

Shabbat Shalom everyone,

I am really excited and honored to be standing here, sharing my first D'var Israel.

My name is Noa Ron, and I'm the UJA ShinShinit at Holy Blossom Temple, and also at Leo Baeck Jewish Day School. I'm so excited for this year, being a part of the Jewish community here and making connections with all of you.

I wanted to tell you a little bit about myself. I was born on October 1st, 2005 (turning 18 soon). I have one older brother named Guy, and two incredible parents Ettie and Nitzan. My family are the closest people to me, they are my rock and I'm grateful for all of their love and support. I live in a city called Kfar Saba, which is about 30 minutes from Tel Aviv.

Since the age of 4, I've been dancing all day, practicing, competing and just expressing myself through dance. This is my true safe space to unload my feelings and just be me.

As the years went by, I started exploring my love and interest in medicine. I've been volunteering now for 3 years at Megan David Adom- which is a branch of the Red Cross, doing shifts on ambulances with paramedics. During the shift I got to know all types of populations in Israel, and got a bigger understanding of what's important in life.

One of my biggest passions is teaching, and I got to be a head instructor in a first aid course, teaching 30 trainees every week. My time at MDA taught me a lot about communication, compassion for other people and matured me in a way I struggle to summarize in a few words. This experience shaped my personality and gave me tools that I am sure will help me in the future.

This gap year, or as we call it "Shnat Sherut", is a dream I had for many years now. And I want to share with you a little bit of my feelings after only two weeks in Toronto.

Everything is new, the host family and the other 21 ShinShinim who are now my closest friends. Coming to school, but not as a student, something I haven't done in 12 years, the streets and the subway stations, the changing weather and the squirrels that are

everywhere. Every day I meet over 10 new people, trying to remember everyone's names but honestly, I can't remember all of them that well. It's new for me to be talking in English for the whole day, without even thinking that it is not my native language. I'm starting to get to know the Jewish community and the role of the Shinshin. And more importantly, I'm starting to realize that even though it's very overwhelming, and that I miss Israel, I am completely where I should be.

In 9th grade, when I heard about the program for the first time I immediately knew I wanted to do it. Something about the experience of learning about another culture and community, opening my mind to new ideas, far from the safe place I call home, thrilled me. "Shnat Sherut" in Hebrew means to serve (leaharet - לשרת), and I really hope that in my time here I will serve the Toronto Jewish community, make meaningful connections and mostly learn from all of you. I can't wait to get to know all of you better, to share my experience of living in Israel and have an amazing time here in Canada.

Thank you and Shabbat Shalom.