

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is Birthright Israel Fellows?

Birthright Israel Fellows is an intensive professional development program designed to identify, attract, and train experiential Jewish and Israel educators to staff Birthright Israel trips. The initiative elevates the traditional role of madrichim, raises the overall educational quality of the seven or ten-day trip in Israel, and offers Birthright Israel Trip Organizers a growing pool of staff who are trained in Birthright Israel's educational pedagogy.

Run in partnership with The iCenter, Birthright Israel offers this training program annually welcoming in approximately 100 new Fellows into each cohort. After completing a 4-day, in-person training seminar, Birthright Israel Fellows commit themselves to staffing at least three Birthright Israel trips over the course of the following three years (with the first trip needing to take place within the immediate 12 months after the training seminar takes place).

Birthright Israel Fellows is part of a larger framework of madrichim training programs that Taglit-Birthright Israel models across the globe. Similar programs occur with local partners in the former Soviet Union, Germany, France, Argentina, and Brazil. To ensure that all models of training are similar, Birthright Israel has now adopted a "shared language" and core set of principles that is to be introduced and understood by all staff and educators. These concepts include things like "Ritualizing Time and Space," "Framing the Ongoing Jewish Journey," "Giving Voice to the Experience," and, "Using Themes and Values to Create Meaningful Learning."

What's included?

All expenses for the training seminar including room and board and round-trip travel (from within North America) to San Diego are covered.

The program itself is comprised of a four-day, in-person training seminar which include all day programming making the most of our limited time together. The schedule—like a Birthright Israel trip—will be packed from morning until night, and you will have ample opportunity to process and internalize your experiences throughout each day. Programming will include



workshops in experiential Jewish education, facilitation, storytelling, etc. As a byproduct of being there, you will gain a worldwide network of skilled leaders and elite educators and increase your knowledge about Judaism, Israel, and leadership practices.

What are the commitments of the program?

Upon completing the four-day in-person training seminar, Birthright Israel Fellows then commit themselves to staffing three Birthright Israel trips within the following three years (with the first of these trips needing to occur within the immediate 12 months following the training program).

APPLICATION AND ELIGIBILITY

Am I eligible to apply?

Birthright Israel Fellows is open to both experienced Birthright Israel trip staff and people who are interested in staffing Birthright Israel trips for the first time. We are seeking people with strong Israel experience and strong leadership qualities, and those who are passionate about Israel and Jewish Peoplehood. Knowledge and involvement in the North American Jewish community is also preferred.

To be eligible to apply to Birthright Israel Fellows you must currently be living and/or working in North America. Additionally, you will need to make a commitment to staff at least three Birthright Israel trips within the three years following your participation in the training seminar.

Are there age requirements?

Applicants must be 22 years-old by the start of the in-person training to be eligible to participate. There is no maximum age that a Fellow could be.

What's the application process?

Candidates who are interested must first complete our online application. Once submitted, it will be reviewed and if your background and qualifications meet our standards, then we will look to schedule a one-on-one Zoom interview.

I haven't staffed a Birthright Israel trip before. Can I still apply?

Yes! Even if you haven't staffed a Birthright Israel trip, you may still be an ideal candidate depending upon other Israel experiences that you have had.

Can I apply if my only Israel experience is having been a participant on a Birthright Israel trip?

We require that applicants have more Israel experience beyond just having been a participant on a Birthright Israel trip. Whether it was traveling on your own, visiting friends or family, participating on any number of other peer-educational experiences, living and/or studying in Israel, our aim is to find people who have multiple and varied encounters with Israel.

The above stated, exceptions are possible in rare circumstances (e.g. a Jewish professional whose job involves them leading Birthright Israel trips).

I am a Jewish professional with significant experience already. Is this program for me?

Yes! This program is for anyone who is looking to become a better mentor, facilitator, role model, Jewish and/or Israel educator when leading Birthright Israel trips. Birthright Israel Fellows will offer you a new lens in which to view your role(s). Additionally, you will have the chance to learn with and alongside your peers and world-class Jewish and Israel educators who will offer new insights and push you to think outside the box.

Is this program only open to North American citizens?

Birthright Israel Fellows is meant to expand the quality and quantity of our North American madrichim. That said, this doesn't require you to be a US or Canadian citizen. If you are living and/or working in North America for the foreseeable future (long enough where you'll be able to fulfill your commitment of staffing three Birthright Israel trips), then you are eligible to apply to the program.

THE PROGRAM ITSELF

When is the next Birthright Israel Fellows training seminar?

Dates for Cohort 2 of Birthright Israel Fellows will be announced shortly.

What will the seminar consist of?

The seminar will include workshops in storytelling and developing your personal narrative; in experiential education skills and practices including recognizing and using teachable moments; and in content knowledge and development in Jewish and Israel studies. Check out the [schedule from the most recent cohort](#) to learn more.

We view storytelling as a critically important tool in any educator's toolbox, and we hope that this skillset will enable staff to become better mentors to their future trip participants, who we hope will then begin considering their own personal narratives and place within the ongoing story of Israel and the Jewish people.

The Birthright Israel Fellows program complements the success of Taglit-Birthright Israel's Institute for Tour Educators by creating a more holistic educational team. Recognizing the need for complimentary and contextualized voices on the trip, Birthright Israel Fellows are trained to provide a North American articulation of the themes and values of the Birthright Israel experience.

Is there work to be done in preparation for the seminar?

Yes, you will be required to complete an assignment and possibly some online work prior to the in-person seminar. However, this should not be seen as a barrier to participation and will likely require no more than five-hours investment of your time.

Who will I be learning from and with at the seminar?

In addition to your fellow participants who will come from varied backgrounds and bring their own experiences and personal narratives, you will be interacting and learning with world-class Jewish and Israel educators including educational staff and faculty from The iCenter and Taglit-Birthright Israel. Additionally, you will be joined by a small number of Israeli Tour Educators, and representatives from our partnering Birthright Israel Trip Organizers.

What are the COVID protocols in place for the seminar?

The iCenter and Birthright Israel are working closely to develop effective guidelines to ensure a safe program. More details will come as government recommendations and restrictions unfold. The participants and faculty at Birthright Israel Fellows will all be required to be vaccinated and

share proof of vaccination. PCR testing, mask protocols, and updated on site guidelines will be shared with all Fellows upon their acceptance to the program.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A BIRTHRIGHT ISRAEL FELLOW?

As a Birthright Israel Fellow, how will my role differ on the trip from my co-staff?

You will board your bus with significant educational tools and resources to enrich the experience of your participants both on the ground in Israel and once they return home. The expectation is that you will work as a team with your Israeli Tour Educator and co-staff to create a meaningful environment and implement the tools you've learned. That said, being a Birthright Israel Fellow doesn't relieve you from your everyday responsibilities of being a madrich(a) which will include core logistical, programmatic, and safety and security responsibilities.

When will I be able to staff Birthright Israel trips as a Birthright Israel Fellow?

If you are chosen to participate in Birthright Israel Fellows, you will be able to staff Birthright Israel trips as a Birthright Israel Fellow immediately following the training seminar. In practice, most Fellows staff during the summer season immediately following the training.

Does being a Birthright Israel Fellow mean that I automatically will get hired to staff a trip?

Being a participant in Birthright Israel Fellows does not guarantee that you will be hired to staff a trip. However, it is our intention to see that all Birthright Israel Fellows will have the opportunity to staff trips so that you are able to fulfill your commitment of leading three trips within the following three years.

To affect this outcome, at Birthright Israel Fellows you will have the opportunity to meet and interact with representatives from each of our partnering Trip Organizers who are responsible for all hiring decisions related to their trips. Developing a relationship with these people will put you in the best position to get hired to staff a future Birthright Israel trip.

When the time comes, and you are ready to apply to staff a trip, you will still be responsible for navigating the traditional application process that each Trip Organizer employs. For a current listing of Birthright Israel Trip Organizers who offer trips in North America, [click here](#).

How long do I have to fulfill my commitment of staffing the three trips required by the program?

You have three years in which to staff your three Birthright Israel trips, with the first of these trips needing to take place within the immediate twelve months following the end of the training seminar.

What if I don't know where I'll be three years from now?

That's ok! Who really knows where they will be in three years anyway? Birthright Israel Fellows will work with you to be your advocate to your employer should you need it. Plus, many Fellows decide to staff multiple trips within a single travel season or year. So, there is no limit to the number of trips you can potentially lead.

Is there any stipend for me as a Birthright Israel Fellow?

All expenses related to the training seminar are covered through the program. This includes your domestic travel to and from San Diego, as well as full room and board during the length of the training seminar. However, once you begin staffing trips, there is no financial assistance to offset any related costs or travel expenses.

Have more questions?

Contact Or Shermer at: or@theicenter.org