

USY International Convention 2011



This article was written by Kayla Goldberg shortly after her return from USY International Convention. She was joined by her chapter co-President, Paul Levine, and Simone Kopman. Our Har El Tzofim USY chapter will shortly be hosting our own convention, providing wonderful memories for teens visiting our neck of the woods! (USY Spring Kinnus, March 2-4)

International Convention is USY's biggest convention of the year, and was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania this year. It is something I look forward to the whole year, and I always have the time of my life while I'm there. On December 29th, 2011, I returned home from the third International Convention I've been to. USY is a huge part of my life, and being able to share my love for USY with over one thousand other Jewish teens is a feeling I cannot describe.

On December 20th, I travelled with 8 other Jewish teens from chapters in Vancouver and Calgary. We met up with the rest of our region (the Pinwheel Region) in Long Island, New York to begin our Pre-Convention. (Pre-Convention was only for our region, and on December 25th we would meet up with the 17 other regions of USY.) We were very lucky to be hosted by the Midway Jewish Center in Long Island, and

they welcomed us with open arms. Some of the congregants volunteered to open their homes to us and let a group of USYers stay with them for the duration of Pre-Convention. Three of my friends and I stayed with one of the nicest families I have ever met. They were so excited to have us there, and never let us go hungry. We felt so welcome and comfortable the whole time we were there. We got to tour around New York City for the first and second days that we were there. We saw and did everything; we saw the statue of liberty, shopped in Times Square, and even lit a menorah and sang the Chanukkah blessings with Chasidic Jews by Times Square. Doing all these things was truly amazing, but the fact that I got to experience them with my USY friends made it a thousand times better.

Even though we were all sad to leave New York, we knew that in just a few hours we would be in Philadelphia, at International Convention, with over one thousand other Jewish Teens. As soon as we arrived at the Philadelphia Marriott Hotel, we went straight to the opening ceremonies and were instantly reunited with friends we have made over the years. We listened to welcome speeches from the International President, and from Jules Gutin, the International USY and Kadima Director. We then began our programming, which included Limmud sessions where we discussed the theme of the convention, Derech Eretz (respecting others and having appropriate behavior). Between all the fun programs and praying, my friends and I met lots of Jewish teens our age from all across North America. International Convention is definitely something every USYer should experience – it is something you will never forget.

We did so much at International Convention; we learned lots, made new friends, and created memories that will last forever. USY has changed my life in so many ways, and I want as many Jewish teens as possible to experience the same love that I have for USY. If you are reading this and are in Kadima (grades 5 through 8) or USY (grades 9 through 12), please give Kadima and USY a chance. I never thought I would be a USYer, but after I went to one convention, I fell in love. USY is a wonderful thing and I don't know who or where I would be without it.

Kayla Goldberg (2011-2012 Har El Tzofim Co-President)