

Backstage Israel: A Course for a Closer Look

This Israel Education Fellowship is specifically geared towards students who have spent time in Israel on an educational program, such as Birthright or Young Judea. *Backstage Israel* provides participants with an opportunity to think, digest, discuss, consider, and ponder the multiple opportunities for connecting to Israel and its complexities. *The goal of this course is to help students engage in their relationship with Israel, develop a deeper understanding of the many facets of Israel, and ultimately gain a more sophisticated understanding of and relationship to Israel.*

Backstage Israel aims to provide participants with a space in which to think critically and creatively about Israel, and to explore the multiple facets and opportunities of being in a relationship with the modern Jewish state. In this fellowship, students will engage with Israel through reading articles, exploring Israeli arts and media, and hearing from contemporary Israeli thinkers.

As a result of the study of these topics, participants will come away from the series more confident about their relationship to Israel, know how Israel is integrated into/affects their Jewish identity, and will have a clearer sense of what aspects of Israel they most connect to.

The Ideal Candidates:

- Students **must** have spent time in Israel on a program like Birthright, Young Judea or similar
- Have a desire to discuss the many facets of Israel as a country and society, and not just the political situation
- Have the ability and desire to create a safe space for themselves and their peers in the fellowship
- Want to develop their knowledge and opinions about Israel, and continue to develop their relationship with Israel, on their own terms

This fellowship will be led by Dror Stein, Israel Fellow, and Leah Kahn, Senior Jewish Educator

Students will be compensated \$250 for the semester and are expected to attend all weekly meetings.

Meeting times:

To apply: ([link](#))

Questions: dror@berkeleyhillel.org or leah@berkeleyhillel.org

Why this fellowship is called *Backstage Israel*...

Educational programs tend to provide experiences that put Israel on “center stage,” by traveling around the country, spending time with Israeli contemporaries, and receiving “snapshots” of Israeli culture, politics, land and history. Building on the metaphor of a show, one of the goals of a theater or dance performance is to affect and engage the audience members by creating an aesthetic experience, elicit spontaneous emotion, and provoke thought about universal and particular themes. During the show, audience members are not thinking about the months of the rehearsal process and can’t see the intricacies of the backstage logistics. Their primary job is to experience what the cast is creating for them, and to consider what the director or choreographer is trying to say. After the show, if they were given a backstage tour or watched a future rehearsal, they would have a greater understanding of the work that goes into creating such an experience. Some of the goals of Israel programs are similar to the goals of a show: activate the cognitive and emotional senses of the participants, stimulate big questions, and start a relationship with Israel. Israel programs provide a great opportunity to have an initial, “activating” encounter with Israel; however, participants aren’t always able to meaningfully delve into more complex questions. This fellowship was designed to build on your “snapshot” experiences, take you “behind the scenes,” and provoke big questions to think more deeply about the Modern Jewish State and all its nuances and complexities.