



# NEWSLETTER

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**Dr. Tziona Levi, Director,  
English Education,  
Ministry of Education**

## A Message from Dr. Tziona Levi

Today there is no doubt that English language learning is crucial for a child's well-rounded education. Admission to higher education programs, economic trade, tourism, job opportunities and social mobility all depend on English language acquisition. The only way to learn English in a non-English speaking society is for students to have ample opportunities to communicate with speakers of the English language. Israeli students need authentic language immersion opportunities to allow them to naturally acquire language. Such opportunities are plentiful for some students and hard to come by for others. Making these learning opportunities available to all students is a big challenge and one that I face every day in my role as the head of Israel's English department at the Ministry of Education. Thank you for providing access to students who have fewer opportunities to be exposed to authentic English. Thank you for giving of your time to make this happen. As an educator myself, I know that teaching can be challenging. But I also know there are no sweeter fruits to reap than the ones that blossom from helping students advance their education. You are giving a young adult a future. You are their heroes!



**Sarah Gordon  
Director, Israel Connect**

## A Note from Sarah

While talking with a group of friends the other day, the discussion came around to how disheartening it is that the world is becoming increasingly polarized. Individuals with differing opinions are forgetting how to have conversations and respect one another. Political systems gridlocked by people who are so focused on their own agendas that they cannot make a change for the common good. Yet I had a unique perspective to share. I know that despite our differences we would drop everything to help someone else. I work with hundreds of individuals who have reached out to help others even though it is not always convenient to do so. It makes no difference if the individual they are helping is perfectly aligned with themselves and their beliefs or not. I am fortunate that in my work I get to see that the world is made up of some incredible people; people who are willing to do for others no matter the difference between them. Every day I see how compassionate, giving, and kind people can be and how all the noise that is made in the world dividing us is just that-noise. Our volunteer mentors, who tutor students weekly, are a group of the most giving people. Our mentors are willing to selflessly give of themselves to others, and for that, I do not have enough words to thank them properly. I just had the honor to address English teachers from across Israel as the keynote speaker at the conference marking the 40th anniversary of the English Teacher's Association of Israel. I got to meet the most wonderful teachers who stop at nothing to make sure no student is left behind; teachers who bring all their creativity and passion to work every day for their students. They deserve our greatest appreciation and gratitude. This year I was also blessed to be a recipient of the Sovereign's Medal of Honor for community service. This medal was given to me but in essence it does not belong to me. This beautiful award is the Queen's way of honoring all of those who have taken part in and given to Israel Connect. It truly belongs to each and every one of our special volunteers for their contribution of time and energy to make Israel Connect the wonderful organization that it is. Thank you for another wonderful year, a year filled with so many amazing people; a year filled with the undying human spirit of kindness and caring.

# Our Featured School

**This newsletter is coming to you with a highlight from one of our featured schools that we are proud to be working with.**

**Tzvia Haifa is a middle and high school for girls located on the slopes of Mount Carmel**



## From the teacher:

Two years ago, I heard about the Israel Connect project. I thought that it could be a brilliant way for the students to practice their oral skills in English. I especially liked the idea because it offered an added value to the speech practice - the chance to get to know interesting people living overseas. I wanted my students to have a chance to converse with those amazing volunteers, to get to know more about Jews abroad in general, and people who are older than them in particular. And so, after my principal was presented with this idea and loved it as well, our ninth graders at Ulpanat Tzvia were offered the chance to connect with volunteers and speak to them in English once a week. The weekly curriculum reviewed various sites in Israel and the students loved both the information about those sites and the chance to talk about their personal life experiences with the volunteers.



*Brachi, Teacher at Ulpanat Tzvia.*

It is now the end of the second year of this program at my school and I am delighted with the results. The students have gained confidence when using English, their vocabulary has improved and they hold meaningful conversations with the volunteers. They are happy to connect and enjoy their weekly session together. We have gotten to know many special and incredible people through this program. Thank you to everyone on the Israel Connect staff for your help and support, and above all, thank you to all of the wonderful volunteers who work with us, for your time, effort, kindness and attention.

## The Principal of Ulpanat Tzvia :

Ulpanat Tzvia, named after Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, believes in imparting an education true to the eternal values of the Jewish people - faith, love of Torah, virtue, love of others and love of the Land. We believe that creating a personal connection and a warm and supportive family atmosphere in our school is key to the personal growth and the social learning of our students. Our sages have said, "Derech Eretz Kadma L'Torah" "Being a Mentch (good person) comes before Torah". This is the basis of our educational philosophy. The Ulpana's goal is to enable every graduate to be accepted into any academic institution of her choice. At the same time, we want our graduates to become contributing individuals in Israeli society. We do this by educating our girls for academic excellence, both in Torah as well as in the highest levels of academic and scientific study. We educate our students to have a love of Israel, the land and the people, to value mutual responsibility, to help others, and to do acts of kindness.

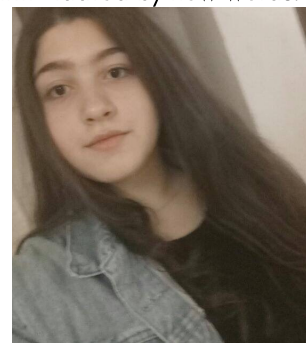


As the principal of the Ulpana, I was very happy to give my students this incredible opportunity of conversing in English with overseas volunteers. I consider this a big step on their journey to academic excellence. Connecting with Jews from all over the world through the program, provided an additional important experience that the students benefitted from immensely. I thank you sincerely for providing the platform for my students to practice English discourse in a meaningful and experiential way.

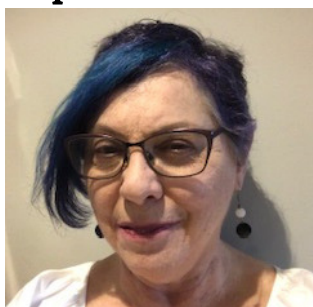


## Tal Yahel Zeruya, Student of Ulpanat Tzvia

Hello my name is Tal Yahel Zeruya, and I live in a small village outside Haifa, called Kerem Maharl. I love the weather and location of my city, and school. My daily commute to school is well over an hour each way, but it is worth it, as I attend a smaller school that shows a lot of love to each individual student. While I have not yet decided what I want to do when I grow up, and I have plenty of time to decide, as I will be doing national service after high school, I do know that I would like to attend university, and get a degree. For that, I know I need to be competitive, and know English. My mentor has really helped me this year. I had been very intimidated to pronounce new words in English, because in English words don't always sound the way they are spelled. Over the year, my confidence in speaking English has grown and I am less intimidated by new words. In addition to the weekly reading, my mentor and I chatted a bit. We loved to discuss travelling. My mentor was very well travelled, and described to me that many places he had been around the world. I, on my part, had been most of the places featured in the text, but I do think that many were new to my mentor. It was nice to be able to discuss with him my personal experiences there. It was very nice to hear about life in another country. It was most shocking to me to hear how cold it can get in Canada. I was also intrigued to hear how large Canada is. Here in Israel we can only dream of having that much space! I would certainly love to go visit one day. All in all, I am so happy that I chose to sign up and join the program. Thank you!



### A Word From Lauren, One of our Mentors working with Ulpanat Tzvia



It was such a pleasure to mentor this year with the Israel Connect program. I was assigned a young girl who attended school in Haifa. She was participating from home, as her school computer lab was not up to standard for the program. I would certainly say the most rewarding thing about the program was watching my student progress over the course of the year. While she was a very strong student to begin with, I certainly felt that her confidence in reading English improved. She made fewer mistakes and understood me better, even though I still had to be mindful to speak slowly. During each session, we discussed a little bit about the places featured in the text. My student was surprised by how many of them I had seen, as I had previously lived in Israel. I, in turn, was surprised how well travelled she was. As she attends a religious Zionist school, travelling is a part of the curriculum. She loved to tour Israel as well with her family and had been to most places. What was most eye-opening for my student was life in Canada. As I live in an 11th floor apartment on a nice day, I could take the iPad out to the balcony and show her the snow or the Autumn leaves. A special treat for her to see, as they are both seasons they do not have in Israel. She is a member of Bnei Akivah and is going to a Bnei Akivah camp in Yerushalyim this summer. She was interested to know that I had both been a member of Bnei Akivah and attended Camp Moshava in my youth. She was surprised to learn that Toronto has a large Jewish community with a choice of Hebrew day schools and Zionist organizations. In summation, it was a pleasure to mentor this enthusiastic Israeli girl and to see her English reading and comprehension skills improve.