

My last article as an Israeli Shaliach

*“And sometimes
the party is over
The lights go out, the trumpet says
goodbye to the violins...*

*To wake up tomorrow morning
with a new song in our hearts
to sing it with strength,
to sing it with pain.
To hear the flutes in the free breeze
and to start - from the beginning”*

(Ve'Lifamim Ha-Hagiga Nigmeret – Hakol Over Habibi – And sometimes, the party is over)

WOW. I can't believe that I'm writing my last article for the community. How can I even describe everything I've been through over the last two years?

These two years, being your Israeli Shaliach (Emissary) have been two of the most amazing years of my life. I've met so many people that made this experience unforgettable and meaningful and I have made friends for life.

As I'm sure you remember, in the first year Mayana and I worked together and created many programs geared to bringing Israel to the Canton community. This was an amazing year for us as a young couple, living a new place, in our home away from home, and learning the experience of leading a Jewish life outside of Israel. We got to see how special Israel is to each and every one of you, and how valuable our country is in your hearts and minds. During this year, we were able to travel around the states and have a lot of wonderful experiences along the way. Some of the experiences we couldn't even have imagined having prior to our arrival in the community as your Shlichim, like spending a Shabbat dinner with John Strauss and an Amish family or travelling to Montana with The Lippman School in Akron. We built a wonderful friendship with people from the Northern Cheyenne Nation (two weeks from writing this article, I'll be returning to Montana for the second time and I'm super excited about it!). This was an amazing year!

Fast forward, Mayana started her own incredible journey. She visited over 20 communities in the last six months, sharing her personal life story using her unique voice. She spoke about diversity in Israel and in the Jewish world. This was an amazing opportunity for her and I'm very proud of her.

As for myself, I enjoyed the challenge of working in our two wonderful communities. One of the goals that I've set for myself was to reach out to non-Jewish audiences and share my life story, of living in Israel. I am very happy and satisfied about the numbers of students I met in the last year, entering more than 30 different classrooms of middle school, high school and campuses in the Akron and Canton area. I thank Marilyn Feldman, specifically, for bringing me with her to the schools around Stark County, and for educating students and teachers about Judaism, the Holocaust and so much more.

One of my best moments this year was performing an Israeli song and playing my guitar, while Firestone High School dance department students danced beautifully. That's what music is all about, bringing people together and building bridges between different cultures. Another beautiful moment was visiting Summit County Juvenile Detention Center and meeting young teens that face many struggles and making their day brighter by speaking about Israel.

I also wanted to share one of my biggest passions, music, and especially Israeli music with our students in Chadash School on Sundays. I met a great young generation and I know that they'll be the one who'll lead the community in the future (and now!).

Another great program I was a part of was the Men's Breakfast, where even though I was supposed to be the one sharing information about Israel, from time to time, I got to learn more than to teach. Every time I've had a conversation with a senior from our community I felt I was learning something new, and I'm happy that I shared my young Israeli spirit with their young souls!

At my Shaliach programs we discussed various interesting subjects like the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Jewish Diversity around the world with Laura from Shave Israel, Travelling to North, Central and South Israel in my winter program, watching Israeli movies together and so much more. What I've really enjoyed in these encounters were the conversations with everyone. Thank you for joining me throughout the year, I can't wait to meet you all again in Israel. We will also forever remember the two great Yom Ha'Atzmaut & Yom Ha-Zikaron (Israel's Memorial Day for IDF fallen Soldiers & Terror Victims and Israel's Independence Day) programs we had in the community!

So many people shared great moments with us, travelling together, hiking together, canoeing together (yes Jim, I'm talking to you...), eating (breakfasts, lunch, dinner, you name it...) together, and celebrating holidays and joyous occasions together and inviting us into their homes— There's no way I would be able to explain how welcoming you were as a community and how deeply you made us feel at home. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I must mention one special woman who had made this experience to be what it was, for both Mayana and I. Bonnie Manello, thank you for your endless love and support. You were our mother here, like you have been for all the shlichim, and we love you for that. Thank you for making us feel we always have someone that takes care of us and make sure we're happy!

As I've mentioned, while writing these lines, the Cleveland Cavaliers have already made the Eastern Finals. I hope that by the time you read this article, they make the NBA finals, and hopefully will repeat another championship. You must say that Mayana and I were sort of a lucky charm for Ohio, in that department, with an NBA championship and a world series under our belt. Can't do anything about the Browns, though... sorry 😊 I got to fulfill an old dream of mine this year, covering so many basketball games, and I can surely say that I've picked the right place, and the right time to be your Israeli Shaliach!

Mayana and I are so happy to welcome the new couple of Shlichim in the community: Uri & Gili Hershkovitz! You will get to know them in the August issue, and make sure to make them feel at home, like you made us feel. We wish them good luck and sure they'll do an amazing job!

I hope that Mayana and I have helped to strengthen your connection with Israel. I know it was there before, and I'm so happy about that it is. As I've said so many times over the last two

years – the bond between Israel and its citizens to the Jewish people all around the world, and dare I say especially in the U.S, is so important and it is one of the strongest assets we have as a nation. We should remember to keep this connection strong, live and vivid and I think the Shlichim program is a great way of doing that. This connection helps to better our education and knowledge about each other. Mayana and I are encouraging you to visit Israel, if you've already been there before – return and see new places and meet new people. If you have never been – now is the time to get your ticket and fly over. You all have two young friends, who can't wait to welcome you in our home, show you around the places we've talked about for the last two years, and hopefully make you all feel as happy as we were, being your community Shlichim.

Our time in Canton has come to its end, but it will forever be one that will carry on with us for the rest of our lives. **TODA RABA, MI-OMEK HA-LEV. OHAVIM, MAYANA AND SHAY.**

Yours,

Your Shaliach,

Shay Goldenberg