ANNUAL REPORT
2019
At the end of the day you should be asking yourself the question 'what is going to maximize my potential?', and I guarantee that a program like MTA will indeed maximize your potential.

- Ross Nowitz, participant on World Bnei Akiva Hachshara in the past year
Dear Council Members,

We are pleased to present World Bnei Akiva’s 2019 annual report.

This has been an exciting year for the movement.

We started off with our Veida in which hundreds of young Bnei Akiva members from around the world got together to celebrate the achievements of Bnei Akiva and to conduct a profound discussion on the future of our Tnua. At the opening ceremony we paid tribute to two individuals, Chana Spiegelman and Alain Silverman, who’s lifelong commitment to Bnei Akiva, on many levels have impacted the lives of thousands.

Bnei Akiva as a movement participated in the Jerusalem Marathon partnering with Mizrachi and Tikvot. In March we had our annual Giving Day raising NIS 500,000. Both these fundraising events brought in much needed funds to the Tnua and we hope to grow these initiatives this year.

In the Council meetings that took place in June we continued working on the strategic plan and direction of the Council and evaluated the implementation of our previous goals. We set up committees to tackle some of our challenges such as the Shlichim Program and we hope to see how some of our recommendations will be implemented in the future.

From a growth perspective, World Bnei Akiva is proud to say that this past year we have opened three new snifim and sent shlichim to new communities like Sao Paulo, Brazil and Strasbourg, France. In the coming year we hope to continue this trend but also support certain snifim that have fallen behind.

In Israel we also introduced new programs such as the “Bat & Bar Mitzva” program and a new Bogrim Baretz Network.

Our Mechina is thriving and we are pleased to report that thanks to a very significant donation from the Adelson family we plan to open a second branch of the Mechina in Haifa.

We are excited to report that “Beit Bnei Akiva” has finally broken ground in Jerusalem. Built in partnership with Tirat Yosef, this magnificent educational center will, house many of our Hachsharot and other programs. A full presentation of the new facility will be provided at the upcoming February meetings. We look forward to the opening in 2021.

In terms of fundraising, 2019 was a stellar year. Finances are always a challenge especially in a year in which the Israeli political system is in disarray yet we continue to work hard to be innovative and tenacious both to get the most out of every dollar as well as grow the network of donors. Your assistance in this area is greatly appreciated. We look forward to thanking our major stakeholders at a donor appreciation evening in 2020.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Roi Abecassis our Mazkal, Yoni Bahat, CFO, Ariel Chesner and the rest of their team for their exemplary devotion to World Bnei Akiva. As well, Yasher Koach to Rav Shaul Feldman, Head of BANA and all the Heads of the Regional Desks in the Mazkitut.

Special thanks to Sarena Koschitzky, as she completes her term as Co-chair and is appointed Honorary Chair of World Bnei Akiva.

Thank you to our existing Council Members for their support both on the council and the committees as well as for their support of the local snifim. And finally welcome to our new members.

World Bnei Akiva is starting off 2020 from an excellent place. It is up to us to make it better.

We look forward to working together with you, our lay leaders, and may the professional staff continue on this wonderful path of purpose and success.

Alo Naaleh,

Gael Grunewald and Y. Dov Meyer
Co-Chairmen
WORLD COUNCIL MEMBERS

Roi Abecassis
Mazkal / Executive Director
Based in Israel

Yoni Bahat
Deputy Director & CFO
Based in Israel

Eliezer Borgenicht
Head, French Desk
Based in Israel

Leon Korman
North America Representative
Based in Canada

Yoel Cohen
Head, Latin America Desk
Based in Canada

Rav Shaul Feldman
Head, North America Desk
Based in USA

Rav Arik Speaker
Director, Chinuch Department
Based in Israel

Naama Goldberg
Director, Shlichut Department
Based in Israel

Tamar Goldman
Young Shlichim Coordinator
Based in Israel

Sari Mayer
Head, European Desk
Based in Israel

Yoni Bahat
Deputy Director & CFO
Based in Israel

Eliezer Borgenicht
Head, French Desk
Based in Israel

Sari Mayer
Head, European Desk
Based in Israel

Efrat Metzler
Director, Bogrim Department
Based in Israel

Avichai Meyer
Director, Mechina Olamit
Based in Israel

Robert Ejnes
France Representative
Based in France

Cheryl Bradfield Eman
Europe Representative
Based in Israel

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Latin America Representative
Based in Brazil

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World Mizrachi Representative
Based in USA

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France Representative
Based in France

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Young Shlichim Coordinator
Based in Israel

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Director, Mechina Olamit
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Without Portfolio
Based in Israel

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Europe Representative
Based in Israel

Rabbi Benji Levy
Without Portfolio
Based in Israel

Rav Doron Perez
World Mizrachi Representative
Based in USA

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Alberto Edelman
Latin America Representative
Based in Brazil

Rav Doron Perez
World Mizrachi Representative
Based in USA

Benji Jotkowitz
Australia Representative
Based in Australia

Michael Silver
Without Portfolio
Based in Israel

Bob Fried
South Africa Representative
Based in South Africa

Mark Schneider
Without Portfolio
Based in Israel

Efrat Metzler
Director, Bogrim Department
Based in Israel

Avichai Meyer
Director, Mechina Olamit
Based in Israel

Ilana Sosin
Director, Camp Amichai
Based in Israel

Yonatan Sinclair
Director, Hachshara Department
Based in USA

Rav Arik Speaker
Director, Chinuch Department
Based in Israel

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Honorary Chairman
Based in Canada

Y. Dov Meyer
Co-Chairman
Canada Representative
Based in Canada

Roi Abecassis
Mazkal / Executive Director
Based in Israel

Yoni Bahat
Deputy Director & CFO
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Without Portfolio
Based in Israel

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Australia Representative
Based in Australia

Michael Silver
Without Portfolio
Based in Israel

www.worldbneiakiva.org

@WorldBneiAkiva
OUR SHLICHIM & SNIFIM 
AROUND THE WORLD IN 2019

NORTH AMERICA
1. CANADA • Hamilton
2. CANADA • Montreal
3. CANADA • Toronto
4. USA, CALIFORNIA • Los Angeles
5. USA, FLORIDA • Hollywood
6. USA, GEORGIA • Atlanta
7. USA, ILLINOIS • Chicago
8. USA, MASSACHUSETTS • Boston
9. USA, MICHIGAN • Detroit
10. USA, MINNESOTA • Minneapolis
11. USA, MISSOURI • St. Louis
12. USA, NEW JERSEY • Teaneck
13. USA, NEW YORK • 12 Snifim
14. USA, OHIO • Cleveland
15. USA, PENNSYLVANIA • Philadelphia, Pittsburgh
16. USA, TEXAS • Dallas, Houston
17. USA, WASHINGTON • Seattle
18. USA, WASHINGTON DC

LATIN AMERICA
1. ARGENTINA • Buenos Aires
2. BRAZIL • Belém, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo
3. MEXICO • Mexico City
4. URUGUAY • Montevideo

AFRICA
1. ETHIOPIA • Addis Ababa, Gondar
2. SOUTH AFRICA • Cape Town, Johannesburg

EUROPE
1. AUSTRIA • Vienna
2. BELGIUM • Antwerp, Brussels
3. FINLAND • Helsinki
4. FRANCE • Boulogne, Marseille, Paris, Strasbourg
5. GERMANY • Dortmund, Hessen, Krefeld, Nuremberg
6. HOLLAND • Amsterdam
7. ITALY • Milan, Rome
8. SWEDEN • Gothenburg, Malmö, Stockholm
9. SWITZERLAND • Basel, Zurich
10. UNITED KINGDOM • Birmingham, London, Manchester

ASIA
1. HONG KONG

AUSTRALASIA
1. AUSTRALIA • Melbourne, Perth, Sydney
2. NEW ZEALAND • Auckland, Wellington
The Shlichut Department

Overview

Last year the Shlichut Department continued working on its main goals to recruit, screen, train, and match shlichim for work in communities around the world. 90 families went through our screening process. 30 of them completed the process, and ten of them were matched with suitable shlichut destinations. In the young shlichim department, 124 candidates applied. After the screening process, we placed 21 young shlichim.

2019 was a particularly challenging year in regard to finding placements for shlichut communities around the world. Unfortunately, there were seven communities in which the previous shlichim were not replaced. Some of these reasons included:

1. Challenges finding shlichim who suited the community’s needs – Toronto
2. Problems getting visas for shlichim – Antwerp
3. Temporary decision of the community not to continue shlichut – London, Helsinki, Gothenburg, Los Angeles, New York

In 2020 we are devoting a large amount of resources (subject to budgetary considerations) to new ways of increasing the number of potential candidates for shlichut. Two new shlichut destinations for families, Norway and Chile, are expected to be launched in 2020.

Support for Shlichim

We believe that one of the advantages of shlichut with Bnei Akiva is that the shlichim are sent by an organization that cares deeply for them and accompanies them every step of the way. Until 2019, support for shlichim was provided for through the heads of the regional desks. In 2019 we added two new positions as a crucial step in ensuring the best care for our shlichim:

1. Young Shlichim: One of the biggest challenges of young shlichim is that these young men and women are being sent out at a time of life that is significant to their own spiritual development. The shlichut experience brings with it (alongside the huge advantages) complicated and confronting spiritual challenges. In order to assist the young shlichim with these challenges we have asked Rav Noam Perel to provide support for the young shlichim and assist them in their needs with regard to their spiritual growth. This includes weekly Torah learning via WhatsApp groups, and visiting the young shlichim once a year.

2. Families: Alongside the heads of desks we have instituted a new position – international shlichut mentor – now held by Efrat Metzler. Her role is to care for the well-being of the shlichim, particularly with regard to their family relationships and marriages, as well as providing them with tools to make their shlichut experience more enriching.

Bat Ami and Shin-Shin

In 2019 we opened a special track for the young women who do their national service (sherut leumi) abroad through the Bat Ami organization, and for whom part of their role is to work in Bnei Akiva in their abroad communities. These 40 young women receive support and care from the Bnei Akiva shlichim families in their communities, as well as spiritual support from our “Young Shlichim” program. They participated in the Bnei Akiva shlichut training course and receive continuous support from WBA for all issues concerning their work in Bnei Akiva.

Last year we also started a new project – the “Shin-Shin” (post-high-school year of service) shlichut, in partnership with the Jewish Agency. As a result of this partnership, seven young adults are currently on shlichut, in California, Florida, and France.

In 2019 World Bnei Akiva spent a total $537,000 to fund our Shlichut operations around the world.
Growth of the Kivun program

Kivun is a new type of program, showcasing entrepreneurship, structure, educational rationale and cutting-edge experiential tools. Kivun presents a new opportunity for English-speaking Northern Hemisphere religious youth, even those not affiliated with Bnei Akiva. The accommodation in Jerusalem, high-quality education, and heavy investment in staff members has created a real alternative for many religious young adults who are looking to spend a meaningful year in Israel out of a desire to grow and learn.

Challenges in Latin America

Short background:
After a few challenging years we were obliged to cancel the Southern American programs due to lack of participants. We decided to merge the South American program with the Mexican program, Amichai, so that chanichim from South America who wanted to come on Hachshara would be able to join the Mexican group.

Challenges:
1. Since the merge with Amichai started, the Amichai program has been running every year. However, the snif in Mexico is not as strong as it used to be, resulting in the number of participants to drop, while the competition from other gap year programs in Mexico is very high (“Maccabi B’Kef” and “Challenge”).
2. In South America, the financial situation is worsening, as a result they do not have the money to afford the year in Israel.
3. Additionally, the South Americans, who usually go to university for a semester or a full year before coming to Israel, are more interested in a program like Kivun. Unfortunately, they don’t have the funds or the numbers of chanichim to allow us to open a specific South American Kivun. The Mexicans, meanwhile, prefer to keep the “traditional” model of a more youth-movement-oriented experience.
4. More about these challenges can be expanded upon at the upcoming World Council meeting.

Growth of the Mechina program

We are now finishing the third cohort of the Mechina HaOlamit, and it has been incredible to see it grow and succeed so quickly. The Mechina HaOlamit provides a home for so many young adults seeking to learn, grow, develop and create a meaningful international community. The Mechina is a living example of what Jewish peoplehood means. It is a unique and important institution that closes the gap between Israel and the Diaspora, bringing together Jews from all over the world to live, work, and most importantly form real and deep friendships with each other.

Mental health

We are in an era where schools, as well as gap-year programs are becoming more involved in the mental health issues that the chanichim are bringing with them or developing while on their gap years. We can no longer shy away from discussing every single topic, nor pretend that education is limited to Torah and love of Israel. In order to be equipped to deal with the growing number of cases of MH issues, we have to develop the following:

• Learning in depth about the different issues coming up;
• Equipping our staff members with tools and guidelines on how to identify and respond to MH crises;
• Using as many of the organizations around us to help support our staff and chanichim (e.g., our WBA educational counselor- who is also a social worker, Machon Dvir, Crossroads, and others);
• Helping the chanichim themselves become more aware and conscious young adults, and providing them with tools to create coping mechanisms.

As the worlds largest and most influential Jewish youth organization, we have a responsibility to be at the forefront in this area.
PARTNERSHIP WITH BNEI AKIVA ISRAEL

In recent years, we have strengthened our relationship with Bnei Akiva Israel. We believe that an in-depth introduction to Diaspora Jewry, via direct encounters with it, will increase the sense of responsibility and awareness of the Diaspora among Israeli Bnei Akiva madrichim. In the long term, this awareness will lead to an increase in the number of potential shlichim. To this end, we ran the following programs in 2019:

1. Over 1,200 chanichim from around the world visited Bnei Akiva Israel snifim during their summer tours in Israel and met Israeli chanichim of their own age.
2. 40 madrichim from Bnei Akiva Israel attended Camp Sayarim in Europe. This group was chosen following a selection process, and received training. Upon their return to Israel, each of the Israelis made a presentation to his or her Bnei Akiva snif about the encounter with European Jewry.
3. A new “Hagshama” track was established in Bnei Akiva Israel: shlichut abroad through their “shin-shin” program. Three high school graduates were the pioneers of this track and were sent for a year of shlichut to Florida.

The Bogrim Department continued its operations in 2019, led by a board of bogrim who are olim, together with a representative of the WBA mazkirut. The fundamental objective of their activities is creating a supportive social framework for “olim”. The main activities of 2019 were:

1. Election panel – 200 participants heard from candidates from the different political parties prior to the April 2019 elections.
2. Tikkun Leil Shavuot – On Shavuot night, WBA ran an inaugural evening of Torah learning. Hundreds of olim participated in a night of inspiration and learning, in various languages. The highlight was a talk given by Sivan Rahav-Meir.
3. Social events, such as a communal festive prayer service on Yom HaAtzmaut, pre-selichot learning and meditation, Yom HaAliya party, and many more.

In 2020 we intend to expand our activities to reach two new groups:

1. Supporting lone soldiers and women doing national service, as well as students who have remained for a second year in yeshiva or midrasha.
2. Establishing an “over 50s” group of Bnei Akiva alumni.

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2. Establishing an “over 50s” group of Bnei Akiva alumni.
In the recent years leading up to 2019, Bnei Akiva in France was unfortunately in a decline. Thanks to renewed efforts and targeted action, last year became the year when we turned the trend. In 2019 we were lucky enough that Robert Ejnes, President of the Jewish community of Boulogne, agreed to take on the leadership of Bnei Akiva in France, as well as joining the World Bnei Akiva World Council. In France, a board of volunteers was formed and World Bnei Akiva has hired a new Head for the French Desk, Eliezer Borgenicht, to lead the renewed activities of the Bnei Akiva snifim in France, find new chalichim, resolve the financial issues, and connect Bnei Akiva France to the other snifim in Europe, and the world.

Our main achievements in France in 2019:
1. The Bnei Akiva snif in Boulogne was reopened. Together with the Jewish Agency, World Bnei Akiva sent two shlichot to develop activities in the community. By now there are around 80 chalichim attending each activity.
2. A new snif was established in Strasbourg, and World Bnei Akiva sent one shlichah there. 70 chalichim join the activities there each Shabbat.
3. The Marseille snif has been revitalized with a parents’ committee, and now numbers 40 chalichim.
4. A leadership seminar Shabbaton, run by the Head of the French Desk, and the shlichot, was held to energize and inspire the next generation of young Bnei Akiva leaders.

Our goals for 2020:
1. To send a family of shlichim to Paris to coordinate all the activities of Bnei Akiva France.
2. To send a family of shlichim to Marseille to continue building up the snif and work in the school.
3. In January 2020, Bnei Akiva France will host the annual Bnei Akiva Europe leadership Shabbaton. 150 madrichim from all over Europe will participate. This will contribute in a very meaningful way toward strengthening the madrichim of Bnei Akiva France.

2019 was successful in regards to our fundraising efforts. With the help of the World Council, and with combined efforts of our executive staff, we managed to meet our goal of raising NIS 2.3M for the ongoing activities of World Bnei Akiva, as well as NIS 1M from private donors towards Beit Bnei Akiva.

In addition to our ongoing fundraising efforts, we are engaged in two major construction projects, both which received a significant boost in 2019.

In February 2019, we began the construction of The Sheila and Eric Samson Beit Bnei Akiva. As of January 2020, construction of the fourth floor is underway. The contractor estimates that construction will be completed in 2021. Our fundraising department is investing a lot of efforts in raising NIS 10 million, which is still missing from the NIS 35 million construction budget. So far, around NIS 3 million has been raised from the missing amount.

In March 2019, we received a pledge from the Adelson family who will donate a family-owned building in Haifa and renovate it to be used for the Mechina Olamit. World Bnei Akiva faced off with a number of other nonprofits who were competing to win the bid for the building and its renovation. The Mechina was chosen on basis of a plan that will integrate its participants with community activities in the Hadar neighborhood of Haifa. We are currently working with the Adelson family on preparing the building construction plans.
The fourteenth international Bnei Akiva conference took place at the beginning of 2019, with 120 representatives from around the world. The conference opened with a large-scale event at Binyanei Hauma International Convention Center, with over 1,000 participants.

For two days, the Veida representatives traveled Israel meeting influential and significant leaders in Israeli society, and holding discussions touching on subjects connected to Zionism in today’s world, the movement’s ideology, and the future challenges of the movement.

As a result of these meetings, and after many hours of discussions that continued late into the night, the representatives presented, one after another, the decisions they had worked on, which had been approved by a special committee. These decisions were presented to the entire Veida and were voted upon by all members of the Veida. The main decisions made by the Veida were:

- To create a protocol addressing the issues of mental health and sexuality
- To declare Hebrew as the movement’s official language
- To emphasize Torah study as a core value of the movement, and to designate one day a year for a worldwide Torah-learning initiative.
- To strengthen the relationship with Bnei Akiva Israel and to create more joint projects with them.

Hoshana Raba
One of the decisions passed at the Veida was to strengthen Torah study within the movement, and to designate one day a year for a worldwide Torah-learning initiative in which all snifim would participate.

The day that was chosen for this event was Hoshana Raba. The Education Department decided to use the evening to focus on the subject of “A Chosen People versus Universalism.” They created a source sheet, translated it into different languages, and sent it to all the Bnei Akiva snifim around the world. Each snif chose the framework that best suited them (e.g., a talk, learning in pairs, learning together with parents) to create a powerful and immersive learning experience for their chanichim.

At the same time as this learning was taking place around the world, in Israel, a special learning evening was held at WBA offices. The numerous talks on the topic were enjoyed by Hachshara chanichim as well as olim bogrim. The night culminated with an inspiring musical “tisch” accompanied by a band.

Basic courses
We expect every individual who becomes a madrich to possess knowledge in the areas that are crucial to the movement. The Education Department has created a list of these topics and is currently working on translating them into activities. The content will be given over in various ways, e.g., by the dream team, by shlichim, and at Shabbatons, in accordance with what is agreed upon between the particular snif and WBA. Among other topics we have focused on: Religious Zionism, Modern Orthodoxy, Bnei Akiva’s identity, experiential education, and more.

Dream Team
The Dream Team is made up of bogrim who have made Aliya. It continued its activities this year, visiting more than 10 different countries, among them Turkey, South Africa, USA, Canada, and various countries in Western Europe. The dream team met with thousands of chanichim, madrichim, and school students. Their main role is to train madrichim and strengthen their connection to Zionism and Israel.

Website
The Education Department is also working on upgrading the chinuch section of the WBA website. The section will be divided into 5 categories:

1. **Dream Team**: Read about what the Dream Team does, see testimonials, and submit a request to bring the Dream Team to your community.
2. **BA-KIT**: A kit with all materials and everything you need to know about how to run a snif of Bnei Akiva, including how to run “mifkad”; the emblem; the anthem with text, audio, and translation; and many other features.
3. **Peulot**: This section, available to the public, will contain all relevant links for creating a peula, including links to games, divrei Torah, stories, Jewish and Israeli history, other educational sites, and much more.
4. **Leadership**: In this section, shlichim and madrichim will find all the relevant materials for building a hadracha training course.
5. **Shlichim**: In this section we will gather useful information that is relevant to shlichim, such as content for the national ceremonies, activities for the festivals, etc. There will also be an option for shlichim to upload and share content that they have created with other shlichim from around the world, thus preserving and making use of the work of each shaliach.
Our conservative financial policy continued this year. We accomplished a few goals including:

1. Additional growth in our income from donations (4th year in a row).
2. A continuous reduction in Bnei Akiva's financial obligations.
3. Financial stability within the Israel program's department. In 2019 there was a small surplus in the department's programs. The Hachsharot (Israel programs) budget consist of 65% of the total budget of Bnei Akiva.

Unfortunately, our income from the Jewish Agency decreased this year, due to change in regulations and some complexities in the Shlichut procedures.