*
 Avi Elias, (Jewish Identity Project)

10:00 – 10:50am **Practical Activism – Effective Paradigms We All Can Implement**
(Each will be given twice – pick two out of four to attend)

- A) Aharon Horwitz (Columbia U) and Nathan Gessner (NYU)
"Lessons in highly effective student activism based on the New York model "
- B) Miriam Delman (McGill)
" House of Prayer – how an open communal spiritual house can revitalize a campus"
- C) Daniel Farahan (University of Indiana)
"Autonomous Israel activism on campus – how tiny groups can make huge waves"
- D) Julie Sager (ZOA)
"Resources within the establishment that you can benefit from"

11:00–11:50am **Discussion and Brainstorm Session:** Yoni Petel (McGill) and Kineret Fischer (Columbia)

"Why is everything on campus cool?except Judaism"

12 Noon **Luncheon**

"Making the most of your activism packet"

Yishai Fleisher (Cardozo Law School) and Ezra Levine (Conference Coordinator)

1:00–3:00 pm **Plenary Session #2: Leadership on campus – Implementation and effectiveness**

Guest Facilitators: Michael Eglash, Upstart Activist

Eric Esses, Upstart Activist

3:00–3:50 pm **Mincha/Afternoon Break**

4:00–4:45 pm **Gefilta Phish** – R' Shmuel Skaist, on love, music, and the meaning of life

4:50–5:10 pm **Exodus Shabbat Program (ESP) – A Framework for a Shift on Campus**

Video presentation: "Surviving Terrorism"

5:15–6:15 pm **Extreme Zionist Sports: Capture the Israeli Flag!**

6:30–7:00 pm **Dinner**

7:00–8:45 pm **Maariv/ Evening Break**

7:30–8:45 pm **"Practical Aliya: What Rights Do You Have?"**

Opher Offen, Shaliach Aliyah, former career counselor in Israel

Brief presentation with question–answer session

8:45–10:00 pm **The Bartelbees – Jam session with Rabbi Shmuel Skaist**

Monday, February 18:

8:00–9:00 am **Shacharit** – Morning prayers with Torah reading

9:00 am **Intercontinental Breakfast**

9:45–11:45 am **Closing Session: Resolutions, Roles, Responsibilities**

Rabbi Charles Lebow, Kineret Fischer

12:00 pm **Load buses. On our way Home?to Zion!**

Melissa A. Bernath is currently a student at the Cardozo School of Law. At 20, she was the youngest entering member of the 2003 graduating class. Melissa graduated with a B.A. in Political Communication with a concentration in International Affairs from the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. While in school, she interned at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Texas State Office of State–Federal Relations, the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, Congressman Ralph M. Hall’s office, and most recently, has worked for the United States District Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Texas.

She has studied in China through Duke University, and spent a month at Corpus Christi College in Oxford. She has been a competitive equestrian, a professional actress and singer. Coming from the Jew–less town of Sherman, Texas, Melissa experienced real anti–Semitism growing up, leading her parents to infuse her with an appreciation for Israel at an early age. The love Melissa developed has since flourished into action. Melissa founded the first Zionist organization at the law school – CHAI (Cardozo Heightening Awareness for Israel) – which now has over 100 members and keeps the Cardozo community informed and active in Israel–related affairs.

At Cardozo, Melissa had her first contact with Orthodox Judaism, and has never looked back. Melissa’s love for Israel has become inextricably linked to her love of Torah and the practice of Judaism. Melissa’s involvement in Kumah began with her friendship with Kumah founder Yishai Fleisher (Vice President of CHAI), and has really paid off! On the 7th of Shevat, Melissa and Yishai were engaged to be married.

Michael Eglash’s expertise in and dedication to pro–Israel activism began as a student at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. He was successful in creating an active organization that trained dozens of students in promoting Israel and Zionism on campus.

Michael founded and served as presidents of Tagar and Masada, a project of the Zionist Organization of America. In addition, he was an AIPAC campus liaison for four years and international affairs columnist for the UWM TIMES newspaper. Upon graduation in 1991, Michael served as Midwest director of ZOA’s programs on campus. He was instrumental in creating ZOA student chapters in the Midwest, and sending 100 students a year to Israel.

He made Aliya in 1993 and became founder and Director of Machon Masa, a project of the Jewish Agency. Masa became a vehicle to train American students studying in Israel to be active upon their return to their campuses. In 1996 he became the Director of Hamagshimim in Israel, a Hadassah sponsored young adult Zionist movement in Jerusalem. As such, he helped create an absorption/community center for English speaking olim. Michael also hosted a weekly show on a local Jerusalem radio station, featuring guests and focusing on topics related to Aliya. Since 1996 Michael has worked in hi–tech.

He and his family currently reside in Mevasseret Zion, Israel.

Eric Esses – Eric is a veteran Israel activist who lived activism first hand on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin during the days of the first ‘Intifada’. After graduating, Eric served as regional coordinator and then director of one of North America’s premier Israel activist organizations, the University Student Department of the World Zionist Organization (USD). USD’s objective was to educate students about Israel through campus educational programs, high–level seminars and extensive stays in the country. Under Eric’s management, the USD flourished to become a powerful and persuasive pro–Israel voice on campus, even during the challenging days of the first ‘Intifada’ and the 1991 Gulf War. Eric initiated the creation of the acclaimed Israel Activist Primers on various subjects that provided students with fully packaged and actionable information.

Eric made Aliyah in 1992. After serving in the IDF, he was appointed the director of Project Otzma, a 10-month volunteer fellowship for North American college graduates. As director, Eric was responsible for managing a professional staff of seven, a budget of NIS 2.5 million as well as supervising the activities of the program's 90 participants. Eric initiated and implemented several significant improvements in the program's structure and educational component designed to increase the program's long-term sustainability.

Since leaving Otzma in 1998, Eric has held senior marketing positions in technology firms – most recently as VP of marketing for a knowledge management software developer. Eric has a BA in biological psychology from the University of Texas at Austin and an MBA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He lives in a Jerusalem-area moshav with his family.

Kineret Fischer began her activism after spending a summer empowering assimilated Jewish youth in Russia with knowledge of their heritage and religion. While in YULA high school, she was appointed the first student speaker for the Israel Affairs Bureau and organized a campaign calling upon the US State Department to issue rewards for the capture of Palestinian murderers of American citizens just as they do for the capture of any other such criminals. She is a graduate of several activist training seminars such as JWALOP and SSNAP. Kineret just completed a year of National Service at a Jerusalem hospital and is currently an active member of "PLO out of NYC," a grassroots student movement committed to evicting the PLO Mission from a terror-free New York City. She attends Barnard College where she is studying Comparative Cultural Studies.

Yishai Y. Fleisher was born on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel. Yishai and his family moved to the United States in 1984. At the age of 16, Yishai returned to Israel to attend Yeshivat Ma'ale Adumim and served as a paratrooper in the Israeli Defense Force. These experiences had a great impact on Yishai's mind, and it sent him on a Zionist trajectory. Yishai entered Yeshiva University at the age of 21, and graduated with a B.A. in Political Science. While at YU, Yishai worked at the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), started the Middle East Society, was an editor and writer for The Commentator, and organized poetry readings. Today, Yishai is a 2nd year law student at the Cardozo School of Law in Manhattan, where he is the Vice President of CHAI (Cardozo Heightening Awareness for Israel) and a staff writer for the Insider. He participated in the Holocaust Restitution Clinic, where he joined New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) in recovering settlement money for Holocaust survivors. He is the Mayanot Birthright Coordinator at the Cardozo Law School, and has led two tours to Eretz Yisrael. On Sundays, he teaches 6th grade Hebrew at Temple Emanuel in Manhattan.

Yishai founded Kumah in 5760 with the hope of awakening Diaspora Jewry to a renewed love of Zion and a sense of longing to return there.

Recently, Yishai got engaged to Kumah member Melissa Bernath, and they plan on making Aliya when they finish law school.

Nathan Gessner, originally from Rockville, Maryland, now attends the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University, majoring in Israeli Politics. He is a member of Betar America's Hanhaga Artzit and has helped to organize much of the pro-Israel activism in New York. He participated in SSNAP last summer and plans to make Aliya with Kumah.

Three months ago, Nathan was forcibly removed from an address by Shimon Peres for stating that "Arafat is a murderer."

Aaron Horowitz studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel and served in the IDF. He is Mifaked Maoz of Betar Cleveland, Rosh Hanaga of Betar USA and has directed Betar summer trips and Shabbatonim. He is the Leader and co-founder of the Israel Discussion Group at Columbia University. Aaron has also assisted in leading Birthright tours of Gush Etzion.

Aaron is currently in Columbia University and Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and is one of the founding members of the highly effective PLOoutofNYC which seeks to have the PLO mission evicted from 65th Street and Park Avenue in Manhattan.

Rabbi Charles Lebow is the founder and international director of Project SSNAP (Students' Spreading Knowledge and Pride). He has organized rallies for up to ten thousand and student conferences for 600 but he prefers small, intimate groups. He is married with five children and lives in Jerusalem where he also serves as a counselor to students on the one-year program at Hebrew University.

Ezra Levine founded B'ahavat Yisrael/For the Love of Israel, a student activism group in New York City, three years ago. He sought to meld spiritual activism with strong unapologetic responses to terrorism and the oppression of any Jew worldwide. B'ahavat Yisrael contended that the Oslo Accords were a grave error that signified the conscious negation of the Zionist dream in favor of the historically disastrous drive toward assimilation. Ezra was arrested and charged with third degree criminal trespass and disorderly conduct after he entered the United Nations General Assembly moments after they passed their 11th anti-Israel condemnation, and sang *Am Yisrael Chai* with two other students – holding banners equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.

During the summers Ezra taught adult education classes in Biblical Zionism ("The Book of Joshua as a Zionist guide") in Perth, Australia, interned in the Israeli Justice Ministry, and participated in an activism seminar called Project SSNAP in Jerusalem.

Ezra's activist journey has led him to the conclusion that Aliya is the starting point from which our generation will flourish and invigorate the State of Israel. He is the Director of Kumah-Americans Return to Zion and is working to create momentum amongst North American students that will continue after he makes Aliya with Kumah's first wave of *Olim* this summer. Ezra has been traveling to campuses across the country speaking about Aliya, the Land of Israel and what it means to be a Jew today.

Ezra, after a last minute decision to shun Law School, plans on receiving an MBA from Bar Ilan University and studying for rabbinic ordination at Yeshivat Bat Ayin while sitting on a beautiful Judean hilltop.

Judah HaLevi Mischel is the father of Ayelet HaShachar. He is currently a Rebbe & Director of Student Activities at The Frisch School. Judah taught, for a summer, at Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem. He is a graduate of Yeshiva University (B.A. History & Philosophy) with an M.A. from Azrieli School of Jewish Education and the recipient of a fellowship at the New York Center for Tolerance and Coexistence. With God's help, he will be joining the staff of Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim in Beit Shemesh next year.

Judah is a self-described Post Modern, Neo-Hasidic Pseudo-Kabbalist specializing in carbonated, kosher-style Rabbimics.

Alan E. Oirich is a lifetime activism consultant. He has worked with Jewish students in almost every State in the US and nearly every province of Canada as well as in Europe, South Africa, Israel and Mexico. In recent years he has been an extremely creative producer of educational multimedia including "Virtual Shabbat" and the widely acclaimed "Jewish Hero Corps" comic book on CD. Mr. Oirich writes for various publications on cinema, politics, technology and Jewish issues. His syndicated column, "Film Night", was based at Israel's "Your Jerusalem" for five years. In three weeks he will marry Elisheva Silver, a Doctoral student at Columbia University, an award winning musician and a real sweetheart.

Jason Orenstein revitalized and revolutionized the Israel Club at Yeshiva University through his persistent advertising and hard-hitting programming. Jason is now the Director of Campus affairs of the North American Aliya Center in New York City. He is marrying the lovely Annie Kadosh on Memorial Day and together they are moving Home to Israel to live happily ever after.

Michelle Sarna has traveled across the globe teaching youth from Russia, Ethiopia, and Israel knowledge of Judaism and Love for Israel, while facilitating their integration into Israeli society.

Michelle spent a summer in Perth, Western Australia as an educator and directed several large scale programs within the Jewish community there. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Bible from Yeshiva University as well as a PhD in School Psychology from Fordham University.

Yehuda Sarna founded Eimatai, a leadership training project for high school students in the New York area which encourages independent thinking, activism, and a love for all Jews. An active member in Bnei Akiva, Yehuda served as the Rosh Moshava of Ennismore, Ontario and Wildrose, Wisconsin, as well as on the National Board of Bnei Akiva. He also coordinated youth shabbatonim and high school leadership training programs for the National Council of Young Israel in synagogues across the country. Currently, Yehuda is pursuing his rabbinic ordination in Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Theological Seminary and his Masters in Medieval Jewish History in Bernard Revel Graduate School. He teaches Bible and Talmud in MTA, continues his leadership of Eimatai, now a project of the Max Stern Division of Communal Services of YU, and is a rabbinic intern under Rabbi Avi Weiss at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

Rabbi Shmuel Skaist studied at Yeshiva Sh'or Yoshuv in Far Rockaway, New York for 11 years, absorbing the unique educational ideas of [Rabbi Shlomo Freifeld](#) (of blessed memory). Rabbi Freifeld encouraged him to follow his interests in many areas including Torah study, Jewish history, music, art, literature, quantum mechanics and a bit of tap dancing.

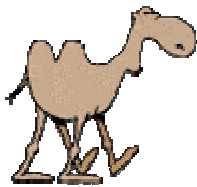
Rav Shmuel was an Instructor of Jewish Philosophy at Bar Ilan University in Israel for several years, where he taught American students in the university's overseas program. In his courses in Jewish Philosophy Rav Shmuel has been known to incorporate eclectic sources such as writings of George Bernard Shaw (Back to Methuselah), Mark Twain, O. Henry, Tom Wolfe (Electric Kool Aid Acid Test), Robert Persig (Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance and Lila) and Grateful Dead lyrics.

Rav Shmuel, besides directing The Gefiltefish Project, also directs the Monsey Talmud Study Center, and lectures weekly at Yeshiva University Stern College in Manhattan and University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia

In Israel Rav Shmuel performed music regularly in Jerusalem nightspots. His Jerusalem based band is informally known as "Not'yo Momma". His US band was called The Bartlebees but is now known as "Rav Shmuel" and has been gigging in New York and college campuses and towns for the last 2 years.

Rav Shmuel's music is not in the genre of what has traditionally been called Jewish music, but as he says; "I'm Jewish and I wrote it so how could it not be Jewish music?"

Although he lives in Jerusalem he's been to 45 Phish shows since 1995, and only been late once.



The Kumah Camel says: "Get over the hump! Make Aliya!"