

Youth Visions

Mickey Barak Aberman AZA Defends Spirit Award at BBYO Winter Cultural

By Jordan Klemons, MBA Sophomore

No, it's not the Nobel Peace Prize, but MBA AZA is proud of the Spirit Award that we have won for the last two years at the Winter Cultural. By the time you read this we will know whether or not we have won again, as the event takes

place in Charlotte on the last weekend in October. As of this writing, though, we are working hard on coming up with a song, a skit, a T-shirt design, a video and a banner. We are competing against chapters from all over North Carolina.

Our newest members, our

Alephs-In-Training (AITs) just came back from their annual convention. They discovered the great spirit of BBYO and met other AITs from around both North Carolina and Virginia. This convention helps build loyalty and leadership in our youngest members. ☆

Israel Without a Sound

By Lauren Gelfond

JERUSALEM — Six weeks of hiking, rafting, touring, socializing and learning-oriented adventures sounds like a dream to most teenagers. That's what 18-year-old Micah Brown of Portland, Oregon thought when he decided to apply to summer programs for his first-ever trip to Israel. But when he received one rejection after another, Micah, who is deaf, wondered if he would ever get to Israel after all.

"I decided to go to Israel as a culmination of my temple's youth study—our rabbi set this goal. But, admittedly, yes, I was afraid I wouldn't find a program," said Micah (via e-mail). "I wanted to go on a program with other deaf Jewish teens, but the only available deaf teen tours were Christian — Hadassah's Young Judaea was the only program for Jewish teens willing to even entertain the idea of a deaf participant."

Although no deaf person had ever been involved with Young Judaea's Israel Programs, Hadassah felt strongly that Micah's situation should not preclude him from participating — and decided to find a way to make it work. Numerous phone calls were made and e-mails sent to Hadassah members and to Young Judaea alumni, resulting in several thousand dollars in donations towards the cost of an American Sign Language interpreter to accompany Micah to Israel.

"There was an immediate and overwhelming response from individuals asking how they could help Micah," says Miki Schulman, Hadassah's Coordinator of the National Fundraising Division.

Hadassah is no stranger to the deaf community, and in fact recently initiated a special membership program for the Jewish deaf, in large part due to the commitment of National President Marlene E. Post, a passionate advocate for the disabled both in Israel and the U.S. Hadassah's National Center for the Jewish Deaf was launched at the Hadassah National Convention, where there were both computer assisted translations and signing for the deaf.

Ultimately, nearly \$5,000 was raised for Micah in less than two weeks, purely by word of mouth and e-mail. "The cost of hiring interpreters — one working mornings and early afternoons, another working late afternoons and evenings — would have amounted to nearly \$12,000. Fortunately, we were able to recruit a Young Judaea alumni with a background in deaf education to work the full tour with Micah," says Gabriel Most, Young Judaea's Director of Israel Programs.

Hadar Dafny, a recent college

graduate, was looking to go to Israel for the summer and decided to apply to her alma mater youth group, Young Judaea, as a *madricha*, counselor, for its summer Israel program. "When they saw my resume, they realized I was the perfect person for the job," says Hadar, who is now off to the Peace Corps to work with the deaf population in Kenya.

Hadar and Micah traveled to Israel together and became fast friends. "I wouldn't call myself his interpreter," says Hadar. "I was his educator, his companion, his friend and his liaison."



Silent Wonder: Micah Brown and fellow Young Judaeans enjoy an outdoors history lesson this summer in Israel. Micah looks on at his American Sign Language interpreter, as his hearing peers listen.

"The summer was incredible for both of us," she added. "I educated Micah about Israel and about Hebrew, he educated me and the entire group about sign language and being deaf."

At the end of the program, Micah told Hadar he had the best summer of his life.

"I loved just about everything on the trip," says Micah. "Climbing Masada, snorkeling in the Red Sea, rappelling down Keshet Cave, visiting the *ma'apalim* camp... I especially enjoyed meeting the other kids in my program, who were very interested in learning sign language. As a matter of fact, Hadar and I started out teaching everyone at least one word or phrase in sign language per day."

"Our group in Maccabiah (teen sports competition) won the Most Spirited Award," Micah added. "One of the reasons I think we did was because several of our cheers had sign language incorporated into them — it was really fun developing them with the other *chanichim* (participants)."

Hadar also remembers the Maccabiah games as a special time. "I couldn't believe it — there I was signing in front of

nearly 2,000 people at the closing ceremony of the games," she said. "The song 'The Greatest Love of All' by Whitney Houston came on and I was signing the words to Micah, and he was singing the words along with me in English. He knew all the words by heart, and it was an incredible moment because we were all singing together. We were a team."

For Micah, the trip was also special in a visual way — because of a heightened visual awareness he has from being deaf. "I think I appreciated the visual aspects of the trip even more than my hear-

ing counterparts," he said. "For example, when we went hiking in the Negev, I was the only one actually snapping pictures of the seemingly barren landscape. The way the sun hit the rocks was so colorful..."

Micah's father is thrilled that Micah had this opportunity. "It is highly unusual for a deaf teen to travel with a group of hearing teens. I think the trip gave Micah a lot more confidence that he could do what he wanted to do and that barriers to success could be overcome," he said. "He has also gained a greater sense of independence. Young Judaea values all kids and that makes me feel great."

Today, Micah says he feels his Young Judaea experience has helped him understand Israeli life and Judaism more. Now he looks to the future, and hopes that such special experiences will be possible for other Jewish deaf teens. "I can honestly say that the YJ program changed a lot for me... and I hope someday there will be a similar program geared particularly for deaf Jewish teens. Who knows? Maybe someday, I'll be the first *madrich* of this group..." ☆

AZA-BBYO-BBG

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION - NOW BEING FORMED
ARE YOU AN ALUMNI FROM YOUR HOMETOWN?
WE ARE PLANNING A REUNION!!

Please fill in this form

Name
Address
Chapter name
City/state

Mail to: Ellen Goldstein, BBYO city dir.
5007 Providence Rd., Charlotte, NC 28226
or call 366-5007 ext. 237

BE A BBYO BACKER!

Support Charlotte's BBYO Scholarship Fund

by making a donation in honor of:

☆ your favorite teen,

☆ in memory of a loved one

☆ and any other SPECIAL Occasion!!!
(Minimum donation is \$5.00 and an acknowledgement card will be sent.)

☆ Please send donations to ☆

BBYO - Ellen Goldstein
5007 Providence Rd., Charlotte, NC 28210



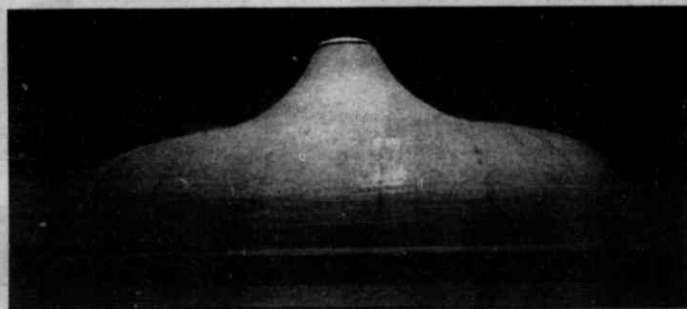
B'nai B'rith
Youth Organization

Charlotte Students Return from Israel

"Last summer I went to my high school history class on top of a mountain and experienced the history of Masada where it actually happened," says Tommy Mann, a recent graduate of the Alexander Muss High School in Israel. Two students from Charlotte returned

Students visited the site of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Shrine of the Book at the museum in Jerusalem. They hiked/climbed to the Qumran caves where they were discovered.

Students had the opportunity to experience a different culture



Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Shrine of the Book at the museum in Jerusalem.

this summer from an eight week educational program at the Alexander Muss High School in Israel where they relived more than 2,000 years of Western Civilization.

"It's a combination of learning and fun," says Josh Klein. On the first trip, the students hiked to a place called Tel Gezer, sat down and began their class. Before long, they realized they were sitting in the same spot that was described in the book!

while earning both high school and college credit for their studies. They liked attending AMHSI because the program gave them the opportunity to study history where it actually happened.

The Alexander Muss High School in Israel offers five eight-week sessions throughout the year. For more information, please contact the Mid-South Director of Admissions, Linda Shapiro in Greensboro at 336-297-9665. ☆