

## **Building Connections between Russian Speaking Jews in Boston and Haifa**

*The Russian speaking Jewish community fears that the next generation will lose its connection to Jewish values and the Jewish people. Oranim brought together educators and volunteers from Boston and Haifa to address this concern.*

The Israel Seminar for Russian speaking Jewish educators and volunteers from Boston and Haifa was a transformative experience for participants. Facilitated by the Oranim International School in May 2015, the seminar created meaningful professional dialogue between educators and lay leaders who work with Russian speaking Jews in Israel and America. This dialogue enabled the two groups to learn from one another and work together to build Jewish Peoplehood and connections to Israel among Russian speaking Jews.



Through meetings with members of the Russian speaking Jewish community in Israel, the participants from Boston gained a better understanding of the issues of Jewish identity and community that their counterparts in Israel are facing, and a better understanding of their own community. Highlights of the trip included meetings with Victoria Shtaiman, founder and head of Tzabar Parents, an educational NGO for bilingual Russian and Hebrew speaking Israeli families, and with Shirat HaYam Carmel, the Russian Reform Jewish community in Haifa. These encounters and others, together with the group discussions they sparked, enabled the group to gain insights into the unique needs of Russian speaking Jewish families in Israel and the United States.

### **Strengthening Jewish Identity and Peoplehood**

At the end of the program, participants spoke about how meaningful the program had been for them in terms of their Jewish identity and connection to Israel:

- “I knew that I was Jewish, but now I feel Jewish.”
- “I discovered the depth of the Jewish people’s roots and my own roots.”
- “I made a connection to this place [Israel] which is my home and my native land.”

The educators and volunteers are now bringing this excitement about Judaism and Israel back to the families they work with in Boston, in the hopes of bringing those families to Israel so that they too can gain knowledge and passion about Israel and Judaism.

The Haifa educators visited their counterparts in Boston in October so that they could get to know the Boston Russian speaking Jewish community better, and the two groups could continue working together to bring Russian speaking Jewish families closer to the Jewish People and Israel.

## **Family to Family**

This delegation is part of “Family to Family,” a seed project that builds ongoing interpersonal and intercommunal connections between young Jewish families of Russian descent in Boston and Haifa. For the last eight years, this project has connected families across the world, from different communities and nationalities, and connected generations to one another.

Family to Family is part of Oranim International School’s ongoing partnership with the municipality of Haifa and the Boston-Haifa Connection. Read more about this ten year partnership [here](#).