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Hi Cleveland!

My name is Itamar Meromi and I am going to be a Shinshin in Cleveland next year! I am thrilled to start my time in Cleveland in a few months, and thankful for the amazing opportunity. I wanted you to know a little bit about me before my arrival, so I wrote this letter.

I'm 18, and will turn 19 just a few weeks before my arrival in Cleveland. I live with my mom, Yael. I have two sisters, Ronni (22) and Shakked (26); both are currently studying at the university. Shakked is going to get married a week before my arrival at Cleveland, and I am very excited about it! I will be at her wedding, of course. My father, Gonnen z"l, passed away six years ago of cancer. I live in Manof, which is a really small town (this type of settlement is called in Hebrew Yishuv) located in the Galilee, the north of Israel. The community in Manof is very special, and was founded by a group of South African Jews that made Aliyah. I love living here, and this place is a huge part of my identity.

My high school majors are music, history and biology. Though it can get pretty difficult and intense sometimes, I enjoy school. It is interesting and my friends are amazing! My senior year in high school has been very tough, but I'm both glad and sad it's coming to an end.

Music is a big part of my life. I play a few instruments including guitar, bass guitar and drums. I listen to music any time I can. From a very young age my parents and mostly my father listened to a lot of music with me, and that made music a very special thing. My favorite artists are Neil Young, David Bowie, The Beatles and many more!

Besides music, I love playing soccer. I played professionally until the age of 16, when due to a bad injury I was forced to quit. I still play with my friends at least a few times a week. I also enjoy watching soccer, and my favorite club is F.C. Barcelona.

Hiking and traveling are other activities which interest and excite me. I hike a lot in Israel, and I think it's the best way to get to know the country! I also travel a lot with my family. We try to do it as much as we can. We like to travel to places around the world which are very different from what we know, such as Ethiopia, China, Vietnam and Morocco.

In the summer of 9th grade, I joined an amazing organization called "Seeds of Peace" by participating in a multinational summer camp near Portland, Maine. The organization's purpose is to create a dialogue between people from conflicted areas such as the Middle East and South Asia.

Since 3rd grade I am a proud member of "Ha'Ihud Ha'Haklai" (in English – the farmer's union) youth movement. It has nothing to do with farming, though. It is very important to me. The values the movement stands for and everything that it gave me will remain in my heart forever. I will follow them for the rest of my life.

I hope I was able to let you know me a little bit before I start my time in Cleveland. I am very excited to get to know all of you, and to make connections for life

Best regards, Itamar Meromi

