



Israel in 3D: Meaning and Connection in the Start Up Nation

An interview with Sara Greenberg

This past spring, Sara Greenberg received a joint Masters degree in Public Policy and Business Administration from Harvard University. At Harvard, Sara was on the leadership council for the Harvard Kennedy School Israel Caucus, was a board member of Harvard Hillel, initiated the first joint Arab-Israeli "Prosperity for Peace" Conference at Harvard Business School and started InsideL, a non-profit platform that sends MBA students to Israel for summer internships.

Sara volunteers with a variety of non-profit organizations, including the Hong Kong Holocaust and Tolerance Resource Center of which she is a founding board member. Sara is also a member of Israel's National Women's Lacrosse Team.

We're curious...what will you be up to in 2020?

No idea but my ulpan teacher said she would be disappointed if I didn't know a few more Hebrew words by then!

Just for fun, what hashtag would you give yourself?

#connector

Now to the heart of the matter...When did you first "meet" Israel? What inspired you to learn more?

I first traveled to Israel when I was two, in a cardboard box, in the bulk-head of a plane. My parents and I were visiting my grandmother, who had made aliyah at the age of 49. While Softah would eventually move back to the United States to be closer to her grandchildren, my family continued to travel to Israel, usually

for 10 days at a time every three or four years, including a trip for my Bat Mitzvah on the Southern Steps of the Kotel.

From an early age, probably even from that cardboard box, I knew Israel was an important place. My mother's parents were both Holocaust survivors and growing up my grandfather never ceased to remind me of the importance of the Jewish State, the nation that ensures the Holocaust will never happen again.

How do you stay connected to Israel today?

Now that I am living in Tel Aviv, I feel more connected to Israel and Israeli society than ever before. I am constantly looking to explore and visit new places and love meeting people from all different parts of the country. The second best thing to living in Israel, is getting to share Israel with others. There is something very special about taking around visitors that are seeing and experiencing the country for the first time.

How do you share Israel with others? What motivates you to do this?

In 2012, while working in venture capital in Israel, I realized that many Israeli start-ups, and even larger Israeli companies, were looking to attract foreign talent, particularly in the areas of business development, marketing and sales, and investor relations roles. At the same time, I knew of many friends in the United States who were curious to learn more about the "Start Up Nation." The only thing that was missing? Someone or something to make the shidduch (connection)!

When I arrived at Harvard, I was determined to build a platform that would serve as matching service between MBA students in the U.S. looking for summer internships and growing Israeli companies in need of talent. Fortunately, there was another woman in my class who had also lived and worked in Israel, and shared the same goals. Della Heiman and I quickly became best friends and almost immediately set to work on building Insidell.

Insidell is a non-profit matching platform that connects top-tier MBA students to Israeli companies for 2-3 month internships. While Insidell started as a pilot exclusively focused on Harvard Business School, the program has since expanded to other elite business schools and this past summer featured interns from the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Turkey, India and China.

We believe that MBAs generate a lot of value for Israeli companies in the form of their proximity and understanding of target markets, relevant previous experience, unique perspectives and useful connections/networks. For the MBA interns, a summer experience in Israel affords an opportunity to see and experience Israel firsthand and also has the potential to inspire students to consider Israel for future job and/or investment opportunities. Just this past summer, two interns accepted full-time offers from their Israeli host companies!

Thanks to the generosity of several foundations, Insidell continues to grow. With a rock star full-time director based in Tel Aviv now in place, we hope to bring 100 MBA interns to Israel by 2020.

How has your relationship with Israel changed over time?

Despite understanding the importance of Israel from an early age, it was not until I lived and worked in Israel in 2013, that Israel changed from a country that was just important, to a country that was also meaningful to me.

Living in Israel, I saw how minorities in the country, including women and Arab citizens, enjoyed equal rights. I saw that despite the constant threat of terrorism, the Israeli court system regularly holds the government and military to the highest standards of the rule of law. I started to appreciate Israel not only as a Jewish State, but as a country that shared my liberal values.

I also began to appreciate Israel as a nation powering the next wave of global innovation. After Silicon Valley, Tel Aviv was ranked the world's second best start-up ecosystem and ranked number one in the world in start-ups per capita. How was it possible that a country of eight million people was only fourth in line behind the U.S., Canada and China with the most listed companies on the NASDAQ and NYSE exchanges combined?

When I left Israel three years ago to start my Masters degree (MBA/MPP) at Harvard, I was determined to one day return to the country that I loved, admired and had a personal connection to. I felt grateful to have been born at a time when the Jewish people could build their own state in their homeland, and I wanted to be a part of it. I was inspired by the "Start-Up Nation" and I wanted to make sure Israel continued to grow. I am delighted, and excited now that I've graduated, to be returning as a citizen.

If you could tell the world one thing about Israel (or an aspect of Israel) what would it be?

You can't learn about Israel or Israeli society by reading the front page of The New York Times. You need to visit! If you're an MBA, check out [Insidell.org](https://insidell.org) and submit your application today!



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– Sara Greenberg, Insidell