

Essay for Submission to The Hilda Specter Morgenstern Scholarship Fund
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Why do you want to study in Israel?

In 2009, I traveled to Israel for the first time for a science program at the Technion University. I wished to experience Israel, the only constant Jewish homeland all throughout history, a land that is physically, religiously, and emotionally inseparable from Jews. I was interested in studying science and becoming a pediatrician, and a science program in Israel would help me figure out if this was a serious interest of mine to pursue further. The program was amazing for me, and looking back, more life changing than I ever expected, and in much different ways than I expected.

Through this program, I learned two important things that lead me to the path that I am currently on. First, I realized that science is not the field that I wanted to focus on in college. Second, I fell in love with Israel; everything about it—the culture, people, food, music, language, history, politics, and everyone’s chutzpah and drive to succeed. Israel was amazing when I was there, but my positive notions of it grew even more after I came home. In my Rabbi’s words, I had caught the “Israel bug,” the feeling of missing the land and the urgency of getting back as soon as possible. My math teacher referred to me as the “Israel girl,” because he said I talked about it so much. I don’t know how the topic of Israel was relevant in a math class, but I made it relevant somehow, and on multiple occasions.

A year later, I started college at Scripps Women’s College in Claremont, California. During my first semester there, I received a hostile email condemning Israel for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and apartheid. This was not the Israel that I had experienced and loved. I wished to defend Israel and my love for it, but I did not know how. I called the American

Jewish Committee (AJC), and the director told me that these assertions were not out of the norm, and that they were an immense simplification of the conflict. I took it upon myself to learn more so I could defend Israel, and my love for it, in the case that this came up again.

The next semester, the opportunity arose to attend the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) policy conference in Washington D.C. I took the opportunity and worked tirelessly to accumulate funding for this endeavor. At the conference, there was a screen the size of a football field for the 10,000 plus attendees, lectures, festivities, which culminated in a day of lobbying Congress on some major legislation related to Israel. We talked about the existential threat that Israel endures, some modern instances of this, the necessity for Israeli security and aid, and the importance of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. The topics presented at the conference were empowering in the idea that conference attendees could work together in a measurable way towards the goal of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship in the capitol of the United States, where the foundations of America's morals were put into law and executed.

I was chosen to be the one to speak to my Congressman and Congresswomen about the importance of imposing sanctions on Iran to halt the nuclear program. This experience marked the first time I had ever engaged in the political process and it was empowering to say the least. I decided to start a pro-Israel club on the Claremont Colleges campus to clear up some misconceptions about the conflict, or at least provide greater context. I also switched my major to Politics and International Relations with a focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict, as it was a way to study more about which I already was eager to learn. I attended further pro-Israel conferences and conventions such as AIPAC, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA), and Hasbara, fundraising the full amounts of each so I could pay for it on my own. Through CAMERA, I secured funding for my club and organized and carried out lectures,

events, and meetings. I found other students who had similar interests and recruited them to join the club.

The club has been incredibly successful. Claremont Students for Israel (CSI) has been featured on many pro-Israel websites, forums, and news articles. (See attached articles at the end of these essays.) I organized an event called “Less Hamas More Hummus” in which I hosted a letter-writing campaign to Congress, “boycotted” Israeli products, designed popular tee shirts to give away to those who participated, showed video clips from Palestinian Media Watch, and discussed Hamas propaganda and the greater Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The event was so successful that CAMERA decided to use my event ideas for their nation-wide campaign against Hamas that is now used on campuses across the nation. I also received a national award for this campaign, Bar Ilan’s “Most Outstanding Campus Activism” award. In April, I will be speaking about my campaign in front of 800+ donors and attendees at CAMERA’s annual gala. Last year, this award was featured in the Jerusalem Post.

During the past two summers, I have worked at AJC as an intern. I actively participated in meetings with the Honorary Consuls General of Norway, Denmark, Japan, South Korea, Italy, France, Canada, Cyprus, and Lithuania regarding Israeli Security and Iran’s nuclear program, asking them to follow up with their country’s legislative and executive branches. In order to prepare for those meetings, I researched each country’s relevant views, culture, and traditions. I also participated in meetings with Washington State’s senators and representatives, also researching their views on Israel and past voting records. After lobbying Representative Dave Reichert many times, he now knows me and told me that he would love to have me work for him after I graduate.

These experiences have made my choice to study in Israel extremely natural. Studying in Israel will be beneficial both academically and personally. In terms of my actual plan for my trip to Israel, from February through July, I will be on a program called Career Israel. At Scripps, I have accumulated enough credits to graduate early. Instead of doing that, I have decided to advance my career goals and take some time “off” to intern in Israel. After a weeklong orientation program in Israel, I will be studying intensive Hebrew for five hours a day, with tours and activities in the evenings. Then, for the remaining four months, I will be living in Tel Aviv and working at my internship for 25-30 hours a week minimum. I will also be going on overnight trips and seminars throughout the country. Topics of the seminars include modern Israeli society, religion and the Jewish state, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Jewish identity in modern Israel, and trends in the Israeli job market.

For my internship, I will split my time between the International Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT) at the IDC in Herzliya, and the American Corner Yaffo at the Arab-Jewish Community Center, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Israel. I expect that these internships will shape my identity, my goals, and my interests in government and public policy. According to the ICT website, they are the “leading academic institute for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy.” As an intern, I will be contributing to the institute’s daily research activities and events, while under the supervision of a senior ICT researcher or staff member. My plan is to research women’s agency in terrorism from a feminist perspective. (If you would like to hear more about the research I plan to do, feel free to contact me for more information.) I will also attend

seminars and lectures lead by prominent academics, practitioners, and decision-makers. This institute is considered to be the equivalent of an ivy-league in the United States and they have endless resources and contacts in the U.S. government.

The American Corner Yaffo is located in the Arab-Jewish Community Center. It is a partnership between the Public Affairs Office of the Embassy of the United States of America in Israel and the Arab Jewish Community Center. It provides accurate and timely information about the U.S. to the general public of Israel. As an intern, I will be creating weekly and monthly programming for the children and adults of the center. The Director of the American Corner has given me the freedom to focus on which ever tasks I find important, whether that means finding speakers and organizing for events, doing special research and public relations assignments, writing and editing grant proposals for the center, or tutoring the children while improving my Hebrew and Arabic skills.

Pairing these internships was a very strategic choice for me. I know that by interning at the ICT, my options for working with the U.S. government later in life will open up, as I will develop the contacts and experience necessary for future opportunities. The policy-level work is very important to me, but in addition, I will also be working at the grass-roots level spreading democratic and American values at the American Corner. This experience will offer me a compelling asset to the work I plan to do at the governmental level. Forming relationships with people “on the ground” will be an invaluable experience. And because the U.S. Embassy sponsors the American Corner, I will likely have contacts there as well.

With all of this work, passion is a necessary ingredient that has made me successful. Studying in Israel is something I have wanted to do for the past five years. It will give me experiential knowledge regarding my academic major while allowing me to immerse myself in

Israeli culture and live as an Israeli, rather than an interested American merely visiting Israel. I am passionate about U.S.-Israel relations and I plan to use my passion and understanding of the conflict in the future.

How do you plan to facilitate your interest in public advocacy or government when you graduate from college?

My plan after I graduate is to work in the U.S government to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship so that relationship can be most beneficial for both parties. My dream job is to be the U.S. Ambassador to Israel. I believe this would be the perfect job, as it would allow me to work on behalf of the United States for values in which I believe and hold dearly, and focus on strong diplomatic relations with Israel. In order to do this, I will likely get a higher degree in a related field. Right now, I am looking at master's programs in Israeli Foreign Policy and Security from Israeli universities or similar programs at prestigious U.S. universities. I believe that with my grades, work experience, and other accomplishments, this plan is a viable option in my future.

My other option, into which I have just recently started exploring, is working for an international organization such as the United Nations in human rights or international law. This will allow me to use my international relations skills while advocating for justice and the most basic human rights of others. Whichever path I choose, I know that I will be doing important work that I love, while representing the Jewish people well.

How do you expect your study in Israel to shape your identity as a Jewish woman who is interested in government and public policy?

I believe in Jewish traditions because my religion is something that connects me to many people all over the world and most importantly, it connects me to my community. In a quote from Mrs. Morgenstern, she reflects, "according to my religion, it is not possible to love and

serve God unless we also love and serve our fellow men and our community.” I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, I connect to Judaism *through* my fellow men and women and our community. Thus it is only when I nurture my relationships with others and with my community that I am able to serve and love God.

One of the reasons why I am so passionate about both the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and public service is because they both coincide with values at the forefront of my beliefs and aspirations, such as tzedek, tikkun olam, and kehillah. The most significant way that I connect to my Jewish faith is through my family and the community. During my third trip to Israel, I got a Hadaya ring with the words inscribed in Hebrew “Remember who you are and what you represent.” These words have been passed down through the generations in my family and have become our family motto. Before any big event, my parents always remind me of this saying. I wear it on my right ring finger wherever I go. It acts as a reminder to hold steady to my values and remember whom and what I am representing when I act and choose. It is no coincidence that these words are written in Hebrew. Many of the values that I hold dearly, which guide my actions, words, and future, are Jewish values with which I have been raised.

Another one of my favorite quotes, which I wear around my neck on one of my favorite necklaces, reads in Hebrew “Kol Yisrael Arevim Ze L’Ze,” meaning all Jews are responsible for one another. This phrase inspires my work in public advocacy. It reminds me that I have a responsibility for the greater community, as we are all connected as a global community. The Jews have a long tradition of tzedakah, both monetary and non-monetary. As a college student who was given all the opportunities for which I could ask, I find that the most meaningful way for me to give tzedakah is in public advocacy and government by giving a voice to people who may need my help in making theirs heard.

It is my strong belief in these values that drive my wish to serve the public, and also why I identify strongly with Mrs. Morgenstern. I have been very lucky to grow up in America and to be given the opportunities to do my best. I have a supportive family and community, and I am growing up in a time where women are making incredible strides in the field of government and beyond. I understand that not everyone in the U.S. and abroad is as lucky as I am to have these opportunities, and I believe it is my duty to use my abilities that I have nurtured to help others reach the same ability to maximize their own wills and capacities. As a leader in my community, I am at a position of influence to impact important matters and I would like to use that influence for the betterment of our society and world. Although I have already shown that I am a leader, I believe that this influence will truly flourish with my study in Israel.

Less Hamas More Hummus:

- <http://5tjt.com/?p=13005>
- http://www.jewishtimes.com/index.php/jewishtimes/news/jt/local_news/less_hamas_more_hummus/33603
- http://jewishvoiceny.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2197:less-hamas-more-hummus-campaign-launches-on-us-college-campuses&catid=102:education&Itemid=285
- <http://www.hasbarafellowships.org/cgblog/319/15/A-Look-Into-the-Claremont-Colleges>

AJC:

- http://www.ajcseattle.org/site/c.gjJSJ9MSlWE/b.6216263/k.C27C/Consular_Relations.htm

Other:

- Video that I was asked to participate in: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Weyb-MNPP14&feature=player_embedded
- Press about the video: <http://www.algemeiner.com/2012/03/01/israel-apartheid-week-and-american-anti-semitism-video/>