



midreshet yerushalayim

chair of the board of directors and executive committee **rabbi yossie goldman**

director of midreshet yerushalayim - israel **dr. yair paz**

director of midreshet yerushalayim - eastern europe **gila katz**

Midreshet Yerushalayim in Israel and Ukraine

Midreshet Yerushalayim was established in 1991 in response to the massive wave of Russian-speaking immigrants reaching Israel's shores and to the "lifting of the Iron Curtain" in the former Soviet Union. Since then, Midreshet Yerushalayim has played an important role in answering the spiritual needs of these newly emerging Jewish communities searching to re-build a connection with their Jewish roots.

Midreshet Yerushalayim, with its open and intellectual approach to Judaism, provided the right educational and spiritual framework for the Russian-speaking community. In the past seventeen years, thousands of Jews in scores of communities throughout Israel and the former Soviet Union have found a Jewish "home" in the educational life of Midreshet Yerushalayim programs.

Midreshet Yerushalayim – Israel Highlights 2007-08

The Numbers

Twenty-six Jewish education programs operated throughout Israel from Eilat to the Galilee reaching close to 1,000 Russian-speaking immigrants of all ages. The year-long programs have created communities that provide a focal point for Jewish identity and a sense of belonging in Israel.

MILI (Hebrew acronym for Midreshet Yerushalayim for Creative Study), attracts hundreds of young Russians (aged 20-35) to competitions, based on a game played in their native Russia, which solves intellectual riddles in small groups. The MILI innovation adds Jewish content to the questions. Now in its seventh year, the game has scored great success in attracting young Russian-speaking immigrants to a framework that increases their knowledge and experience of Judaism, while providing them with a social support group to ease their absorption into Israeli society.

Programs included:

- **Seventeen academic courses in seven cities** throughout Israel for 600 new immigrants, including the successful Tel Aviv lecture series with Schechter graduate **Dr. Rafi Kassimov**, that attracts more than ninety students in two classes.
- **Nine MILI clubs** with a membership of 400 young adults, including a new club in Bet Shemesh, two clubs in Haifa, and veteran clubs in Jerusalem, Ashdod, Yavneh, Bat Yam, Karmiel, and Eilat.

- **Six MILI national competitions** including special Chanukah and Shavuot "treasure hunts" in Jerusalem, in addition to the traditional MILI quiz in Beersheva; a Purim competition in Bet Shemesh; a Pesach quiz in Ashdod; and a Jerusalem Day quiz that drew over 300 participants.

- **Two "Heritage Trail" (*Shvilei Moreshet*) year-long seminars** for Jerusalem students and young adults, co-sponsored by **Keren Klita**. Forty students met twice weekly to study about *The History and Ethnology of Jerusalem*. Veteran instructor **Michael Korol** taught a weekly class on the subject and then guided the group on Friday field trips.

New Chair for Midreshet Board

Prof. Shmuel Glick, Director of the Schocken Institute in Jerusalem, was appointed Chair of the Midreshet Yerushalayim Board of Directors in March 2008, replacing **Rabbi Yossie Goldman** who served from 2006-08. Prof. Glick was the founding director of Midreshet Yerushalayim activities in Hungary and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. He is a professor of Jewish Law at the Schechter Institute and Visiting Professor at the University of Jewish Studies in Budapest. We wish Prof. Glick success in his renewed efforts for Midreshet Yerushalayim and extend deep appreciation to Rabbi Goldman for his contributions to the institution.

Midreshet Yerushalayim Connects with Conservative Kehillot

Midreshet Yerushalayim offered courses in the following Masorti congregations: **Hakehilla Masorit in Ra'anana** where twenty immigrants studied *Jewish Civilization through Music*; in **Karmiel's Kehillat HaKerem** where two courses were offered on *Practical Judaism and Jewish History of the First Temple Period*; and in **Rehovot's Kehillat Adat Shalom Emanuel**, where two courses were offered to thirty Russian-speaking students on the *Mishnah* and the *weekly Torah portion*. Most Midreshet Yerushalayim instructors are Russian-speaking graduates or students of the Schechter Institute. Raised in the former Soviet Union, they were first drawn to Jewish studies and practice by the Masorti approach to Jewish education at Schechter.



1-3: MILI National Competitions in Beersheva, Shavuot "treasure hunt" in Jerusalem and Purim-Fest in Bet Shemesh



MILI Goes International...with MILI Olami

The MILI quiz game was successfully exported to the city of **Kharkov** in Ukraine in June 2008. Over 100 university students aged 17-25 played the game which included a large number of Jewish content questions. The event was organized by **Leonid Kantor**, a graduate of MILI OLAMI, a ten-month academic course run by Midreshet Yerushalayim in 2007 which prepared a select group for Jewish education leadership roles in the FSU and Germany. Another graduate, **Natalie Yemiliyanova**, is director of a Jewish Center in **Novgorod**, while other graduates have found Jewish education work in Israel and the FSU.

MILI Heads for the Great Outdoors

Treasure Hunt: Chanukah Menorahs in Jerusalem was the theme for a new game conceived by MILI director **Yan Privorotsky** which takes the MILI concept out of the classroom and into the streets. Competing teams comprised of over seventy participants from throughout Israel, gathered in the streets of Jerusalem on the third night of Chanukah. Their mission: to scout out the sites where various menorahs were hidden by answering questions on Jewish history. Unlike the indoor MILI game, participants are allowed to use reference books and the internet to obtain the answers.

MILI Methodological Center: Keep those Questions Coming!

The key to MILI's success lies in the formulation of the questions used in the games. To date, about 1,000 questions related to Israel and Judaism have been formulated. **Rabbi Reuven Resnick**, Schechter Rabbinical Seminary graduate, together with **Ilya Talyanski**, coordinator for the Bat Yam MILI group, meet weekly to compose new questions.

MILI website used in FSU The Midreshet Yerushalayim website, www.mili.org.il, continues to gain new readers. With over 12,000 visits recorded in 2008, the site is a rich resource of Jewish information. With much of the material researched and written by Schechter graduate **Rabbi Michael Kovson**, offerings include a weekly Torah portion sheet in Russian with 1,000 visitors a month, half coming from Israel and half from the FSU; an "Ask the Rabbi" column; a "Jewish Expressions" column which provides a basic introduction to Jewish terms and customs; an "Our Jerusalem" column on the history, architecture and geography of various sites in Jerusalem; the Jewish Calendar and a Midreshet Yerushalayim calendar of events; a MILI dictionary for Jewish religious and cultural expressions; and complete texts of books on Jewish topics published in Russian by the Schechter Institute.

Torah in Tel Aviv in Russian...Celebrating Ten Years

Veteran Jewish educator, **Rafi Kassimov**, who will be ordained by the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary in December 2008, celebrated a decade of teaching Jewish studies to a highly committed group of Russian-speakers in the heart of Tel Aviv. Over the years, his course became so popular that an additional class was added, and today, over ninety participants engage weekly in intellectual pursuit, both in the classroom and in the field. One class, studying *History and Religions of Jerusalem*, organized a Shabbat retreat devoted to *Shavuot and the Book of Ruth* at Kibbutz Yehiam. The second class, *Torah and its Interpretation*, examined the *Joseph Story and Exodus*.



Kudos for the Midreshet Yerushalayim Learning Community

Dear Dr. Paz,

We students of Rafi Kassimov's lecture series, have for years now, come every week to learn about our Jewish traditions and culture. Thanks to this class, many of us were able for the first time, to connect with our wondrous tradition—study we were unable to pursue, for well-known reasons, in the Soviet Union. Today we are able to understand Midrashim as well as fully engage in deep discussions on the commentaries of the Torah. With great appreciation to the pedagogic artistry of Dr. Kassimov, we thank him for bringing us closer to Judaism and Torah, and setting us out on the path of understanding our Jewish religion.

Raya Shapira and classmates

July 2008

Israel Culture Club Jerusalem's Russian-speakers are treated weekly to a potpourri of cultural activities held at the Schocken Institute. The brain-child of Schechter-ordained **Rabbi Michael Rifkin** and today coordinated by Schechter graduate **Rabbi Baruch Yonin**, cultural encounters include: *Aficionados of Ancient Hebrew Manuscripts Club*, with lectures utilizing rare manuscripts from the Schocken collection; *Music-Lovers' Club*, which focuses on Jewish and Biblical themes in western classical music; and a *Modern Hebrew Literature Club*, which showcases biblical motifs in modern Hebrew literature.





A first introduction to the David Clayman z'l Library, Kiev Cultural Center

Midreshet Yerushalayim - Ukraine Highlights 2007-08

The Numbers

1,000 children and their families participated in Midreshet Yerushalayim, the only Conservative Jewish educational network in the former Soviet Union, through the following education frameworks:

- Eight TALI Family Education Centers in Kiev, Chernivtsi, Munkatsh, Khust, Berdichev, Priluki, Kirovograd and Donetsk
- The TALI Day School with 320 pupils in Chernivtsi
- Two schools receiving pedagogical support (Chirkasi and Nikolaiyev)
- Ramah-Ukraine Summer Camp
- Ramah-Ukraine Family Camp
- For the first time! Ramah-NOAM Winter Camp

Leadership training is essential to high quality Jewish education and community building. Midreshet Yerushalayim held the following seminars:

- The first Ramah-Ukraine International Leadership Seminar took place in January 2008 in Kiev where six North American Ramah counselors met with forty Ukrainian Marom students in a rich experiential program
- A week-long teachers' training seminar (outside Kiev) was attended by 45 teachers from Midreshet Yerushalayim schools who were joined by ten Ramah-Ukraine camp counselors for Shabbat in March 2008
- A Midreshet Yerushalayim-Marom Leadership Seminar in May 2008 brought together thirty Ramah-Ukraine camp counselors who are also active in their city's Marom chapters throughout Ukraine
- Holiday celebrations included four pre-Passover model Seders held for teachers, students and parents and three High Holiday services held in Kiev, Chernovitz and Donetsk

New Initiatives ... New Programs

Ramah-Ukraine Camps: First Time for Winter Camp

Camp Ramah in Ukraine was a bold idea that took hold 16 years ago, and with each passing year has evolved into an educational reality that has a profound impact on the young Jewish population of Ukraine. Thousands of children have graduated the program as campers and then as counselors, with close to 1,000 of the graduates making their home in Israel in the last decade.

The 1st Ramah-Noam Winter Camp in Ukraine, a longtime dream of the children and staff of Midreshet Yerushalayim, took place this past winter outside of Kiev. Starting on the first night of Chanukah, the five-day camp constituted an additional holiday "miracle" for the eighty campers aged 13-16. The youngsters were treated to an exciting program of educational and cultural activities - *Miracles in Jewish History and in My Own Life* - that focused on the story of Chanukah and on personal Jewish identity. The spirit of Chanukah came to life through workshops in arts and crafts, animation and music. The themes of the Chanukah story were used as a springboard to numerous discussions of Jewish and personal identity which carried over into the Shabbat programming. Feedback was very positive, with campers and counselors already planning for next year's winter reunion.

Camp Ramah-Ukraine, celebrating its 16th anniversary this year, has acquired an outstanding reputation for providing a positive two-week educational and social experience in the countryside for Jewish children and families in Ukraine. Informal Jewish study, religious services, as well as cultural and recreational activities conducted in a scenic setting provide a wonderful model of Jewish living and a welcome break from the harsh economic conditions that characterize life for most Ukrainian Jews. In 2008, 175 children and 34 staff members (seven coming from Israel) explored the theme of *Our Israel: the 60th Anniversary of the State of Israel*.

Ramah-Ukraine Family Camp held its fifth annual camp for children aged 6-10 and their parents. Almost 100 "campers of all ages" formed a Kehilla (community) committed to learning and growing together as one family unit. This year, for the first time, the majority of children were accompanied by both their parents. The experience of the entire family living in a Jewish community twenty-four hours a day plays a vital role in forming Jewish identity, bringing parents and children closer together, and prompting them to observe Jewish ceremonies once they have returned to their homes. A high percentage of parent graduates of the camp take on leadership roles in their local Midreshet Yerushalayim educational centers.



1. Participants of the Tel Aviv Lecture Series take a field trip to Jerusalem
2. Shvilei Masoret fieldtrip in Jerusalem environs
3. Midreshet Yerushalayim lecturer Shlomo Voskoboinyk, speaking to a single-parents group in Eilat
4. Campers at the Camp Ramah-Ukraine Summer Session
5. Gila Katz, Midreshet Yerushalayim Director, sharing a book from the Rabbi David Clayman z'l Library with children at the Kiev Cultural Center





Shlomo Voskoboynik

Teacher of Jewish Thought, Bible and History and Pedagogic Coordinator, Yotvata Regional School, near Eilat; Midreshet Yerushalayim Jewish Studies teacher for single-parent Russian-speakers, Eilat

On the Spectrum

Shlomo made aliyah in 1994 with a wife and child from his hometown of Vinnitsa, Ukraine where he was a teacher of Russian Literature. In Israel, he earned a teaching certificate which enabled him to begin a new life in education. He is now in his second year of M.A. study at Schechter, majoring in Jewish Thought with a minor in Land of Israel studies.

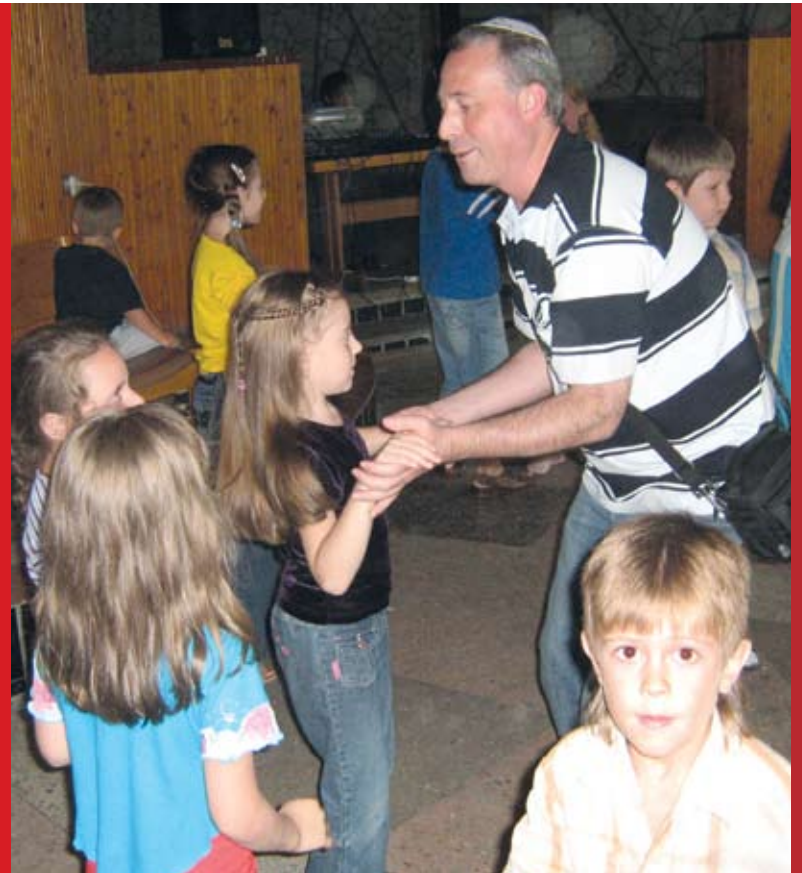
On Defining Jewish Life and Learning

"I remember my grandmother lighting Friday night candles; once in a while, tasting matza, joining in a minyan. But the first time I actually touched a Torah and opened a Bible, I was 21 years old!"

"My work with the single parents has been most rewarding. It is amazing how they take hold of the Bible stories and make them their own. Each one arrived in Israel for his or her own reasons, but none of them had the leisure time to acclimate. I am giving them their 'educational absorption.'"

"My aim is to bridge the gap that prevents them from reaching 'Israeliness.' All of us need to find our Jewish narrative as much as we need a salary to feed our families."

"At Schechter, it became clear to me that what unites Israeli society is much greater than what divides us. Sometimes, sitting in class, I am moved just by looking around the room and seeing fellow students of all levels of religious observance, deep in a dialogue that needs to resonate throughout Israel."



Igor (Boaz) Babkin

Senior Camp Ramah-Ukraine Counselor; Graduate of the Midreshet Yerushalayim Educational Leadership Program; Schechter Rabbinical Seminary Candidate

On the Spectrum

Igor grew up in Odessa, Ukraine, where “Jewish” was a dirty word, and a secret to keep under wraps. He taught English in the FSU before making aliyah five years ago. In summer 2004, he traveled to Kiev and Camp Ramah-Ukraine where he worked as a translator for North American counselors, experiencing a personal “Ten Days That Shook His World!” He has returned to camp every summer since as the “Singing Rabbi.”

On Defining Jewish Life and Learning

“Judaism? I know this is something that was lacking in my life. I now realize that a person cannot be a Jew without learning the basics of Judaism.”

“In Israel, there is a Russian community that numbers more than a million souls. The vast majority of them are good people, educated and moral. But they don’t have a clue about Judaism. In their minds, Judaism equals *Meah Shearim* and black hats. They are losing out on an entire world, rich in color and meaning.

“Ramah has been the miracle in my life. 1000 miles from Israel, so far from Jerusalem, yet connected by that Jewish thread we are all tied to. I lead 200 children in Hebrew song; children who are learning to pray; children who bring the traditions back to the family.”

A letter from **Rabbi Mitch Cohen**, National Ramah Director:



*Following my visit last summer to Ramah Yachad in Ukraine to celebrate the 15th anniversary of their Ramah programming, **Amy Skopp Cooper** and I, together with the Ramah directors and the leadership of the Schechter Institute in Israel, planned a Steinberg Fellowship staff training program in Ukraine for a small number of our senior-most youth leadership at North American Ramah camps. We planned this carefully with **Rabbi David Golinkin** and **Gila Katz** of Schechter's Midreshet Yerushalayim program, in partnership with Masorti Olami.*

*Below, please read **Philip Sherman's** wonderful account of this trip. Philip is a rabbinical student at Hebrew College in Boston, and senior educational leader at Camp Ramah in Wisconsin:*

'Traveling to Ukraine to meet with the staff of Ramah-Ukraine was truly one of the most significant learning experiences I have ever had in my life. These campers ... went to Ramah because they learned of their Jewish heritage from their families and wanted to understand more of their true identity...traveling upwards of 16 hours to be with us for a weekend of learning and fun...

'Understanding the mindset of a Ukrainian was not easy, but finding clarity in their commitment and passion for Judaism was quite meaningful...

'Creating successful and meaningful relationships with the young Ukrainian Jewish community, in my eyes, is one of the more important things young Jews of today can do. Jews around the world are beginning to establish significant communities that many in North America have yet to discover. Using Ramah as a catalyst for these relationships will not only help our youth, but also will connect their youth to a brighter future...'

Midreshet – Marom Sponsor Four Young Leadership Training Seminars

The Marom (Masorti Olami) Student Movement and Midreshet Yerushalayim, in a new initiative to build a strong young leadership base within the Ukrainian Jewish community, have organized four Young Leadership Training Seminars in 2007-08.

- **The Ramah-Ukraine International Seminar**, organized by Midreshet Yerushalayim Director **Gila Katz** and Ramah National Director **Rabbi Mitch Cohen**, brought six Ramah staff from North America to Kiev to connect with forty of their Midreshet Yerushalayim counselor counterparts in January 2008. The seminar took participants to Kiev for a tour of the Jewish sites of the city, followed by five days of

professional growth and exchange at the site of Camp Ramah-Ukraine outside of Kiev. Response to Ramah-Ukraine International was overwhelmingly positive. Counselors from both sides of the ocean committed themselves to maintaining and strengthening the professional ties and personal relationships that evolved out of this gathering.

- Thirty young Jewish leaders from all Marom chapters attended the **Midreshet –Marom May Seminar** whose theme was Israel's 60th anniversary. The program focused on preparing for the Camp Ramah-Ukraine summer session as well as strengthening participants' knowledge of Shabbat practice and prayer.
- **A third Young Leadership Seminar** took place at the end of the summer after Camp Ramah-Ukraine.
- **A fourth seminar** is planned for November 2008.

Marom provides an avenue where young Jewish students can meet and socialize, which strengthens Jewish identity. To date, Marom has opened chapters in Midreshet Yerushalayim - Masorti Olami Cultural Centers in Kiev, Lvov, Chernivtsi, Kirovograd and Donetsk. All chapters hold Kabbalat Shabbat activities that include prayers and a Shabbat dinner. Many Marom students are also Midreshet Yerushalayim teachers and counselors at the Ramah-Ukraine summer camps. Midreshet Yerushalayim guest lecturers enrich Marom programs with lectures and workshops on timely Jewish topics.

Kiev Cultural Center: Outreach Seven Days a Week

Kiev's new Midreshet Yerushalayim-Masorti Olami Educational Cultural Center, funded by a grant from the **Rothschild Foundation-Europe**, celebrated its second anniversary in January 2008. In a short time, with the ongoing partnership of Mercaz-Masorti Olami, a multi-generational Jewish community with a strong Jewish identity has developed in Kiev. The Center is open seven days a week, with a host of innovative programs that is drawing some 250 people weekly, including:

- Armon (Chestnut) Community Education Center which meets twice a week and is comprised of 100 parents and children
- Kiev Beit Midrash, weekly pre-Kabbalat Shabbat *Havruta* study with 30-40 participants
- An animation workshop that produced two short films on Chanukah and the Hebrew alphabet
- The Jewish Cinemateque Club
- The Jewish Literature and Poetry Club
- The Jewish Drama Club
- *A Judaism in the Home* "how-to" morning workshop for mothers, grandmothers and toddlers
- Israeli and Jewish Song and Dance
- Hebrew Ulpan
- Marom Student Movement
- Holiday Arts and Crafts Workshops



NOAM Branch to Open at Kiev Center

In response to local demand, the Center is now recruiting and training counselors in order to open a NOAM Youth Group for children aged 12-15, patterned after the NOAM youth group that is run in Israel.

Rabbi David Clayman Memorial Resource Library: A Community Gem

A Jewish Resource Library named in honor of **Rabbi David Clayman z"l**, one of the founders of Midreshet Yerushalayim, opened last year at the Kiev Cultural Center. Presenting a unique resource for the Kiev Jewish community, the Clayman Library contains bilingual Bibles, Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, Pirke Avot, Siddurim, books by Jewish philosophers and teachers on spiritual and practical aspects of Judaism that have been translated into Russian, books on Israel, as well as CDs with prayers and Shabbat songs. The intellectual hub of the Center, the library is used extensively by students and instructors. Of particular interest is a *Library Appreciation Class* established to introduce children aged 9-13 to the beauty of classical Jewish texts. The versatile library transforms itself into a bookmobile which is stationed each summer at Camp Ramah-Ukraine for use by campers and counselors.

Schechter Rabbinical Student Interns in Kiev

Rabbinical student **Reuven Stamov** serves as student rabbi and educator in the Kiev Cultural Center, Midreshet Yerushalayim-Marom seminars, Camp Ramah-Ukraine winter and summer sessions and the Teacher Training Seminar. At the seminars, he taught classes on contemporary Halakhah, Conservative Judaism and Streams in Judaism. In informal settings, he led prayer services and Torah readings, accompanied by his guitar.

New "Family Club" Opens Door in Chernivtsi TALI

Chernivtsi TALI school families attending the annual Ramah-Ukraine Family Camp have developed strong bonds. As a result, they have established their own "Family Club" that meets twice monthly at the Chernivtsi school. The club initiates popular lectures on Jewish traditions, Israel and other current issues common to Jewish family life around the world. The Chernivtsi TALI Day School, established in 1991, is Midreshet Yerushalayim's flagship school. With 320 pupils from elementary through high school, the school hosts family programs, Kabbalat Shabbat and holiday celebrations for the school community.

Seminar for Jewish Educators in the Ukraine

Midreshet Yerushalayim's week-long seminar for teachers, held in March 2008, provided an intense educational experience that enhanced the participants' Jewish knowledge and equipped them with new didactic tools. This year, in addition to the forty-five teachers representing all Midreshet Yerushalayim schools and educational frameworks, ten camp counselors from Ramah-Ukraine joined the seminar for the two-day Shabbat program.

Conversion Classes at Teachers' Seminar

Rabbi Chaim Weiner, from the Masorti Bet Din in London, together with Schechter rabbinical student **Reuven Stamov**, met with nine prospective converts during the Teachers' Seminar in March. The students, all veteran Midreshet Yerushalayim counselors, received a study plan and introduction to the conversion process. Reuven will continue to learn with the group toward their conversion.

Kirovograd and Donetsk Community Schools

Community schools in Kirovograd and Kiev are successfully reaching out to their respective Jewish communities with an inclusive Jewish studies program which began in 2006. These schools were established in response to demand from families who had attended Ramah-Ukraine's family camp. The schools offer a rich program in Jewish experiential learning. **In Kirovograd**, seventy parents and children learn on Sundays and Wednesdays. **In Donetsk**, 150 children and parents attend weekly and Shabbat activities.

Turetsky Scholarship Fund Broadens Reach

The Rabbi Arnold (z"l) and Noemie Turetsky Scholarship Fund, after many years of spearheading the revival of Jewish education in Budapest, has from 2008, thanks to the vision of **Noemie Turetsky**, expanded its mandate to include developing rabbinical leadership that will serve the young, growing Midreshet Yerushalayim-Masorti community in Kiev. **Reuven Stamov** is the first Turetsky Rabbinical Scholar, who besides studying full time, traveled to Ukraine six times in 2007-8 to conduct programs and religious services as a rabbinical intern.

Midreshet Yerushalayim – Hungary

Marking the fourth anniversary of the passing of beloved Midreshet Yerushalayim educator and supporter, **Rabbi Arnold Turetsky z"l**, the Turetsky Fund will maintain its ties with Budapest by continuing to send a visiting scholar from the Schechter Institute twice a year to teach advanced seminars. This year, **Prof. Shmuel Glick**, Professor of Talmud and Rabbis at the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, traveled to Budapest where he taught Jewish Education and Rabbinic Literature.



1. Gila Katz with Midreshet-Marom Young Leaders, Kiev, May 2008 2. First Ramah-Ukraine International Seminar, January 2008 3. First Ramah-Noam Winter Camp Havdalah Service 4. Children of Midreshet Yerushalayim's TALI flagship school in Chernivtsi 5. Directors of Ramah-Ukraine and Ramah-North America, Gila Katz and Rabbi Mitch Cohen lead a summer camp session 6. Turetsky Fellow Reuven Stamov leads song at the Kiev Cultural Center

