



Voices of Nesiya 2011 Participants and Parents

In Nesiya we learn to define ourselves not by our opinions but by the way we treat one another. It's not easy – it's worth it.

Gillian Friedman, Seattle, WA

I learned to listen and focus, to open up and to expose myself.

Shalom Chai, Gilo, Israel

Nesiya promotes consideration and self-exploration in a time of strife and narrow-mindedness. Words I thought I understood – "consideration", "thoughtfulness", "open-mindedness" – now have much deeper meaning. I have learned to be a more thoughtful and considerate person.

Robert Ascherman, Birmingham, AL

Confronting issues I don't usually like to talk about, such as politics and society, opened me up to new perspectives and taught me that I don't need to be afraid of people disagreeing with me.

Olga Nesirov, Ashdod, Israel

I've never felt such a deep connection to a group of people, to a country.

Jason Kasman, Niskayuna, NY

Shira is questioning text, history, current events and conflicts with inquisitiveness and intelligent thought. She seems more confident and connected to Israel and her Jewish identity.

Stacey Berger, mother of Shira, Westborough, MA

I feel like I've matured and learned to accept myself. I believe the change in me will influence my surroundings for the better.

Marom Ginsberg, Jerusalem, Israel

I was encouraged to embrace myself and my values. But I was also encouraged to embrace others and their values. Learning that it is ok to doubt and struggle has made me a stronger person.

Kayla Rosen, East Brunswick, NJ

I got to debate with Israelis, people who disagreed with me for once!

Julia McCoy, Santa Rosa, CA

In the midst of great differences, Nesiya reveals closeness, love, and caring between us to create a unified and strong community.

Einat Tidhar, Hoshaya, Israel

Isaac came home energized and enthusiastic. He is beginning to understand that Nesiya broadened his world and that he will need to readjust his choices to fit that broadened world.

Susan Silberberg-Robinson, mother of Isaac, Brookline, MA

Having seen so many ways of practicing Judaism, I know now that mine works best for me.

Shula Goldstein, Beachwood, OH

Questions arise which we never asked ourselves before. The program doesn't answer questions: it poses them and leaves them open for us to struggle with. By trying to answer them, we learn about ourselves.

Roi Aschanka, Maale Adumim & Yemin Orde, Israel

We went to the most obscure places, the most unimaginable places in Israel.

Melissa Goller, Hollis Hills, NY

Nesiya gave me the opportunity to create meaningful relationships with American and Israeli Jewish teens. It meant a lot to experience Israel's internal troubles, and not just those with surrounding areas.

Ellyn Zeidman, Richmond, VA

Nesiya brings American and Israeli teens together to explore Israel in a thoughtful way. The opportunity for self-exploration and self-expression within an accepting community is unique.

Lori Herz, mother of Rebecca, Port Washington, NY

The Israeli participants inspired me and taught me about strength, brotherhood, and spirituality. Seeing people who are totally unaffiliated grow to love Judaism was inspiring. For the first time in my life I had to think about the way I relate to the most fundamental aspects of Judaism.

Katie Feld, Los Angeles, CA

Nesiya helped me understand who I am and what kind of Jew I want to be.

Amit Cohen, Beit Shean, Israel

My mind was opened not only to other viewpoints, but to real, lovable people who reflected these views.

Dani Shapiro, San Diego, CA

The group challenged my beliefs, which made me think in new ways. I learned that listening to people can be more interesting and fulfilling than immediately sharing my ideas and opinions.

Isaac Silberberg, Brookline, MA

I grew to understand the power of honesty, openness, vulnerability, responsibility and acceptance in my evolving relationships with myself and others. I learned about the arts as a mode of diverse creativity and expression. I learned what real pluralism can look like. I learned that our goal should not be to impress but rather to be true to ourselves.

Noah Weinberg, Evanston, IL

Nesiya challenged me to open my eyes to a new side of my personality, one of spirituality, generosity and connection. It caused me to give my full self to everything I experienced, to constantly ask myself what I have to offer instead of what to take.

Rebecca Herz, Port Washington, NY

I created strong connections with people I thought I would never be able to connect with.

Bat-El Hatuka, Nitzan, Israel

Ben had a life-changing experience. He developed more self confidence and a richer sense of Judaism and the world. He was able to express himself in a safe environment and was supported during his growth.

Fran Godgart, mother of Ben, Castleton, NY

Nesiya taught me about myself, my relationship with others, and my relationship with Judaism. It opened my mind to new ideas and my heart to different people. Nesiya challenged me every day but also allowed me to feel completely comfortable being me.

Suzy Flaster, Phoenix, AZ

Before the summer, I was introverted. On Nesiya, I opened up, I shared, I stood my ground.

Moti Aruzan, Ashdod, Israel

I realized that sometimes when people talk to me, I nod my head and don't process what's being said. Nesiya helped me listen to people, and really hear what they have to say. I learned that it's okay to disagree with people and respect them at the same time.

Zev Fogelman, Brookline, MA

On Nesiya we learn to listen, to make genuine connections, to care about others, to receive, to contain, to give space to every person, to open up, to speak candidly, to become better people, to love.

Margalit Fridman, Gilo, Israel

I built real relationships that enabled me to explore who I am, including my flaws. This led to amazing personal growth and the ability to explore controversial issues with others.

Alexandra Feinberg, Lake Forest Park, WA

Future generations will gather the fruits of your work with these young people.

Mishley Yehudai, father of Ilan, Hatzor Haglilit, Israel

Arik came home passionate about Israel and longing to return. The program helped my son blossom, speak up and share.

Sarah Gadye, mother of Arik, San Francisco, CA

I came on Nesiya knowing only Orthodoxy. During the summer, I learned about people of different backgrounds and understood their practices.

Mickey Rosenbloom, Beachwood, OH

You gave me the opportunity to broaden my views in a special way.

Ilan Yehudai, Hatzor Haglilit, Israel

Nesiya taught me to appreciate experiences even if I don't know exactly what I'm gaining at the time. I learned about Israel, explored my religion, and expressed myself through art, all while being part of a beautiful community.

Amy Solomon, Framingham, MA

Already, I see a change in Zev. He is more independent, but is also more considerate of us, his parents. He thinks more about the effects of his words and actions.

Pam Grill, mother of Zev Fogelman, Brookline, MA

I expressed aspects of myself I have long been out of touch with.

Revital Zecharia, Jerusalem, Israel

Nesiya is meaningful, surprising, challenging. Nesiya asks a lot from its participants. It gets people to open up and explore.

Matthew Gurevitch, New York, NY

I loved the rich discussions and controversy that grew out of the text studies.

Abigail Rosenthal, Montclair, NJ