

Israel@70 Day of Learning: Connections and Complexities

About Our Presenters

Dr. Rachel Fish



Rachel Fish is Senior Advisor and Resident Scholar of Jewish/Israel Philanthropy at the Paul E. Singer Foundation in New York City. Most recently she was the Executive Director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University. She completed her doctoral degree in 2013 in the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies department at Brandeis University, where she researched the history of the idea of bi-nationalism and alternative visions for constructing the State of Israel. She has taught at Brandeis University, Harvard University, UMASS Amherst and Tzion and Me'ah, Adult Jewish Education programs. In 2015 she held the Rohr Visiting Professorship at Harvard University, where she lectured on modern Israel and received the Derek Bok Certificate of Teaching Excellence. She is co-editor, with Ilan Troen, of the book *Essential Israel: Essays for the Twenty-First Century*.

Michael Soberman



Michael Soberman is a Senior Educational Consultant for The iCenter. Prior to that, Michael was the Vice President of Canada Israel Experience and Next Generation Initiatives at the Jewish Federations of Canada – UIA. Canada Israel Experience is the Federations' Israel Experience arm that is committed to maximizing the number of Canadian teenagers and young adults traveling to Israel on program such as Birthright Israel, the March of the Living and high school/youth movement programs. Michael has been invited to speak all over the world on topics of the Israel experience, Birthright Israel, next generation and experiential education. Michael holds a Bachelor of Arts from York University, a Juris Doctor from Osgoode Hall Law School, a Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto, and an Executive Master's of Arts in Jewish Professional Studies from Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership.

Vavi Toran



Vavi Toran was raised in Tel Aviv by a theatrical and artistic family. She studied English Literature and Art History at the Hebrew University, and Painting and Drawing at the Bezalel Art Institute in Jerusalem. Vavi joined the Israel Center of the San Francisco-based Jewish Federation in 1996. As the Director of Cultural and Educational Resources of the organization, she helped fashion the Arts and Culture programs that have since become a model locally and nationally. In 2003 she was assigned the position of Director of the Israel Education Initiative, a joint project of the San Francisco-based Bureau of Jewish Education (now Jewish LearningWorks) and the Israel Center. Until recently, Vavi has served as the Israel Education and Arts Specialist at Jewish LearningWorks. For the past ten years, Vavi has also been a consultant on Arts & Culture for The iCenter for Israel Education. Today Vavi is an independent consultant.

Richard Walter



Richard Walter is the Associate Director for Israel Education, Center for Israel Education and Institute for the Study of Modern Israel, Emory University. Rich has extensive experience increasing community involvement in Jewish formal and informal learning for a wide variety of age groups. Prior to joining ISMI and CIE as Associate Director for Israel Education in August 2012, he served as Director for Jewish Life and Learning at the Jewish Federation and Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven and Director of Education and Community Development at the Bureau of Jewish Education in Rhode Island. From 1997 to 2001 he taught in the Solomon Schechter School in Providence, Rhode Island. He was educated at Brandeis University where he received his BA and MA degrees focusing on Jewish history, Middle Eastern history, and Judaic Studies.

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Dr. Shayna Weiss



Dr. Shayna Weiss is the Associate Director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University. Previously, she was the Distinguished Visiting Scholar in Israel Studies at the United States Naval Academy. Hailing from Jacksonville, Florida, she earned a Ph.D. from New York University in Hebrew and Judaic Studies in 2015. She has also taught at Bar Ilan University, NYU, and Brooklyn College. Dr. Weiss is fascinated by the politics of Israeli popular culture, particularly in television and film.