

**Israel (IBA) Radio—Moreshet Channel, Evening News Broadcast
March 22, 2011**

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**Interview with Shira Ruderman
Interviewer: Aharon Menachem**

Aharon Menachem: The Ruderman Program, whose goal is to educate Members of Knesset about the American Jewish community, was inaugurated at the Knesset today. The program will also expose MK's to the diversity of views that characterize the American Jewish community and its connection to Israel. We welcome Shira Ruderman, the wife of Jay Ruderman, President of the Ruderman Foundation.

Shira Ruderman: Hello and good evening

Aharon Menachem: This is certainly a very important program. How will it be implemented?

Shira Ruderman: Six Knesset members, from the largest parties, Kadima, Labor and Likud, will fly to the US for a 6-day seminar in Boston and New York, during which they will hear from experts from Brandeis University, experts on the history of the American Jewish community, and also meet the presidents of the leading Jewish organizations active in the North American Jewish world. In the evenings they will meet with local leaders, business people and local philanthropists, and will attend the AIPAC Annual Dinner in Boston. This is an academic partnership with Brandeis and with Jewish organizations we have had contacts with for years. This is the first program of its kind, and we hope it will meet our expectations.

Aharon Menachem: Why inaugurate a program like this when there is already an existing connection? Another question: When the person who speaks for Israel, does the PR for Israel, doesn't speak English well, for instance a Member of Knesset, this is a problem? And some of the MK's do not know English well. Has this been considered?

Shira Ruderman: I think that first of all, I should say that the reasons for establishing such a program are based on our understanding of this very clear connection, however it is always a bit one-sided; I mean MK's who travel to the US speak to these communities about Israel, but they have never stopped for a moment to listen and understand. How does the community operate, what are its reasons, what motivates it, what is its history? What changes are taking place in the American Jewish community? Because many changes are taking place. That is one component. The second component is that because the Jewish connection is so deep, every decision of an MK in the Israeli government has some clear and immediate impact on the Jewish Diaspora. So we thought it would be right that the MK's go there to listen, learn and understand. Understand the nature of the relationship, the future implications on the Jewish People and on the State of Israel. This is a much deeper

connection than just feeling, I call this the historical aspect... OK the Jews in the US will continue to support Israel, especially when it comes to financial support. I think the community today is a much more sophisticated one. Israel is much more stable. It's a strong country. The relationship is becoming a more challenging one. Both sides have the responsibility of understanding the implications of this trend on both sides and on the nature of the relationship.

Aharon Menachem: You speak about the strong connection of American Jewry to Israel, to the Israeli leadership. Do the Jews there really know the MK's and the Ministers, just like Israelis know? Do they take an interest?

Shira Ruderman: I can't answer for the Jewish Diaspora, but I can tell you that from my own experience, whoever is involved is also knowledgeable. But most of the Jewish community is not involved on a daily basis in an active manner. They hear what they hear, either from the news or from relatives or friends who visit. Therefore, we have the responsibility, both the American Jewish community and the State of Israel, to expand the relationship. Not only to make headlines, as sometimes happens as we all know. I can tell you that in Boston and New York, they are getting ready to welcome the Ruderman Fellows. They are really looking forward to this encounter. It will also be a diverse group. Today we met with the MK's for an intensive 4-hour preparation and I was very impressed with their motivation to listen and learn. They all said that this is the very first time that they are asked to listen and learn, not only talk about different topics when they really don't understand much about the audience.

Aharon Menachem: There we go then, a program that will be very beneficial to the MK's and also beneficial to the American Jewish community. Shira Ruderman, wife of Jay Ruderman, President of the Ruderman Foundation and founder of this initiative. Thanks, good luck and good evening.