

# SPEAKER BIO



הסוכנות היהודית  
ללארץ ישראל  
THE JEWISH AGENCY  
FOR ISRAEL

Securing the Jewish Future for Generations



## Tomi Buchler

Tomi Buchler was born and raised in Budapest, Hungary. “My story is unique,” he says, “Because I was born into one of the few Jewish families in Budapest that did not assimilate during Communism. My parents gave me a strong Jewish identity. I attended Sunday school and Jewish summer camps, was involved with the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement, and participated in the *Taglit*-Birthright program, which further grew my connection to Israel and my Jewish identity.”

Tomi recently completed a Ph.D. from Elte University of Budapest. He is also a graduate of the University of Haifa’s Peace and Conflict Studies program, and of the Refugee Studies program at Wesley College. Additionally, he holds certification as a teacher of Judaism, Hebrew, and Jewish history from Orze University.

Between his studies, Tomi decided to lead a *Taglit*-Birthright trip. “It was when I was 19, as a *madrish* (educator/trip leader) on a Hungarian Birthright trip that I realized what a bubble I had grown up in,” he says. “I would ask participants if they knew what a *kippah* or a *mezuzah* was, and they didn’t know. They celebrated Christmas but knew little about Jewish holidays. This was the reality for the majority of young Hungarian Jews. I knew then I had a responsibility, when I returned to Hungary, to share with my Jewish peers the beautiful Jewish traditions and heritage that had been passed down to me by my parents and to empower the young Jews of Budapest to reclaim their identity.”

After returning to Israel on a Jewish Agency Masa program, Tomi helped found, and currently directs, The Jewish Agency’s regional leadership program, *Minyanim*, which develops and empowers young Jewish leaders in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Serbia/Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Poland, and Israel.

*Minyanim* leverages The Jewish Agency’s Israel experience programs and other cultural and identity programming to engage and build young Jewish leaders in Central-Eastern Europe. According to Tomi, “Israel is the key to building proud Jews in Central and Eastern Europe. Our people’s history is very important. But our recent history in this region is tragic – and today we still fight anti-Semitism. We cannot forget our past and we must learn its lessons and honor our ancestors. But our past tragedies are not the basis to grow a strong Jewish future in the region. Israel gives us a language, a land, and a people. Connection to Israel is critical here because it gives us the strength and confidence to be proud Jews – to build a Jewish future.”

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### *About The Jewish Agency for Israel:*

Established in 1929, The Jewish Agency for Israel has worked to secure a vibrant Jewish future for 85 years. The Jewish Agency was instrumental in founding and building the State of Israel and we continue to serve as the official link between the Jewish state and Jewish communities everywhere. This global partnership has enabled us to address the Jewish People’s greatest challenges in every generation.

Today, we connect the global Jewish family, bringing Jews to Israel, and Israel to Jews. We build a better society in Israel - and beyond - energizing young Israelis and their worldwide peers to rediscover a collective sense of Jewish purpose. The Jewish Agency continues to be the Jewish world’s first responder, prepared to rescue and bring Jews home to Israel from countries where they are at-risk.

*More information can be found at: [jewishagency.org](http://jewishagency.org).*