



OTIC International Interfaith Diplomacy Fellowship End-of-Year Report - 2025

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Executive Summary

The **OTIC International Fellowship Program 2025** successfully advanced its mission of deepening Jewish engagement with other faith traditions, fostering interreligious dialogue, and cultivating a global network of faith leaders. Across the year, 15 fellows from diverse backgrounds participated in structured learning, lectures, and peer exchanges, resulting in meaningful cross-cultural and theological insights. The program operated in two different groups due to time zone restrictions: one for North America and Europe, and the other for Australia. Ten out of the fifteen participants responded to their end-of-year survey.

Key Outcomes

- **Increased Understanding:** Fellows reported improved knowledge of Jewish perceptions of other religions (mean: 3.6/5) and greater understanding of Islam and Christianity (mean: 3.8/5).
- **Program Impact:** Participants expressed a strong likelihood to recommend the program (mean: 4.0/5), highlighting both intellectual enrichment and relational trust-building.
- **Scholarly Engagement:** Lectures by figures such as Rabbi Yakov Nagen, Sheikh al-Tamimi, and Rebecca Abrahamson enriched participants' perspectives, especially on the Jewish roots of Islam, extremism, and diverse streams within Islam.
- **Global Reach:** Fellows reported applying insights in contexts as diverse as the Caribbean, Germany, and Australia – strengthening grassroots dialogue and new interfaith partnerships.

Participant Feedback

- **Strengths:** The program's structured flow, goodwill among participants, and exposure to multiple faith perspectives were widely praised. Several fellows described it as one of the most impactful interfaith initiatives they had experienced.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Participants requested greater Muslim representation, stronger diversity (geographic, ideological, political), more structured administration, and increased peer-to-peer interaction. Suggestions

הופכים את הדת לחלק מהפתרון • MAKING RELIGION PART OF THE SOLUTION

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also included adding Evangelical Christian engagement and exploring antisemitism in mainstream Protestant settings.

- **Format:** Online study pods were meaningful for some, though limited in scope. Many emphasized the need for in-person components to strengthen commitment and collaboration.

Strategic Value

The Fellowship not only expanded participants' theological and cultural literacy but also provided practical frameworks for advancing dialogue in their own communities. Alumni networks emerging from this program hold significant potential to shape future interfaith initiatives, with opportunities to build on the program's scholarly rigor, relational goodwill, and global connections.

Key Metrics

Metric	N	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
To what extent do you feel you now understand Jewish perceptions of other religions?	10	3.6	4.0	0.8	2	5
To what extent do you feel you now have a better understanding of Islam and Christianity?	10	3.8	4.0	0.87	2	5
How likely are you to recommend this program to your friends or colleagues?	10	4.0	4.0	1.0	2	5



Participants' Reflections

In one or two sentences, what do you feel is the main thing you gained from this program and that we should definitely keep for next year? (N=10)

Responses
A network of people working on the field. A better understanding of different branches of Islam.
The flow of the course is structured in a beautiful way to lead a fellow to actively understand Islam, Islamic-Jewish opportunities for peace-building and interfaith dialogue; however, the historic-theological-academic discussions with Rebecca in the breakout group completely changed my thinking in exploring the Jewish roots of Islam.
The vision and some of the reasons for the program are very relevant.
In my opinion, I gained a wonderful perspective on how people of other faiths see the world, for example, how the Muslims view Jews and their faith. This perspective, when you cannot see yourself, but see yourself through the eyes of others, was simple huge for me.
The good will from all the sides.

In one or two sentences, what would you improve or change in the program for next year? (N=10)

Responses
More participation from Muslim side. More diversity in geographical, ideological and political terms.
Stronger guidance on interfaith opportunities with evangelical Christian's and tools to address antisemitism in the mainstream Protestant churches
The administration of the program was somewhat problematic. WhatsApp is not the best way to create a schedule, and I was unsure how the readings were integrated into the program. People not committing in advance did not create the momentum required. If we are being asked to be agents for change we need to closely understand the materials and the direction. (Clearly the War got in the way of a lot of planning.) Intake and interviews before the program are critical.
I would suggest 1. more interaction between the program participants themselves, more horizontal connections. 2. lectures on topics requested by the participants.
More critique non Jewish speakers.



Name one or two key lecturers or topics that were especially meaningful to you. (N=10)

Responses
Intro to Islam and Sheikh al-Tamimi
Rebecca's ongoing discussion on the Jewish roots of Islam; rabbi Nagen's class with us
The lecture on the Muslim brotherhood and extremism.
Rabbi Yakov Nagen and Sheikh Hassan
Streams in Islam

Did this fellowship influence your perspective or motivation to engage in interfaith work going forward? If so, how? (N=10)

Responses
Yes, it shows me there are serious people involved on Interfaith work, with a clear understanding which goes well beyond goodwill.
The work is hard in the Caribbean; Muslim leaders do not want to engage - but I'm able to share some of what I'm learning with Muslim laypeople. This has been wonderful in people to people building. It has also helped me indirectly in my work with evangelical support for Israel and navigating some of the difficult parts of engaging with evangelicals who have motives of converting me.
Not necessarily yet. I was motivated beforehand.
It definitely did. In Germany, I started spending more time and resources on the Ahmadiyya community, whom I got to know well at the conference in Washington D.C. and was impressed by their theological principles. There is a chance for mutual dialogue with them.
To keep searching for a dialogue

If you participated in an online study group ("pod") with non-Jewish peers, to what extent did you find this experience meaningful? (N=7)

Responses
Very meaningful in academic terms but I would love to see more Havruta style study with our Muslim colleagues.
I was in the curriculum for peace - EXTREMELY MEANINGFUL
This pod has only had one meeting and it was meaningful.
I didn't
Unfortunately, not



Anything else you would like to share? (N=5)

Responses
An in-person component is critical to invest the group into the work we are doing. I know some came to the interreligious conference, but because of the lack of real communication I did not see what my place was, including my financial obligations. However, there is a lot of potential in this program, and I hope we can do something substantive.
Thanks a lot und big big Yashar Koach to Rabbi Lavi and Rabbi Nagen for the Program !!
I've been involved in Interfaith work for some 30 years, and this program rates among one of the best things I have done in the field. It is based on rigorous scholarship and its breadth and contact with religious leaders across the world is awesome! It was also a great way of bringing together Australian religious leaders in a focused, deliberate and thoughtful way. Furthermore, it paves the way for us developing our Interfaith work on this continent. Thank you to Aharon and all those on the OTIC team who dedicate so much of their time, talent and energy.
Thank you for this opportunity! Life got very busy for me this year, so I didn't necessarily get to participate to the fullest, but I really appreciated the chance to be part of an important conversation that I hope can continue here in Australia
Would love to be able to co-create the vision