

I have been fortunate enough to represent USA in soccer at both the 2013 Maccabiah Games in Israel and the 2015 Pan American Games in Santiago. Each time I have competed with Jews from all over America and against Jews from all over the globe. This incredible opportunity has enabled me to learn about my Jewish identity, play my favorite game at an international level, and connect with people I would never meet if not for Maccabi. The Israel Connect program allows the Maccabi USA delegation to travel throughout the Jewish State and explore the sites while learning about the history of this ancient (and new) country. But beyond the desert views from Masada and the bustle of the Tel Aviv shuk are the people that are alongside me, as we together experience Israel. The connections I have made with my teammates and fellow USA athletes are so unique and strong. Coming from a shared appreciation of and curiosity for Judaism along with a love for sports (specifically soccer) my new friends have already left an important impact on me - and we're only one week into the experience. Everyone is interested in each other and is eager to learn about both our differences and similarities outside of Israel and the Maccabi world. I have stayed very close to my teammates from the 2013 team, and I am looking forward to making life-long friends in this 20th Maccabiah Games. I am eternally grateful for the experiences and opportunities Maccabi USA has provided me with. Maccabi USA has shown me new places and introduced me to new people while simultaneously allowing me to explore Israel and my Jewish roots. I feel so lucky to represent both America and Judaism with pride. Thank you Maccabi and let's go USA!