





“What began as a vision for the future of Jewish individuals has turned into a realized community of Jewish pioneers. Founding BYFI was an investment in long-term change for the Jewish community, the results of which I never could have predicted.”

— Edgar M. Bronfman z”l, Founder of The Bronfman Fellowships

**T**he Bronfman Fellowships is a different kind of community. We are composed of thinkers and doers with wildly distinct takes on Judaism, a shared commitment to pluralism and a hunger for life-long Jewish learning. We are both an incredible program for teens and a space for Jewish reflection and inspiration for adults.



The cover of our 2015 annual report is an image of a Bronfman-style whimsical Rube Goldberg machine. This image reminds us of the core elements that make our community unique: mentorship, personal relationships, outstanding Jewish learning, ideas that inspire and, in particular, great discussions with interesting people. When Bronfmanim form a lifelong community the results are splendidly original and have an outsize impact.

In a world where it often seems people are talking across one another without listening, the Bronfman community is one that constantly elevates the conversation. Whether in person or through our vibrant virtual channels, fellows and alumni can engage with people who think differently and where there is genuine interest in learning from one another. This is our definition of a deeply pluralistic Jewish community, where everyone has the potential to be both a teacher and friend.

This report highlights the ways in which The Bronfman Fellowships continues to evolve, engage, and inspire. **I welcome your feedback and thank you for your continued affection for and involvement with this rare and wonderful community!**

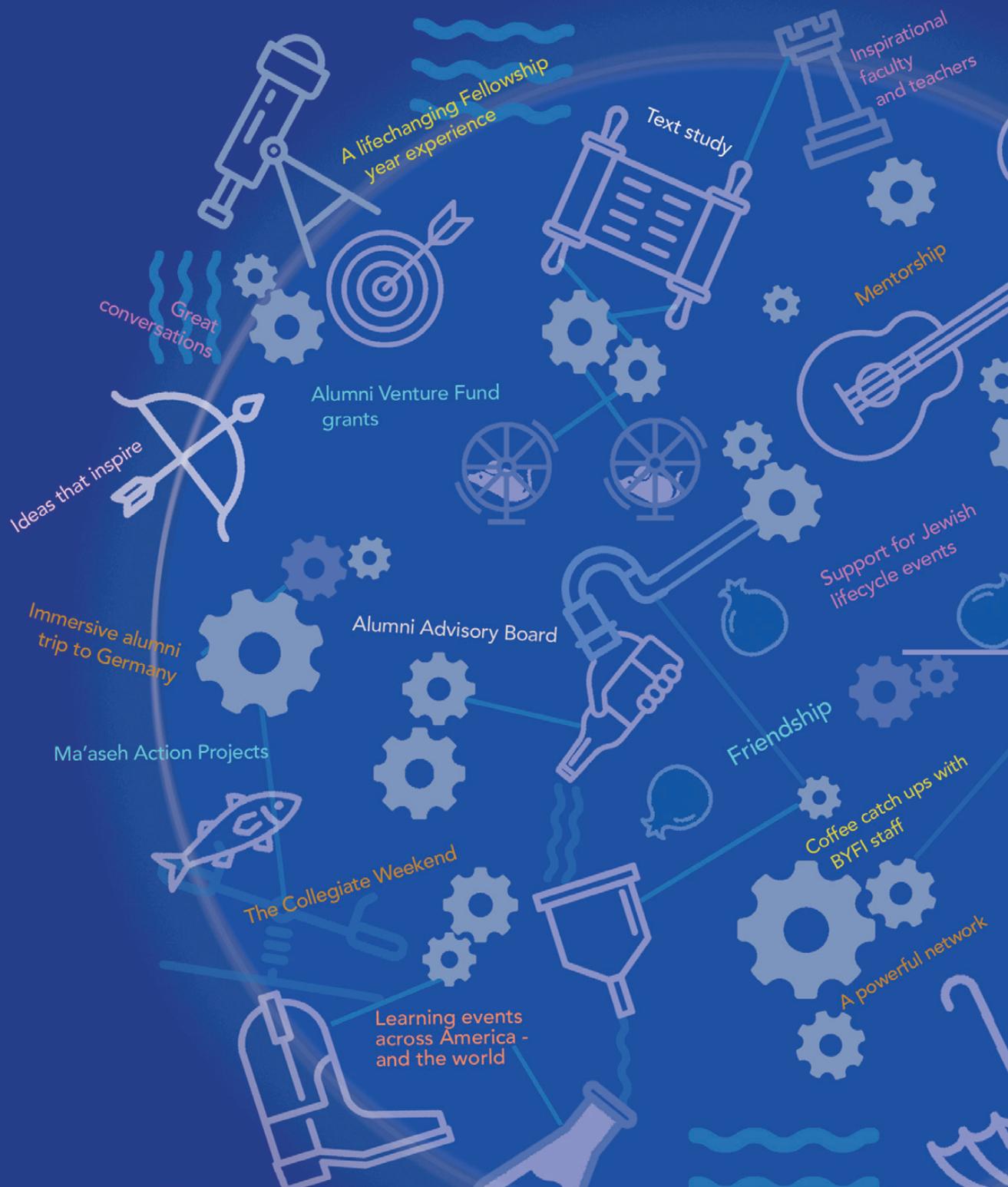
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky Voorwinde". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**Becky Voorwinde**

Executive Director

[Becky@byfi.org](mailto:Becky@byfi.org)

# What builds and



# animates the

# BYFI community?

We are a unique combination of people, conversations, events and ideas sparking dynamism in our community. From a dinner table discussion inspired by a listserv thread, to a professional connection made at a learning event, to a life changing project supported by the BYFI community, The Bronfman Fellowships strives to enrich and support the lives of our alumni as they make an impact in the world around them.



Caring community

Briefing calls on current events



Alumni Divrei Torah



Alumni hosts for Jewish Holidays



Immersive seminar for Israeli alumni



# A Life Changing Fellowship Year

## The Fellowship Year Experience

### Summer Fellowship

5 weeks in Israel, including a week-long Mifgash with our Israeli Bronfman Fellows.

### Journal Group Calls

Skype sessions with a faculty member and group of Fellows continue the debriefing process from the summer.

### Fellows Day

The Fellows come together to talk about their transition home and their ma'aseh projects.

### Zman Fellow

Each Fellow has the opportunity to design and lead a 30 minute session about a topic of interest to them.

### Winter Mifgash

A weekend retreat during the Israeli Fellows' trip to the US. Reconnecting with friends and discussing the American Jewish experience.

### Spring Seminar

Five days in New York City during the spring where the Fellows explore different American Jewish narratives with speakers that include many alumni.



## Ma'aseh Projects

The Ma'aseh project allows the Fellows to bring back the Bronfman experience into their home communities, and apply some of the ideas that they encountered over the summer to their everyday life. We also ask older alumni to serve as Ma'aseh advisors, welcoming our Fellows into the alumni community and giving them important resources in a field that they're interested in.

# The Amitei Bronfman Experience



<p><b>Seminars</b> 6 seminars and mifgashim focused on group building, exploring ideas of identity and self and engaging with Israeli society.</p>	<p><b>Mifgashim</b> Two Mifgashim with American Bronfman Fellows.</p>	<p><b>US Trip</b> One two week trip to the United States to learn about expressions of American Jewish identity.</p>	<p><b>Zman Amit</b> Each Fellow has the opportunity to design and lead a 30 minute session about a topic of interest to them.</p>
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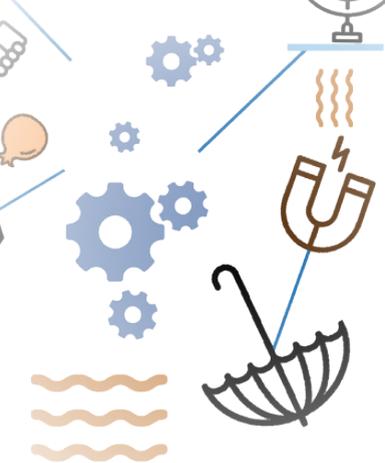
## Who is an ideal Bronfman Fellow?

There are a lot of them (around **1,105** at last count). Our intentional selection process ensures that our Fellowship Year group and larger alumni community are balanced, diverse and interesting. Our Fellows are as different as can be, live all over the country and define Judaism in many different ways. They are dedicated artists, science whizzes, students who speak multiple languages, animal lovers, bookworms and track stars. What else do we consider? Here are some key qualities.

## The Feurstein Seminar

As one of the 8 seminars during the Israeli Fellowship Year, our Amitim spend a Shabbat with residents of the Feurstein Institute, a program for people with special needs. In engaging with these students in a non-hierarchical setting, by learning and working together, our Amitim learn about participating in society with those who are different. We strive to teach our Amitim to be responsible for making the communities around them a more open environment, and this experience helps them explore how to make that possible.





# Connections and Support

Why does BYFI focus on strengthening relationships and networking?





## Viewpoint

Throughout the year, our Israeli community hosts “Viewpoint” conversations, where we invite experts in their fields to a small informal breakfast. During one Viewpoint meet up, featuring author Matti Friedman ('94) talking about his experience with Israeli journalism, participants sat speaking with him for 3 hours. After the conversation was over, a small group even extended the discussion to lunch.



## Catch ups

One of our core values is the individual attention we give to Bronfmanim, and we love knowing first hand what's on their minds. To do this, our staff in both Israel and America devote time to sitting down 1:1 with alumni to catch up about what's new, offer career advice and let them know what's going on at BYFI. This year, we met with over 30% of our Israeli alumni and over 10% of our American alumni. These personal connections allow us to serve as a hub for the community, introducing Bronfmanim to others in their field, passing along job and volunteer opportunities, providing Jewish resources, and helping connect them to local communities.



## Collegiate Weekend & Shabbat Bogrims

In both our American and Israeli alumni communities, we host large yearly gatherings for our youngest alumni. Engaging with the collegiate or army population allows us to continue to support our alumni through large transitions while introducing them to our alumni community. We invite faculty members to join us and plan a mix of text study, informal social time and conversations about issues important to this alumni demographic.

At this year's Collegiate Weekend and Shabbat Bogrims, alumni had the chance to sit down with BYFI staff for informal “office hours” to chat about activities, internships, or future opportunities. We hope not only to introduce younger alumni to the connections available in the Bronfman community, but also to provide a forum for them to talk through their options and think long-term. We're excited to help alumni explore their passions and think holistically about their futures.

# BYFI VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

The Bronfman community is the consistent place to turn for thoughtful commentary on current events, with alumni from diverse backgrounds and perspectives coming together for nuanced conversation. We love that our alumni are always excited to learn, and that Bronfman is a space where anyone can contribute their thoughts on the weekly Torah portion, what's in the news, or share personal challenges and triumphs. Bronfmanim use our virtual community to discover new ideas and solicit trusted opinions that they can bring to their family, workplace or community.

## WHAT WE ARE LEARNING



This year, we launched a new quarterly email, in memory of our founder Edgar M. Bronfman z'l, that asks a group of alumni to share something they've been reading with the community. Here's what we found in our inaugural email:

### Work featured

- Let There Be Water
- Mechon Hadar podcast
- The Fragile Framework
- John Mcphee's series on the art of writing
- Jill Lepore's article on the accuracy of surveys and polls

## LISTSERV

Our listserv continues as one of the most vibrant centers of our alumni communications.

Here's what's been going on there this year:



### MOST POPULAR TOPICS

- Simchat Bat ceremony ideas
- Supporting women in Orthodox leadership roles
- Status report from Israel



### MOST POPULAR STATS

Number of topics

112

Number of posts

195

Number of contributors

113



## BRONFTALKS

With experts in everything from government to the environment to education policy, our community is poised to respond to current topics in a reflective and honest manner that goes beyond the headlines.

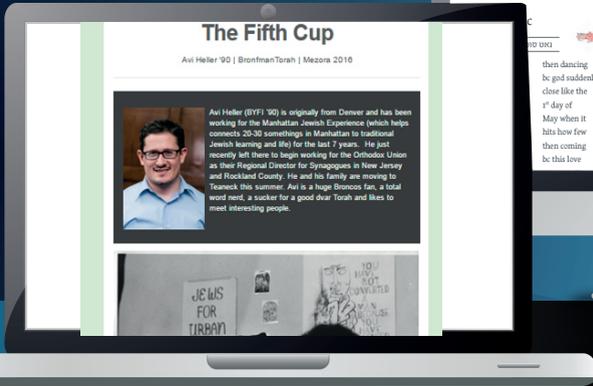
Alumni, parents of alumni and friends join our calls to get a balanced and informed briefing on what's going on in the world.

### TOPICS INCLUDED

- Water accessibility
- Israel and the Temple Mount
- Iran Nuclear Deal

### SUKKOT USHPIZIN MAILING

### DIVREI TORAH PROJECT



Our **Divrei Torah project** began last year with an open call to Bronfmanim to contribute their thoughts on the **weekly torah portion** to the community. We were thrilled with the response, and glad to see a diverse group of our alumni take this project on.

From Rabbis who were looking to experiment with their typical divrei torah to alumni who had never had the opportunity to write one before, we saw unique thoughts and interesting formats coming from a wide cross section of the community.

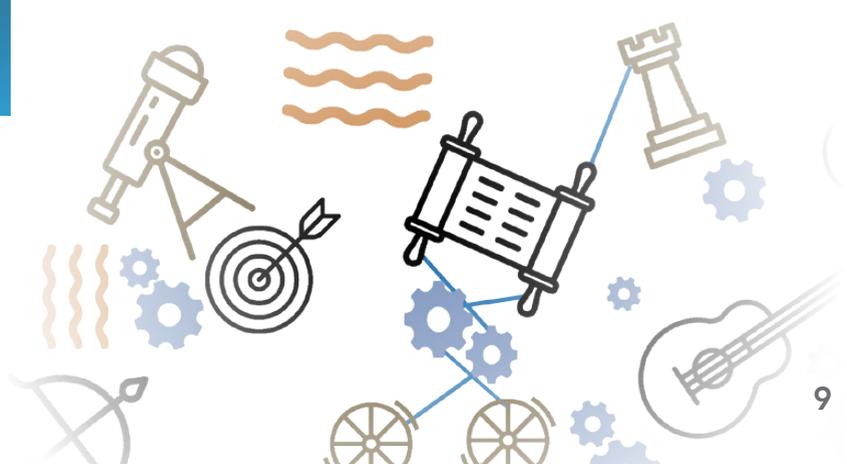
From the **24** alumni who contributed in 2015, there was original poetry, an important reflection about mental health, a piece co-written by two friends, a paper cut-out illustration, and thoughts about everything from the meaning of light over Hannukah to Rabin's legacy.

We are proud that the Divrei Torah project shows the diversity of the ideas of Bronfmanim, and that our alumni are so excited to share them with this community.

This year we asked nine Bronfmanim - from Israel and America - to host us in their Sukkah for a moment, by sharing a text or image that serves as a blessing and inspiration, in their lives.

Tradition has it that on Sukkot, the most wondrous guests visit one's Sukkah. Called Ushpizin - Talmudic-for guests - they usually consist of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and so on, each on their own special night, each bringing with them their own stories.

The Bronfman Fellowships encourage Fellows to appreciate guests of all kinds as inspirations: people, texts and art. We were excited to share these printed booklets with our entire alumni community, as well as alumni parents.



# Immersive Adult Bronfman Experiences

We've asked ourselves for a long time whether an adult Bronfman experience was possible. Could we ever recreate the close connections, exciting content and meaningful discussions that typify Bronfman? This year we gave it a try by running two adult overnight seminars.

## Germany Close Up

11 alumni travelled to Germany for 8 days through a program subsidized by Germany Close Up, a great organization that facilitates trips for American Jews to encounter modern Germany. The diverse group of alumni and their partners took a week away from their lives, to engage in conversations and ask questions that allowed them to go back to those intellectually curious 17 year olds that they once were. We asked alumni to contribute content during the trip, from leading small discussion sessions to coordinating the Shabbat experience.



## Schedule highlights



Discussion with non-profits grappling with the refugee crisis in Germany

Meeting with a member of German Parliament

Guided tour of the Memorial and Museum at the Former Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen

Thanksgiving dinner with young Germans

“Germany Close Up was a uniquely “Bronfman” experience in a lot of ways - from the intense discussions, to the sites that we visited, to the always-legendary pre-trip reading, and above all, the amazing group of people that tromped all around Berlin together. Our days were filled with facts and figures, peppered with firsthand accounts of War and Communism and narratives from all walks of life, mixed together with awesome group leaders who kept us on our toes.”

– Kaitlin Nemeth '05



# Bogrim Seminar

In Israel, the oldest members of our alumni community are now 35, with careers, families and growing responsibilities. This year, we expanded our programming for this demographic through a forum for them to discuss issues pertaining to their lives. Sixty of our Israeli alumni, 6 American alumni and 30 spouses and partners of alumni attended a two day program. Our Israel office modeled the programming on the structure of an Amitei Bronfman Seminar, with external speakers and faculty members providing content and moderating group discussions. The Vaad, our Israeli Alumni Advisory Board, organized a planning committee that was intimately involved in determining the seminar topics and content for the day.

“The event felt very high-quality and serious – I feel that this is the beginning of a direction the community needs to think about, how we support each other during critical junctures in our lives.”

– Igal Avrahami '00

## Seminar topics included

**The Path Not Taken**

**Should I Specialize or Keep a Broad Focus?**

**Tradition vs. Finding My Own Path**





# Peers Investing in Peers: The Alumni Venture Fund

Launched in 2005, the Bronfman Alumni Venture Fund (AVF) is the first Jewish peer-to-peer giving fund program of its kind - fundraising from alumni for the sole purpose of redistribution to alumni-led projects in both Israel and America.

In the 10 years of our AVF

200 Grants to 143 Alumni

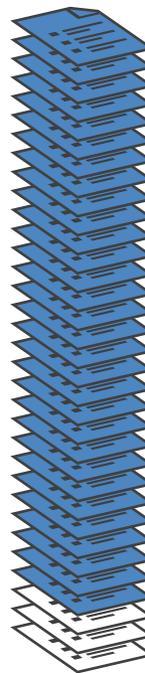
With contributions  
from 501 alumni

10 YRS

In 2015, we  
received a record  
33 applications  
from alumni  
all over the US  
and Israel

28 grants were  
awarded ranging from  
\$500 to \$3,000,  
totaling \$25,800  
in distributed funds

\$25,800



## Changemakers and cultural innovation

Beyond funding, the AVF connects to experienced professionals within our rich alumni network, and provides additional forums for feedback and support. Alumni changemakers and influencers utilize the AVF as a living laboratory and incubator to innovate.

## Co-deliberation between Israelis and Americans

Our Israeli and American alumni jointly review applications and steward the use of donations to ensure grants are awarded to projects that are innovative and high-impact. The AVF is a leader in this cross-cultural co-deliberation process.

As a result, Israeli and American alumni are well aware of what Jewish, social, and cultural innovation looks like in each country, and are exposed to each society's current questions and issues.

## Meet some of our 2015 grantees

This year, the AVF supported several new media initiatives in Israel and America, aimed at inspiring conversations between unlikely subjects and prompting new ways of thinking about history and the present.

**"The Hitchhikers,"** a web documentary series directed by Yair Agmon '04 creates a space for unusual yet critical conversations about Israeli identity with a kaleidoscopic cast of characters: hitchhikers he picks up in his camera-rigged car while driving throughout the country. The intimacy of the enclosed vehicle and probing presence of the cameras unravels the candid charm and roughness of the passengers. Both driver, hitchhiker, and viewer know the journey is transient, however, the impressions of these exchanges, ranging from nationalism, to love, to cigarettes — are powerful and lasting. These episodes are distinctly Israeli, yet they provide a window for understanding the many faces of one place, which Agmon demonstrates is only possible through taking a journey and lending a hand.



**Can We Talk?**, a podcast produced by Judith Rosenbaum '90 and Nahanni Rous '92 with the Jewish Women's Archive, brings stories and conversations about Jewish women and the issues that shape our public and private lives. Alternating between a documentary style and a roundtable format, *Can We Talk?* includes profiles of historical and contemporary Jewish women, frank discussion of culture, politics, and current events, and little-known stories from our past and present.



## Tracking AVF Trends

Projects that receive AVF funding are also bellwethers of change in the greater Jewish community. AVF grantees are exemplars who are redefining how to bridge the gaps in communities they serve, whether through their career, independent project, or student-led organization.

2006

The rise of new Independent Minyanim with alumni spearheading these alternative communities. (Hadar in NYC, Washington Square Minyan in Boston, Tikkun Leil in DC, Kavana in Seattle and Minyan Naaleh in Denver)

2009

Rise in interest in supplemental Jewish education for children as more alumni start families (Darkhei Noam Children's Siddur, Hyde Park Jewish Enrichment Center, Olam Montessori School)

2013

Projects focused on LGBT and inclusion issues in Israel (Jerusalem Gay Group, The Normal Heart)



# Thanks to our supporters

This year, for the first time ever, we turned to our Bronfman community to partner with us in supporting the BYFI mission. We raised over **\$118,376**, a truly impressive milestone for our community.

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We are so thankful for the outpouring of support we received from alumni, parents and friends, and excited to be activating our community in determining the future of The Bronfman Fellowships. Though we have raised money since 2005 to support the Alumni Venture Fund, this was the first year that donors were able to designate their gift towards the BYFI budget.

Our alumni are showing that young Jews are excited to be equal partners in funding their Jewish experiences, and willing to contribute their voices, time and money in advocating for a very different model of Jewish community. These contributions ensure that the program's core mission as a need-blind, merit-based Jewish community of diverse thinkers and doers remains strong.





We'd like to thank:

**319** individual donors

The **66** donors who increased their gift this year

**63** Amitim who donated to the 2015 campaign

Our **62** first time donors

Our 26 class representatives who helped talk to their peers about the campaign

All members of the 2014-2015 Alumni Advisory Board and Vaad

Our 2015 Fellows and Amitim for their class gifts

Donors from EVERY one of our Fellowship years

Adam R. Bronfman for his commitment and guidance

The Samuel Bronfman Foundation for their sustaining support

Edgar M. Bronfman z"l for his founding vision

We are thrilled to have you as partners in BYFI's growth!

# 2015 Budget

**\$1.61 million**

7% from individual donors



93% anchor grant from The Samuel Bronfman Foundation

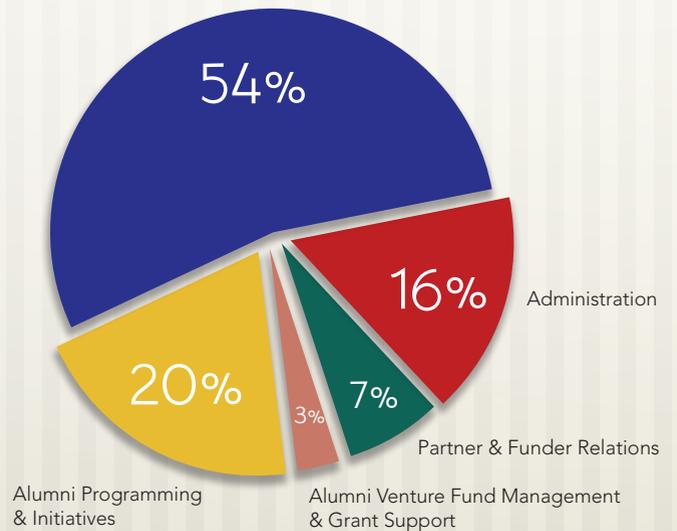
Thank you to our in kind supporters, who are an integral part of keeping our operation costs low by donating space and professional support.

- Beit Avichai Israel
- Diamond McCarthy LLP
- Foundation for Jewish Camp
- Hebrew College
- Mechon Hadar
- The NYU Bronfman Center
- Paul Hastings LLP
- The Shalom Hartman Institute of North America
- The Samuel Bronfman Foundation

**Thanks to  
The Samuel Bronfman Foundation  
for its ongoing support,  
including the \$25.52 million  
investment in the Fellowships  
over the past 30 years.**

What are The Bronfman Fellowships' expenses?

Recruitment, Selection, Fellowship Year



## Our Governance Structure

### The Bronfman Fellowships Board of Directors

Dana Raucher, '89 President  
Ned Foss, Vice President and Treasurer  
Danny Greene, '00 Secretary

### The Alumni Advisory Board

Danny Greene, '00 President, Sustainability Chair	David Bell, '93	Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, '10
Zach Bleemer, '08 Governance Co-Chair	Rafi Bildner, '10	Sophie Oberfield, '96
Noah Kippley-Ogman, '03 AVF Co-Chair	Ellie Gettinger, '98	Sarah Rapoport, '05
Melissa Korn, '01 Community Chair	Ryder Kessler, '03	Ella Shteingart, '88
Laura Liebman, '88 AVF Co-Chair	Alana Kinarsky, '03	Skyler Siegel, '10
Igor Timofeyev, '91 Governance Co-Chair	Hannah Mayne, '02	Jonathan Wachter, '96

### The Amitei Bronfman Va'ad Advisory Board

Nerya Cohen, '99 President  
Eyal Aviv, '01  
Igal Avrahami, '00  
Snunit Baraban, '04  
Elisheva Gillis, '09  
Lara Kfir, '99  
Noa Kwartaz-Avraham, '99  
Adi Livny, '02  
Esther Meir Horowitz, '02  
Shir Meshali, '07  
Nadav Penn, '03  
Jonathan Reiner, '01  
Nadav Wachs, '09

### Staff

Rebecca Voorwinde – Executive Director

North America:

Ava Charne – Administrative Director  
Louise Derzansky – Programmatic and Administrative Coordinator  
Aliza Gans – Staff Fellow  
Hannah Kapnik Ashar – Community Educator  
Heather Smith – Director of Finance  
Aaron Steinberg – Manager of Alumni Initiatives

Israel:

Daphna Ezrachi – Educator  
Neta Polizer – Educator  
Alissa Symon – Alumni Program Coordinator  
Orit Yavniely – Office Manager  
Daphna Yizrael – Director, Israel Office  
Rabbi Mishael Zion – Community Scholar and Rabbi

**THE  
BRONFMAN  
FELLOWSHIPS**

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