

עֵכָּשׁ כִּי אֶחֱשָׁה!
A CHSHAV!

The Official Magazine of USY

**How
Does USY
Light Up
Your Life?**



חורף תשס"ח • Winter 2008

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES • The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

First Step, Last Step: Concluding the Journey

by Greg Abdallah



It was once said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. As I write my final article for *Achshav!*, I look back on my journey, which started as a young 8th grader who stubbornly did not want to go to Kadima encampment. A very caring youth director, as well as family and friends, convinced me I would have a great time. Reluctantly, I went, and it was one of the best times of my life. So much so that I immediately became actively involved, and USY became the flame in my heart.

I assumed positions of leadership in my chapter and was appointed as a member of the METNY regional general board. From there my commitment and dedication for USY only strengthened. I realized that through my involvement I had the potential to be a leader, which would give me the opportunity to make a difference.

As USY International Communications Vice President, my goal was to get each and every chapter and its members involved and connected, and to share the flame of USY with potential members. I wanted to maintain, streamline and upgrade our existing programs and make you aware of the resources USY offers.

There are many people I would like to thank who have influenced, helped and supported me this year and throughout my journey. I would like to thank my chapter youth director, Judy Stein, for her guidance and unending support; the METNY staff for all their hard work and great programs; and the "Comm Squad": Becca Friedland and Anna Kaufman, *Achshav!* editors; Sam Nassau, *Shalhevet* editor; Aaron Zack, Lanasi Chair; and Scott Strenger, who took the idea of an International Communications Challenge and made it blossom.

I would also like to thank Jules, Karen and the members of the USY International office, as well as Matt Halpern for all the dedication and guidance he has brought to USY. In addition I would like to recognize your wonderful *Achshav!* editors, Anna and Becca, who used so much creativity to produce four exceptional and interesting editions of *Achshav!*

USY, it has been an honor and privilege to serve you. I hope I have succeeded in reviving and initiating programs that will be beneficial for USY's future.

It is with this article I conclude my journey of a thousand miles. But no matter where our lives lead us, our paths will cross again, as the light of the USY flame will always burn brightly in my heart. □

Greg Abdallah of METNY is the 2007 International Communications Vice President of USY. E-mail him at communications@usy.org.

How USY Lights Up Our Lives

by Becca Friedland &
Anna Kaufman



In the spirit of Hanukkah, we called upon International USY to tell us the significance of the Jewish holidays for them in different contexts such as: in the home, in the synagogue, on a USY on Wheels bus, or in Israel on USY Israel Pilgrimage. USYers around the continent responded with recipes, chapter holiday events and reflections on past holidays spent with friends or family.

Our goal for this issue is to have every reader take home one aspect from the magazine and apply it to his or her Judaism. Maybe try out a cookie recipe, or run a special holiday-themed event in your chapter. These ideas are resources that should be used to enhance your Judaism and the holiday experience for those around you.

Like Hanukkah and almost every Jewish holiday, we light candles to memorialize the occasion. Think of USY as a candle, as an inspiration and motivation to enhance your life. Many USYers in this issue talk about how their religious observance and holiday appreciation have been transformed and enhanced by USY. Like them, let the light of our Movement and youth group stimulate you to try out new customs, explore exciting program possibilities and further your religious experiences.

We want to thank everyone who has helped make this past year as your *Achshav!* editors such an enjoyable and amazing experience. Without Greg Abdallah, your 2007 USY International Communications Vice President, and Matt Halpern, who runs design and production of this magazine, none of this would have been possible. Most importantly, we thank you, our readership, for all of your contributions. It takes time and effort to write a meaningful and heartfelt article, and we appreciate your willingness to help. We hope you continue contributing to the magazine and voicing your opinions. Future generations of USYers deserve to experience the fun and memories you have all expressed in your articles. It is your responsibility USY, to take the Conservative Movement into your own hands and make sure it continues to strive for generations to come. □

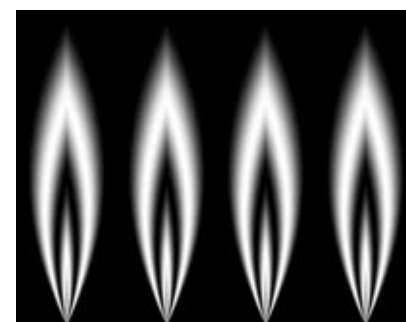
Becca Friedland and Anna Kaufman are the 2007 Editors of *Achshav!*. If you have questions, comments, or want to volunteer to write for *Achshav!*, e-mail them at achshav@usy.org.

Winter 2008

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The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism promotes the role of the synagogue in Jewish life in order to motivate Conservative Jews to perform mitzvot encompassing ethical behavior, spirituality, Judaic learning, and ritual observance. Combining an awareness of communal responsibility with a strong sense of commitment, the United Synagogue is a dynamic force within the Conservative Movement.

Making the Most of Life in the Post-USY Years

by Jules Gutin



“There is life after USY. Your post-USY life can be filled with new and enriching Jewish experiences on the college campus through KOACH and Hillel. After college when you become involved in synagogue and community life, think back to what you learned during your USY years.”

I recently attended the Biennial Convention of our parent organization, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. It was a wonderful experience sharing Shabbat with hundreds of dedicated lay leaders and professionals from all over North America. (Many of them were your parents!)

The Convention, which extended from Thursday afternoon through Monday morning, was filled with many rich and inspiring opportunities and experiences. One aspect that I found to be particularly rewarding was the involvement of USY alumni. Speaker after speaker referred to their USY experience and what a powerful impact it had on their lives. This began at the first session with the new Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Dr. Arnold Eisen, who spoke about the importance of experiencing a late night Shabbat ruach session when he was a USYer, to the Chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents, Eric Fingerhut, who spoke about the lasting impact of his USY experiences.

Six former International USY Presidents played key roles as guest speakers, session leaders and members of the staff. And our 2007 USY President, Aaron Jacobs, delivered the *D'var Torah* (from Jerusalem) at *shaharit* on the first morning of the Convention.

Many of the delegates were USY alumni. They, too, spoke warmly of their USY experience. They often attributed their current involvement as synagogue leaders to their USY experiences. The best part is, none of this was planned. The repeated mentions of USY involvement just happened naturally. The age range was significant. There were alumni from USY's earliest years who are now in their 70s and those who are young leaders in their synagogues in their late 30s, not to mention the more recent alumni who were there representing KOACH.

So in case you were wondering, there is life after USY. Your post-USY life can be filled with new and enriching Jewish experiences on the college campus through KOACH and Hillel. After college when you become involved in synagogue and community life, think back to what you learned during your USY years. You'll be surprised how much you've learned. □

Jules Gutin is the International Director of USY. Send your comments directly to Jules at gutin@uscj.org.

Growth Through Lessons Learned in USY

by Aaron Jacobs



“USY has taught me so much; I do not know where I would be without my experiences from this organization. I have met hundreds of different types of Jews from all over North America that I would have never met otherwise.”

A few weeks ago, I heard the words I have been dreading for a long time. On the last night of USY International Convention in Anaheim, Jules Gutin discharged me from the office of International President, ending my career as a USYer. It's a scary thought and something I have been trying to ignore for a long time. To be honest, I can't really remember what my life was like before USY. For the past 4½ years I have been so active in USY and I just can't imagine my life without it.

As cliché as it sounds, USY has taught me so much and I seriously do not know where I would be without my experiences from this organization. I have met hundreds of different types of Jews from all over North America that I would have never met otherwise. I have created life-long friends, friends that I will keep in touch with for the rest of my life! I have traveled the country on USY on Wheels, experienced my first trip to Israel on USY Israel Pilgrimage, and now I am studying in Israel on Nativ, USY's gap program between high school and college. But most importantly, I am the Jew that I am because of my involvement in USY.

See, I didn't grow up with a strong Jewish background. I went to public school all my life. Of course, I went to Hebrew School, had a Bar Mitzvah and went to services every so often, but it wasn't until I was in USY that I started to truly appreciate my Judaism.

USY was like a supernova explosion to my Jewish involvement. I started going to services more. I started to pay attention in Hebrew School and became one of the top students. I gained a better understanding of Jewish values and beliefs. USY on Wheels really opened my eyes up to living a committed Jewish life. I started keeping kosher and observing Shabbat in high school. And one day, I decided to wear my *kippah* everywhere. All of this, I did because of my experiences in USY. Because of what USY has taught me, and what USY has provided me with.

So you see, my days as a USYer may be over, but it is these experiences that I will have forever. Just because USY for me has ended doesn't mean I am going to lose my Jewish values or the friends I have made in USY. It just means that this chapter in my life is over and now it's time to start a new one.

USY, the time has finally come. Thank you for providing me with an amazing group of friends, a Jewish lifestyle and a sense

From the President, continued on page 8

Aaron Jacobs of SWUSY is the 2007 International President of USY. E-mail him at president@usy.org.

Hadashot

Making the Transition from the Ordinary to the Extraordinary on Shabbat

by Sammy Forshner, Emtza

I've watched the *shabbat* candles illumine a dark night in some off-beat, as well as warmly familiar, locations. From a remote Indian reservation devoid of other Jews, to my summer home at Camp Ramah in Ojai, Calif., and countless middle-of-the-country hotels and retreat centers where I have enjoyed regional USY *kinussim*, *shabbatonim* and *kallot*. But nothing, not even Shabbat at home, can hold a candle to ushering in the Sabbath queen with my Mile High USY family.

Surrounded by the same faces I see every week at events or board meetings, albeit now freshly scrubbed, smiling and singing, we form a beautifully bonded *kehilla* to give real depth and meaning to *shabbat*. Whether we join Rabbi Josh's joyful dance-filled *Neshama Minyan*, Cantor Marty's beautifully sung traditional davening or do it ourselves, USY-style, our Shabbat celebrations become our own.

We sing the songs, slowly at first, then more hurriedly as our hunger grows and the aroma of dinner begins to waft over to where we are davening. Each month brings a new treat. There is Chinese Shabbat Dinner with lo mein and fried rice, Shabbat in the Negev, where we sit on the floor and scoop hummus with our pita triangles, and Hippie Shabbat, complete with peace signs and beads. Much joy and laughter is served along with heaping portions of tasty kosher food.

During the week, we are clad in t-shirts and blue jeans, our minds cluttered

with homework, sports and after school jobs. USY takes us out of that reality for a few brief hours, and then we fall back into the mundane. But on those special

all be off to college and work; we'll have lives and homes of our own. How will we be Jews in these new lives, apart from our family? Will we know what to do for



Some pre-Shabbat games go on in the Mile High USY Youth House before the preparations to welcome the Sabbath Queen begin.

Friday nights when we gather as a chapter, all is changed. We are neatly dressed, our hearts are lightened and our spirits lifted, as we leave the week behind. We are transformed.

Our monthly chapter *shabbat* dinners embody the essence of what USY can enable us to do: create, enjoy and literally own Judaism in a way that speaks to us and works for us as high school students. One day in the not so distant future, we'll

shabbat and *chagim*? Will we be able to maintain our beliefs and practices? Even more importantly, will we even want to do these things?

For the members of Mile High USY, seated around the Shabbat table in our very own youth house, the answer to all of the above questions is a resounding "yes!"

Thanks to USY. □

The *Ruach* of Shabbat

Experiencing Shabbat Around the World

by Sarah Roth, Hagalil

Growing up, my family was not strictly *shomer shabbat* but always made *shabbat* special. We had dinner together

on Friday nights, went to shul on Saturdays and tried to maintain the “Shabbat mood.” My mom always tells people about the time I came home from nursery school (I was probably about three-years-old) and told her that we had to “do Kiddush, candles and HaMotzi.”

When I was 11, I started going to Ramah in the Berkshires. It was totally my choice – I just had a feeling that it was where I wanted to be. The song, or *shira*, on Friday night was incredible, and the atmosphere I found on Shabbat – both Jewish and secular – strengthened my understanding and love of Shabbat. It was the day when we could rest, talk and really just hang out with the people for whom we returned to camp every summer.

Coming into USY in ninth grade, I don't think that I knew just how much it would change me and how much I would fall in love with it. Kabbalat Shabbat on the Friday night of my first Hagalil USY Fall Kinnus was my first taste of USY *ruach*. The *niggunim*, the dancing – it was all so spirited! After dinner, I experienced *real ruach* – the jumping, dancing, screaming, singing kind. Everyone was up and moving, really getting into the songs. During slow *ruach* on Saturday night, everyone had their arms around each other, swaying back and forth.

On USY on Wheels, I saw Shabbat outside of New Jersey. Every Friday, we stopped at a market to buy groceries and

snacks for Shabbat and for the upcoming week. Our weekly grocery adventures separated Shabbat from the rest of the week; we could sleep later, relax in the



Whether in Israel on USY Israel Pilgrimage (top) or on North America participating on a program like Summer in the City (bottom), the Shabbat experience – spending time with friends, rest and relaxation, *ruach* around the table – is universal.



afternoon and spend time with our friends. Summer in the City – even with our

group of 13 – had some of the best Shabbat *ruach* I have ever heard. Around a table in our residence hall (or sometimes just on a couch in a common room), we brought different styles of *ruach* from each of our USY regions. For services, we walked to different shuls or *minyanim* each week, deciding which ones we liked and which ones we didn't like, finding where we fit.

On USY Israel Pilgrimage this past summer, we spent *shabbatot* in Poland and in Israel. During our first Shabbat, we davened on our own in the basement of a hotel in Warsaw, Poland. After dinner, we sang through the entire *B'kol Echad* and then sang even more (through all of free time), just sitting at the table together. Throughout the rest of the trip, we built up our repertoire of *ruach* songs, singing songs from different regions and ones that we learned from our staff and people we met over the summer. Walking to Yemin Moshe for *Kabbalat Shabbat*, we sang *z'mirot* and readied ourselves for Shabbat. Overlooking the Old City, we davened, ignoring the tourists staring taking pictures of us.

Over the past four years, USY has strengthened my understanding of and love for *shabbat*. Now that I am *shomer shabbat*, I have found that *shabbat* is my day to rest and catch up on the sleep I don't seem to get during the week. I see my friends in shul and wait for the next USY convention so that I can experience the USY *ruach* and environment I adore.

USY has been the backbone of my escalation in Shabbat and religious observance. When I am at home on Shabbat, I think back to everything I have learned in USY and – reminded of the tone set on

Shabbat in USY – I try to emulate that feeling for myself and my family. □

The *Ruach* of Shabbat

Shabbat: A Weekly Holiday Celebration Brought to Life

by Tyler Dratch, Hagesher

There is only one holiday on the Jewish calendar that is so important that we celebrate it every week. This holiday, *shabbat*, is very special and is full of meaning. I have learned, however, that the only way to fully appreciate *shabbat* is to experience it in USY.

Before USY, I knew that *shabbat* included things such as lighting the candles, going to long services and listening to the reading of the Torah. I could not understand the true holiness of *shabbat* until I experienced it at a USY convention. In USY, I feel the true emotions of *shabbat*. I am very eager for it to start, and very happy when it comes. Services do not seem like something I have to do, but something I want to take part in, to thank God for this incredible day of rest. Finally, at the end of *shabbat*, I am sad to see it leave. I sing *Mizmor L'David*, a song often sung in a house of mourning. I sing

with my region surrounding me at the end of *Seudat Shlisheet*, to “mourn” the end of *shabbat* and to hold on to it as long as we can.

A USY *shabbat* is like no other. Where else can one listen to the beautiful melodies of *Kabbalat Shabbat* with so much enthusiasm? Where else can you hear Jewish teens enjoying a *ruach* session, singing at the top of their lungs, to celebrate being together on this special holiday?

I hope wherever I celebrate *shabbat*, I can appreciate its holiness. I hope I can remember singing songs after Friday night dinners and enjoying *hofesh* on Shabbat afternoons with my friends. I know that once you can experience these emotions, true happiness will be discovered. USY, thank you for teaching me this. □

Sharing, Shouting the Shabbat Spirit

by Melissa Lovitz, NERUSY

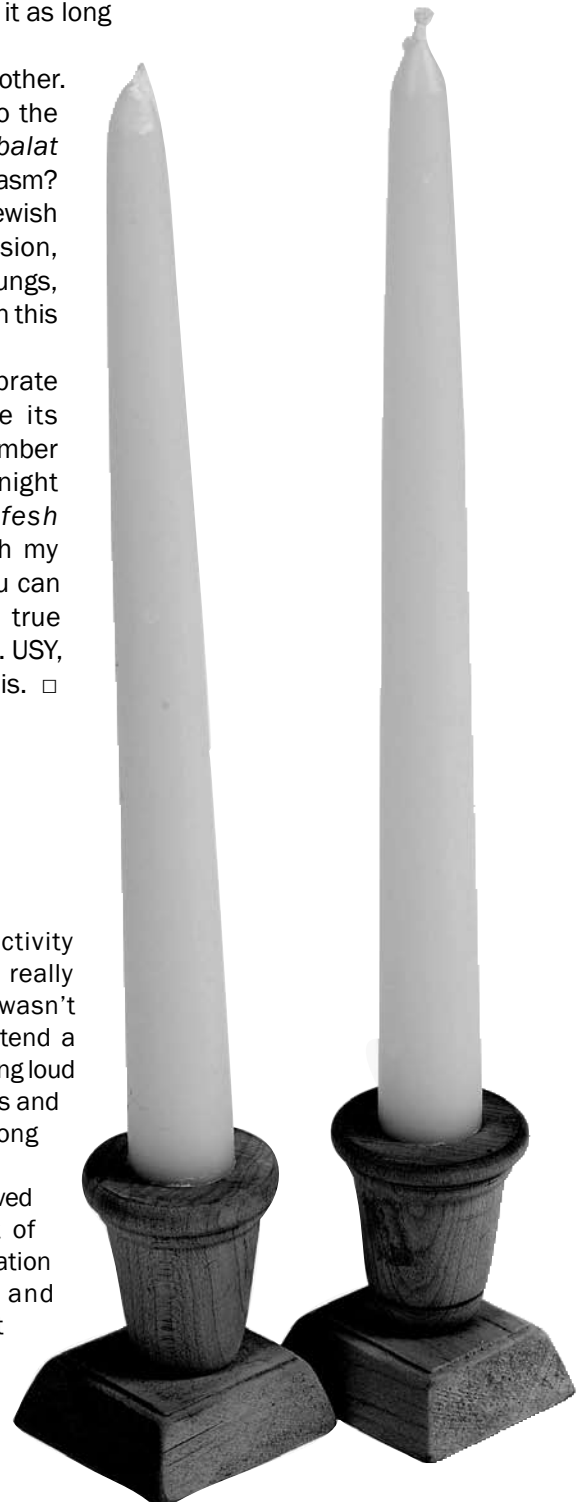
One USY experience that has always made me happy is *ruach*. If only there were more opportunities to join together as one group to share in the music and feeling that is associated with *ruach*.

My first real *ruach* session was at Encampment going into freshman year. It was right then that I promised myself that it wouldn't be the last. Everyone gathered together in a huge group holding *B'kol Echad* songbooks. It made me wonder why I hadn't attended a regional convention sooner!

The fun I had got me thinking ... how I could give back to NERUSY for introducing to me this great concept? Well, it became apparent very soon that *ruach* was customary

and almost a “required” activity in USY. No giving back was really necessary, but to me that wasn't enough. Now every time I attend a *ruach* session I make sure to sing loud and proud to my favorite songs and encourage others to sing along too, especially the freshmen.

This essence of being involved in the *ruach* and the spirit of USY has shaped my appreciation for the Jewish community and Jewish youth in particular. Just participating in *ruach* makes me want to come back year after year, convention after convention. It makes me want to live USY! □



Feeling the Passion of Prayer

by Melody Mostow, CRUSY

It was Regional Convention of my freshman year. I still remember it perfectly. During *shabbat* services, I had finished my abridged version of the *Amidah* and sat quietly, waiting for my friends to finish theirs. Looking up, I saw a friend of mine, who I have great respect for, and I watched with fascination as he prayed the most purposeful and intense *Amidah* I had even seen before. He was swaying, motioning, even talking, it seemed, directly to God.

I was so moved by his passion for the prayer. I can remember at that exact moment thinking, "Wow, this is ok. If he can pray like that, I guess it's acceptable." Influenced by my good friend, together at a

USY convention, I have never approached the *Amidah* the same way since.

Although I entered USY with a strong Jewish connection, it is the experiences like this one that have given me the confidence to be a Jew I am today. By relying on my USY friends for support and reassurance, I have grown into a proud, independent, strong-willed Jew, and I have the foundation I need to stay that way from now on. I credit that to USY.

I have never prayed the *Amidah* that same way since that convention. I'm now one of the many proud USYers who takes their time, reciting the *Amidah* with intense intent or *kavanah*, bowing, swaying and feeling free to display my respect for God as I deem appropriate. I can only hope that maybe, one day, I can help to inspire other USYers to be confident in their religious passion, just as my friend inspired me. □

Growth Through Lessons Learned in USY

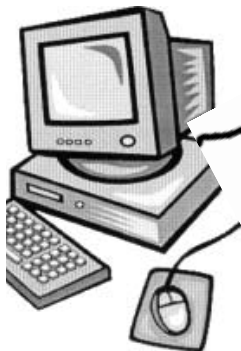
Continued from page 4

of fitting into a special community. Thank you for all the lessons you have taught me and everything you have given me. Thank you for the best 4½ years of my life!

Fellow USYers: This is where my USY story comes to an end, but yours can just be beginning. Make the rest of this year, and however many years you have left in USY, a time for learning and growing, and most importantly make your remaining time in USY the best years of your life! □

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Board Bites

Can You Describe USY in 150 Words or Less?

by Rachel Levenson, New Frontier

“In the space provided below, please elaborate on one of your activities in 150 words or less,” reads the common application question.

How would you describe your USY experience in 150 words or less in that little box on the common application website? How would you describe a second family that you have been part of for more than half your life?

In 150 words, I am able to explain how in 4th grade I joined Kadima because it was a close-knit community in which I could both be myself and continue to grow. Through USY, I have made lifelong friends, traveled the country and the world, explored the concept of faith and religion and discovered the importance of learning for its own sake. USY also pro-

vided me with a forum to gain and apply leadership skills.

What I am not able to explain to the admissions' officers are the finer points that USY has instilled in me. When I entered USY, my *shabbat* observance consisted of a family dinner each week and maybe going to services. Now four years later, I am *shomer shabbat* and *shabbat* has become a holy time for me to spend with family and friends, something I will continue to do for years to come.

How that has happened I can't exactly tell you. Maybe it came from my deep love of every *shabbat* I have spent with USY whether it has been in Sacramento, Spain, Boston, Israel, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Encino, Palo Alto or Anaheim. Maybe it came from my love of slow *ruach* (slowach). Maybe I just love having an excuse for not doing homework on Saturdays or not getting up from the

couch to answer the phone. But time always seems to move a little slower for that one day each week. There is something so real about not being able to talk to someone unless they are standing in front of you.

It may seem hard not to be able to use your cell phone, computer, TV or car, but I urge all of you to make a point of doing it every once in a while, if you don't already. I can guarantee you if you surround yourself with friends and family for the day, you will enjoy it. Don't worry; it grows on you.

As I head off to new adventures in my life, I will always take with me the importance of setting aside those 25 hours to rest. □

Rachel Levenson of New Frontier is the 2007 USY Social Action/Tikun Olam Vice President.

A Mixture of People, Places Lights Up USY

by Sam Kerbel, Hanegev

Before I moved to Atlanta in the summer of 2003, I knew that one of the first things I would do would be to join my new synagogue's USY chapter. Looking back, I am not exactly sure what led me to this certainty. Where I had lived previously did not have any USY chapters, and besides the fact that I knew it was a youth group for Conservative Jews in high school, the extent of my knowledge on USY was very limited.

Nevertheless, I recall having multiple conversations with my friends at Camp Ramah in Canada that summer about how excited I was to join USY. I raved about all of the good things I heard about it from people at the synagogue when my family visited earlier that year: the weekly Wednesday hangouts (Wacky Wednesdays); the strong regular attendance to chapter programs, which

included annual events such as the Limo Scavenger Hunt and Yom Disney weekend along with the entire Hanegev region; and the soon-to-be opened Youth Annex, a house in a neighborhood adjacent to the synagogue. But besides all of this, having not known anyone in Atlanta or much about USY in general, what was it that drove me to accept USY as one of my central social and religious gateways in high school?

I have to be honest: there was no groundbreaking revelation that took place overnight. There was not a single person who showed me the light to USY's greatness, neither did a single program pull me into the depths of this youth group. For me, a broad mixture of people and places brought me into USY, and I would like to take the opportunity to just pinpoint a few of these things

A Mixture of People, continued on page 14

Sam Kerbel of Hanegev is the 2007 USY Religion/Education Vice President.

D'varim

When It's Time *Not* To Light Hanukkah Candles

by Paula Sass, CRUSY

I saw the theme of this *Achshav!* Edition and immediately began singing the song from USY International Convention 2005 (IC '05: Philly lights up your life). That convention, my first IC, is still one of the most memorable of my USY career.

I remember being inspired by the unbelievable *ruach*, happily overwhelmed by the massive amounts of people, and excited to spend time with my new friends from CRUSY, my friends from USY on Wheels, Mission: Mitzvah, and my old friends from Hagalil USY. I remember screaming "GO (daven at) TEMPLE" at the wheelchair basketball game, singing in the hallways, laughing at Jules Gutin portraying Rocky Balboa in the convention video and crying when it was all over.

Perhaps most significantly, however, I remember a short announcement made on the first day of the convention. In 2005, as often occurs, IC fell during Hanukkah. "Every evening," Jules announced, "we will light Hanukkah candles and say the *brachot* together. DO NOT light candles in your rooms - it is a fire hazard." The seriousness with which Jules made this announcement amazed me. I thought to myself, "Wow, he is really worried that someone might do this." Being afraid of fire, I must admit that the idea of lighting Hanukkah candles in

my room had never even occurred to me, nor was it particularly appealing. But Jules' seriousness made me think.

The rule that we couldn't light our own candles was obviously a safety precaution. It is the fact that this rule needed to be announced, however, that was of greater significance. It meant that staff believed that the USYers would try to take the performance of this *mitzvah* into their own hands. It meant that lighting Hanukkah candles was important enough to USYers that we had to be reminded not to do it on our own. At that moment, I was simply awed by USY. Here were more than 1,000 teenagers who were so dedicated to Judaism that they needed to be told NOT to do something Jewish because of the risk that it posed.

That night, as we lit Hanukkah candles together, I didn't feel the warmth of the *shamash* in my hand as I watched the candles being lit. As I sang the *brachot* together with the other USYers and staff, I felt something much more powerful. I felt the warmth of the *achdut*, unity, of the USY community as we fulfilled the *mitzvah* together. The warmth of the candle in my fingers would only have lasted for a few brief moments. The warmth of the community and memories I have found through USY will last a lifetime. □



D'varim (דברים) is Hebrew for "all things."

A Sweeter Seder

Chocolate Makes Everything Sweet at Passover and Year-round

by Samantha Seserman, NERUSY

I have always loved Passover seders with the family. My grandfather would typically lead the seder, I'd ask the four questions and my little cousins would find the afikomen. My grandfather is an observant man, so when he knew how important USY was to me, he would smile from ear to ear thinking, "that's my granddaughter! I'm so proud she's getting into religion!"

However, it's not only the memories of the traditional seder that really make me happy, it's a memory of when I was only in 5th or 6th grade. Yes, I was a small Kadimanik and I enjoyed every minute of it. I had already made some great new friends through *shabbatonim* with other chapters and chapter events.

However, one chapter event in particular made me really love Passover that year.

It was a simple, yet deliciously sweet event. Approximately one week before Passover, my Kadima chapter had organized a Chocolate Seder. As I sat through the seder, I realized that there was no traditional food, just chocolate sitting there, waiting to be eaten by a bunch of kids. It was amazing. We went over the different parts of the seder, but blessed the chocolate and enjoyed some water, juice and soda. After the seder, we ate the chocolate and practically inhaled our "meal" and talked about upcoming events or Passover plans.

One week later, I went to my grandparents' house for a traditional

seder. I was so used to sitting through the service, trying to follow along as my grandfather spoke in Hebrew. I read the four questions like I was used to and my cousins searched for the *afikomen*.

I had no idea which seder I liked and appreciated more: the seder I spent with friends or the traditional seder with my family. I loved both and hoped to have another wonderful year with family and friends at the holidays.

Due to of those early memories, sitting around a Chocolate Seder enjoying a sweet meal, I am still involved USY and incorporate religion into my life. Thanks to USY and my grandfather, I found an appreciation for Passover, Yom Kippur and other Jewish holidays and continue to make them part of my life. □

Write for Achshav!

Achshav! is always looking for USYers to write articles for upcoming issues!

Stay tuned for future announcements over USY listserves or on the USY website about themes, deadlines and more!

Want More Information?

If you are interested in writing, you find can out more information by e-mailing your Achshav! Editors at achshav@usy.org or by going to www.usy.org/achshav



Celebrate Good Times

Bringing Family Together Around the Passover Seder Table

by Joshua Remba, New Frontier

The time I look forward to the most every year is definitely Passover. The fun begins a few days before the holiday when both of my brothers and sister in law fly home from Hawaii and San Diego. Together, we clean the house, prepare the tables for guests and have our last meal of *chametz*.

Right before the first seder begins, the guests begin to arrive. Among those who come to my house are my cousins whom I only get to see once a year. By the beginning of the first seder, we usually have from 35-45 people sitting in one room. The closeness allows for input from everyone and makes the whole experience

more welcoming.

Much of the seder is very traditional, such as going around the table and allowing everyone to read from the *Haggadah*. When we reach the telling of the story of the exodus from Egypt, or *magid*, we play a game show. Over the past few years, we've played *Deal or no Deal*, *Jeopardy*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and others. Through these games, we learn something new about the Exodus every year. Later in the seder comes the food, in many people's opinion the best part of the ritual. Every year my mother makes delicious potato kugel, salad, matzah kugel, brisket and so much more.

The seder on the second night is just as fun in different ways. This seder is

spent only with my siblings, parents and cousins. Since there are less people, we are able to have more discussions about what things mean. It also means that me and the other people under 35 get better *afikoman* presents.

After the seders, the rest of Passover is just hanging around the house having fun. My siblings and cousins stay around for a few days and we have many family traditions. Among these are playing Monopoly and "Frisbee Baseball." With so much practice over the years, we are all now masters of these activities.

Passover is a time that brings my family closer together and brings out the goodness of life. □

Coming Together in the Sukkah is More than Just Sharing a Meal

by Anna Kaufman, Tzafon

Surrounded by family, friends and mounds of food, the chilly night air is the only reminder that this meal is not taking place in our dining room. This is because tonight we are gathered outside in the *Sukkah* to fulfill our obligation of eating within a *Sukkah* during the holiday of Sukkot.

As I glance through the partially covered top of the *Sukkah* and into the depths of the night sky I am astounded by the vastness of the universe, but at the same time by the closeness of the mini-Jewish community that has gathered together tonight to share a meal.

Stories are shared, jokes are cracked and, if nothing else, year after year I realize how this one night of togetherness is a reminder of how fortunate I am to have so many people that care about me. Sukkot is my favorite Jewish holiday because there is nothing like outdoors beneath a night sky with those you care about. □

COMING NEXT ISSUE

FULL COVERAGE FROM

USY
INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION
2007



CAN'T WAIT THAT LONG?

Check out www.usy.org/ic for pictures and a full recap of all the events from the 57th Annual USY International Convention.

Staying Connected Through Judaism

Keeping the Light Burning After USY

Though your time as a USYer only lasts a finite interval of time, the impact it brings to your life is infinite. For every way USY lights up your life during your high school years, there are multiple ways you can take that light and share it with others, thereby lighting their life with USY. Jules Gutin, USY's Director, even points to USY alumni who are making an impact in the Conservative Move-

ment through their dedicated involvement to the organization in his column on page 4. For each of them, there are countless others around North America and across the globe that have used their USY experiences as the inspiration and catalyst for influencing future generations. Here are a few ways you can keep the light from USY burning for many, many years. □

NATIV: College Leadership Program in Israel



Nativ is a challenging academic year program following high school graduation dedicated to creating and inspiring Conservative Jewish leaders. Nativ, which means "path" in Hebrew, runs from September to June and offers participants the chance to engage in the rich and diverse Israeli society, explore the land and enjoy a fulfilling Conservative Jewish lifestyle, which includes university or yeshiva studies and innovative leadership training. For more information, go to www.nativ.org.

KOACH College Outreach



As the college outreach program for the Conservative Movement, KOACH On Campus helps connect college students to their heritage and the Jewish community on campuses throughout North America and Israel. Led by a Student Steering Committee to help guide the program, KOACH works closely with Hillels or Jewish student organizations to encourage students to explore Judaism and Jewish life, and to use these gifts in creating a Jewish identity. For more information, go to www.koach.org.

Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life



The largest Jewish campus organization in the world, Hillel provides opportunities for Jewish students at more than 500 colleges and universities to explore and celebrate their Jewish identity. Hillel helps students find a balance in being distinctively Jewish and universally human by encouraging them to pursue *tzedek* (social justice), *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and Jewish learning, and to support Israel and global Jewish peoplehood. For more information, go to www.hillel.org.

Influence the Next Generation



Many USYers point to specific individuals who have had a positive influence on shaping their perspective as a Jewish adult. To influence the next generation, consider being a USY advisor or youth director, Jewish educator or Camp Ramah staff member. In each position, you will have an opportunity to show how Judaism is enjoyable while being a focal point in our lives through education and observance. To learn more, go to www.jyda.org, www.jesna.org, or www.ramahjobs.org.

My Purim Adventure

Going after 'Pirate's Booty' on Purim

by Becca Friedland, Seaboard

“A rgh, me maties. Do you want to hear a pirate joke? What’s a pirate’s favorite letter of the alphabet?” (awkward pause of silence) “the letter **ARRRR!**”

We storm the *bima* of the synagogue and kidnap the *megillah* from the *Hazzan* and Rabbi. We grab the microphone and yell, “We won’t return this *megillah* until we raise (insert money amount here) for *tzedakah!*” The clergy moan and groan, pretending to be scared and upset by this calamity, as USYers run around the sanctuary in their pirate outfits shouting pirate sounds and raising their pirate swords. Crazyness breaks out until the silver *megillah* case, a cylinder shaped container, is filled with dollar bills, and the “*tzedakah* money-hungry” USYers return to their seats.

This is my Purim. This is my USY. This is my *ruach*, holiday spirit and mitzvah of *tzedakah* all rolled into one. This is *megillah* kidnapping!

Try it at home, I promise it will be fun! Any chapter of any

size can do this activity, because it doesn’t require too many participants. Take the time to bring your chapter together with matching costumes, raising money for charity and being an active and vital part of your synagogue.

If stealing precious pieces of Jewish literature isn’t your “thing,” then maybe you can try this on for size: Purim Carnival! Even if your USY chapter does not sponsor this event, you can link on to your Youth Department by volunteering to run stations at the carnival. My life goal came true this year when I held an hour-long shift at the cotton candy stand. Not only did I get to attain a vital vocational skill (cotton candy weaving), but I also was able to go home covered in sticky, cobwebby sugar! Obviously most importantly, I paid a service to my Jewish community and doled out cotton candy to many little kids eager for their sugar intake.

Give these Purim tips a try to spice up your holiday experience this coming year! □

A Mixture of People, Places Lights Up USY

Continued from page 9

now.

First, I would like to thank my father, Rabbi Paul Kerbel, who was the first person in my life who enlightened me with the existence of USY. A former Hanegev subregional board member and an international board member as well, his concern for the quality of my experience over the past four years has given me not only confidence, but also motivation, to do whatever I can for this organization. In addition, he provided me with the best Jewish education accessible and guidance in developing my religious capabilities, whether it be leading services or giving a *d’var torah*.

Secondly, my USY chapter in cozy, southern Marietta, Ga.: Sababa USY. My years on chapter board and organizing chapter programs not only gave me the capacity to bring my skills to higher levels of USY leadership but also in other areas in high school (and now college)

extracurricular life. I cannot take for granted the support I received from my chapter, and I only hope that each future USY leader comes from a similar source of encouragement.

Finally, to all of my youth directors and fellow board members: you have all made me more socially outgoing, efficient, self-confident and religiously conscious. To name all of you would exceed the *Achshav!* budget, but I’d like to give a special shout out to Harris Eppsteiner: my partner in crime, fellow synagogue attendee, YouTube expert, and fellow chapter board member, chapter co-president, regional and international board member. Together, we made our chapter one of outstanding international merit, and also managed to get ourselves into some interesting situations, such as when we had to dump that month-old mega-container of spaghetti.

Between everything and everyone I mentioned here, I furthered my abilities and knowledge in what I consider the three most important facets one can obtain in USY: leadership, social amiability and an increased knowledge of the Jewish self. The reason I give these “thank yous” here is not to demonstrate how fortunate I am for my experience, rather I wish to illustrate that all of you reading this have a myriad sources of support at your service. Your USY careers are, in large part, whatever you make of them. Don’t wait for one life-changing moment to spark your USY experience, whether as a leader on board or as an avid participator of events. It is up to YOU to make it happen.

I wish you all *b’hatzlacha* on your future USY endeavors whatever they may be, and *tzetchem l’shalom*. It’s been a wonderful ride. □

Final Word

Hanukkah at Home Starts in the Kitchen

In case you didn't notice, Hanukkah cuisine has come a long way from greasy potato pancakes and overfilled jelly donuts. With a few simple steps and a few simple ingredients, you (and your parents, siblings, grandparents and more) and enjoy some delicious culinary delights.

A Tasty Menorah

Hanukkah Cupcake Menorah Recipe

by Robin Boedecker, New Frontier

1. For each Cupcake Menorah you want, make 9 cupcakes using a simple cake mix.
2. Frost each cupcake.
3. Use aluminum foil to create a boat large enough to hold 9 cupcakes in a row.
4. Line 8 cupcakes in a row. Raise one cupcake (the *shamash*) higher than the rest by placing it on top of some cookies.
5. Insert a candle into the center of each of the 9 cupcakes.
6. Light your Hanukkah candles and enjoy a tasty Hanukkah treat.

Hanukkah Sweet Treat

Apple Latkes

by Anna Goldberg, New Frontier
(recipe courtesy of Claudia Rodin)

Ingredients:

- 4 apples (tart or sweet)
- 3 Tbsp. Sugar
- 3 Tbsp. Rum
- 2 eggs, separated
- 2 Tbsp. Light vegetable oil
- A good pinch of salt
- 1 cup flour
- 7/8 cup water
- Vegetable oil for frying
- Confectioners Sugar for sprinkling on after

1. Core and peel apples and cut into thick (1/2") slices.
2. Put them in a shallow dish with the sugar and rum and turn them so they are well coated.
3. Leave for at least 1 hour, turning the slices over occasionally so that they absorb the liquid.
4. For the batter, beat the egg yolks with the oil and salt, then stir in the flour and mix well. Now beat in the water gradually and vigorously, squashing any lumps. Leave for an hour to rest.
5. Beat the egg whites into stiff peaks. Fold in the egg whites in the egg yolk and flour mixture.
6. Heat at least 3/4" of oil in a large frying pan. Dip the apple slices in the batter, making sure they are well covered with batter.
7. Lift each one out carefully and lower into the hot oil. The oil must be sizzling but not too hot, or the latkes will brown before the apple is soft inside.
8. Fry in batches, turning the apple slices over to brown both sides.
9. Lift and drain on paper towels.
10. Sprinkle with sugar or cinnamon and sugar and serve!

Before or after you light the Hanukkah candles ...

Before or after you spin the dreidel ...

Start your next Hanukkah celebration in the kitchen.

Take these recipes, put them in a special place for Hanukkah 5769 and enjoy making them for your family and friends. And let the light of Hanukkah – and USY – light up your holiday and your life.

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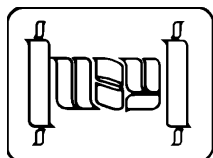
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To find out how to begin your adventure, contact us at
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