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Northwood and Pinner
Liberal Synagogue

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JFS teacher ”

Building for our future starts in the summertime

SUMMER IS here. There is one facet of the season I miss for not being a child and that is the summer programmes our wonderful youth movements run. My parents, Rabbi Dr Andrew and Sharon Goldstein, established Kadimah summer school in the year that I was born. For the first 15 years of my life, the two weeks of Kadimah were as much a part of my Jewish ritual life as the festival cycle.

While Kadimah and youth movements are not for everyone, it was a time of great joy for me. As well as the sports, arts, crafts and culture, the stand-out moments were the innovative educational programmes about the prophets and the rabbis. Text study was accompanied by appearances of the Punk Prophets and Rockin' Rabbis; the supervisors (now called *madricim* – leaders) dressed-up with air guitars and drumming on dining-room tables. Some of these punk prophets and rockin' rabbis went on to become rabbis and a JFS teacher. I'll leave you to work out who they are.

Another inspirational factor was the diversity of those who attended. People from all religious and secular Jewish backgrounds and those from abroad: Israelis and Americans, Swiss and Dutch. Of the latter, Rabbi Kathleen de Magtige-Middleton, now at Middlesex New Synagogue and her family, opened the door to years of Kabbalat Torah (confirmation) trips to Amsterdam. The result: so many rabbis and other Jewish professionals and lay leaders whose experiences and friendships expanded their horizons and

enriched their Jewish experience. These were formed and continue to be formed on our summer programmes.

My visits to Machaneh Kadimah are now restricted to the odd teaching gig. I am too old to be a participant or leader. Therefore, I had to innovate together with LJI-NETZER who run Machaneh Kadimah, to gain entry this year.

Indeed, we are doing so in a manner that is consistent to the values and programming that made and makes Kadimah a vital Jewish experience.

Having made contact with a resident of the village of Nahaf, just north of Karmiel, through a New Israel Fund event, my synagogue and LJI-NETZER are hosting seven teenagers from that village, Palestinian, Muslim citizens of Israel.

As part of a policy of considered engagement, we are providing opportunities for these teenagers who are proud Israeli citizens, to make connections and friendships with Jewish peers from the UK.

At Kadimah, they will have a full programme of *mitgashim* – encounters – formal interfaith dialogue and study sessions, exploring their complex relationships through art, games, drama, a prom and camping out together for a night.

Next year, on their Israel tour, our young people will visit Nahaf to further understand life as a teenager in the village, as well as meeting Jewish teenagers in Karmiel and other towns in Israel.

Considered engagement means encouraging debate and providing experiences that are controversial and confront the cutting edge challenges of today and tomorrow. It means sometimes participating in places and in topics where others fear to enter and realising that there can be benefit in interacting with those who may have contrary views rather than simply exposing ourselves to scenarios that accord with our beliefs and positions.

The engagement with the village of Nahaf is one we intend to pursue into the future.

We are not so narrow-minded or self-congratulating to suggest that this will solve all the problems that Israel faces. But it is an attempt to create avenues of understanding between those who will be citizens of Israel of all religions and backgrounds after a state of Palestine is created; and with us, who will eternally support the state of Israel.

By providing inspirational and diverse educational programmes during the summers, youth movements provide our children with new and enhanced tools with which to enter the next academic year.

Recorded in a famous Talmudic passage, Rabbi Eleazar said in the name of Rabbi Hannina: "Do not call them *banayich* (your children) but *bonayich* (your builders)."

Our children are our builders of the future. When they establish lasting friendships born of challenging perceptions and attitudes, they will continue making considered engagements that will build better communities and societies.