Welcome to the world of Bnei Akiva

Bnei Akiva is a Jewish religious Zionist youth movement, which inspires and empowers young Jews all over the world with a sense of commitment to the Jewish people, the Land of Israel and the Torah, placing an emphasis on the value of Aliyah to the State of Israel.

For more than 80 years, Hachshara, a year trip to Israel, has played a part in shaping and training the future leaders of Bnei Akiva and Jewish communities around the world.

Hachshara is a vital component in your Bnei Akiva journey, when you can devote time to learning Jewish texts, develop independently and explore your identity.

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Who? What? When?

MTA is a Torah/Midrasha based Israel year program geared for participants from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and runs between January and December.

MTA offers a year of intense study in top learning institutions all while remaining in the Bnei Akiva framework. With over 30 years of experience, MTA has produced generations of leadership for Bnei Akiva, and is the perfect way to build one's future in Torah learning and Israel.

MTA (Midreshet Torah Va’Avodah) is an Israel year programme geared for participants from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

We are proud to have partnered with four incredible institutions for the MTA programme: Midreshet AMIT, Midreshet Harova, Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi and Yeshivat Har Etzion. You will spend an entire year with them, immersing yourself in the Beit Midrash and soaking up Torah Eretz Yisrael.

Outside of yeshiva and midrasha, you will travel the length and the breadth of Israel on seminars, Shabbatonim and tiyulim as well as experience kibbutz and go on a life-changing trip to Poland. From learning about Israeli society to volunteering where Israel needs you most, MTA brings Torah study and a passion for Israel into one holistic programme.

Your year with MTA also places focus on leadership, and through volunteering, touring and learning from first-class educators, you’ll gain the skills and knowledge to make a difference to the community.

You’ll be more independent than you’ve ever been in your life, yet you can relax knowing that your needs are being looked after.
Yeshivat Har Etzion is the largest of the Hesder Yeshivot, where Israeli students combine their army service with yeshiva study in a five-year programme. The intense study of Gemara is the central focus of learning, while other areas of study, including Tanach, Machshevet Yisrael and Halacha, are integral parts of the programme as well. The overall goal of the yeshiva is to foster within each student a love of Hashem and a lifelong commitment to Talmud Torah, Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael.

www.haretzion.org

Machon Maayan is a transformative, life-changing seminary journey which combines inspirational, serious Torah learning, diverse and personalized chesed/internship opportunities, and thought-provoking, experiential weekly seminars and Tusim that seamlessly move the classroom into the Land of Israel. Over the years, Machon Maayan has developed the reputation of being an incredibly warm home where each student is showered with personal attention by a very caring and passionate staff. The multi-facility Givat Washington college campus - which includes an Olympic-size swimming pool, a gymnasium, basketball and tennis courts, a fitness center, an art school, a music school and more - is the perfect address for motivated young women who wish to grow personally, spiritually and religiously.

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Yeshivat Eretz Hatzvi is in situated in the Katamon neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and places emphasis on teaching the skills to enable students to become independent in their studies. Featuring prominently in the schedule are Gemara, Tanach, Halacha and Machshava classes. While the curriculum is devoted to Limmudei Kodesh, the Yeshiva is sensitive to issues that students face during their growth process in Israel, and that they will encounter in their subsequent university years.

www.yehatzvi.org

Midreshet Harova is located in the heart of the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City, and is one of Israel’s leading seminaries. The Midrasha offers an ideal setting for students to achieve spiritual and intellectual growth in a religious Zionist framework. The open intellectual environment, combined with the wide variety of teachers, is particularly attractive to the creative student interested in exploring a range of ideas and approaches.

Midreshet Harova

www.harova.org

Yeshivat Har Etzion is the largest of the Hesder Yeshivot, where Israeli students combine their army service with yeshiva study in a five-year programme. The intense study of Gemara is the central focus of learning, while other areas of study, including Tanach, Machshvet Yisrael and Halacha, are integral parts of the programme as well. The overall goal of the yeshiva is to foster within each student a love of Hashem and a lifelong commitment to Talmud Torah, Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael.

www.haretzion.org
As well as various trips you'll take with your Yeshiva or Midrasha, you'll get to see the length and breadth of Israel with Bnei Akiva. We'll show you some of the most beautiful views in the country, and while you're stretching your legs, you'll also expand your educational horizons, learning about the land of our forefathers. Later in the year, our Eilat Tiyul will give you the opportunity to enjoy water sports, hike the land, and see how Ben Gurion’s dream of making the desert bloom is coming true.

**Leadership Seminars**
Bnei Akiva believes in the importance of developing Jewish leadership around the world. Our seminars aim to help you to return to your communities ready to take active leadership roles as madrichim in Bnei Akiva, as activists in the Jewish student world and as leaders within the Jewish community. You’ll be introduced to leaders of the past, be inspired by leaders of today, and gain practical skills to help you be the leaders of the future.

**Zionism and Israeli Society**
Our Shabbatot and seminars will give you an in-depth journey into Israeli society where you will explore the challenges that exist in Israel. You’ll meet people from all shades of the spectrum of those who make up the population. Politicians, the media, the army and other connected organisations will present their take on life in Israel.

**Sar-el Army Experience**
Sar-el provides people from abroad with an opportunity to volunteer on an IDF base doing routine but important tasks. (Sar-el may not be available to the entire group.)

**Seder Night**
The group Seder is a highlight of the year! You’ll never forget Seder Night on Hachshara. Whilst you might feel a little homesick at the thought of being away from home for Yom Tov, you’ll soon feel differently once it comes to the unique experience itself! You’ll share stories, customs and songs from around the world.

**Tiyulim**
As well as various trips you’ll take with your Yeshiva or Midrasha, you’ll get to see the length and breadth of Israel with Bnei Akiva. We’ll show you some of the most beautiful views in the country, and while you’re stretching your legs, you’ll also expand your educational horizons, learning about the land of our forefathers. Later in the year, our Eilat Tiyul will give you the opportunity to enjoy water sports, hike the land, and see how Ben Gurion’s dream of making the desert bloom is coming true.

**Summer Volunteering**
Some of the MTA participants will have the opportunity to run educational programmes and activities for underprivileged children and immigrants in the summer.
MTA SHABBATOT

Shabbat Irgun
Shabbat Ha’Irgun in Israel is the culmination of a month of celebrations, which includes a special ceremony at which the newest shevet name is revealed. Shabbat Ha’Irgun is the highlight of the year for members of Bnei Akiva in Israel – and you’ll be joining one of the local branches of BA to share in the celebrations, and getting to know your Israeli counterparts.

Shabbat Hachshara
MTA will join together with the rest of Bnei Akiva’s many Hachshara programmes from all over the world to enjoy Shabbat with an international flavour. There will be around 200 people from every continent, and while you might not all speak the same language, you’ll all have one thing in common – you are all part of Bnei Akiva.

Yeshiva and Midrasha Shabbatot
Shabbat at your Yeshiva or Midrasha is an integral part of your year experience, and will strengthen your bond with your rabbis and the other students. From time to time, your Yeshiva/Midrasha will have a Shabbat away, and you’ll be inspired by your teachers as well as by the location.

Group Shabbatot
A few times during the year, MTA will reunite to spend Shabbat together. We choose the venues carefully so that you’ll enjoy Shabbat against a backdrop of some of Israel’s most beautiful settings. You’ll sing, share Divrei Torah, and enjoy meals together – all while seeing much more of Israel.

Shoah Seminar
Before and after the MTA Journey to Poland, you will explore different issues related to the Shoah, including the relationship with the foundation of Israel, how survivors were treated in Israel, the partisan forces, the role of the Zionist youth movements during the time of the Shoah, and more. You will hear survivor testimonies and visit some of Israel’s main Holocaust museums, incl Yad Vashem. This seminar frames the experiences you will receive on our Journey to Poland.

MTA participants have the special opportunity to visit Poland as part of their year on Hachshara. Starting and ending in Israel, the trip focuses on the experiences of Polish Jewry throughout its history. You’ll explore the immense and beautiful Jewry of pre-war Poland, dating back 800 years, and you’ll examine the years of the Holocaust by visiting Jewish ghettos, death and labour camps, and other significant sites. The trip is prepared meticulously by our educational team so that the experience is a meaningful one.
LIMMUD
Now including Mechina

A new key element of Limmud is the Mechina Olamit which includes Shabbatot, seminars, orienteering, camping, physical training combined with learning about Zionism, Hasbara, Leadership, and all infused with the Bnei Akiva Ideology.

Limmud is an uplifting, inspiring and empowering gap year program in Israel with Bnei Akiva. You’ll learn new skills, enhance old ones, develop your Jewish identity and adapt to new environments - all while enjoying the group experience.

On Limmud you’ll spend significant time at Yeshiva or Midrasha, as well as the legendary Bnei Akiva experience of Israel, including Kibbutz, community volunteering, Marva (army experience), internships, and now also on Mechina.

Limmud will also enable you to grow Jewishly. You will come back with a clearer understanding of what it means to be Jewish for you, and the skills, drive and passion to develop your own Jewish identity.

Limmud is all about learning and giving. It’s a year for yourself, but also a chance to contribute to society around you.

Who? What? When?

Limmud is an experiential based Israel year program aimed at participants from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and runs between January and December.

MECHINA OLAMIT
The Mechina is a 4-month experience in a religious, Zionist, mixed gender environment for Bnei Akiva chanichim from across the globe, together with Israeli high school graduates. More on page 14.

JEWISH ENRICHMENT
Learning a religious Zionist and Modern Orthodox educational philosophy, and you will also learn about critical and relevant issues of faith in modern times. More on page 16.

LEADERSHIP COURSE
The leadership course period is an intense and interactive seminar looking at Zionism, Israeli society, Jewish dilemmas and leadership. More on page 16.

AT A GLANCE

| JAN   | Opening Seminar |
| FEB   | Kibbutz         |
| MAR   | Leadership Course including Pesach break and Journey to Poland |
| APR   | Yoshiva/Midrasha |
| MAY   | Magen David Adom or Marva Army Experience |
| JUN   | Mechina Olamit  |
| JUL   | Closing Seminar |
The Mechina Olamit part of Limmud serves as the ideological Beit Midrash of Bnei Akiva. Through its learning programme, participants will deepen their understanding of our movement’s ideology, learn how to be leaders and gain practical hadracha skills.

Together, Limmud participants and Israeli high school graduates, will go through an incredible process of learning, self empowerment, preparation for the army, and/or community service. You will gain life experience in an unforgettable setting with the guidance of a team of dedicated leaders of the highest quality. Experiential Torah learning, deepening knowledge of Jewish peoplehood and Israel Diaspora connections, community involvement, leadership, hasbara, discovering Israel, fitness training and more...

Volunteering is an inseparable component of the Bnei Akiva ideology. Throughout the year you will volunteer in different places in Israel and different organizations, including “One Family”, “Tachlit” “Leket Israel” etc. During the Mechina period, the group will have an opportunity to decide on one long-term volunteering project. The project will reflect where the group feels Israel needs them the most. This will empower all the members of the group, teach them responsibility, and force them to think and internalize what are the different challenges Israeli society has, and where can they as young idealistic adults make a real difference.

Learning with Israelis on Mechina

Mechina Olamit is a place for Israelis and foreign students to learn together. The Israelis arrive after finishing their high school studies, and view the Mechina as a preparation for the army.

For the foreign students this time represents a unique learning experience with Israelis where they can learn about various topics including: Zionism, Israel advocacy, Jewish identity, Jewish peoplehood, physical preparation for the army (for those that want), as well as hiking and traveling together.

Shvil Yisrael - the Israel National Trail

You’ll have the special opportunity of taking part in a country-wide hike, delving into the grand scale of Biblical landscapes together with sites of modern Israel.

You’ll see Israel like never before, and will stretch your mind as well as your legs, on this educational tiyul.

Shvil Yisrael is set to be a highlight of the year on Limmud!
From the early days of the State, kibbutzim had a sense of duty, serving as a pillar of strength for Zionism. The members lived under extreme conditions, while tilling the soil, draining the swamplands, and building a settlement. Today, Hachshara participants are viewed as valuable contributors to the kibbutz movement.

You'll be guided throughout, and different levels will be catered for. To be a participant on Hachshara, you don’t need prior knowledge in Jewish studies – you just need commitment to learn and to grow.

We will equip you with Torah learning skills that will stay with you for life, and you’ll soon feel at home in a Beit Midrash.

Leadership Course

World Bnei Akiva believes in the importance of developing Jewish leadership and activism around the world, which is why over and above the Mechina we have Leadership training courses.

The leadership courses are a variety of intense and interactive seminars studying Zionism, Israeli society, Jewish dilemma’s and leadership. The courses are geared towards training, inspiring and enriching the Jewish leaders of tomorrow.

Providing a broad range of stimulating sessions, combined with exciting seminar days exploring Israeli society, you’ll be nurtured into making life-defining decisions. The courses will develop your understanding of key areas relating to modern activism, Jewish life and the State of Israel.

Kibbutz

From the early days of the State, kibbutzim had a sense of duty, serving as a pillar of strength for Zionism. The members lived under extreme conditions, while tilling the soil, draining the swamplands, and building a settlement. Today, Hachshara participants are viewed as valuable contributors to the kibbutz movement.

Working with kibbutz members, you may share duties in the field, gardens, factories, kitchen, dining hall or childcare facilities. You’ll be offered placements according to the work requirements of the kibbutz, and you’ll live together in kibbutz housing, eating meals in the communal dining room.

The group will also become involved in kibbutz social and communal activities such as Shabbat and holiday celebrations. You’ll be “adopted” by an Israeli kibbutz family, enabling you to have a closer view of what kibbutz life means for the children and adults who reside there permanently.

Jewish Enrichment

Education is at the heart of Bnei Akiva, and there will be learning programmes throughout the year. However, there is also a set period of time dedicated specifically to Jewish learning.

Our learning institutions teach a religious Zionist and Modern Orthodox educational philosophy, and you will also learn about critical and relevant issues of faith in modern times.

We will equip you with Torah learning skills that will stay with you for life, and you’ll soon feel at home in a Beit Midrash.
We believe that your year in Israel should give you the tools to shape your future life direction in a truly holistic way. That’s why we are offering professional internships, personalized based on your needs and interests. Whether in journalism, politics, medicine, teaching, finance or education, we aim to find a placement suited to you, in an industry of your choice*. Building connections with people and experiencing life in the Israeli workplace will give you an authentic and diverse appreciation of what it means to live and work in Israel.

*Placements in certain fields may not be available.

Realize skills

Option 1: Marva Army Experience

Marva is ideal for those who want to become familiar with Israel by experiencing the physical and emotional challenges of the country and its people. Through hiking the land, living in field conditions, navigating deserts and participating in seminars and lectures, you’ll learn about the issues of the country.

The programme is based in the Southern Negev, but you’ll spend time in various other parts of the country, including Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Galilee. The two-month experience is conducted in easy Hebrew, and as participants come from all over the world, that becomes the common language of communication, allowing for significant improvement of Hebrew skills.

Marva is a physically demanding programme, and participants are expected to be in good physical condition and highly motivated. You will be required to have a personal interview prior to acceptance.

Option 2: Internships

Whether in journalism, politics, medicine, teaching, finance or education, we aim to find a placement suited to you, in an industry of your choice*. Building connections with people and experiencing life in the Israeli workplace will give you an authentic and diverse appreciation of what it means to live and work in Israel.

Option 2: Internships

Marva Army Experience

Realize skills

Option 1: Marva Army Experience

Journey to Poland

Limmud participants have the special opportunity of visiting Poland as part of their year on Hachshara. Starting and ending in Israel, the trip focuses on the experiences of Polish Jewry throughout its history.

You’ll explore the immense and beautiful Jewry of pre-war Poland, dating back 800 years, and you’ll examine the years of the Holocaust by visiting Jewish ghettos, death and labour camps, and other significant sites. The trip is prepared meticulously by our educational team so that the experience is a meaningful one. Whilst in Israel, you’ll prepare for your journey to Poland, and on your return, you’ll deal with processing and concluding the many concepts and issues that the trip covered.

Journey to Poland

Journey to Poland
Frequently Asked Questions

Why Hachshara?
You rely on Bnei Akiva to support and help you whilst in Israel and you can trust us to create a programme tailored to people from a Bnei Akiva background. Hachshara is geared towards what you, individually, want from your year in Israel and allows you the security and enjoyment of being part of a group sharing the same experiences.

Will I see my friends on other programmes?
Yes. There are times when the different Hachshara groups are together, even though your real group relationship will be with those on your own programme. You’ll also have ample free time and Shabbatot to make your own plans and arrange visits to those on other programmes and at other Yeshivot and Midrashot.

What security measures are taken?
Your safety is our primary concern. Like all gap year programmes, we follow the security advice of the relevant security agencies in Israel, and run our activities with their approval. In the event of a change in the security situation, we will inform you. Occasionally, as a precaution, we will ask you not to go out, even during free time.

Is Hachshara useful for my university studies?
The value of gap year activities is widely acknowledged and most universities will allow you to apply for deferred entry. It is a good idea to include details of your proposed gap year in your personal statement to support your application.

Medical services and insurance provided?
Medical services and insurance for illness and injury while in Israel on Hachshara is included in the cost of the programme. Doctors affiliated with the plan are located throughout Israel and you can easily arrange to see one, no matter where you are based at the time. Treatment related to pre-existing conditions is not included in the coverage. You are advised to take out ‘personal effects insurance’ to cover your valuable belongings and we will be happy to send you the details from our recommended insurers.

Are arrangements made for special diets and allergies?
If you require a special diet or have a severe allergy that may necessitate extra attention, please state this in a letter attached to your medical form. Although it may not always be possible, we will make every effort to cater for your needs.

Is laundry arranged?
Laundry for certain parts of the year will be provided free of charge, for example on Kibbutz. During other periods, laundry will be organised, at a cost of around 25-40 shekels for a large load.

Is medical care and insurance provided?
Medical services and insurance for illness and injury while in Israel on Hachshara is included in the cost of the programme. Doctors affiliated with the plan are located throughout Israel and you can easily arrange to see one, no matter where you are based at the time. Treatment related to pre-existing conditions is not included in the coverage. You are advised to take out ‘personal effects insurance’ to cover your valuable belongings and we will be happy to send you the details from our recommended insurers.

Do I need a special visa to stay in Israel for the year?
When you arrive in Israel you’ll be issued with a three-month entry visa at border control at Ben Gurion airport. We will make the arrangements to extend this visa into a year-long visa. This visa does not affect your status as citizens of your home country or your future Aliyah rights. If you or your parents have Israeli citizenship, please contact the Israeli Consulate as soon as possible and complete any necessary steps before arrival in Israel.

Who manages Hachshara?
We have a highly qualified administrative and educational staff in Israel, looking after the programmes and participants. Qualified resident leaders (madrichim) accompany you, guiding and advising you throughout your year in Israel. The programme co-ordinator (rakaz) is responsible for the logistical and educational implementation of the programme. He will visit you regularly and will maintain close contact with the madrichim, your local Bnei Akiva, and your parents.

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If you require a special diet or have a severe allergy that may necessitate extra attention, please state this in a letter attached to your medical form. Although it may not always be possible, we will make every effort to cater for your needs.

Is laundry arranged?
Laundry for certain parts of the year will be provided free of charge, for example on Kibbutz. During other periods, laundry will be organised, at a cost of around 25-40 shekels for a large load.

What do I need to bring with me?
A few weeks before the start of Hachshara, we’ll send you a packing list, containing all the essentials for an amazing year in Israel!

You should bring both a sleeping bag and beddings. Although beddings will be provided for some parts of the year, there will be occasions when you’ll need it. There are companies that hire out sets to gap year participants, to save you from schlepping it to Israel in your luggage.
HOW TO APPLY

How to do it

1. Apply online at www.hachshara.org | Once you have begun the application process, you can sign back in as many times as you like to continue the application.

2. Complete the medical form, which needs to be signed and stamped by a doctor, and uploaded to the application website.

3. Register with MASA at www.masaisrael.org | Masa is a project of the Israeli government that offers Hachshara participants an automatic grant, with further needs based funding available.

How much does Hachshara cost?
The cost of Hachshara will be announced mid-year. The cost will cover tuition, seminars, tiyulim, accommodation, special Shabbatot, group transportation, staff and medical insurance.

Not covered are the costs of optical care and treatment of prior dental problems, medical care relating to pre-existing conditions, hepatitis and MMR vaccinations (required by MDA volunteers) and laundry for certain parts of the year. In addition, you may be required to purchase your own books and learning materials for the study periods.

How will I know if I have been accepted?
After we receive your application, you’ll be invited for an interview. Your interview allows us to get to know you a bit better and assess your suitability for the programme. It will also give you the opportunity to ask them any specific questions you may have.

Shortly after the interview, you’ll be informed of your acceptance. Your place will be confirmed only after the payment plan has been agreed.

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