

Donor Profiles



Aron Abecassis & Fiance Michelle Hansel

Live in: Beverly Hills

Occupation: Successful entrepreneur and investor with major holdings in commercial real estate and start-up businesses in the U.S., Canada and Israel.

Family details: Three children, **Lilia**, 11; **Isaac**, 9; and **Joel**, 8. Engaged to be married to **Michelle Hansel** in August 2007.

Joined The Foundation family in: Contributed a percentage of his commercial real estate holdings to open a Donor Advised Fund in December 2004.

Personal information and community involvement: Aron fled Morocco as a small boy with his family in 1970, leaving everything behind and settling in Toronto. His strong entrepreneurial and philanthropic spirit appeared at a young age. Today, he supports numerous charities, including the Perutz Etz Jacob Hebrew Academy and the Etta Israel Center in L.A., senior housing for Moroccan Jews in Canada, and programs for Portugal's conversos returning to Judaism. He also funds interest-free business loan programs through the Jewish Free Loan Association in Los Angeles, as well as in Toronto and Montreal, and the American Joint Distribution Committee in Argentina, Israel and the Ukraine.

Why I joined The Foundation: "I opened the fund at The Foundation because I feel that it is important to lead by example and put my money where my mouth is. My real mission is to encourage others to give more generously and not just 10 percent of their income, but 10 percent of their assets, especially people in real estate who make millions of dollars in appreciation on their holdings."

Focus of our philanthropy: "I believe in diversification, both in business and my charitable giving. I'm most passionate, though, about creating interest-free loan funds to help Jews and other people around the world start their own businesses and become financially self-sufficient. Helping our brethren in need is a concept rooted in the Torah, and nothing brings more joy than making a difference in other people's lives, especially if it will change the future of an entire family."

The most meaningful aspect of working with The Foundation: "The Foundation makes it easy for me to accomplish my philanthropic goals and work together with the community. It also gives me the flexibility to make a large contribution at the end of the year for tax purposes if need be and decide later where I want the money to go."

How I plan to instill philanthropic values in the next generation: "I want to teach my children through example, the same way my father taught me. I hope by influencing my children and friends to give, they in turn will influence others."

The Development Perspective

Aron came to The Foundation with the express purpose of using some of his real estate assets to fund his philanthropy. The income generated by the properties goes directly into his Donor Advised Fund, which is much easier to manage and offers significant tax benefits over a private foundation. Once the properties are sold, the proceeds will go into the fund and avoid capital gains taxes. Aron can also distribute the funds to the organizations he supports. This is a great solution for someone like Aron who is engaged in so many different and noteworthy causes.

— Baruch Littman, Vice President, Development