

Midreshet Yerushalayim



Israel

2008-09 Numbers

- 16 Jewish studies courses in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Karmiel, Maale Adumim and Ashdod
- 8 MILI clubs in Jerusalem, Yavneh, Bat Yam, Haifa, Karmiel, Eilat, Beersheva and Bet Shemesh; with over 300 participants
- 3 MILI National Competitions, attracting over 400 participants at each event for Hanukkah, Purim and Jerusalem Day events
- Over 100 students a month at Jerusalem's Israel Culture Club take classes on Ancient Hebrew Manuscripts, Jewish Music Appreciation, Modern Hebrew Literature and Land of Israel studies
- 12,000 visitors per year go to the Midreshet Yerushalayim Jewish studies resource website: www.mili.org.il
- 35 regular participants in the weekly "Heritage Trail" (Shvilei Moreshet) seminars and fieldtrips on *The Ethnology of Jerusalem*
- **NEW!** MILI International clubs were established in Kharkov and Vinnitsa, Ukraine (with plans to open in Kiev or Lvov, Ukraine and Mannheim, Germany).

New Initiatives

The Kerem Midrasha for Jewish Culture staged a gala opening in Karmiel's Kehillat Hakerem with a Shavuot study evening for Israelis and Russian-speaking immigrants in May 2009. Over 150 people came to hear Israeli best-selling author and Schechter graduate, **Yochi Brandes**, speak on *Megillat Ruth: A Male or Female Reading?* and **Prof. David Golinkin** share insights on *Shavuot Customs – East and West*.

Kerem Midrasha, which represents a new model for Learning Centers, will be directed by **Ron Nissel**, a Schechter M.A. graduate (see profile, page 23) in conjunction with Kehillat HaKerem, led by Schechter graduate **Rabbi Reuven Resnick**. In partnership with the Masorti Movement, the new Learning Centers are geared toward Hebrew-speakers. This model of learning center already operates in Tel Aviv's Midreshet Iyun for many years. The concept will be expanded in 2009-10 to include a new center in Haifa's Kehillat Moriah, with lectures by Schechter faculty and graduates.

Midreshet Yerushalayim-Ashdod Initiates "Clean-Up" of Jerusalem's Sanhedrin Graves While touring this ancient site with course instructor **Dr. Rafi Kassimov**, the group was appalled by its neglected condition. In response, they organized a clean-up campaign of the graves, replete with signs in Russian, Hebrew and English describing the historical importance of the site in Jewish history.

FOCUS ON: MILI Olami International Jewish Culture Clubs, in partnership with the Jewish Agency, have taken root in Vinnitsa and Kharkov Ukraine, with the ground work laid for additional clubs. The club concept was organized by **Leonid Kantor**, a graduate of MILI OLAMI, a ten-month academic course run by Midreshet Yerushalayim and funded by Legacy Heritage Fund Limited in 2007, which prepared a select group for informal Jewish education leadership roles in the FSU and Germany. Together with **Haim Neimark**, a veteran Midreshet Yerushalayim educator, they have set up vibrant clubs in Vinnitsa and Kharkov that attract between 50-150 young people for Jewish learning, MILI Jewish-content game competitions and holiday celebrations. Pilot programs took place in Kiev and Lvov in 2009.

Chair of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee **Prof. Shmuel Glick**
 Director of Midreshet Yerushalayim – Israel **Dr. Yair Paz**
 Director of Midreshet Yerushalayim – Eastern Europe **Gila Katz**



Ukraine

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

- Six TALI Family Education Centers in Kiev, Donetsk, Chernivtsi, Berdichev and Kirovograd, with Chirkasi and Nikolaiyev Family Centers receiving pedagogical support
- Chernivtsi TALI Day School, 320 pupils, with more than 400 attending Shabbat services and programming weekly
- Kiev Cultural Center programming seven days a week, attracting over 200 participants weekly with Armon (Chestnut) Community Sunday School, Kiev Beit Midrash, weekly pre-Kabbalat Shabbat Havruta study, Clubs in Jewish Film, Drama and Literature and Poetry
- 16th Annual Ramah-Ukraine Summer Camp, 160 teenagers, 15 counselors
- 6th Ramah-Ukraine Family Camp, 30 families (100 children and parents)
- Rabbi David Clayman Memorial Resource Library serving hundreds in the Kiev Jewish Cultural Center and Ramah-Ukraine summer camps

■ Turetsky Rabbinical Intern, **Reuven Stamov** (see profile p. 23) traveled to Ukraine four times for teaching and conducting religious services as the future Masorti Olami rabbi of the Kiev Jewish community

■ A five day teachers' training seminar focusing on Jewish-Zionist education in Ukraine, was enriched with scholars-in-residence, Schechter lecturer **Dr. Yair Paz** and **Ayala Paz**; attended by 55 teachers from Midreshet Yerushalayim schools and 11 Hebrew and Jewish studies teachers who work in other ulpan, Jewish schools and universities, Kiev, July 2009

■ Midreshet Yerushalayim-Marom Seminars, funded by Masorti Olami, took place in August 2008 and in April and May 2009. Leadership delegations representing the more than 150 Marom university students came together for socializing and Jewish learning. The May seminar stressed leadership training for summer camps and included Ramah-Ukraine counselors.

■ Temple Beth-El, Bellmore, NY Delegation Donates Torah Scroll In a historic ceremony in December 2008, the TALI Chernivtsi school proudly received a Torah scroll from leaders of Temple Beth-El in Bellmore, NY.



1. Purimshpiel and MILI game in Kharkov Ukraine
2. Sanhedrin Graves "clean-up" led by Dr. Rafi Kassimov (center left) and his Ashdod students
3. Michael Korol (left) with "Heritage Trail" students
4. Opening of the Kerem Midrasha Center in Karmiel with author Yochi Brandes
5. MILI "owl of wisdom"
6. Young campers of the Ramah-Ukraine Family Camp
7. Turetsky rabbinical intern, Reuven Stamov and students enjoy Clayman Library, Kiev Center
8. Sasha Frankel with Berdichev students
9. Gila Katz (left center) with Ramah-Ukraine counselors
10. Conversion ceremony of MY graduates
11. Temple Beth-El, Bellmore, NY donates Torah to Chernivtsi TALI school

The Torah, whose donation was facilitated by **Buddy and Fran Brandt**, Lido Beach, NY, will be read on weekdays, Shabbatot and special occasions.

FOCUS ON: A Conversion Ceremony for Seven Midreshet Yerushalayim graduates of the Chernivtsi TALI school and veteran Ramah-Ukraine Camp counselors took place in August 2009 at the camp site. **Rabbi Chaim Weiner**, head of the Masorti European Bet Din in London, officiated at the emotional conversion ceremony, with Schechter graduate **Rabbi Reuven Resnick** and rabbinic intern **Reuven Stamov** serving as part of the Bet Din. The group is committed to working in Jewish education in Ukraine.

Midreshet Yerushalayim Bridge-Builders



The Builder

Tatiana Tsadkin, 57, aliyah from Rostov-on-Don, Russia, 1990; enrolled in one of Midreshet Yerushalayim's earliest Jewish studies classes in Tel Aviv in 1991; two years later, Midreshet Yerushalayim hired her to teach Jewish studies in learning centers being opened in Israel's north; she has taught Russian immigrants ever since.

The Blueprint

"My first teacher in Midreshet Yerushalayim told me that if you really study the texts with heart and soul, they become part of you and you become a part of them. What started as a 'conversation' with Judaism has become my 'love affair.' I try to convey this same passion to my students."

The Bridge

Tatiana Tsadkin arrived in Israel as a single mother with an 18-year old daughter, no money, no home and no family. "It was crazy," she remembers, "but the moment the plane landed, I was overjoyed. I just knew that Israel was the place we needed to be."

Although Tatiana could have earned more money in her profession (she holds an M.A. in Engineering Sciences and was offered a job at the Technion), she was drawn to other places. After completing Midreshet Yerushalayim's two-year course in Jewish studies, she combined ongoing learning (Jewish history courses at Haifa University and three years of Talmud study with Rabbi Gil Nativ in Kehillat Moriah in Haifa) with teaching Judaism to new immigrants like herself in Karmiel, Neshet, the Krayot and Haifa.

Tatiana muses, "Maybe I am the 'bridge' over all those years of war, pogroms and revolution that destroyed the Jewish community; to my great-grandfather who was a Jewish scholar in the Pale of Settlement."

The Builder

Polina Yurkovetsky, 23, immigrated to Israel from Uzhgorod, Ukraine in April 2009; joins the more than 1200 graduates of Midreshet Yerushalayim programs from the former Soviet Union who have made aliyah since 1991; a graduate of Uzhgorod University in International Relations; hopes to work in informal education once she is fluent in Hebrew.

The Blueprint

"Ten years ago I started learning in the Midreshet Yerushalayim family education center in Uzhgorod. This first real introduction to Jewish life reinforced my strong sense of Jewish identity and developed my love of Judaism and Israel."

The Bridge

Polina Yurkovetsky has always felt a strong attachment to her Jewish roots. Influenced by the Jewish traditions practiced by her paternal grandparents, she searched for the right place in which to begin her return to Judaism. Ten years ago, at age 13, she found her "Jewish home" in Midreshet Yerushalayim. "There are many Jewish institutions operating in Uzhgorod, but what I loved about Midreshet Yerushalayim is its open-mindedness and the intellectual choices it provides. There is no coercion or brainwashing," she explains.

Polina has been an integral part of Camp Ramah-Ukraine for the last nine years; first as a camper and for the last five years as a counselor. She met Midreshet Yerushalayim director Gila Katz in 1998. "Gila has been like a second mother to me since I made aliyah," she said. "This year I am learning to be an 'Israeli'. Next summer I hope to be back as a counselor."





The Builder

Ron Nissel, 45, director of the first non-Orthodox Bet Midrash in the western Galilee city of Karmiel; Jewish studies teacher at Horowitz High School, Karmiel; Schechter Class of '05.

The Blueprint

“As an educator, I say that if we don’t pass on Jewish education to our children, then it simply won’t be there for future generations.”

The Bridge

In September 2009, Ron Nissel will officially open Midreshet HaKerem for Jewish Culture and Learning to all residents of Karmiel and the surrounding area. The Bet Midrash concept expands Midreshet Yerushalayim’s original mandate of providing Jewish education to Russian-speaking immigrants to include Jewish education for the Israeli public at large.

A Schechter graduate and Jewish educator, Ron, who already runs a Bet Midrash in his home community of Yuvalim, was the natural choice to direct the Karmiel program.

Ron was about to embark on an M.A. in Education when he decided instead to do an M.A. in Jewish Studies. “My decision to change course came at exactly the right time. I felt that the Israeli education system was lacking in Jewish content and I wanted to do something about it. The Schechter Institute gave me that opportunity.”

The Bet Midrash will operate out of the Masorti Congregation HaKerem, led by Schechter graduate Rabbi Reuven Resnick. Initially, the Bet Midrash will offer two classes for native-born Israelis and a third class for Russian-speakers. For Ron, partnering with Kehillat Hakerem seemed a logical move. “The way Conservative Judaism has fused Jewish tradition with modern scientific rational thought and egalitarianism speaks to my generation of Israeli,” sums up Ron.

The Builders

Reuven and Yelena Stamov, both 35, Jewish educators who met at Camp Ramah-Ukraine in 2004; Reuven is a Turetsky Rabbinical Intern, student at Schechter and rabbi at the Kiev Cultural Center; Yelena is a full-time “mom” for Miriam, age 3 and Aleza, age 1.

The Blueprint

“As rabbi of the Kiev ‘kehilla’ my dream is to establish a full-time synagogue, Jewish day school, kindergarten and a center for spiritual leadership.” Reuven Stamov

“People can only be truly happy when they are doing things that they were created for...Reuven and I are such people.” Yelena Stamov

The Bridge

In 1998, Reuven and Yelena lived 1000 km apart; he in the Crimea, she in the western Ukrainian town of Rovno. That was the year that both found their way back to Judaism. From that moment, their paths were destined to cross. They were introduced at Camp Ramah-Ukraine in 2004. They married a year later, the same year that Yelena became the director of the Midreshet Yerushalayim Donetsk Community School.

These days Reuven commutes between Jerusalem and Kiev. When not studying at Schechter, he is in the Ukrainian capital for most holidays, supervises Marom Ukraine activities for university students and serves as Camp Ramah-Ukraine rabbi every summer. He has also taught a group studying for conversion in Kiev and participated in their conversion ceremony in late summer 2009. Yelena hopes one day to study in cantorial school. “We quickly and enthusiastically adopted and adapted to Jewish life. For both of us, giving back to the community is our greatest fulfillment,” says Yelena.

