



Michal Katzman

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Hi everyone,

My name is Michal Katzman and I'm excited to be coming to Cleveland in just a few months and to spend an amazing year with you sharing "my Israel"! Though we'll have plenty of opportunities to get to know each other well, I want to share with you in this letter just a few details about myself.

I'm 18 years old and have 3 older brothers. My eldest brother, Matan (29) is a lawyer and an IDF reserve Captain. He and his wife, Nuphar, are expecting a baby boy any day which means I'm about to become an aunt! Ariel (27), an IDF reserve combat soldier, is completing his Electrical Engineering BSc. degree and Ori (22) is currently a soldier in an elite IDF airforce medical evacuation unit (669). Though we are all very close, growing up in a home with three older brothers was oftentimes challenging and taught me many survival skills which I've found very useful.

My senior year in high school is about to end. It's been a very busy year with final exams, including a dance test and recital meant to sum up the past 15 years of ballet, jazz and modern dance that I've studied. It's also been a year of interviews and testing for



different roles in the IDF (for when I enlist after returning from Cleveland), interviewing, preparation and training for the Jewish Agency shnat sherut program and Israeli Scouts (Tsofim).

When I'm not at home, I can usually be found at my "second home", the shevet (the Tsofim compound). I've been an active Tsofim member since 4th grade and have filled many leadership roles. I'm currently a counselor of 9th graders. All of my friends are involved in the Tsofim since this is where we can do what we love to do together. Most of my friends are also going to be shinshinim next year, taking on amazing volunteer roles throughout Israel.

Each summer, for the past several years, I've attended Zionist summer camp at Sprout Lake and Tel Yehuda in New York. The other Israeli campers and I learned a lot about Jewish life in America and shared with our American friends our experiences of being Israeli teens. These experiences made me realize how important the connection is between Jews abroad and in Israel. This led me to apply to be a ShinShinit through the Jewish Agency and I was glad to be selected with 3 other amazing partners to come to Cleveland.



Interestingly, when I told my grandmother that I'd been chosen to come to Cleveland she told me that my family actually had a personal connection to Cleveland. It seems that my great-great maternal grandmother, Miriam Miller, lived in Cleveland for many years. I found letters that she'd written to her family in New York dated 1948 – the same year Israel was founded. This is one of her letters to my great-grandfather -

I wonder if Miriam could ever have imagined having a great-great granddaughter who lives in Israel and is coming to Cleveland! So, without even knowing, I already have one personal link to Cleveland. I can't wait to meet all of you and to spend next year making new friends, sharing experiences and learning together. See you very soon!

B'ahava (with love), Michal Katzman