

“And my roots are in two disparate landscapes” Leah Goldberg

Ami-Unity Delegation To New York
Of Israeli School Principals
December 2019

The Ami-Unity Initiative provides leading Israelis with profound encounters with the vitality and reality of Jewish life around the globe. As part of this mission, The Jewish Agency for Israel developed this unique Seminar for Israeli heads of schools in the Mamlachti sector. Participants in this week-long seminar include leading figures in Israel's secular education system from the North, South and Jerusalem areas who have come to learn about diverse methods and pedagogies to integrate peoplehood and pluralistic Judaism in non-religious formal education.



Currently in her sixth year as principal of the Lower Galilee's **Naftali Elementary School in Yavne'el, Keren Arish** holds a BA from Oranim College in Hebrew literature, Hebrew grammar, general education and informal education. She also holds an MA from the University of Haifa in Geography and Land of Israel Studies, and graduated from the principals' course at Oranim College in 2008. She has been an educator for 16 years, including 10 years as a teacher and coordinator in a junior high school in Tiberias. She lives in Yavne'el and is the mother of four.



Esther (Etty) Atali is the principal of **Hagiva Elementary School in Ofakim**. The school emphasizes Judaism's social-justice aspect, good deeds, and mutual responsibility. Under her direction, the teachers discuss issues relating to Judaism in simple language to make them accessible to the pupils.



A graduate of the academic training program for school principals at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, **Ilanit Bartov** holds an MA in Administration, Society and Education Policy from that institution. She is the principal of **Tomer Elementary School in Be'er Sheva**, which has approximately 300 pupils, including special-needs classes. Under her direction, the school has been working for the past four years with a network of schools in Be'er Sheva that are based on Self-Determination Theory, and with the Division for Research and Development, Experimental Schools and Initiatives to provide the most supportive environment for its pupils. She has been an educator for 25 years.



Edna Ben Basat earned two degrees at Bar-Ilan University: one in Jewish literature and philosophy and the other in contemporary Judaism. She began her career as an educator by teaching in a high school in Or Yehuda, which was then a development town. She presently **teaches literature and methodology at Orot College**, and has been working in the field of Israeli and Jewish culture as the **Jerusalem District Coordinator** for the past ten years.



A resident of Ahuzat Barak in the Jezreel Valley, **Ilanit Ben Ychay** has served for the past eight years as the **principal of Gevanim Elementary School in Afula** with 470 pupils and 50 staff members. Previously, she served for as the Upper Nazareth municipality as director of its Education Division. She enjoys traveling the world and getting to know new cultures by observing education. She is married and the mother of three children.



A mother of four and grandmother of two, **Orly Chen** has served for 14 years as the principal of the **Ben Zvi School in Afula**, a multicultural school, where she knows each pupil and his or her individual story. She is a resident of Gan Ner.



Avivit Cohen has served for six years as the principal of the **Ner Hagilboa School in Gan Ner**. She holds a PhD in educational philosophy from the University of Haifa. Her first experience of teaching was in the army. After her discharge, she worked as a teacher in the Israeli school system until she became a principal. A resident of Givat Avni, she is married and the mother of four children.



Daniella Cohen was appointed the principal of **Hofim Elementary School on Kibbutz Yad Mordechai** in 1999. Hofim is the closest school to the Gaza border. The school community deals with a challenging security situation and, in spite of everything, lives happily in a green environment, that emphasizes resilience, learning, creativity and a sense of belonging to the school and the area. She believes that each pupil can reach their full potential through instruction based on the values of choice, belonging, and effective communication. Hofim was nominated for a national education award this year. Over the past eight years, Hofim has coordinated projects with Jewish schools in Tucson, Arizona as part of their Partnership2Gether relationship.



A resident of **Beit Shemesh, Bracha Gandekan-Biton** has served as the principal of **Jabotinsky Elementary School** in that city for 13 years. Her school, which emphasizes pluralism, strengthens its pupils' Jewish heritage while emphasizing positive discourse. She believes that structuring the school's educational climate and community in a pluralistic spirit enables the pupils to express their own opinions on the various Jewish identities in Israeli society. Her school strengthens its pupils' Jewish heritage while emphasizing positive discourse in order to create an atmosphere where they can express their opinions and develop their skills.



A father of four, **Moshe Harel** served as a high-ranking officer in the Israeli Air Force for 25 years. After his retirement from the Air Force in 2000, he began working for the Ministry of Education. He has served for the past 18 years as the principal of the **Levi Eshkol Elementary school in Beit Shemesh**, which received a national education award from the Minister of Education in 2018.



Tikva Ifrah is the principal of the **Ben-Gurion Elementary School in Ofakim**, which specializes in scientific and technological excellence. Her school has 405 pupils, in 15 regular classes and two special-education classes. Previously, she worked as a science teacher, fifth-grade teacher, sixth-grade teacher, and vice principal. She has been a principal for 21 years. She is a mother of three and grandmother of seven.



A resident of Kibbutz Dan and the mother of three, **Anat Kafri** has served for eight years as the principal of the **Einat Hagalil Democratic Elementary School on Kibbutz Amir**. She served as a science teacher for four years before managing a science program for children at Tel-Hai College for eight years. Einat Hagalil was founded in 2009 by a group of parents who wanted an alternative education for their children. From 10 families, the school grew to 133 pupils from 31 different localities, and is part of the Democratic Schools community.



Shimat Kastoryano has served for three years as the principal of the **Lev Ha'emek School**. Located on **Kibbutz Neot Mordechai** in the Upper Galilee, the school, which has 460 pupils from first through sixth grades and 36 teachers, educates for sustainable development, Jewish humanist education, and positive values. Before becoming principal of the Lev Ha'emek School, where she has spent 22 years in all, she worked as a homeroom teacher and coordinator. She believes in an integrative, holistic, environmental and artistic approach to education, and cultivates leadership, innovation, and equal opportunities for all pupils.



Shlomit Kroviarsky is the **District Coordinator for Civil Education, Shared Life and Israeli Jewish Culture for the Northern District**, where she leads an education program aimed at promoting multiculturalism and civics in the district schools. An educator since 1992, she produces events such as seminars, conferences, and training sessions, and organizes meetings between Arab and Jewish residents where the participants study topics such as the arts, English, and agriculture. She also volunteers with people with special needs and leads humanitarian missions in Africa.



The principal of the **Beit Ze'ev School in Afula**, which has a unique aerospace program, **Nira Laps** lives in Kiryat Tivon in northern Israel. Under her direction, the school promotes positive values among its 600 pupils such as resilience, cooperation, and mutuality, among its pupils and staff. She seeks to train graduates who will use their intellectual abilities, fostered by the innovative learning that the school offers, for the benefit of society.



Yigal Levy is the principal of **ORT Technological College of Aviation & Space in Ma'ale Adumim**, which includes a middle school, high school, and college and works with the Israeli Air Force. Most of its alumni serve in technical roles in the Air Force upon graduation. He previously served in the college as its pedagogical director. He is married and the father of four children.



A native of Afula and current resident of Ahuzat Barak, **Ilana Oz** holds an MA in organization and management of educational systems. This is her fourth year as principal of the **Alumot Elementary School in Upper Afula**, which has 261 pupils and 40 staff members. An educator for 20 years, she attended and later taught at the Gvanim School in Afula for 13 years. She then served for three years as district supervisor in the field of Health Education at the Ministry of Education. She is very connected to Jewish-Israeli culture and identity and advances the subject in all aspects of the school.



A former science teacher and mother of four, including a foster child, **Mali (Malka) Perez** is the **principal of a farm in Beit She'an that functions as a school**. She also enjoys folk dancing and reading. She has been married to her husband, Golan, for 52 years..



Ronit Revizada has served as the principal of **Hayovel Elementary School in Modi'in** for the past four years. Her school is a “green school” that nurtures the natural curiosity of its pupils in their study, and operates a program for teenagers in science and social awareness. Her school teaches the values of gender equality; personal and social excellence; devotion to the land, the nation, and the state; Zionism and democracy; tolerance, giving, accepting diversity, and mutual cooperation.



Pirhit Rivlin, a resident of Kibbutz Ma'ale Gilboa, is the principal of **Hava be-Eden, a farm in Emek Hama'ayanot that functions as a school**. Each week, 700 pupils come to Hava be-Eden from their schools to work and learn about nature, agriculture and the environment. At Hava be-Eden, special needs pupils work together with pupils from the mainstream. Pirhit has five children and recently became a grandmother for the first time.



A member of Kibbutz Misgav Am for 40 years, **Tal Haya Rubinski** has served as the **principal of Kfar Giladi's Alei-Giva School** for 14 years. She recently became a grandmother for the first time and enjoys sports and travel.



The holder of an MSc in education and a BSc in mathematics and physics from Tel Aviv University, **Dafna Sarig** has served for 15 years as the principal of the **Ma'alot School for Gifted Children, located in Modiin-Maccabim-Reut**. Previously, she taught creative mathematics to gifted children, led the Geometrical Studies Program for Elementary School, and guided kindergartens and new gifted children centers as a representative of the Gifted Children's Department at the Ministry of Education. Married and the mother of four, she lives in Rosh ha'ayin.



Osnat Shufan has served for 12 years as the principal of the **Yachdav Elementary School in Be'er Sheva**, which offers curricula in journalism and environmental issues. The school has 560 pupils from preschool through sixth grade, including pupils with Cerebral Palsy. She believes that integrating these pupils into the school makes not only for a better learning environment, but also a better society.



Lior (Meir) Shwartz has been an educator for 26 years, and served as a school principal for the past 11 years, including five at the **Nof Yam Aleph School in Ashkelon**. His educational approach is to ensure that students feel supported, and to integrate the school's three classes of pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He uses innovative pedagogical processes in his school, and believes in making school a place where pupils can experience learning in a fun and enriching way. He is married and the father of two children.



Orly Susan has served as the principal of the **Ayalim School, an elementary school in Tiberias**, for the past five years. Previously, she was a first- and second-grade teacher for 25 years at the Har Nof school in Tiberias, where she also served as the social coordinator and language coordinator, as well as a member of the school's management staff. With 180 pupils and 25 teachers, the Ayalim school has seven regular classes and three special-education classes. It offers a unique program on art and sustainability, and promotes health and wellness among its pupils.



Nitzan Tigger is the principal at **Mevo Hagalil Elementary School on Kibbutz Ayelet Hashahar** in the Upper Galilee. Before she became the principal, she worked there as an English teacher and coordinator of English studies. Over the past several years, she has expanded the autonomy and independence that her school gives to its pupils, increased project-based learning, and challenged herself and her staff to examine the teacher's place in the learning process. She lives with her husband and five children in Yesud Hama'ala.



A resident of Metula, Israel's northernmost city, **Orna Weinberg** has been running the **Hagoma Elementary School on Kibbutz Kfar Blum** in the Upper Galilee for the past five years. The school has 500 students from first to sixth grades, all from six nearby localities. Orna previously worked at the Einot Yarden Democratic High School for twenty years, teaching sociology and psychology, in addition to running the school.



An educator for 20 years and the holder of a master's degree in education, **Keren Vaknin** is a resident of Meitar and a mother of three. This is her second year as the principal of the **Rechassim Elementary School in Be'er Sheva**, which has 520 pupils from the first through sixth grades, including students who are on the autism spectrum. Under her direction, the educational team fosters a sense of belonging, capability and responsibility that leads to social and educational excellence. In addition, the school holds activities that help the pupils form their Jewish identity, as well as a multicultural worldview, so as to train them to be involved in and contribute to society..



An educator for 27 years, **Ofra Amar** has served for the past six years as principal **of the Amit Junior High School in Sderot**. She was educated to the values of pluralism, acceptance of others, volunteerism, and Zionism, and concluded her military service with the rank of first lieutenant. She holds a BA in education and literature and an MA in educational management. Her previous positions included homeroom teacher, school curriculum coordinator, matriculation examination coordinator, and vice principal. A resident of Kibbutz Gevim, she is the mother of four.



A mother of three, **Orly Abergel** is a **teacher at the Yitzhak Navon School** in Be'er Sheva. Also an **instructor of Israeli Jewish Culture in Israel's southern region**, she has been invited by different schools to help them in the field of Jewish Israeli Culture. She is a member of the school management team and an instructor in Jewish studies in her school. She believes that it is important to teach Judaism to the school pupils in a pluralistic way in order to help each child find his or her own connection to Judaism.



Yuval Shapiro, the **coordinator and guide of the principals' group**, lives on Kibbutz Na'aran in the Jordan Valley. He works for **The Chagim Center**, a project of the **World Zionist Organization's Department of Education**, which works to create a Jewish-Zionist-humanist culture in Israeli society through teaching about the Jewish festivals, the Jewish life cycle, and the foundations of the Zionist-pioneering philosophy. He leads educational programs for school principals and teachers of Jewish Israeli culture, and also guides groups of adults and teenagers to Poland in order to study the history of World War II and the Holocaust.



Hadas Ruth Libman works as a **group facilitator and educational programs coordinator at BINA**, an Israeli movement at the intersection of Jewish education and social activism. She is proud to be part of the **continuing education program for principals** that started last year and aims to develop the identity of a multi-voice Jewish discourse in schools. She is pleased to have the opportunity to encounter diverse educational philosophies and to meet the Jews of the United States in a different context. She holds an MA in Hebrew literature and is the mother of three.

Jewish Agency Staff



Abi Dauber Sterne is the **Director of Makom: The Jewish Agency's Israel Education Lab**. She comes to Makom after seven years as the Vice President for Jewish Education at Hillel International. Previous positions have included Director of the Mandel Jerusalem Fellows, founding Director of Limmud New York, and planning executive at UJA-Federation of New York. Abi has a passion for creating frameworks and programs to strengthen pluralistic Jewish life around the world. She lives with her husband and four children in Jerusalem.



Osnat Fox is an educator and works as the **Makom Content Manager for The Jewish Agency for Israel**. Osnat brings extensive experience in community engagement and education from diverse communities. Having just completed her term as JEWISHcolorado's senior Shlichah (Israeli emissary), she has personal and in-depth experience with diverse Israeli and American communities. Osnat holds a BA in Psychology, a MA in Education Policy and Management and a teaching certificate. Some of the roles she held in the past include the director of an educational program in Mindlab, teaching thinking skills through games; initiator and co-leader of Ya'ala, a community empowerment program; and teaching high school, college and graduate students at Ben Gurion University, where she created and facilitated courses to educate about prevention of sexual violence.