



Remember counting down to the last day of school as a child? The final bell of the year brought a feeling of exhilaration, a well deserved

break after a year of school and the structure that came along with it. Summer has a certain power. The power to rejuvenate, the power to explore, and the power to follow a slower pace.

As a parent and educator, I am a firm believer of taking advantage of the power of summer. It provides us with the opportunity to spend more time with our children and enable them to grow through new experiences. I have discussed the challenges of the summer with many people over the years, and it's evident that many parents are grappling with how to maximize summer break. Often the challenge grows as our children become older, particularly teenagers.

Throughout the year, children are in school, and in many ways this structure is easier for both parents and children. Everyone knows what to expect - schedules, teachers, homework and exams, set chugim, and limited free time. We know



that religious values, including davening and Torah study, are done in school.

Like most things in life, the challenge of no school has advantages and disadvantages. It is up to us to focus on the positive. For those of us blessed with children and grandchildren, we can heed these ideas, but if you don't (yet) have children of your own you can set an example bringing these values to nieces and nephews or other children in your lives.

Many professions and offices allow for more flexibility in the summer. Recently, two friends shared with me that they are taking their teenagers to help them at their places of employment this summer. What a wonderful way to bond with their children and set a strong personal example of work ethic, respect for one's colleagues, and passion for one's career. If you are taking time off of work, your days will be filled with opportunities to convey the positive messages you want to inculcate in your children.

In addition to maximizing this time together, the OU takes great pride in offering top notch summer programs - Camp Dror, NCSY Summer, and Yachad. While the notion of long sleep-away camps so many of us are familiar with from abroad has not really taken off yet in Israel, study after study show that the impact summer camps have on participants is life changing.

Informal education in the laid back summer camp environment strengthens teen's values and beliefs in a way that frontal education does not typically accomplish.

This past week, I had the opportunity to visit numerous OU summer camps. OU Israel's Camp Dror celebrated 25 years of camp (26 years since we opened, but due to Covid-19 we could not run camp last summer). The learning and *midot tovot* I saw the campers exhibit was incredibly uplifting. I saw the teen's learn about Taamei HaMikra and Birkat HaLevana in a fun atmosphere. They cleared up nicely after lunch without being asked, and their pure joy was evident as they chanted the camp cheer. None of this would be possible without our dedicated camp staff who work tirelessly throughout the year to provide these teens with the best summer ever. Thank you to Chaim Pelzner (OU Israel Director of Programs), Cindy Weisel (Camp Director), Vered Ganan (Girls Head Counselor), Tsofia Maoz (Girls Asst. Head Counselor), Meir Vonhotzker (Boys Head Counselor), Kobi Ziat (Boys Asst. Head Counselor), Liat Goldberger (Logistical Coordinator), and the entire camp staff for all that you do.

I also spent time with Yachad Summer Nofesh (which ran parallel to Camp Dror on the same campus) and NCSY Summer. I visited NCSY Michlelet on a day of chesed in Beit Shemesh and NCSY Kollel both on campus and at their incredibly inspiring Tisha B'Av Kumsitz at the Kotel. Seeing over 1,500 teens at Yom NCSY last week was inspiring, as always. These teens participated in a Hachnasat Sefer Torah and

exhibited a genuine love for Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael. Yasher Koach to Rabbi Micah Greenland (International Director, NCSY), David Cutler (Director, NCSY Summer), and your dedicated team of staff and volunteers.

While Israeli culture has not yet made summer camps available to the masses (most Israeli teens that have an overnight experience have 1-6 nights through their youth groups), the OU has a goal to bring the summer camp experience to thousands of Israelis each summer. We are currently limited since the facilities we use need the space for other groups throughout the summer, but we have a dream to open our own OU Israel campus to enable us to impact countless more youth during the summer and throughout the year. If you are aware of anybody that shares this dream with us and is interested in donating towards this cause please be in touch/have them be in touch to discuss.



Avi,
Executive Director, OU Israel
aberman@ouisrael.org

May the learning in this issue
be dedicated in loving memory of
אנחנו לעילוי נשמת

Anna Beer a"h
חנה טובא בת ר' יעקב הלוי ע"ה

on her fifth yearzeit

כ' מנחם אב

The Beer, Carroll and Maisel families