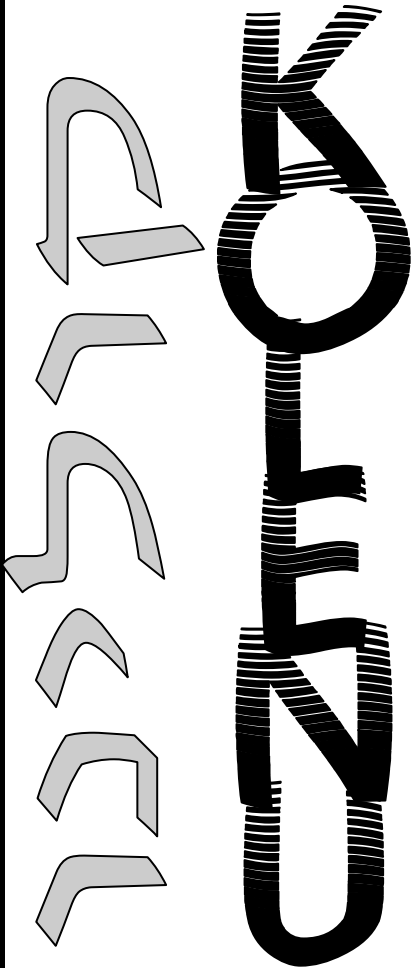


**HAGALIL  
USY's  
NEWSLETTER**



**MID WINTER  
KINNUS  
2010**



# WELCOME TO Mid Winter Kinnus 2010!

Hi everyone! Well, this is pretty weird (I mean taking up the job as Kolenu Editor in the middle of the year), but it is also a new experience for me. It has been pretty cool setting up a newsletter. I've had the opportunity to read lots of interesting articles from a variety of USYers, and read their first-hand stories.

The theme for this issue of Kolenu is, 'Write about a life-changing experience'. So that I don't seem out of place, I've written an article about a life-changing experience I've had:

### A New Friend

About seven and a half years ago, I had a terrible time deciding which summer camp to attend. After much contemplating over the multitude of decisions, I finally found a camp that I wanted to go to: Camp Green Lane. It was a seven-week sleep away camp, and for such a young kid to attend sleep away camp at all is a bit out of the ordinary.

When I arrived, I was so confused, but I did enjoy myself a lot as the summer progressed. During that first year, I made a best friend. At that time, it was one of those little kid best friend relationships (where everyone is your best friend).

However, as the seven years went by, we experienced so much together in camp, and truly became best friends. We are still best friends to this day! However, we are both not going back to that life-changing camp this summer. Instead, my best friend and I will get to experience fun and amazing times together other times throughout the year.

I hope you enjoy the rest of Kolenu!

*Jesse Oberstein, Editor*

### **THIS SUMMER, I WENT ON A MISSION.....**

This summer I went on Mission: Mitzvah. While on the trip we went to so many amazing places. We saw Mount Rushmore, the Grand Canyon, and even the Texas Legacy show. The mitzvah projects were a lot of fun too! We went to soup kitchens, food banks, and we even learned how to become mitzvah clowns and visit people in assisted living homes. The experiences are incredible and unforgettable! I made a ton of life-long friends that I talk to all the time. It was truly a life changing experience.

*Molly Gimbel*

**It's late Friday afternoon, the sun is beginning to set. There I am, standing on a stone platform in Yemin Moshe, overlooking the walls of the Old City, with 40 or more USY Pilgrims talking about their week. They have gathered there to daven Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv. This is a picture that stands out in my mind of something that I have done many times. Others have had similar experiences, but to me, this is something unique that brings forth many emotions. Whenever I arrive in Jerusalem, the first place I want to be is Yemin Moshe, because of that unique feeling I get.**

**When we are together at a USY convention, I can close my eyes during Kabbalat Shabbat and see the walls of the Old City. The tunes that we use remind me of the times that I stood at Yemin Moshe and watched the sun set as we davened Kabbalat Shabbat. Many of these tunes were written by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. His passion for tefillot came through his songs and zemirot. There is something very moving about his songs; I can hear the magic in his voice. I strongly associate Carlebach's music with my time in Jerusalem.**

**When I was growing up, Rabbi Carlebach came to my synagogue and davened for us. I remember him standing on the bimah, facing the ark and banging away on the lectern as he sang. I don't remember who he came to visit, but he visited several times. It was not until I had my first experience at Yemin Moshe, did I remember Rabbi Carlebach and his visits in my youth.**

**Each summer, hundreds of USYers travel to Israel and across North America together on the USY summer programs. Registration is in full swing and several programs have a waiting list. Now is the time to build your memories and unique experience on a USY summer program. Whether it is: Eastern Europe/ Israel Pilgrimage, Israel Pilgrimage/ Poland Seminar, Italy/Israel Pilgrimage, Israel Adventure, Israel Adventure Plus, USY on Wheels, Mission Mitzvah, Pacific Northwest, or Summer in the City, have the time of your life on a USY trip.**

**Just ask anyone who has done one! USY summer programs are the place to be! For more information check out the website: [www.usy.org/escape](http://www.usy.org/escape).**

**Hope to see you on a USY program this summer!**

**Michelle**

**Michelle Rich, Director of Education and Youth Activities**

**ARE YOU A MEMBER OF HAGALIL'S  
3 CLUBS  
—613, HESCHEL, AND HECHALUTZIM?  
IF NOT, JOIN TODAY!**

**Do you want to show New Jersey the  
awesome things you do at chapter  
events? Send pictures to, or contact  
Andrew Podob at  
[hagalilpublicity@gmail.com](mailto:hagalilpublicity@gmail.com)!**

## **A Sunrise Shacharit**

**Before one goes on USY on Wheels, he or she hears about the famous “Sunrise Shacharit” at the Grand Canyon. Everyone says, “It’s the most incredible view ever,” or, “It’s the most spiritual moment I’ve ever experienced”. Everyone has their own take on this moment that every Wheelnik experiences.**

**After hearing from almost everyone I knew about “Sunrise Shacharit”, I had high expectations. I was anticipating only the best view. Yet, the night before there was a violent thunder storm in the canyon, consisting of thunder, lightning, wind, and wetness. We were worried that the occasion would not meet our expectations. A possibility that the sunrise would be masked by clouds was not far-fetched. As we got off the bus at roughly 4 am, the sun was just beginning to rise. We were in luck! The sunrise was visible and we were going to begin our tefillah. We prayed together and were also given time to pray on our own. I spent this time praying, utterly mesmerized by the colors of the sunrise melting together as the sun reached its place in the sky.**

**I must say that “Sunrise Shacharit” surpassed my expectations. It was worth waking before dawn, getting very little sleep, and the long day ahead. We had started off the day on the right foot, now ready to start hiking though the canyon. The day’s adventures continued underneath the scorching hot Arizona sun. With lots of water, a few granola bars, and a hat, our day had only just begun.**

**Jonathan Steinberg, Regional President**

## **MEETING SAPIR**

Over the summer, I was a participant on USY on Wheels: Mission Mitzvah, which was the most amazing experience of my life. I met great friends, made hundreds of memories, and was inspired by my great staff. One of my staff was Israeli: Sapir Giloh. Mission Mitzvah usually doesn’t receive an Israeli staff, so I considered myself lucky from the start. Little did I know how much I would learn from Sapir. She came from the Orthodox community in Raanana, Israel, and she recently finished her Sherut Leumi—the national service that Israelis that are not joining the army participate in. Staffing Wheels opened her eyes to the Conservative movement. While she was terrified at first of being thrown into an unknown world, she was brave and learned some new customs she took back with her to Israel. She taught me so much about Israeli music, food, culture, and heritage. I talk to her every day and treasure every conversation that I have with her. Sapir made my summer more than special, and I can’t wait to see her when I next go to Israel.

**Jesse Nagelberg**

## THE AIPAC CONFERENCE

Last year I went to the annual AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, DC. As a part of the International USY delegation, I joined over 6,000 Americans journeying to our capital city for three days in order to support Israel through AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. AIPAC is a huge force in Congress that helps to rally American support for Israel, and its annual Policy Conference is always an amazing sight. Simply being able to sit in the cavernous convention hall with thousands of students, teenagers, and adults from across the country, while listening to speakers who have the power to make a difference in the world, is an amazing feeling. These speakers were anything but boring. Joe Biden (Vice President of the US) came to speak, as well as the president of Israel, Shimon Peres, and Prime Minister Netanyahu over video conference. They are the leaders of nations as well as makers of policy and decisions. Having to have been able to listen to them in person was more than I ever could have asked for. And the best part? It happens every year!

***Oren Fliegelman, Executive Committee/Israel Awareness Vice President***

## AN ITALY /ISRAEL POEM

Last summer I went on Italy/Israel pilgrimage with USY.

Italy is an amazing place and you can get great pizza pie.

We went to Pisa, Florence, Rome, and Venice too,

Visiting ghettos and incredible synagogues (there were quite a few)! You can even throw a coin  
into the great Trevi Fountain in Rome!

Believe me, you will be wishing you will never have to go home.

We also got to go to the Vatican and witness mass,

But then it was off to Israel, flying first class (NOT).

There, we did everything from visiting the Dead Sea,

To climbing Mount Masada and planting a tree.

The memories from pilgrimage I will never forget,

Always remaining close to the 38 friends I have met.

If you are looking for something to do this summer,

Go on Israel/Italy Pilgrimage so your summer's not a bummer!

***Jonathan Winter***

Do you want to write for Kolenu? It's an awesome way to express yourself, and share all the amazing and fun experiences you've had in USY. If you're Interested, email Jesse Oberstein at [Jesserobe12@verizon.net](mailto:Jesserobe12@verizon.net).

## THE CHOIR'S RECITAL

"There are certain times in life when musical moments can change who you are -- not only your view of yourself as a person, but how you view the world and the power music can have." As our excited choir sat in the bus, anxious to leave, our choir director read us this quote from Joe Miller, the choral director from Westminster Choir College. We were on our way to make our Carnegie Hall debut. Hours upon hours of practice in rooms without windows were about to pay off. When we arrived, we entered through a back door directly into the dressing rooms. It didn't seem real until we stepped out onto the stage. The bright lights shone down upon us as we looked out into the vacant audience during our dress rehearsal. The orchestra struck their first note, and suddenly a dream had become reality.

Later that night, we proudly walked onto the stage in Carnegie Hall, ready to sing our hearts out. The magnificent room was now filled with hundreds of people, all there to hear us. Singing in Carnegie Hall was absolutely breathtaking. It's one of those experiences that you only get once in a lifetime, and one that I'll be remembering for the rest of mine.

*Halli James, Membership/Programming Vice President*

## STANDING MY GROUND

Ever wonder what it would be like to be a Rabbi's daughter, and attend Saint James Academy in Montgomery, Alabama? Sound like a politically incorrect sitcom? For me, it was a reality.

I will always remember leaping over the fire-ant hills with the grace of a gazelle, and catching fireflies between paper plates on those warm summer evenings. Of all my memories of that grits-loving state which I came to affectionately call "home", one memory stands out more clearly than the rest.

I was standing in the social hall of Saint James Academy (the Protestant private school) while my peers were reciting the Lord's Prayer. I represented one-third of the school's Jewish population, and so I was accustomed to standing there silently. Suddenly, a boy named Paul turned to me and asked why I wasn't reciting the prayer. I responded cordially, explaining to him that in my religion we did not believe in Jesus as the Son of God. His shocked face changed to a disapproving scowl.

"You don't believe in Jesus? Yer gonna go Down!" "Down where?" I naively asked him. "Down to hell," he responded. I went home that day extremely upset by what he had said. After mulling it over for some time, I realized I wanted to teach him about Judaism, and the perfect opportunity was coming up!

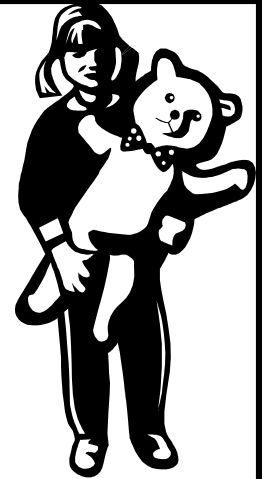
I decided to invite him, along with the other children in my grade, to come celebrate Sukkot with us. About half the class showed up with their parents, including Paul and his mother. Together, we learned about and celebrated the holiday, passing around harvest fruits while reciting the accompanying blessings. In the end, an extremely negative situation had turned out to be an amazing (once in a lifetime) opportunity for learning, and I will never forget it.

*Mira Biller*

My teddy bears were being held hostage. Fifty-two of my most prized stuffed animals were held captive by Israeli customs officers. My job, should I have chosen to accept it, was to infiltrate Israeli customs and set my bears free, for a very noble purpose.

In the summer of 2008, I traveled halfway around the world with forty teenagers on Eastern Europe/Israel Pilgrimage (Group 11!!!!). Not only did I delve deep into the roots of my heritage, but I also embarked on a long and tedious journey with Mike, the FedEx man stationed in Nashville, hoping to free my bears. I truly did not understand why a package full of fluffy, harmless stuffed animals posed a threat to Middle Eastern peace. I guess it was a little suspicious.

You are probably wondering why in the world a sane teenager would send a load of teddy bears across a vast ocean. Well, these stuffed animals were not just any stuffed animals. I was not asking my parents to send me a security blanket for when I slept in a strange bed, on an unfamiliar pillow. I was on a mission much deeper than that. I did not want comfort for myself, but rather for the sick children at Hadassah Memorial Hospital in Jerusalem.



These teddy bears were once my own, given to me by my friends and family who visited me while I was hospitalized for surgery due to a chronic illness that I have finally overcome. Now that I am healthy, I strive to spread the same comfort I received when I was ill. I thought this could be done by organizing a trip for my group to the emergency room, so that we could personally deliver my bears to suffering children. But this was not possible. Not anymore, at least. According to Mike from FedEx, there was no way that I could free my bears. They were permanently jailed.

Throughout the trip, “free the teddy bears!” was an ongoing joke and became our group slogan. Although it was a source of laughter for everyone else, it was an incentive for me not to give up. Being unable to give away my bears, the bears that comforted me when I was in pain, was not sitting well with me. I had to make this work.

Fortunately, I was able to work hand-in-hand with both the world headquarters of FedEx and the Israeli customs department. It took quite a bit of negotiating, but with a lot of hard work, it finally happened! The bears were free, never to be held hostage again. I had never been so happy to hug my favorite stuffed animal, a panda. Now, I was more than ready to make the long awaited delivery.

The Sunday after my bears were released, my group loaded the bus and drove to the children’s emergency room. When we got there, everyone was given a bundle of joy to deliver to an ailing child. I was sure to take the panda that my best friend had given me when I was recuperating from abdominal surgery. I remembered pacing back and forth through the hospital halls, attached to an intravenous pole, clutching that panda to my stomach. During those long weeks after my surgery, I never let it leave my side. It was my shield. I refused to let go.

When I arrived at a little girl’s room, I was greeted by her mother in Arabic, a language I could not understand at all. I tried to speak to her, but my attempts were futile, and we ended up laughing. She led me to where her daughter was laying peacefully. The young girl was about ten years old, greasy-haired and obviously exhausted, reminding me of the way I had been when I was sick. I gave her a huge smile, and laid my precious panda next to her. She thanked me with a small nod, attempted to crack a smile, and drew the stuffed animal closer. My favorite panda was no longer mine. I finally let go.

As I left the room, I heard her mother enthusiastically speaking to her daughter in their native language. Although it was a language I did not comprehend, I still understood. My group gathered in the lobby, anxious to tell me the stories of the patients they had visited, and how uplifting their experiences had been. My group leader had tears in her eyes, and so did I. I was so gratified that I was finally able to pass on the comfort I had once received, to children who really needed it. Completing the most important mission of my life so far, I was left feeling larger than life.

Peace, Love, SA/TO,  
*Melissa Sperber, SA/TO Vice President*

## REALIZATION

If you've ever met me, you would probably know that USY on Wheels (YEAH BUS B 2007!!) was the greatest experience of my life because of the people on my bus, and the places that we visited. My bus took the southern route, and before I knew it, almost three weeks flew by and we made it to the Grand Canyon.

After that, when we were almost in Los Angeles, which is where you meet up with the other buses and also the half way marker of the trip. The morning after we arrived, everyone woke up at around four in the morning so we would be able to daven Shacharit during sunrise while overlooking the Grand Canyon. Even though it was tough to get out of bed, it was well worth it. As the bus moved to where we were praying, overlooking the Canyon, it was pitch black, and I truly did not know what I was in for. We made it to the canyon, took out our siddurim, and waited for the sun to rise. At that moment in time, I made a true connection with myself and had a realization that this was a once in a lifetime moment. The Canyon was breathtaking; I couldn't believe I was truly there. After we finished davening, we hiked up the canyon—an experience in itself. Being at the Grand Canyon made everyone so much closer to one another, and made everyone—including myself—realize just how lucky and fortunate we are to witness such beautiful things in life.

*Lindsay Steinbach, Communications Vice President*

## A SUMMER WITH BUS E

**Bus E 2009 left me with the best summer of my life. 48 Wheelniks, four great staff members, our bus driver Jimbo, and AVB as our Rosh all made Bus E amazing. We traveled across America, seeing awesome places like the Coca Cola Factory, Yellowstone National Park, went whirlyballing in Cleveland, experienced the legendary Wall Drug, along with the greatness of its free ice water, and had an unbelievable time. We also met some "interesting" people at the AIDS Walk in San Francisco, and took in beautiful sunrises at Crater Lake, as well as the Grand Canyon. I keep in touch with all of my best friends on a constant basis, and can't wait until the next Bus E reunion. All of these wonderful places, combined with new life-long friendships, made my Wheels experience unforgettable. I cannot even imagine if I hadn't gone on Wheels last summer.**

*Ross Haimowitz and Adam Rosen*



## **A SUMMER I WILL NEVER FORGET**

Despite having traveled to Israel two times before my summer on pilgrimage, I can safely say that the third time was the most amazing. Regardless, traveling to Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people, is an incredible experience on its own, but going with USYers from all over the country makes the adventure even better. During Poland Seminar, I, along with my group mates, spent one week in Poland, witnessing the horrors and atrocities that fell upon our people. We visited concentration camps throughout Poland, and learned about Jewish life in Poland before the Holocaust. After studying the Holocaust in school for many years, actually being able to observe and witness where it all happened was very moving. After a long and depressing week where we witnessed a terrible time in our people's history, my group was eager and excited to arrive in Israel.

As the plane landed, in spite of the stares from the other travelers, my friends and I started singing Hebrew songs, ecstatic that we were finally in Israel. Those four weeks, traveling in Israel from north to south and east to west, were an unbelievable journey. My group (Group 7!!!) was smaller than the others, only consisting of 35 participants. This made the bonding experience more enjoyable, allowing us all to feel a special closeness to each other. The Fuchsberg Center (also known as Beit Nativ), where all the groups stayed in Jerusalem, was my second home.

One experience that I will never forget was hiking and sleeping overnight in the desert. My groupmates and I hiked around 16 miles in the desert in less than 24 hours. It was one of the biggest accomplishments in my life. We also slept one night in the desert in sleeping bags (without tents) on the desert sand. There was nothing like the silence and peacefulness that we experienced in the desert. Lying on the sand and just staring at the stars with my friends is something I will never forget.

The memories from my summer on pilgrimage will always be with me. From the hysterical moments to the enlightening experiences, it was a truly an unforgettable summer. The friendships I made while crying in Poland and laughing in Israel will always remain with me.

**Brandon Bell**

## **JUDAISM IN THE WILD**

**GOING ON OUTDOOR ADVENTURE: PACIFIC NORTHWEST IN 2007 WAS THE BEST DECISION I HAVE EVER MADE, HANDS DOWN. ONE MONTH OF HIKING, CAMPING, KAYAKING, AND COOKING MY OWN KOSHER, VEGETARIAN MEALS IN THE WOODS AND MOUNTAINS OF WASHINGTON STATE WAS THE BEST SUMMER VACATION EVER. THAT ONE MONTH REALLY OPENED ME UP TO USY. I HAD JUST BEEN ELECTED CHAPTER REL/ED, BUT I WASN'T SO DEVOTED TO USY AT THAT POINT. BEING ABLE TO EXPERIENCE CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN THE WILDERNESS SHOWED ME JUST HOW POWERFUL JUDAISM IS, AND JUST HOW ESSENTIAL USY IS TOWARDS FOCUSING THAT PASSION FOR JUDAISM INTO A CREATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENTITY. I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE GONE ON THAT TRIP, BECAUSE THE NEXT YEAR, THE TRIP WAS CANCELLED. I CAN'T SAY FOR CERTAIN IF MY LIFE TODAY WOULD BE DIFFERENT, OR EVEN IF MY LIFE IN USY WOULD BE DIFFERENT, BUT I AM POSITIVE THAT OA '07 MADE ME A BETTER JEW, AND I AM GRATEFUL FOR THAT.**

**CORY NAGELBERG, RELIGION/EDUCATION VICE PRESIDENT**

## **MY EXPERIENCE ON BUS B**

WHAT AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE. I WOKE UP ONE MORNING TO A LETTER FROM USY; IT WAS MY BUS LIST. I SCANNED IT FOR FAMILIAR NAMES, BUT I ONLY FOUND A FEW. AT FIRST, THIS MADE ME NERVOUS, BUT ONCE I MET MY FELLOW WHEELNIKS, I KNEW THAT I WAS IN FOR THE MOST AMAZING SUMMER EVER.

ORIENTATION DAY WAS JUNE 29<sup>TH</sup>, 2009. IT WAS A VERY AWKWARD DAY THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET, AND THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO DESCRIBE IT. ALL I WANTED WAS TO GO BACK TO MY ROOM AND SLEEP. THE NEXT DAY, WE WENT STRAIGHT TO BALTIMORE, MARYLAND. AFTER THAT FIRST BUS RIDE, ALONG WITH THE FREE TIME IN BALTIMORE, I CALLED MY PARENTS AND FRIENDS TO LET THEM KNOW THAT I MAY NEVER COME HOME. FROM THAT FIRST DAY ON, I KNEW THAT WHEELS WOULD HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON MY LIFE, AND IT WOULD ESCALATE MY JUDAISM TO NEW LEVELS.

THE EXPERIENCE THAT I HAD IS ALMOST INDESCRIBABLE. EACH DAY WE WOULD WAKE UP, PRAY SHACHARIT, EAT BREAKFAST, MAKE LUNCH, AND THEN WE WOULD GET ON THE BUS FOR A LONG DRIVE THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. BUT FOR SOME REASON, IT NEVER GOT OLD. EACH PLACE WE WENT TO WAS AMAZING, THE COUNTRY WAS BEAUTIFUL AND NEVER CEASED TO AMAZE ME. SEEING PRACTICALLY THE ENTIRE COUNTRY IN A MATTER OF SIX WEEKS WAS INCREDIBLE IN ITSELF.

ALTHOUGH, WHEN I THINK BACK ON THE EXPERIENCE, IT WASN'T THE SITES THAT WE SAW THAT MADE MY SUMMER AMAZING, IT WAS THE PEOPLE WHO I SPENT IT WITH. EACH DAY I WOULD WAKE UP TO A KNOCK AT THE DOOR, AND THE MOMENT I OPENED MY EYES I WOULD LOOK TO MY SIDE TO SEE MY CLOSEST FRIENDS LAYING IN THE BED NEXT ME. THE BUS ALLOWED FOR THE BEST BONDING TIME BECAUSE LIVING IN SUCH CLOSE QUARTERS FOR SIX AND A HALF WEEKS WAS THE BEST WAY TO MAKE FRIENDS FOR LIFE. THE TIME SPENT EXPLORING DIFFERENT CITIES, PARKS, AND TOURIST ATTRACTIONS WITH MY FELLOW WHEELNIKS WAS GOLDEN. WE SHARED STORIES FROM OUR HOME REGIONS OF USY, SIMPLY FORMING FRIENDSHIPS THAT WOULD LAST A LIFETIME. TOGETHER, WE MADE LASTING MEMORIES THAT WE CAN NOW ALL SHARE WITH OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY. NOT A SINGLE DAY GOES BY THAT I DON'T HAVE AT LEAST ONE FULL CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE FROM MY WHEELS BUS. EVEN AFTER THE SUMMER HAS ENDED, I KNOW THAT MY WHEELNIKS WILL ALWAYS BE THERE FOR ME. USY ON WHEELS WAS THE BEST EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE, AND I COULDN'T HAVE ASKED FOR IT TO TURN OUT ANY OTHER WAY. WHEN I THINK BACK TO MY SUMMER WITH USY, I KNOW THAT IT COMPLETELY CHANGED MY OUTLOOK ON LIFE, AND FOR THAT, I AM THANKFUL.

*RACHEL FRIED*

**HAGALIL USY  
SPRING CONVENTION 2010!  
DON'T MISS IT!  
APRIL 23-25 IN SOMERSET**

**APPLICATIONS ARE ON THE WEBSITE AT:  
HAGALILUSY.COM**

## A MUSICAL TRADITION

I am a firm believer in the idea that doing things for your community can be even more rewarding if you can associate it with something you love.

For instance, I absolutely love singing.

I have been fortunate enough to partake in an extremely special tradition in my school for three years now. Every December, the Masters Choir takes a trip to a local assisted living development, where our chorus teacher is the choral director. As a class, we take a trip to the development, and have a rehearsal with the "Pine Cone Singers". After a quick run through, we sit around and talk about our favorite holiday memories. I had the opportunity to sit with a Pine Cone Singer, who told me how she was in her high school choir, and how she is happy that she can be part of a choir again.

After this visit, we go back a few days later for the concert. In this concert, the residents are the audience, while the Masters Choir and Pine Cone Singers are the entertainment. Each choir sings a few songs back and forth. Then, they both finish up by singing a song together as, "The Intergenerational Choir". Afterwards, we mingle with the residents. Seeing the joy in their faces as they congratulate us on a job well done always makes me smile. They always enjoy our company as well as our show, and never hesitate to tell us! After the success of this year, there is a possibility we will be going back in the spring for another concert, and I truly hope so, because the experience really means a lot to me.

## A MOTHER'S DAY GIFT

Sunday May 9th, 1999: A day that would change my life, which was unlike any other. The day started out pretty normal, but that would soon change. Originally, the day was Mother's Day. Going out with my entire family for breakfast was my family's tradition. Every year on Mother's Day we would all pile into a restaurant and have a huge breakfast. My aunts, uncles, grandparents, and even great-grandparents would be there. That was the normal part. The part nobody could have ever predicted was that my sister, Alyssa, would be born that day. We never saw it coming. Yes, my mother was pregnant, but my sister's due date was still a few weeks away.



My sister was born late in the day. Just as most families do, we all stuffed into the hospital room to see this little tiny newborn girl. She had no hair and was quite small. I was almost 5 years old at that time and it took a few days for it to sink into me that I was no longer an only child. Gosh darn it, that stinks! Since I was so young, I never really appreciated my sister's birth then, but I appreciate it now. It was truly a once in a lifetime experience, for I have no other siblings. Of course I have visited my numerous cousins when they were born, but that experience was much different. I guess it is just not the same when the newborn child is not a younger sibling.

This experience for me was one that cannot be described. I cannot say it was cool, or fun, or exciting, which it was, but it was an experience which was much deeper than those vapid and dull adjectives we throw around all the time. It would definitely fall into one of those categories where one must experience it for himself or herself. Otherwise the person just would not understand it fully. USY and all the conventions would definitely fall into this category as well. For someone that is an only child or has no younger siblings, I would tell them that an experience such as this is one you will never forget. Similar to when the astronauts first landed on the moon, the people who saw it will carry that memory with them forever.

That is why, this year, when my sister's 11th birthday once again falls out on Mother's Day, my family and I will tell this story over and over again. As I say, my mother really did get a tremendous gift that year. She got the gift that keeps on giving. Maybe that gift, plus me, which equals two wonderful children, is the reason why we don't have anymore siblings.

**Andrew Podob**

# Bus E Meets The San Francisco AIDS Walk

Some experiences come once in a lifetime, and one experience always exists which changes a lifetime. USY was that life-changing experience.

From my tenure on Bus E 2009 (clearly the best bus) I learned an innumerable amount of lessons and had extremely varied adventures. On Wheels I experienced everything from the famous Shacharit at the Grand Canyon, to some lesser-known activities such as defrosting foods for dinner without an oven, microwave, or other conventional means.

The Jewish community puts a special emphasis on repairing the world and giving back to the "community". It is from turning this adage into action that possibly my most memorable experience on Wheels took place. I've always envisioned the "community" as the area in which I lived, but on Classic Wheels I learned that the "community" could be as remote as Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

Now the day in which my bus had our scheduled time to give back was no normal day. That day, we would not be cleaning up the park nor doing something else as traditional as that. On that fateful day, my bus pulled up to Golden Gate Park we got an education from the famous (possibly infamous) San Francisco AIDS Walk.

The event began with us getting our AIDS Walk shirts and pins (mine is still on my Wheels Siddur). From there, we divided into our respective groups. My group was bound to work as crowd control. My group and I met our leader from the AIDS walk staff and immediately knew that this experience would be different from all other service experiences. Our first order of business was to make headbands and/ or belts with the caution tape we had been given. From there, we formed a chain of Wheelniks, linked by our arms, to control the crowds. Now, I want you to try and imagine the mayhem that we were witnessing. First of all, there were tens of thousands of people, all dancing and having a great time. This was normal enough for us. It was when we saw the men dressed as Jesus dancing around, and the men dressed in running shoes, socks and underwear (just the bare essentials) that we realized this would not be an average walk in the park.

After most of the participants had begun the walk we took a respite for lunch, allowing us to have some free time to explore the booths that were set up in the park. Reunited as an entire bus, we eventually went to our next job, which consisted of cheering on people as they finished the walk. First, we aligned ourselves by the finish line. Then, as the thousands of people passed us, we gave random strangers high fives and encouragement for completing the AIDS Walk.

This experience was awe-inspiring. I was given the opportunity to help out a bunch of random people. Probably, the best part about this occurrence was that at the time it seemed to be a normal day, which is a testament to the Wheels experience. I was able to work as crowd control for thousands of people, see people dressed as Jesus dancing in crowds of people (and eventually crowd surf their way to the start of the walk), get high fives from random people, explore the park of a city I had never visited, and believe it was a completely average day. Clearly in retrospect, I don't know if I would have appreciated how extraordinary my Wheels adventure was, if the day Bus E met the San Francisco AIDS walk was merely typical.

***Matt Herling***