

Young Zionist

Cause we're Ofek 09...Having a great time

Philippa Goulde along with Ofek 09 madrichim and Emma Bowers, Claudia Gold, Georgia Green, Sammy Horne, Tara Keeney, Holly Pollack, Jacob Rabin, Marcus Shaffner.

“We’ll be back here next year for Keshet don’t you fear”...these were the words of the song written by Ofek '09 *chanichot* (participants) for the *messibat siyyum* (concluding celebrations). The experience of the sixty five *chanichim* and thirty *madrichim* on Ofek this year was almost indescribable but in typical FZY style we forced them to try. We asked *chanichim* and *madrichim* eight questions about *machane* (camp) and about FZY: what they enjoyed, what inspired them and how they are going to stay involved.

Why did you come on Ofek?

Answers to this question ranged from the expected “because my sibling/cousin/friend told me it would be the best two weeks of my life” and “because I wanted to meet new people” to some refreshingly new ideas such as “to learn more” and “to build my character”. It seems that most of our *chanichim* came on Ofek to spend two weeks with friends, thinking that FZY was the best place to do so. As for the *madrichim*, continuation of the FZY journey, putting Year Course *hadra* (leadership skills) into practice and a desire to instil in our *chanichim* what our *madrichim* instilled in us, were the main reasons to take *machane* this summer.

What (excluding *peulot* - programmes) have you enjoyed most on Ofek?

As expected, many *chanichim* enjoyed meeting new friends and then spending an amazing two weeks with them. More than one *chanich* commented that their favourite thing about *machane* was meeting the *madrichim* and making bonds with them; a number of them said that they would want the same *madrichim* on Keshet next year. Other highlights included our Maccabiah colour war, dorm time and the last night.

Which *peula* have you enjoyed most?

Six *peulot* were mentioned as being the highlights of Ofek. Two of them, the 50:50 *peula* and the bonding games *peula*, were *peulot* run with Ofek and Keshet together, something which the Ofek *chanichim* particularly enjoyed. Spending time with Keshet was something they relished and many said they wanted to see more interaction. Ray Hill, an outside speaker, who spoke about how to combat the issue of the BNP in the current political climate was the highlight for more than one *chanich*, and clearly made a very strong impact.

One *peula* written by Ofek *madrichim* that was noticeably mentioned was ‘FZY does *Magen* (Defence of Jewish Rights)’, a *peula* that looked at issues surrounding Sderot, Darfur and Iran, Anti-Semitism. Another favourite asked *chanichim* to create a utopian society which then had to deal with the problems of immigration. *Chanichim* inevitably ended up discriminating against the immigrants, and this led to a discussion on anti-Semitism. Finally, without a doubt, the *peula* which struck a chord with many *chanichim* was a ‘Jews Around the World’ string *peula*, that used all their senses by blindfolding them,

taking them on an airplane, through a barren land filled with wild beasts and over obstacles to go around the world, attached to a string.

What has inspired you most?

One of the aims of *machane* is to inspire, and *chanichim* were inspired by a wide range of issues. Some were inspired by our outside speakers: CST, Ray Hill and Drugsline, some by the Israeli Updates given by our *shlichim* (emissaries from Israel), in particular, Einav's update on the Israeli army. Some were inspired by FZY projects, in particular this year, by Sderot and the MIAs. Most inspiring of all however, for us as *madrichim*, are the answers that are more general. One *chanich* told me that before they came on FZY they were not particularly interested in Israel and did not consider themselves a Zionist, but since coming on Ofek they have become more Zionist and want to further this new found passion. One *chanich* told me that what inspired them most... was their *madrichim*, and their passion, enthusiasm and knowledge.

What is one thing you would want to get involved in with FZY between now and Kesher?

The purpose of this question is hopefully instantly clear: firstly to find out what *chanichim* are interested in doing so that we can make sure to get them involved in those projects, but secondly to remind them that there are lots of things they can do between now and Kesher to get involved. Whilst some *chanichim* struggled initially to think about what inspired them, none struggled to tell me immediately the activities in which they wanted to get involved. One *chanich*, so inspired by Ray Hill, wants to get involved in raising awareness about the BNP, a number of *chanichim* are keen to join the *Tzedakah Va'ad* (charity committee) and help the *Va'ad* with all the amazing projects that they do, some *chanichim* want to organise a camp reunion, and some *chanichim* want to get involved in the Sderot project of FZY *bogrim* (graduates of Year Course) to help make a difference in the region. Whatever it is that *chanichim* want to get involved in, this summer we inspired all of them to want to get involved in something.

What is your lasting memory of camp?

I explained to them that for this I wanted to hear the one thing they would always remember about Ofek, the one thing they could not wait to rush home and tell their friends, or the one thing that they would be laughing about with their friends from Ofek until Kesher. The Maccabiah colour war featured here as the best day of camp and something many of the *chanichim* said would be their favourite camp memory, isolation or quarantine featured as something *chanichim* will still be laughing about on Kesher 2010, *rikud* (Israeli dance) was a memory one *chanich* could not wait to go home and tell his friends about, and, as expected, meeting new friends and discos also featured as key memories from camp.

Madrichim said they will remember how their *chanichim* were inspired, how their *chanichim* enjoyed it so much that they want to come back on Kesher, and the way their *chanichim* acted through the last few days of camp, especially towards the *messibat siyyum* and the idea of going home. However, the most captivating answer came from a *chanich* who said that his lasting memory of Ofek 2009 was how passionate everyone was about everything they did.

I know I said that I had asked *madrichim* and *chanichim* eight questions and only six are explained above, but that is because the last two will hopefully illustrate the moral of the story. The first was to ask the *chanichim* what the odds were they would come back next year and to ask the *madrichim* what the odds were they would take *machane* or Tour next summer. It will be no surprise that, barring

nuclear warfare, or a deadly virus (although we have dealt with one of those already), **every *chanich* and *madrich* said that they would be spending summer 2010 with FZY.** The last question asked *chanichim* and *madrichim* to describe FZY in a maximum of eight words, either in individual words or a sentence. I leave you with these words... this is how Ofek '09 views FZY:

Fun, character building, different, enjoyable, challenging, interesting, amazing, pretty sick, a movement where everyone is accepted and provided for, a way to make your summer really enjoyable, a summer to always remember, an unbelievable experience, a family, gives opportunities, amazing *ruach* (spirit), exciting, a community, inspirational, creates memories... and lastly... *tnua bli hafaska*, a movement that never stops moving