

על שלושה דברים העולם עומד:
על התורה, על העבודה ועל גמילות החסדים

There are three things upon which the world depends:
On Torah, on work and study and on acts of loving-kindness



The Bible
NETZER FSU
Summer Camp Program
2014/5774

Introduction

The summer camp season in the FSU is always eventful and full of surprises!

We held a total of 11 camps and seminars, among them a Special Needs camp in Moscow, a variety of day camps held in Russia, Crimea, Ukraine, and 4 interregional camps in Belarus. These along with the interregional conference that will take place in October will result in 806 participants from all over the FSU that will have taken part in our summer camp program.

This was a most unique summer. It was simultaneously challenging and rewarding. Due to the crisis in Ukraine, the venue for the interregional program needed to be moved from Ukraine to Belarus. Despite the obstacles, we were able to find a very attractive venue outside of Minsk.

The theme of this year's interregional camp program was the Bible (Please see [video](#) clip of all camps). We dedicated a lot of time to studying the sources and texts of Judaism, and it was wonderful to see the *madrachim* sitting and reading the Plaut Torah Commentaries, using this important publication as their basis for study and teaching.

While it was a summer of conflict in the FSU and Israel, we were able to overcome this and provide both participants and staff with an island of stability, a taste of *Am Israel*. We can all be proud of this new generation of Jewish youth, who put aside all their differences and came together to support one another and Israel to learn about Reform religious and Zionist values: *Torah, Mitzvot* and *Tikun Olam*.

HUC Rabbinic student Josh Mitikus joined the FSU staff for 2 sessions and became an essential part of our team, enhancing our staff. We are grateful for his hard work and assistance this summer. In addition, Israeli *madrachim* and staff added a much-needed Zionist component and were able to update and explain the complicated situation developing in Israel further strengthening our staff.

For all this, I want to praise the entire WUPJ staff in Jerusalem for their contributions to the FSU summer camp program. I would like to especially express my deep appreciation to Alex Kagan, FSU Director and Debbie Pulik, Project Development with whom I work as a strong unit.

Finally, on behalf of Netzer staff and youth, I would like to thank you donors. With your assistance and continued support, we were able to hold an amazing camp program in the FSU and provide Jewish youth with a wonderful environment filled with warmth, Reform Jewish tradition, Zionism and much needed laughter.

Wishing you and your families a New Year filled with good health, laughter, prosperity and serenity.

Rita Fruman, Netzer Coordinator, FSU

After a year of meeting with the FSU Desk in Jerusalem, I was thrilled to join the Interregional Netzer Camps outside of Minsk.

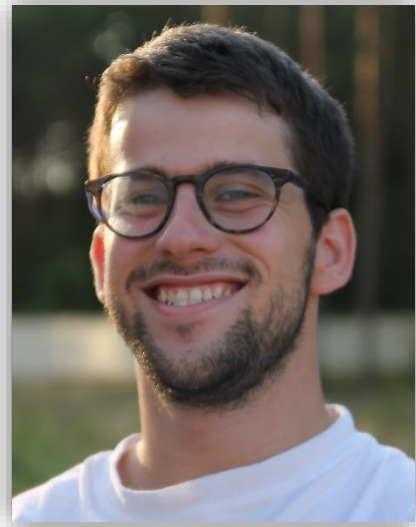
Nerves tempered my excitement: what would the camp be like? Would my Russian be sufficient? But, all of these anxieties were swiftly swept away.

I found an incredible community of *madrachim* from all over the FSU and Israel who were passionately dedicated to transmitting their love for Progressive Judaism and Netzer to a future generation. I found energized *chanichim* who had grown up with minimal Jewish content but were astounded to find a beautiful tradition that could bring such rich community and meaning to their lives. I found brilliant Rabbis who were insistent on creating a camp full of rich spiritual meaning but one that was accessible to all. I found new friends, new melodies, and a new community.

The Interregional Netzer Camp is a holy place—where Jews throughout the FSU feel united through their Judaism rather than separated by where they have come from, Moscow with its wealth of Jewish options or Prujani, Belarus, which does not even have a cinema.

I anxiously anticipate next summer with Netzer, and I plan to pass the time by speaking about the incredible experience I had.

Joshua Mitikus, HUC rabbinic student



Special Needs Camp, Moscow – June 3-10/5-12 Sivan



The 2014 Reform summer camp program started in Moscow with the sixth annual [Special Needs camp](#) in June. The camp was the final event for the series of family programs (2 family workshops and the winter camp in January). One hundred and ten participants took part this year.

The theme of the camp this year was Torah and Commentary, which was perfect as the camp took place during Shavuot, the holiday in which the Torah was given to *Am Israel*.

Participants joined in festive services. Rabbi Lyskovoy held lectures for parents and children took part in age appropriate activities that taught them about the holiday.

During the final feedback sessions, many of the families both who were not there for the first time and those who were, spoke about the strong connection they have with other participants, parents and children. They referred to one another as one big Jewish family, and there is an amazing understanding between families that have children with special needs and those who do not.



See video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMmaZZSk06Y>

Rabbi Leonid Bimbat, Moscow

Interregional Camps – Minsk: July 16 – August 17, 2014 / 18 Tammuz – 21 Av

The first 3 sessions of the Minsk/Belarus Inter-Regional Camps were held between July 16 and August 17. A total of 301 youth ages 11-17 took part ([1 session of 11-13](#) and 2 sessions of 14-17 ([session 1](#)/ [session 2](#)), 100% capacity! The focus of the camps was the Torah. The campers learned Torah texts and through them the history of the Jewish People. We spoke a lot about the heroes in the Torah from the time of Abraham through today providing campers with a fuller appreciation of who they are. For many of the campers, this was their first exposure to modern Judaism. For quite a few, it was their first exposure to Judaism of any kind. Here, they learned the basics of Judaism, experienced the mitzvot of *Tallit* and *Tefillin*, the central value of *tzedakah*, and how prayers reflect and reinforce those values.



One camper I will never forget is a 12-year-old boy named Vlad. He is from Prujani, a town that was 60% Jewish before the Holocaust but now has only two Jewish families. Our camp was his first contact with the Jewish world outside of Prujani. Vlad has since come to Israel to study in the *Na'ale* program. Vlad has found his Jewish family with us in Israel. We are in regular contact with him as he continues on his Jewish journey of discovery.

WUPJ has learned much about summer camps over the last 20 years. The comprehensive introduction of Netzer into our curriculum has enabled us to convey our values in a compelling way. As a result, camp participants often take home what they learned during the summer.

The crisis in Israel was not overlooked and is as well understood by our campers, as is the tense situation in Ukraine. Each camp had activities dedicated to explain the complicated situation. The Israeli staff who experienced all of this first hand, and were able to impart it through explanation, videos, news, etc. It was most heartwarming to see the response of campers who wanted to express in different ways their support of both Israel and the IDF.

Prayer in its entirety was a very important part of the camp program. It brought everyone together, and for the first time, many of our campers both female and male put on *tefillin*.

At the end of each camp session, participants exchanged telephone numbers and made plans to meet during the year.

Student camp August 18-28 / 22 Av – 2 Elul

The demand for the [student camp](#) this year was extremely high. In the end, we had space for 103 participants and had a waiting list of at least 10.

The theme of the camp was the same as the previous interregional camps, but the approach to the program was different, as the participants were older and we wanted to impart the Bible in a more enriched and challenging manner.

The camp turned into a Netzer campus. In framework, participants came to the campus to assist a student in passing all of his/her exams. Together with this student, they studied Jewish history, Zionism and Israel, heroes from the Torah, etc. There was a wide variety of stories to cover, Exodus from Egypt, Ruth and Naomi, Joseph and his brothers. We also used the texts to prove that the land of Israel belongs to the Jewish People and actions taken to ensure this land be returned to Jewish hands in modern times: the first Zionist Congress, Theodore Herzl and the philanthropy of the Rothschild Family.

One of the amazing events that occurred in the camp was the presence of 3 rabbis (Lyskovoy, Bimbat and Abramovich) during the camp. In the study activities, they taught a new subject every day (the structure of prayer and the *Siddur* the High Holydays, the Jewish life cycle, the 3 pilgrimage holidays Sukkot, Pesach, Shavuot and other topics). They were able to bring these issues to a much higher level and enriched the overall program. We see this as a step in assisting these students to become more active in their local communities following the camp program.



Another highlight of the camp was the lecture of Alex Kagan on the recent operation in Gaza, "Protective Edge". He gave a broad overview that answered the questions: why it took place, what Israel's policy and actions were, the opinions of Jews and non-Jews alike and the ramifications for Israel. During feedback, participants stated that it was very important that an Israeli who has lived through this with his family could talk about this very sensitive issue based on facts, numbers and events and not on emotions.

Netzer and TaMaR have had a huge impact on those who participate in our activities. We saw this with the participants who initiated different activities and those *madrichim* who for different reasons were unable to work in the camp, but it was important to them to take part in the program as volunteers. They prepared activities and assisted staff.

Finally, I would like to thank Denis Burmistrov who was Netzer Coordinator for Ukraine for the past 4 years. He was the staff leader of this camp, which was his last one in this position. Denis is continuing his connection with the Reform Movement and is taking part in the MASA program in Jerusalem this year. We wish him the best of luck in the future!

Rita Fruman, Netzer Coordinator, FSU



Regional Camps:

I. Russia

Chelyabinsk

A total of 30 children ages 5-13 took part in a day camp in Chelyabinsk in June. The camp began with the holiday of Shavuot and lessons on: "Oral and Written Torah, *Tanakh*, Talmud - the main spiritual values of the people", "Torah and the commandments," and reading the special book for this holiday - "*Megillat Ruth*". All of these texts depicts the story of the lives of different heroes, and how they deal with different situations.

Our program this year was the story of the journey of Abraham. We learned about Abraham and Sarah their family history and the history of the Jewish people. We did not just follow the path of Abraham from Ur to Canaan, but tried to understand that "*lech lecha* or you go" is a very difficult way to find and recreate yourself, your family, and people who for thousands of years will play a special role in history. An important extension of this theme was the project of participants to study the history of their families and to collect materials (photos, documents) for a large family album. They collected photos, recorded stories of parents and grandparents and created their "family trees". Stories included evacuation of refugees of war and led us to the history of the Holocaust and discussing the challenges of modern nationalism, neo-Nazism, etc.

The Israel component consisted of a travel map of Israel. We spoke about the most important events in the history of the people and places associated with them: Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, and others. On the right of the Jews to land, the history of settling the land, establishment of the State of Israel and the state symbols, events in modern Israel.

There were also a variety of excursions to the Chelyabinsk Regional Scientific Library, the exhibition "History of the peoples of the Urals", an exhibition of arts and crafts with a master class for dolls.

Each participant of the summer camp was able perform in a talent show that included poetry, song, dance and magic tricks!

Yevgeniy Dobin, Chair Chelyabinsk Community

Ukraine:

"Ivri" Jewish Day Camps – Odessa, pilot project



In March 2014, we decided to hold a pilot [summer day camp](#) in our community. We prepared a program for children ages 10-15. In addition to children who take part in our community programs, we also invited children from the Jewish school №94 (ORT), with a modest advertising campaign.

In the first session of – "Ivri" (June 2-5 - 17 participants) was so successful, we decided to hold an additional session August 18-22 (15 participants).

The camps had a very warm and friendly atmosphere. The daily program consisted of morning Boker Tov (Israeli dancing + ice

breakers), Hebrew, English, art, tours, quests, sporting events and more.

Children went on excursions to the Museum of Paleontology, the wax museum, the science museum, the chocolate museum and the zoo.

Other activities included a hike, rope climbing in the park, recreational activities at the fountains on the waterfront, a tour - the quest for Odessa, a sports tournament "water fight".

Arts and crafts introduced children to techniques of felting wool, decoupage, quilling, etc. Among the projects completed: a cardboard castle, sweet bouquets, cookies, souvenirs made of colored salt, toys and photography.

Hebrew and English were taught in an informal environment through a variety of games, songs and activities such as the "Shuk"(market) for a Hebrew lesson.

These 2 sessions resulted in 25 Jewish families becoming more involved and potential members of the community. The pilot was a success and we hope to continue this next year.

Rabbi Julia Gris



Lutsk:

The day camp in Lutsk to place June 1-10 for 20 children age 6-13.

The camp consisted of workshops about Jewish history and tradition, art-studio, sport events, excursions, Jewish dances and songs.



Alex Gaydar, Executive Director Ukraine

III. Crimea

Summer day camp, Crimea



We did not change our tradition of holding [annual summer camps in Crimea](#) for children and their parents. A distinctive feature of the summer camp this year was the inclusion of families with children with special needs. A total of 100 children and their parents took part. Children and parents had two wonderful weeks of excursions, hikes, classes, games, and many other events.

Below are testimonials from parents and camp participants.

Thank you to all who participated in our summer camp!

Anatoly Gendin, Chair Progressive congregations in Crimea

Inna Malakhov from Feodosia wrote: *"My 13 year old son Vlad is disabled since childhood. He cannot walk on his own and moves around in wheelchair. At home, Vladik basically sits in the apartment. At the camp, he met and became friends with many of the children who showered him with attention and care. He was able to take part in activities with other children. What joy and what a blessing it was! If he was unable to use a wheelchair, the older boys would carry him. He was at a concert of the "Boker" ensemble, went on excursions at the Dolphinarium and Aquarium, theater, saw giants on stilts, and much more. He studied Jewish history, traditions, culture, and travelled to Yalta and attend all classes, even visiting the synagogue in Evpatoria. My son for the first time attended a play "A Streetcar Named Desire" in Yalta, and made a wish. Thank you to Elena Kriulk and Anatoly Gendin who told all the sponsors to take care of our children. We as parents are very grateful.*



Marina Vinokur, Mother Julia and Andrew Winokur, Evpatoria: *Our children always look forward to each summer, not only because of school holidays, but also because they spend an unforgettable time in the Jewish camp. This year the camp was in Evpatoria on the beach. The program was diverse and filled with exciting activities. Theodosia concert ensemble "Boker" showed Jewish dances introduced us to history and Jewish music. Through these activities children learned about the rich culture of the Jewish people, customs, and national values. The attentive and kind staff were wonderful with the children. We look forward to next summer.*

Hello, my name is Olga Kobtseva from Feodosia, I'm 11 years old. *I liked all the excursions and activities. I liked the competitions and quizzes. For correct answers, we received papers in envelopes, which were pieces of the map of Israel that we assembled. I found on the map the city where my older brother studied, the Golan Heights where my cousin is serving in the IDF. We were taught the rules of kashrut, and I liked the "buffet", there was a lot of delicious kosher food. We went on trips to the Holocaust memorial in Yalta, Dobrushin and Elizavetovo. We cleaned near monuments and laid stones. Each day spent in the camp was very interesting. Thank you from our whole family!*