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Hillel. Schools and camps. 2003.

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ACROSS THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

In Russia, asking about Hillel is a way to ask, 'Are you Jewish'?

By Lev Krichevsky

MOSCOW (JTA) — When Marina Drouz was taking a college entry exam a few years ago, she found herself sitting next to a girl who she thought could be Jewish.

Not sure how to satisfy her curiosity, Drouz asked if the girl had ever been to the local Hillel.

"I haven't, but I could have," the girl responded.

"I thought the word 'Hillel' would be a convenient test word for finding out if the person was Jewish," explains Drouz, a 20-year-old economics student from St. Petersburg. "I just realized that someone my age would have known the word had she been Jewish — even if she never goes there."

While it's not the only group with a focus on Jewish youth, Hillel is arguably one of the most successful organizations of its kind in the former Soviet Union.

Eight and a half years after the first Hillel center opened in Moscow, the movement boasts a network of 27 full-time centers and a dozen additional affiliated youth groups devoted to bringing Judaism and Jewish experiences to young and mostly assimilated Jews in nine of the former Soviet republics.

More than 10,000 students regularly take part in various Hillel activities in the former Soviet Union.

But there are obstacles to overcome.

Drouz, who spends most of her free time at Hillel as a volunteer coordinator responsible for recruiting new members and running programs, recalls how her group in St. Petersburg once tried to set up a program on one of the campuses.

"It turned out that many students didn't want to be open about their Judaism inside the school — some of those who helped to organize the event changed their mind in the last minute and didn't even show up," she says.

Hillel activities may include English-language lessons, psychology classes, writing workshops and various performing arts. Some Hillel groups publish their own newspapers.

Lisa Gudina, an activist in Odessa, Ukraine, says local Hillel leaders have to be resourceful to ensure an ongoing flow of new members.

Her group recently attracted some new members when it launched a brand-new program — an Irish step dance studio — after a tour by a professional step dance group launched this fad among local students.

Hillel in the former Soviet Union was established and operates with the support of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, in partnership with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life.

Unlike in the United States, where most Hillel chapters work with Jewish students on a particular campus, Hillel in the former Soviet Union operates community-based centers that reach out to a broader student population from various colleges.

More than 300 Jewish students gathered recently at a retreat near Moscow for the fifth annual Hillel Congress.

The six-day program of the conference, titled "Am Echad — One People," featured lectures on community building, leadership skills classes and discussions on Judaism and Soviet Jewish history.

Like many other Hillel activists, Ilya Rapoport, a 22-year-old medical student from Moscow, is familiar with other groups wooing younger Jews.

He says Hillel places more emphasis on Jewish tradition than the other groups.

"Being Jewish to me means to have a certain amount of knowledge on Jewish tradition.

"That's what I found in Hillel and couldn't have in another Jewish youth club I go to," Rapoport says.

In addition to classes in basic Judaism, Hillel groups celebrate Shabbat, lead holiday celebrations in their communities and conduct Passover seders throughout the former Soviet Union, offering many participants their first encounter with traditional Passover customs.

In the post-Communist Jewish reality, Hillel groups often play a crucial role in community building and ensuring Jewish continuity. This is especially true in some smaller communities, where Jewish life is not as rich as in Moscow or Kiev.

Yevgeny Rybalko, a 23-year-old Jewish student leader in the Siberian city of Tomsk, says his youth club conducts celebrations for the entire Jewish community, which numbers approximately 400 people.

"Otherwise we will continue to have a majority" of Jews "who feel quite comfortable without any Jewish knowledge or attachment to tradition," he says.

In fact, some of those familiar with Hillel operations on U.S. campuses say Russian students who are active in Hillel have a stronger sense of community among themselves and are often more serious about their Judaism than their American counterparts, even if they are sometimes less knowledgeable.

Marina Teremets, a Brooklyn College senior who emigrated from Ukraine six years ago, was among a group of Soviet-born American Hillel students who participated in the conference.

She says the Hillel group on her campus is "more like a club, similar in a way to some other clubs you may join when at school. "What we saw here is more like a full-time community."

Peter Greben, a recent university graduate from Moscow, says this focus on Judaism is what makes his involvement with the local Hillel especially meaningful to him.

"This is ironic, but when I lived in Jerusalem I had no interest in Judaism. I even developed a certain immunity against religion — like many Russians in Israel," says Greben, 26, who made aliyah to Israel but later returned to Russia to attend college. "Having lived in Israel for four years, I had my first Shabbat experience, my first Passover seder in Moscow Hillel. My encounter with Judaism at Hillel was so accommodating that now I feel my Jewish life really began here." □

Journalist who backed Israel dies

ROME (JTA) — Robert St. John, a journalist, author and tireless supporter of Israel, died Feb. 6 near Washington at 100.

During a 75-year career in which he worked on five continents, St. John clashed with Al Capone, chronicled World War II and befriended Israel's founding fathers.

An eloquent non-Jewish spokesman for Jewish causes, he maintained close ties with the Jewish state and was honored by Jewish and Israeli institutions.

David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, called him "our goyisher Zionist." □

Example:

Ultimate Survival Action On behalf of USA Jewry

A.

1. Build a Jewish Day School which will carry your name

30 million

- Grades K-8, each grade averages 22 children
- Total 200 kids, each child's cost is \$7000 per year

1.4 million

2. Establish a Student Aid Endowment Fund

40 million

Income at 4%=

- Tuition must be free, to enable more children to obtain the education which will develop their sense of Jewish identity, knowledge and pride- thus guaranteeing the survival of Judaism in the U.S.

1.6 million

3. Payment Schedule

- For construction: 30 m. over 5 years = 6 m. per year
- For student aid: 40 m. over 10 years = 4 m. per year
Total=10 m. per year

B.

**1. Build a Jewish Day High School
which will carry your name**

50 million

- Grades 9-12, each grade 50 students
- 200 students, each one costing \$15,000 per year

3.0 million

**2. Establish a Student Aid Endowment
Fund**

75 million

Income at 4%=

3.0 million

3. Payment Schedule

- For construction: 50 m. over 5 years = 10 m. per year
 - For student aid: 75 m. over 5 years = 15 m. per year
- Total= 25 m. per year



Orah Sherman

From: Steven Kraus [steve@jesna.org]
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2003 3:39 PM
To: Orah Sherman
Subject: RE: From Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

----- Original Message -----

From: "Orah Sherman" <Orah@wexner.org>
Date: Tue, 28 Jan 2003 13:42:37 -0500

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K-9: 500-600

PARDeS: 3,500?

No High School

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>of Schector schools and PARDES schools.

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212 284-6951 Fax
steve@jesna.org

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From: Ramie Arian [ramie@jewishcamping.org]
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2003 4:55 PM
To: Orah Sherman
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Dear Orah,

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The overall picture is this: There are 120 not-for-profit Jewish overnight camps in the United States and Canada. They accommodate roughly 50,000 children per summer, and the camps are full. (Actually, the overall occupancy rate is 96%, which means actual registration for the summer of 2002 was about 48,000.)

In addition, these camps employ some 10,000 seasonal workers each summer, almost all of whom are Jewish college students.

Thus, camps provide important experiences of Jewish education and Jewish growth for nearly 60,000 young people, including campers and staff, each summer.

There is some growth in the camping system – that is, there are camps which are expanding. However, given the sorry state of the economy and the high cost of construction (estimated average cost for camp expansion is \$20,000 per bed), the expansion is slow – in the range of 1% per year.

Therefore, it is reasonable to estimate that the camping system will accommodate about 51,000 campers and 10,000 staff for 2003.

Many camps are already fully enrolled for the summer of 2003. Almost all are full for their most popular age groups and most popular sessions (which vary regionally). I would estimate that at the present time probably 40,000 children are already enrolled of the 51,000 who will ultimately attend.

I hope this is helpful.

Please send my warmest regards to Rabbi Friedman.

Sincerely,

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----- Forwarded by Richard Joel/Hillel on 01/26/03 11:43 PM -----

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>I am looking for the number of students in day schools and high schools
>of Schector schools and PARDES schools.

>With Appreciation,

>Orah

>Orah Sherman
>Assistant to the President
>Wexner Heritage Foundation
>551 Madison Avenue
>New York, NY 10022
>212-355-6115

>-----Original Message-----

>From: Steve Kraus [mailto:steve@jesna.org]
>Sent: Monday, January 27, 2003 3:25 PM
>To: Orah Sherman
>Cc: jwoocher@jesna.org
>Subject: From Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

>
>
>
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>Orah,

>Here are some of the numbers you asked for, based on some statistics
>provided by the AviChai Foundation, RAVSAK and NAAJHS:

>
>The number of students K-8 in non-denominational dayschools is
>approximately 19,000

>
>The number of students in non-denominational high schools is
>approximately 3,500.

>
>The number of students, K-8, in Orthodox day schools is approximately

Orah Sherman

From: Ramie Arian [ramie@jewishcamping.org]
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2003 4:55 PM
To: Orah Sherman
Subject: RE: From Rabbi Herbert Friedman

Dear Orah,

I have estimates only – not exact numbers. I hope that is okay. Also, note that these figures apply to not-for-profit Jewish overnight camps. That is, they don't include privately-owned camps, and they don't include day camps.

The overall picture is this: There are 120 not-for-profit Jewish overnight camps in the United States and Canada. They accommodate roughly 50,000 children per summer, and the camps are full. (Actually, the overall occupancy rate is 96%, which means actual registration for the summer of 2002 was about 48,000.)

In addition, these camps employ some 10,000 seasonal workers each summer, almost all of whom are Jewish college students.

Thus, camps provide important experiences of Jewish education and Jewish growth for nearly 60,000 young people, including campers and staff, each summer.

There is some growth in the camping system – that is, there are camps which are expanding. However, given the sorry state of the economy and the high cost of construction (estimated average cost for camp expansion is \$20,000 per bed), the expansion is slow – in the range of 1% per year.

Therefore, it is reasonable to estimate that the camping system will accommodate about 51,000 campers and 10,000 staff for 2003.

Many camps are already fully enrolled for the summer of 2003. Almost all are full for their most popular age groups and most popular sessions (which vary regionally). I would estimate that at the present time probably 40,000 children are already enrolled of the 51,000 who will ultimately attend.

I hope this is helpful.

Please send my warmest regards to Rabbi Friedman.

Sincerely,

Ramie Arian

Rabbi Ramie Arian, Executive Director
 Foundation for Jewish Camping
 6 E. 39th Street, 10th Floor
 New York NY 10016
 212.792.6222 (tel.); 212.792.6242 (fax)
ramie@jewishcamping.org
www.jewishcamping.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Orah Sherman [mailto:Orah@wexner.org]
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2003 3:07 PM
To: ramie@jewishcamping.org
Subject: From Rabbi Herbert Friedman

Orah Sherman

From: JRubin@Hillel.org
Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2003 12:19 PM
To: Orah Sherman
Subject: Re: From Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

Orah,

Richard Joel asked me to follow-up on your questions.

1. Hillel estimates 250,000 Jewish undergraduates currently attend two and four-year colleges and universities in the United States. In addition, approximately 100,000 Jews are enrolled in graduate and professional schools. 2. Hillel has three types of affiliates in the United States.

- a) 120 Hillel Foundations with the most infrastructure on the largest campuses
 - b) 50 Hillel Program Centers generally with one full-time professional on smaller campuses
 - c) 300+ Hillel Student Organizations with limited infrastructure and part-time staff, faculty advisors or completely student run
3. Hillel is a participatory rather than membership organization. Participation rates vary depending on the campus and level of participation (student leaders, regular participants, periodic participants, in contact list). Hillels involve an average of half of all identified Jews on campus during a typical year. Some campuses do significantly better. Others significantly worse. I hope this helps. I would be happy to speak with Rabbi Friedman if he has additional questions or share some of our survey data with him. I am in Moscow the week of January 27 and back in Washington, DC the week of February 3. Best regards.

Jay L. Rubin, Executive Vice President
Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life
Charles and Lynn Schusterman International Center
Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Building
800 Eighth Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20001-3724
Phone 202/449-6557
Fax 202/449-6457
E-Mail jrubin@hillel.org
Website www.hillel.org

----- Forwarded by Richard Joel/Hillel on 01/26/03 11:43 PM -----

"Orah
Sherman"
<Orah@wexner.
org>
To: <rjoel@hillel.org>
cc:
Subject: From Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

01/21/03
05:19 PM

Dear Mr. Joel:

I am writing on behalf of Rabbi Herbert Friedman. He wanted me to ask you the following questions:

- 1) How many Jewish kids are in colleges?
- 2) How many Hillel Centers are there?
- 3) How many students are connected to the Hillel Centers?

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The number of students in non-denominational high schools is approximately 3,500.

The number of students, K-8, in Orthodox day schools is approximately 115,000.

The number of students in Orthodox high schools is approximately 47,000.

Please note that, based on your request, I did not include Schechter or PARDeS schools in this calculation.

Steven Kraus
Director of School Support and Development
JESNA - Jewish Education Service of North America
111 Eighth Avenue, 11E
New York, NY 10011-5201
212 284-6893
212 284-6951 Fax
steve@jesna.org

Orah Sherman

From: Steven Kraus [steve@jesna.org]
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2003 3:39 PM
To: Orah Sherman
Subject: RE: From Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

----- Original Message -----

From: "Orah Sherman" <Orah@wexner.org>
Date: Tue, 28 Jan 2003 13:42:37 -0500

Orah,

Although I am not in the office let me offer the following estimates:

SSDS - K-8: 20,000
K-9: 500-600

PARDeS: 3,500?

No High School

>Thanks again for your response. I know that I did not ask for the
>Schector and PARDES schools in my original request, but I was wondering
>if you could give that information.

>
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>of Schector schools and PARDES schools.

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EIGHT AREAS OF WORK

U.S.A

A. EDUCATION

1. 20 Community Day Schools
2. 20 Community High Schools
3. 2 Boarding Schools
4. 100 Adult Education Groups
5. 20 Adult Education Groups for Russian immigrants
6. 50 Hebrew Ulpanim
7. Student Aid *for all schools, including Teachers College*

B. Teacher's and Principal's College

C. Birthright

D. Hillel

E. Summer Camps

F. Jewish Education

G. Immigration

1. Immigration – Argentina, France, Ethiopia, F.S.U.
2. Terror Relief

WORLD WIDE

H. JDC

