

UJA'S ISRAEL ENGAGEMENT SHINSHINIM



DVAR ISRAEL: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2019

Hello and good morning everyone, my name is Maayan and this is Lior and we are so honored to have this opportunity to stand here in front of you today. We are extremely excited to embark on this wonderful year ahead of us, but before we start this amazing journey together we would like to introduce ourselves.

My name is Lior Cohen, I'm 18 years old from Bet Shemesh - a city between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. My family consists of my parents, 3 siblings and two dogs. Music is my whole world. I've been singing since I was 10 years old in different platforms such as the representative singing group of my city, classical choir and more. I'm also playing on the guitar and piano and I like writing songs and composing. My biggest dream is to publish an album one day. Except for music, I enjoy and love Hebrew. I like researching and reading about the evolution that the Hebrew language went through and about the Hebrew grammar. In high school I majored in Biology and Social sciences.

This year does not count as part of my military service and I have decided to do it voluntarily. Therefore, after this service year, I will be drafted to the army - to the military bands of the IDF. Which means I will perform in front of soldiers, in different ceremonies and even delegations. In Israel I took part in Diller teen fellows program, which you also have here in Toronto - Diller is a Jewish leadership program which had a big influence on my decision to come here. During the year in Diller, I got to meet with the Jewish community of Johannesburg and they left a huge mark on my heart and my life as a whole. This experience has inspired me and made me feel a greater connection to Israel and Judaism. This experience has helped me to shape my Jewish identity and made my being in Israel feel like something even more powerful than it has felt before. It changed my way of life, and this is the main reason why I'm here - I want to give back to the diaspora that has contributed to me and my life so much.

My name is Maayan Gean, I am 18 years old, from Hadera. I come from a small nuclear family that consists of my parents, my older sister and me. I am an avid book reader, and an aspiring writer. I enjoy psychology and the art of the human mind. That is the reason I majored in biology and social sciences in high school. The other day I wondered what should I tell all of you, in this amazing opportunity. I was playing through the time I spent in Canada in my mind, and decided to share something with you. To share a feeling.

The last three weeks of my life, as difficult and challenging as they were, made me feel grateful. Leaving my home, my friends, my family, and even my childhood bedroom, postponing my army service in a year, going on a plane with 21 other teenagers that I met for the first time not too long ago and leaving for this country that I've never even visited.

The repeating question in my mind that asks me if I'm ready for this lifestyle change? If I, an 18-year-old girl from Israel am ready to start this new adventure, to start something new for the first time in years. And after three weeks, my answer to my questions is clearer to me now than it ever was.

Yes. Yes, I am ready. Yes, I am capable.

I am grateful, so extremely grateful to have gotten the opportunity that I have to come here and to take part in this amazing Jewish community. I am grateful for new beginnings, new relationships and new challenges that surround me every day and I am taking in gladly. And this is what we want to wish for you all, for this start of the year:

New beginnings, whether in school, work or even relationships are a gift sent upon us, so we hope we all will accept them gratefully.

We wish you Shana Tovah, full of challenges and adventures.

We are so excited to start this year with you!

Thank you for having us and Shabbat shalom.