

HAZON & PEARLSTONE ANNOUNCE MERGER; JAKIR MANELA NAMED AS NEW CEO

NATIONAL - Hazon, the largest faith-based environmental organization in the U.S., and Pearlstone, one of the largest Jewish retreat centers and Jewish outdoor education sites in North America, announced today that their boards of directors have unanimously approved a proposal to merge the two organizations. Together we are launching a powerful new organization that will catalyze the JOFEE movement ([Jewish Outdoor Food Farming & Environmental Education](#)) and the field of Jewish retreating for years to come. The new national organization will be called Hazon, with Pearlstone serving as national headquarters based in Baltimore and with offices in New York and additional major impact hubs at [Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center](#) in Connecticut and [Hazon in Detroit](#).

Both Pearlstone and Hazon have struck a deep chord engaging young children to senior citizens in immersive experiences integrating Jewish wisdom and inspiration, food and farm, song and spirit, community, sustainability, and justice. The shared mission is to lead a transformative movement deeply weaving sustainability into the fabric of Jewish life, in order to create a healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable world for all. Through our programs—[Adamah](#), [Family Farm Camp](#), [Farm & Forest School](#), the [Hazon Seal of Sustainability](#), [Jewish Youth Climate Movement](#), [the JOFEE Network Gathering](#), [Teva](#) and more—and a wide range of strategic partnerships across the US and in Israel, Hazon and Pearlstone will catalyze significant culture change and multiply our impact locally, nationally, and globally.

The combined organization will manage an estimated \$12 million budget, over 200 staff, and will directly engage nearly 50,000 program participants annually. The merger is not premised on any job losses, and after extensive due diligence with our merger consultants at [La Piana](#), we can already see that the combined entity will be more impactful with integrated staff, systems, and programming.

The first board chair will be Marina Lewin of New York and the vice chair will be Aaron Max of Baltimore. Jakir Manela will serve as the organization's inaugural CEO.

The idea for this merger arose as Nigel Savage, Hazon's founder and CEO, told the Hazon board in the summer of 2020 that he wanted to step down as CEO by August 2021.

*"Nigel founded Hazon 21 years ago, and under his leadership Hazon has steadily grown, evolved and thrived" says **Marina Lewin**, board chair of Hazon. "He steps down as CEO with our great gratitude, and great blessings for the future." And at this point in Hazon's history, we are delighted to welcome Jakir Manela, one of the outstanding leaders of this generation, as our next CEO. In his hands, the combined organization is entering the post-Covid era with a stable and growing team, strong programmatic momentum, growing revenues, and in solid financial shape."*

***Emile Bendit**, Pearlstone's board chair, said, "It is clear that Pearlstone and Hazon have deeply shared values, vision, mission, and culture. We have felt great resonance and alignment throughout the merger exploration and negotiations process, and we are all truly thrilled to see this merger come to fruition."*

Prior to becoming the Executive Director of Pearlstone in 2012, Jakir Manela was a recognized leader in the Jewish sustainability movement. Manela was trained at Isabella Freedman as a

Teva Jewish outdoor environmental educator and then went on to launch Kayam Farm at Pearlstone in 2007 before taking over as Pearlstone's Executive Director in 2012.

*"Teva, Isabella Freedman, Hazon, and Pearlstone have changed my life in profound ways, and I'm now deeply inspired to help lead a movement that can change many more lives now and into the future." says incoming CEO, **Jakir Manela**. "The JOFEE movement (Jewish Outdoor, Food, Farming & Environmental Education) is truly one of the most powerful forces in American Jewish life today, and together we are poised for exponential impact and culture change moving forward. None of this would be possible without Nigel's visionary leadership, and I'm honored to take over the leadership of Hazon from someone who's been a friend, a partner and a mentor for many years."*

In a joint statement, founders Richie Pearlstone & Josh Fidler, past board chair P.J. Pearlstone, and President & CEO of the Associated Jewish Community of Baltimore, Marc Terrill, said:

"We have watched Pearlstone go from an idea to a retreat center to a thriving institution that we have long believed has significance beyond the boundaries of the Baltimore Jewish community. We are thrilled that Pearlstone will now be the home of what we expect and intend will become one of the most exciting institutions in American Jewish life in the coming decade and beyond."

Nigel Savage, Hazon's outgoing CEO, said, *"I'm obviously deeply committed to Hazon. I have been to many retreats at Pearlstone and have watched it grow and thrive under Jakir's leadership. I believe strongly in this merger, and it has been my very great pleasure to say privately to both boards and both staffs, and now very publicly, that I am simply thrilled that Jakir will be CEO of this new merged enterprise. I have known him, admired him and respected him for twenty years, and he has my full and complete support, now and in the future."*

Aliza Mazor, Upstart's Chief Field Building Officer, acted as an advisor to the merger negotiations committee, and has worked with Pearlstone, Hazon and many other Jewish nonprofits for many years. She said, *"It's exciting to see a merger of two such healthy and high impact organizations. This is not a merger borne out of crisis, but rather out of opportunity. The potential to grow existing programs and leverage two world-class retreat centers and synergistic programming through a single organization is immense. This merger greatly increases the brightness of the Jewish future."*

"Hazon and Pearlstone have been integral to the Jewish community for many years. This merger was a natural next step for the organizations to have even greater impact in building a sustainable Jewish environmental movement," said Amia Grashin, Senior Consultant at La Piana Consulting. *"It was inspiring to be a part of a process where all of those involved agreed on their values and vision for the future, not to mention the commitment, respect, and trust that was apparent every time we met."*

Nigel Savage will continue in a new part-time role with Hazon, based in Israel starting in January 2022. Beginning August 1, 2021, Jakir Manela will assume leadership in working with each board and staff to maximize our collective impact, begin operational integration, and work towards final merger closing in 2022.

End of statement

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