Shabtai: Yale's Elite Secret Society and Its Influential Network

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> Shabtai is a secretive elite network founded at Yale in 1996 that brings together future senators, politicians, military officials, media figures, and Israeli leaders for private dinners and discussions. Despite claiming to groom Jewish leaders, many known members are not Jewish, and the organization maintains lifetime membership and confidential operations with minimal public transparency.

SAŽETAK

This presentation examines Shabtai, a little-known secret society based at Yale University that operates as an elite networking organization for cultivating future leaders across politics, media, business, military, and foreign government sectors. Founded in 1996 by Rabbi Shmuley Hecht, Ben Karp, and Cory Booker, and financed by Israeli-American businessman Benny Shabtai, the organization maintains strict confidentiality around its membership and hosts private dinners with a no-phones policy. The speaker documents connections between the organization and prominent figures including senators, Pentagon officials, Israeli cabinet ministers, and business executives. The presentation also traces documented relationships between the organization's principal financial backer and Jeffrey Epstein, including travel to Israel and invitations to Shabtai events. The speaker argues that understanding Shabtai illuminates how elite networks function as informal power structures through relationship-building and lifetime professional connections, operating largely outside public awareness despite their influence on policy, media, and leadership across multiple sectors.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

Shabtai is a secretive Yale-based network founded in 1996 that maintains lifetime membership, confidential rolls, and private meetings with no phones policy, hosting conversations between students and influential figures from politics, media, business, military, and foreign governments.

The organization was founded by Rabbi Shmuley Hecht, Ben Karp (brother of Palantir CEO Alex Karp), and Yale student Cory Booker, and was financed by Israeli-

American businessman Benny Shabtai, who purchased properties to house the organization.

While Shabtai describes its purpose as grooming future leaders of the Jewish people, documented members include non-Jewish individuals such as Vivek Ramaswamy, JD Vance, Michael Knowles, and others with stated pro-Israel positions and political ambitions.

Notable speakers and participants have included Democratic and Republican senators, New York Times columnists, Israeli government ministers including National Security Minister Amir Ben Gvir, Pentagon officials, and hedge fund executives, providing students with extraordinary access to established power networks.

Benny Shabtai, the organization's principal financial backer, had documented relationships with Jeffrey Epstein, including being scheduled to travel to Epstein's private island and traveling to Israel with Epstein in 2008 while Epstein faced criminal charges.

The organization has invited Jeffrey Epstein to dinners, as evidenced by released documents describing the group as designed to groom future leaders of the Jewish people, though the extent of Epstein's involvement remains unclear.

Shabtai exemplifies how elite networks at universities function as informal power infrastructure through lifetime relationship-building, with members maintaining professional connections across government, media, business, and foreign policy sectors decades after graduation.

ČLANAK

An Elite Network at Yale University

What if there exists a secret society at Yale that quietly brings together future senators, future governors, Pentagon officials, CEOs, media personalities, Israeli politicians, and some of the most connected people in Washington—and almost nobody has ever heard of it? This is not Skull and Bones. It is a much newer organization called Shabtai. Its secretive membership is confidential. Members are admitted for life. It hosts private dinners behind closed doors with a strict no phones policy. And according to its own founders, its purpose is to cultivate the next generation of Jewish leaders. According to their own website, Shabtai is the Global Jewish Leadership Society based at Yale University.

Throughout their public materials and invitations, they repeatedly describe their purpose as grooming the future leaders of the Jewish people. What's particularly

interesting, however, is that many of the known members are not Jewish. This might seem unremarkable at first, but when you begin looking at who founded it, who finances it, who speaks there, and who belongs to it, you suddenly realize this isn't just another college club. It is an elite network filled with highly influential people who are young and up and coming, whose stated goal is to lead the Jewish people—whatever that means.

This network connects Israeli political figures and American politicians from both parties, military officials, billionaire donors, media personalities, Silicon Valley executives, and—as the story unfolds—even Jeffrey Epstein appears in the narrative. Before anyone dismisses this as conspiracy theory, it should be noted that almost everything presented here comes from the organization's own public statements, archived websites, court filings, and the Epstein documents themselves.

The Origins and Structure of Shabtai

According to the organization itself, Shabtai is a secret society founded at Yale University in 1996. When most people hear the term "secret society," they imagine old movies, mysterious rituals, or Skull and Bones. But Shabtai is different. It is much newer and much less well known, yet despite that, it has quietly built a network that stretches across politics, academia, media, business, and even foreign governments. Unlike a typical student organization, Shabtai does not cease to exist when students graduate. Membership is for life. The organization accepts only a small number of new members every year. Its meetings are private. Phones are not allowed. Many discussions are never recorded.

The organization describes its purpose as bringing together exceptional people for conversation and leadership development—fairly common language for many organizations. What is uncommon, however, is who shows up. Once you begin looking at the people surrounding this organization, you realize this is not simply a campus club. It is an elite network that remains very much prominent and involved with many politicians you know.

Yale as a Pipeline to Power

Why Yale? The answer is straightforward: if your goal is to cultivate relationships with future leaders, Yale is one of the best places on earth to do it. Consider some of the people who have walked through those gates. Five U.S. presidents graduated from Yale: William Howard Taft, Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. For decades, nearly every presidential election featured at least one Yale graduate on the ticket—either the president or the vice president. For the last thirty-six years, either the president or vice president has been a Yale graduate. Yale alumni have gone on to become Supreme Court justices, cabinet officials, members of

Congress, governors, corporate executives, hedge fund managers, media leaders, and nonprofit executives.

In other words, if you are looking for tomorrow's American establishment, there is a pretty good chance you will find a lot of them at Yale. This is not unique to Yale, of course. Harvard has similar influence, as does Princeton. Elite universities have always functioned as pipelines into positions of power. But Yale has another reputation: it is famous for organizations that continue shaping relationships long after graduation. You might know about Skull and Bones, but far fewer people have ever heard of Shabtai.

The Founding Circle

The organization began with Rabbi Shmuley Hecht. According to his own account, shortly after being ordained, he came to New Haven with the goal of building Jewish life around Yale. While visiting the university, he met Ben Karp. Ben Karp is not particularly famous, but his brother is Alex Karp, the CEO of Palantir, one of the country's most influential technology companies whose software is used extensively by the U.S. military, intelligence agencies, and governments around the world. Ben Karp and Rabbi Hecht quickly became collaborators, and together they started what was originally called the Chai Society, which eventually became the Eliza Society, and finally became Shabtai.

There was also another co-founder, and this one is notable. Cory Booker, today a United States senator, is not Jewish, and at the time he was still a Yale student. Booker, though, has long described himself as a strong supporter of Israel. Speaking before AIPAC, he once said his support for Israel predated his political career and quoted the biblical phrase, "if I forget thee, O Jerusalem."

Benny Shabtai: The Financial Backbone

The next person to understand is Benny Shabtai, after whom the organization is named. Why? Because he financed it. When Shabtai outgrew its first meeting space, Benny Shabtai purchased a townhouse for the organization. Years later, he purchased a much larger mansion that became its permanent home—quite a significant investment. Who is Benny Shabtai? He is an Israeli-American businessman who built a successful career in luxury Swiss watches before expanding into technology investments and other ventures. Public reporting has documented investments connected to Israeli technology companies and defense-related industries. He has long been active in pro-Israel causes. He served on the board of Friends of the IDF—Friends of the Israeli Defense Forces—an American nonprofit that raises private donations to support IDF soldiers and military programs. Its donor base has included many prominent business leaders and philanthropists.

None of this is secret. It is publicly documented and shows the world from which Shabtai emerged. This was not simply an academic organization. It was built with

support from people deeply connected to Israeli causes, businesses, and political circles.

Why This Matters: The Combination of Factors

You might be watching this and thinking: okay, so what? It is a fair question. After all, universities have alumni organizations, political movements have leadership programs, and religious communities mentor young people. This is true. But the difference here is the combination: a secretive membership, lifetime relationships, an elite university, influential founders, well-connected financial backers, and a guest list that eventually includes cabinet officials, senators, media personalities, military leaders, billionaires, and foreign politicians. This combination naturally raises questions. How much influence do these networks have? How are ideas exchanged? What do they discuss behind closed doors about how society should be run? What do they say about ordinary people? What knowledge are ordinary people allowed to have? Is this what they discuss in their secretive meetings before they go into their influential spheres and actually implement the ideas? And who is in these secretive meetings to begin with?

The Epstein Connection

That is where the story takes another turn. When researchers and journalists started looking more closely at Benny Shabtai's circle, another familiar name began appearing in the documents: Jeffrey Epstein. Jeffrey Epstein knew an extraordinary number of influential people, so simply appearing in his address book or attending the same event does not automatically imply wrongdoing. However, documented relationships involving Epstein are still worth examining, especially when they intersect with organizations whose purpose is cultivating future leaders. There are multiple documented connections.

The publicly released Epstein documents include references to Benny Shabtai, including entries showing he was scheduled to travel to Little Saint James, Epstein's private island. Other documents show that Jeffrey Epstein was invited to Benny Shabtai's wedding. This tells us that these men were not just acquaintances who happened to meet; they had a social relationship. Then there is another document that is particularly noteworthy: an invitation sent to Jeffrey Epstein for a dinner hosted by the organization that would eventually become the Shabtai Society.

The email describes the group as being modeled after Yale's **secret societies** and says its purpose is to bring together student leaders with established leaders through private dinners, lectures, and events. One passage states that the goal is to help groom the future leaders of the Jewish people. What does that even mean? Those are not invented words—that is language from the invitation itself. Apparently, Jeffrey Epstein was viewed as someone worth inviting into this network. Whether he

attended, what role he played, or whether he had any deeper involvement is something these documents do not answer, but the invitation exists, and it is another piece of the puzzle.

Then there is one more thing. In 2008, while Epstein was already facing serious criminal charges for child exploitation, he traveled to Israel with Benny Shabtai. The trip is described as including visits to Israeli military facilities. Some lawsuits have alleged that discussions involved funding undisclosed operations, though those allegations remain unproven in court—they appear only in court documents. What has been proven, however, is that Benny Shabtai and Jeffrey Epstein had an ongoing relationship. Epstein was invited to the secret society, and they traveled to Israel together.

The Activities and Guest List

If Shabtai is not simply about one donor or one relationship, then what exactly does the organization do? To answer that, we must look at what they have chosen to make public. Despite describing themselves as a secret society, they have left behind a surprisingly large public footprint. According to the organization itself, its central activity is hosting conversations—lots of conversations. These are private conversations, private dinners, small discussion groups, lectures, panels, and invited speakers. Most are held under a strict no phones policy. Some are later released publicly through the organization's YouTube channel or website; others remain private.

The idea, according to Shabtai, is to create an environment where students and established leaders can have candid discussions that might not happen in more public settings. This is not unusual in itself—universities frequently host private discussions with notable guests. What is interesting is the range of people who have participated. The guest list includes Democratic senators, Republican politicians, New York Times columnists, business executives, military officials, Israeli government ministers, and media personalities. One day, a student could be sitting across the table from a columnist at The New York Times; the next, an Israeli cabinet minister; the next, a hedge fund billionaire; the next, a senior Pentagon official. That is an extraordinary amount of access for students. And if the organization is designed to build relationships over a lifetime, then those conversations become more than one-off events. They become the beginning of professional networks.

Notable Speakers and Participants

One of the more interesting speakers is Tony Schwartz, the ghostwriter behind Donald Trump's book "The Art of the Deal." They have hosted Democratic politicians like Senator Richard Blumenthal and Representative Rosa DeLauro. They have invited prominent journalists and opinion writers from major publications, including Anthony Scaramucci. They have figures from the business world as well. Perhaps most notable

are the Israeli officials. Former Ambassador Michael Oren has deep ties to the organization. Israeli lawmaker Simchah Rothman has spoken there. National Security Minister Amir Ben Gvir also addressed the society.

During his remarks, Ben Gvir articulated that the ideology he advocates is one that did not allow Jewish people to pray on the Temple Mount and ended up removing Jews from Gaza communities. He stated that one cannot be merciful to the wicked and end up being wicked to the merciful, and that democracy exists to serve good people, not wicked ones, and that support must be for the good ones. In a question-and-answer session, a student named Theo Weiss, a junior from New York, asked whether anything in the Israeli response to the October 7th attacks had crossed a line in his opinion, or if there was any line at which he would be uncomfortable with the retributive action taken by Israel against the Gaza Strip. Ben Gvir responded by saying he believed the Israeli response had been very soft, reminding the questioner of the actual agenda of those they were fighting.

Membership and Known Members

Shabtai does not publish a membership list, so the full roster remains unknown. However, according to public reporting, the organization accepts only around ten to twenty new members each year, and membership lasts for life. Unlike a fraternity that fades away after graduation, Shabtai becomes a lifelong professional network. While most members remain unknown, a handful have been identified publicly, and some of those names are worth noting.

One well-known member is Vivek Ramaswamy. Long before he became a presidential candidate and one of the bigger names in the Republican Party, he was involved with Shabtai. Rabbi Shmuley Hecht has publicly described Vivek as a close friend, and in interviews and public statements, Hecht has said Vivek helped expand Shabtai's activities into multiple cities across the United States and Israel. Vivek himself has referred to Rabbi Hecht as a mentor. This matters because it shows the type of people this organization attracts—many of them not Jewish, but who clearly hold a pro-Israel agenda and are young. This isn't the dying-off Boomer class; these are future leaders still rising through the ranks.

Vivek Ramaswamy and JD Vance became close friends while they were both at Yale, and their friendship has continued for years. They have campaigned together, worked together, and even spent holidays together. Vance represents another future leader and current leader tied to Israeli causes and the Israeli agenda. Other publicly identified members include Daily Wire host Michael Knowles, Eldridge Colby, who has served in senior Pentagon policy roles, and Michael Oren, Israel's former ambassador to the United States, who has had a long association with the organization and even lived in the Shabtai House for a period. These individuals come from very different

professions—media, domestic and foreign governments, diplomacy, and defense—yet they all intersect through this one network.

Elite Networks and Power Structures

This story is really about something much bigger than Shabtai alone. Every society has elite networks, some public and some private. Military academies create them. Law schools create them. Business schools create them. Think about Harvard, Stanford, West Point, and Oxford. These institutions don't just educate people; they create relationships. Those relationships often become the informal infrastructure of power. People hire people they know. They recommend former classmates. They serve on one another's boards. They join one another's companies. They invite one another into government. That's not a conspiracy; that's human nature. The question is simple: how much influence do these networks have, and should the public know more about them?

When an organization intentionally recruits future leaders, maintains lifetime membership, operates largely behind closed doors, and consistently brings together powerful figures from politics, media, business, and foreign governments, it's fair to ask questions.

Summary of Key Findings

Shabtai was founded at Yale in 1996. It was created by Rabbi Shmuel Hecht, Ben Karp, and Cory Booker. It was financed by Israeli-American businessman Benny Shabtai, who purchased homes for the organization and whose name it now bears. The organization maintains confidential membership, lifetime participation, and private discussions. It has hosted senators, journalists, business executives, military officials, and Israeli cabinet members. One of its principal financial backers had a documented relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, and several prominent political and media figures have publicly acknowledged their involvement with the organization. Above all, the organization's stated goal is for Jewish interests, even though most of the known members are not Jewish.

Understanding Power Through Relationships

One of the easiest ways to dismiss a story like this is to throw around the word conspiracy, but that misses the point entirely. The point isn't that a handful of people gather in a room and decide the fate of the world. Real life is usually a little bit more subtle than that. Power often works through relationships, trust, access, and shared experiences. The people you meet at twenty years old can still be the people you call when you're fifty. That's true whether you're in politics, business, journalism, or government.

Organizations like Shabtai are investing in relationships before most of us have ever even heard the names of the people involved. Some of those students will go on to become senators, some will become CEOs, some will become judges or presidents of the United States. Most Americans will never know these relationships exist. But as one Shabtai invitation stated, universities are the front line on the battlefield for the Jewish people and the Jewish state. They are cultivating and incubating young leaders who will likely do whatever is in the best interest for the state of Israel, and they're doing it to the nation's youth at colleges on American soil, and they're doing it in secret.

Only a few of the names connected to this secret society have been shown here—a tiny fraction of the actual network. Who else is in it? The important takeaway is that this secret society and others like it explain why it doesn't seem to matter how many of the old guard die off; these influential circles of power persist. It explains why there doesn't seem to ever be any real change.

#Elite networks and power structures #Yale University and leadership pipeline #Secret societies #Israeli-American relations and influence #Political networking and relationship-building #Transparency and institutional accountability #Jeffrey Epstein connections

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