

In Israel, June 20th marked the last day of school for 600.000 High-School students. 1.280.000 Elementary school students will begin their summer vacation on July 1st.

The summer with all its attractions, long vacation and activities is best appreciated by kids and teens and less by their parents.

So how do Israeli kids spend their summer?

Many of them work in temporary jobs like Day Camp counselors, Baby-sitting etc. Others hang out with friends, mainly by the beach, mostly doing nothing.. When they are not at the beach, they will be at the mall or simply "with" their "friends" on facebook. So basically, an average Israeli teen will spend his summer like most teens around the world.

However, Thousands of teens will spend most of their vacation days with their peers at their Youth Movement. For those teens that prefer to do more than just hang by the beach or at malls, today's youth movements offer more.

In Israel today, as in many other countries throughout the Jewish world, youth movements are an extensive, organized phenomenon.

Youth movements provide an opportunity for teenagers to put their feelings and ideals into action; to make an impact on the world around them, by helping others and by building the land; and, not least in importance, to form connections with other young Jews around the globe whose ideals match or complement their own. Members of Zionist youth movements try to meet these challenges.

Most youth movements were originated in Eastern Europe and established worldwide organizations. The main movements founded in Eastern Europe have branches in the United States, but young people there tend to join social organizations that are less emphatically political. North American Jewish teenagers, mostly belong not to Zionist youth movements but to organizations associations of synagogues, or local and countrywide community organizations which also impart Jewish-Zionist consciousness.

In Israel, most of the movements were affiliated with political entities or even established them. Only the Scouts movement, which is the largest in Israel, defined itself as nonpartisan, but it also educated its members in a national pioneering spirit and established agricultural training groups that founded their own kibbutzim.

Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel, and during the first years, youth movements had a clear task of educating

and absorbing new immigrants, assisting with State building and founding new kibbutzim. Since then, as State institutions took over these national tasks, many movements had to find new tasks and new agendas. In addition, through the years, the social scale of values of Israeli society has changed, and to some extent, a competitive and materialistic climate took over the pioneering ideals and romanticism of the youth movements in previous years.

Today, the large movements try to cope with these social changes and attempt to adjust their programs and activities.

Sixteen youth movements are active in Israel today: Secular, modern orthodox, special needs, Right wing, Left wing, Druze and unaffiliated. All are Zionist movements that were able to maintain idealism with the changing reality. Most movements invite members to join their activities at the age of eight or nine. Members pay dues that cover insurance and most activities. All counselors are volunteers. Activities usually takes place on Tuesdays and Saturdays. A beautiful scene is to drive on Tuesday afternoon at some areas, and see teens from the different movements, all wearing their movement's unique uniforms, walking to their branch. Many schools, as an act of supporting the movements, reduce the amount of homework on Tuesdays, and try to avoid giving tests on Wednesdays.

During the summer vacation, each of these movements has its own summer camp. These camps are shorter and very different from overnight camps in North America. During the five to ten nights of camp, most campers will sleep in tents, using their sleeping bags, cook their own meals and hike during the day.

Other than the few days in camp, youth movements' members will meet a few times a week, volunteers at different places, discuss current events, adopt new agendas that reflect the social and political atmosphere in Israel and try to be involved and busy with "changing the world".

As part of the will to change the world, or to do Tikkun Olam, many members of these movements, at the age of seventeen, choose to spend their junior year of high school, away from home, living at developing towns and joining the local high school as twelve graders, in order to enhance these communities. They will live together at rented apartments, go to school during the day and volunteer at the community after school. These idealistic teens will see their families every other weekend or less and enjoy the full support of their proud parents.

Others choose to defer their army service in one year, and spend a post high school year volunteering in Israel or abroad. The ones that choose to volunteer abroad will travel to Jewish communities around the world (what is known as Shin

Shin, which is in short: "Service Year" in Hebrew), and will be active at local Jewish youth movements, Jewish Day schools and Hebrew schools, synagogues etc.

Israel's teens, as any other teen around the world, love listening to music. This summer, many worlds recognized artists plan to perform in Israel, starting with Bob Dylan, Duran Duran, Sarah Silverman, Rock-set, Jane's Addiction and others.

Those teens that prefer to listen to Israeli bands will enjoy the:

Balkan Beat Box band:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=169QANtJkWk&feature=related>

Or the popular HaDag Nachash band:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIBjpev6U5s&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7E8KDI4kg0&feature=related>

Or Mush Ben Ari: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh2WoSeQx5U>

Or Efrat Gosh:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7xxj7LbPxE&feature=related>

Or Erik Berman: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4IjDjfz6FK4>

Enjoy and have a wonderful summer!!



