

Shira Salomon

Hilda Specter Morgenstern Merit Scholarship

February 26, 2023

My name is Shira Salomon and I'm a 17 year old college graduate. My dream is to study in Israel, and have the chance to strengthen my Jewish roots and identity before applying to Law School. I hope to have a voice in government and public advocacy such that I can help the Jewish community, as well as other persecuted groups. As you read my story, you will find answers to the three questions of why I want to study in Israel, how I plan to facilitate my interest in public advocacy/government, and how I expect my study in Israel to shape my identity as a Jewish woman who is interested in government and public policy.

For financial reasons, I wasn't able to go to a Jewish high school with my peers. Instead, I completed high school online in a secular program that my parents were able to afford. I feel I missed out socially as well as spiritually due to lack of learning about Judaism during my teen years and connecting to my roots. With the opportunity of seminary ahead, I searched to find a place in the Holy land that taught Judaism with love and devotion, with a strong focus on charity, and helping others. Upon finding this school that spoke to my soul, I applied and got in. Financially, going to Israel and studying abroad is not affordable for my family of 6. I am however not deterred because I know in my heart that this is the right path for me. I am praying as well as searching for solutions to bring me there. I am doing my active part, "hishtadulut", so I can see my dream of studying in Israel become a reality.

As for why I chose Israel specifically, the list is virtually endless. The feeling of love, belonging, connection and hope is what I experience when I'm in Israel. I feel so close to G-d in this land He gave to us. I cannot imagine a better environment to spend a year dedicated to connecting with my history, other Jewish students, and working on my spiritual and emotional

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growth. Not only do I plan to study during my year in Israel but also to do charity/community work. The school I choose has this built into their curriculum. I believe that by working with immigrants from different countries and socioeconomic backgrounds, I will learn a lot about people. Specifically how they communicate, live, what their needs are, and how different cultural backgrounds can coexist and create safe social structures.

Throughout my life, I've always had a pull towards pursuing a career in law. I am currently studying for my LSAT, and plan to take this time in Israel as my gap year before Law School. I have always been one who plays by the rules while ensuring everyone is treated with correctness and fairness. Public advocacy is important to me because I believe that if G-d gave us the ability to speak and act, we should not only practice this on our behalf but also for those who aren't able to do so for themselves. "If you have a voice, be a voice" is my motto. I hope that as a female Jewish Attorney, I am able to put this into practice and help be a positive light in this darkening world.

The Jewish values that I will learn, practice, and absorb in Israel will shape me into the Woman I hope to be. This will strengthen my goals and abilities to enact positive change regarding public advocacy and improve governing laws to make our world more safe and kind. My year in Israel will be the stepping stone on which my adolescence ends and my adulthood begins. I appreciate your help and dedicated time to reading my essay.