



Report

Family Camp. Summer 2015. Middle Way

Five lights and the five best days of summer spent with the family

More than hundred participants from Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, Chernovitz and Berdichev were gathered to celebrate festival of conservative Jewish life in Ukraine. Some participants of the camp were not acquainted with each other, and some attend camps and activities for several years and with joy were waiting for the family camp. Every participant had feeling that he is part of one big family. Among them were five refugee families from Donetsk. All the participants spent five unforgettable days at the beginning of July in a picturesque place on the banks of the Dnieper River.

The name of the program was Middle Way (Shvil Hazahav). There are purposes and tasks that were set:

- 1) to give families opportunity to feel unity inside of the family;
- 2) to give them vision of Ukrainian conservative movement
- 3) attracting of new families to the community;
- 4) to give knowledge of Jewish tradition;
- 5) family vacation in a pleasant atmosphere;
- 6) to tell about Conservative Judaism;
- 7) to familiarize with the era of King Shlomo and the literature of that period. Overview of Shir HaShirim, Mishlei and Kohelet;
- 8) to apply the basic principles to the practical life.

King Shlomo time was very successful for Kingdom of Israel. Shlomo was wise, harmonious and spiritual person. Based on this, camp program was built on spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and creative aspects. This topic was chosen because Conservative Judaism is just the middle way among three main streams of Judaism. King Shlomo which is known as wise person and held visions middle path in politics, diplomacy, and his works. Participants were able to explore work and values of Shlomo Ha Meleh. Get acquainted with King Shlomo time, with its literary heritage in practical application in our time. Parents listened to lectures by Rav Reuven Stamov about books Shir HaShirim, Mishlei and Kohelet, Shlomo Zaharov told about fast of 17 Tamuz.

Boker Tov

The beginning of each day was Boker Tov with Jewish dancing, which set a good mood. Of course traditionally Mode Ani was sung.

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Shaharit

Three kvutzot and their madrichim also pray, but depending on age. The youngest participants were from 4 to 6 years and the oldest one 14-15 years old. That's why madrichim told to younger children about tfila and tradition. It was amazing when children read Shma, for someone it was first time. Kids of all ages can feel a special atmosphere and learn new about Judaism. Children in oldest kvutza had an opportunity to wear tallit and tfilin and almost all of them pray with parents. It's really unique opportunity that they can do in family camp.

Quests

«Shlomo Ha Meleh»

Participants learned about King Solomon, his life, and that with the help of which he became famous. Children and parents were delighted with the event, because in a very interesting way, they did different tasks on stations, reading and writing poetry, dancing, building, and trading. Also learn aspects of Jewish tradition and interesting information about Shlomo Ha Meleh.

«The Treasures of King Shlomo»

This quest consists of several stations. Participants had the opportunity to look for coins with metal detector, learn several phrases in Hebrew from Micheley, visit library of King Shlomo and build the Temple, feel the depth of that time diplomacy on the court and reach a compromise. Quest was very saturated and the stations were very diverse. Participants plunged into almost all spheres of life at that time and were excited.

Quiz-museum by the book Mishley - Beit Midrash

Participants need to find objects from Mishley: honey, light, water, etc. Each team had to figure out why these items are in our improvised museum of King Shlomo. At the end was given original source for each team, and participants were looking for a particular point in the text, read and comment on them. So everybody could be convinced of the relevance of the text from Mishley and discuss the meaning of it and its actuality nowadays.

For example: "A mitzvah is a lamp," says King Solomon in Proverbs, "and Torah, light." Light is a metaphor for Torah, and light, too, assumes these three forms: light as a tool of life, light as a means of connection to a higher place, and light as light.

Evening event "Song among songs"

It was an evening of poetry and poesy. Lena Stamov told about peculiarities of poetry of that time Men read lyric poems, told beautiful words and Brahot to their wives and woman from Mahane. In this

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unusual form of the camp participants were able to meet with such a wonderful Shlomo creativity and plunge into the world of romantic poetry of that time.

One woman from Kiev told: "I am divorced, thank you for this event. I feel that I am meaningful, I even didn't know about tradition of Eshet Hail". Also Rav Reuven Stamov told about tradition of Shabbat and Shir ha Shirim. All men did Braha to all ladies in mahane. There were many romantic songs, congratulations, warm words to ladies; it was deep inside to every heart.

Activities

Children did a lot of crafts such as presents to moms, Shabbat haKalah, King Solomon ring and of course discuss Torah. Acquaintance by families made it possible for many to get to know their children and parents and to see Jewish life in different cities. The first peula "Middle way - traditional Judaism" made it possible to acquaint with Conservative Judaism as the middle way between three movements in Judaism. Rav Reuven and Lena Stamov told about main features of traditional Judaism. Younger children talked about the sense of measures. The goal was using the Book of Mishlei and the history of occurrence different movements in Judaism to tell about different aspects. This caused many large and thorough questions from parents. They asked many questions about the features and differences between halacha and real everyday life.

It is pleasant that new participants delighted with prevailing atmosphere in camp. Children with madrichim studied the texts, talked about the importance of the measure and middle way, do crafts, draw and even made the King Shlomo ring. It was also there were three clubs in camp: dancing, psychological relax and art. They discuss how to make decision and madrichim discuss topic of King Shlomo success secret with teenagers. About how important it is to keep the commandments.

The culmination was that all made Mizrakh. Each family took to their home Mizrakh. It will be a pleasant memory of vivid impressions.

CEREMONIES

This summer camp was very solemn because of many Jewish amazing ceremonies. It was their first Aliya to Torah. All sang Mazal Tov and scattered candies. Rabbies told them Brahot and invite their parents, bless them. Shlomo Zaharov taught a song and presented books. Everyone was involved in this solemn moment.

For Bar/Bat Mitzvah children are preparing for several years. Three girls from Kharkov and one boy from Kiev had opportunity to pass Bar Mitzvah ceremony and share this joy with big Jewish family and were blessed and inspired by three rabbies. On last day of mahane they told their speeches.

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Rabbi Reuven Stamov and Zeev Vaksman helped to prepare speeches. It was important that parents were with kids and maintained them in such important day for all of them. Children were very sincere in their words about Parashat HaShavua. They were so grateful for their parents, madrihim, teachers and friends. Each of the 4 families and bnei bar/bat mitzvah sparked fiery lights on the last but very important evening of the camp. It was so beautiful and touching view which be remembered.

Viktoria from Kharkov mother of Bat Mitzva girl said: “Very important to have such camp where children and their parents can understand their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, where they become Jewish adults, makes sense and is a natural part of everyday life. I grow up assimilated family and even didn’t dream about this moment, Thank you for this opportunity”.

Conversion

Very important and big day comes for those, who want to convert. Twelve people from Chernovitz, Kiev and Odessa were converted. Before they enter the mikveh and say the blessings and officially become a member of the Jewish nation, the final step in conversion process is to have exam before the Beit Din. There was amazing moment of the day, when people came out from mikveh suddenly sun came from the cloud and glumly day converted to sunny. The participants of this process felt importance of every moment, the atmosphere was really emotional. In the evening it was ceremony under Talit rabbies blessed by “Birkat Kohanim”. Julia Fresh sad it was a long way, I cried but it was decision of my life.

Oksana Remarovych said that at the beginning of conversion process, she had a startling and unexpected chain reaction — a change or loss of friends, a new look at familiar things, a less than supportive friends reaction. But being Jewish is what she I identify with most of all, even though people can't see it. Lena Stamov sad congratulations and give presents from community.

Shhita Studding

On July, 3 Shloma Zaharov taught two persons from Kiev community how to do shhita. It was beginning of big processes and a good start.

Shabbat

Before Shabbat every group (four) presented their presentation Shabbat. Drama, songs, dances and speeches, brahot. In beautiful and solemn atmosphere ladies lighted candles and we had Kabbalat Shabbat prayers on river bank. It was two prayers, Shaharit and Mincha with Torah reading, so we could give kavod to many people. They were very impressed. We had unformed Beit Midrash on

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Mishley, Parashat HaShavua lesson. Shlomo Zaharov lecture and lecture about Jewish Odessa by chairman of Odessa community Ilia Perstnev.

Wonderful havdalah was little bit sad because the understood that was only one Shabbat in family camp.

Feedback

Analyzing the camp we can said that the main goals were reached. Parents were very grateful for the opportunity to be together with their children, especially teenagers. After all, the parents were able to see and know their needs. They thanked for an interesting informal learning process and interesting topic. It was great possibility in such a short time to get acquainted with a circle of Jewish life practically: Convert to Judaism, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, prayer, shechita, Shabbat, Torah reading, prayers, rabbis from different countries, and so on. Parents wanted more Hebrew and thanked for the good madrichim.

President of the Jewish Forum of Ukraine and Chairman of the Board of the Jewish Fund of Ukraine Arkadiy Monastirskiy the father of two teenagers said thanked for beautiful time in family camp and said that it have taken a worthy place of Jewish life in Ukraine. Masorti movement is well-balanced point of view and wished success. Also he and his family often visit community on Shabbat. His daughters and wife delighted with the Rothschild project.

It was very important for team to hear words of support from Shlomo Zakharov and Khaim Viner. The team was very inspired with their words and brahot.

After all everyone felt special atmosphere of Jewish life, enjoyed songs, stories, ceremonies and history — all together with new Jewish family friends. For the participants of the camp tzevet created such conditions that it was no matter what Jewish background they have, each family found place at Family Camp. Whether at a Havdalah service or Makabiada near river, Jewish values permeate the program in such a way that all camp activities can ultimately be placed in a more meaningful context. Our families realized that living Jewishly as a family is necessary.

Olga from Donetsk said: “It was a great time. We really enjoyed spending time together as a family. I loved being out at camp with my kids and friends and getting to know new people. I loved feeling a sense of Jewish community.” Vladimir from Kiev noted: “Well-organized with a great mix of family time and time for parents to learn new interesting thinks.” Dmitri from Berdichev said: “Family Camp was a pure joy of a Jewish experience for our family.” Irina from Chernovtsy pointed: “Family Camp it’s a piece of the puzzle that makes up our lifestyle. Such wonderful families attend this special week.”

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With all sincerity, many thanks for grantors who made this camp possible because the camp gathered a large Jewish family. Many thanks for Masorti Olami, Mirdreshet Yerushalaim for this opportunity to create such camp. Also many thanks for that people who worked in Jewish communities and schools, find money, write programs, lead and encourage jewish leaders.

Already in Facebook on day of arrival to their hometowns were posts named like “5 brightest unforgettable days with big family”. It is a big honor to us to understand that we took part in organizing this unforgettable time.

More photos you can find on our page in Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/masoretinkiev>

Respectfully,
Lena Stamov,
Family camp
educational director.

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