



Summer Camp at Kfar Silver for Youth Impacted by the Swords of Iron War

Fostering Healing, Growth, and Connection

July 2025



Psychologist and camp leader Royi Yablochnik running a session for the group

Thanks to the generosity of ORT Zurich donors, this summer Kfar Silver welcomed a remarkable group of young people for ten days of learning, emotional growth, and unforgettable memories. The summer camp was designed to support youth impacted by the horrific terror attack on 7 October 2023, and the ongoing Swords of Iron War. The students who attended were both first and second-circle victims; those who lost immediate or close family members, or were directly impacted by terrorism, evacuation and the ongoing war.

The camp was designed to promote emotional healing, strengthening resilience, and fostering positive memories. Through therapeutic activities, educational programs, and outdoor adventures, participants connected with peers, immersed themselves in nature, and deepened their sense of community, connecting with other young people who had experienced similar challenges, losses, and disruptions in their lives. Amid the

challenges and uncertainty of the recent months in Israel, World ORT Kadima Mada organized the camp to provide a safe and supportive space where youth could heal, connect, and discover their inner strengths.

Twenty participants aged 13 to 15, 15 girls and 5 boys, stepped away from their daily routines to explore new horizons, express themselves in a supportive environment, and engage in meaningful activities that foster resilience and create lasting positive memories.

Highlights of the Summer Camp

Over the course of those ten carefully designed days, Kfar Silver Youth Village provided a life-changing experience for youth who had been emotionally impacted by the war in Israel. The camp's structure combined educational, cultural, physical, and social activities, intentionally crafted to nurture resilience, foster a strong sense of identity, and promote emotional well-being.

From the moment participants arrived, the camp focused on building trust and connection. Initial activities such as team challenges and group exercises were more than simple icebreakers; they laid the groundwork for mutual support and belonging. By engaging in collaborative tasks, participants began to experience the power of working together, recognizing that they are part of a community that values and uplifts each member. Practical sessions like self-defense training contributed not only physical skills but also boosted personal confidence, giving the youth tools to feel safer and more in control.

The camp balanced moments of high energy and physical activity with reflective, inward-looking workshops. Cooperative games and problem-solving exercises enhanced adaptability and persistence, critical components of resilience. These activities encouraged participants to confront personal challenges collectively.

Regular swimming and physical exercise supported both mental and physical health, offering an outlet for stress.

Early in the program, participants visited the Jewish Sports Museum in Ramat Gan, a site rich with stories of survival, identity, and pride. This experience went beyond learning about sports as physical activity; it emphasized the values of perseverance, fairness, respect, and camaraderie. It helped the youth connect with a broader cultural heritage, reinforcing their sense of belonging to a community that celebrates resilience.

The excursion to Jerusalem served a deeper purpose than education alone. By exploring their heritage and national history, participants strengthened their sense of belonging and identity, a core pillar of emotional resilience.

The immersive learning trip to Jerusalem, where participants explored historical sites symbolizing endurance and continuity, helped participants to draw parallels between their own challenges and the broader narrative of perseverance inherent in the Jewish and Israeli culture. Back at Kfar Silver, reflection and group discussions translated these insights into personal growth, reinforcing their resilience and inspiring a commitment to their community.



Mirav Shynes speaking to the group

A profoundly impactful session was held with Mirav Shynes, mother of Eyal Shaynes of blessed memory, who was tragically killed during the Swords of Iron War in Gaza. Mirav spoke passionately about the power of choices and how they shape our lives every day. She encouraged the participants to recognize that while they may not control every circumstance around them, they can choose how they respond. Through simple, thoughtful

decisions, whether about how to treat others, how to face challenges, or how to take care of themselves, each person has the ability to steer their own path toward growth and resilience. She emphasized that making choices sometimes means stepping outside of comfort zones but that it is precisely in those moments of choice that strength is built, and confidence grows.

Throughout those 10 days, the accompanying workshops and cultural evenings created a shared narrative that fosters connection and self-worth. Workshops focusing on personal strengths and developing coping mechanisms provided participants with tools to better understand and manage their emotions.

These sessions emphasized recognizing one's own resources and developing strategies for overcoming adversity, empowering participants to navigate complex personal and social challenges with greater confidence. The inclusion of contemplative activities, such as meditation and guided imagery, encouraged mindfulness and emotional regulation, skills essential for long-term well-being.

A pivotal moment in the camp was the communal Shabbat dinner, which embodied themes of community, tradition, and mutual support. This shared experience offered participants a sense of stability and continuity, reinforcing the idea that they are part of something larger than themselves. This was a vital message for young people who often face instability in their personal lives.

The 10-day camp experience closed with a ceremony that celebrated participants' personal growth. By integrating physical, emotional, social, and cultural programming, Kfar Silver's camp provided a holistic framework to help build resilience and well-being. Each activity was carefully chosen to develop essential life skills, and empower participants to overcome adversity and pursue their potential. This camp was more than a break from daily challenges; it was a pivotal experience that equipped young people with the mindset and tools necessary to thrive in the face of future obstacles.

Testimonials

From Matan's mother, a participant in the summer camp:

"Something from the heart, just before the summer camp comes to an end...

We didn't know each other before Matan joined the camp, apart from a short conversation covering the basic details. I entrusted into your hands, and the hands of your team, the little treasure of our home, the pampered, sweet child who receives so much warmth and love at home, and who at times also finds it difficult to accept authority.

Honestly, I was worried that within a day or two Matan would say, "I get it, this isn't for me, I want to go home." I must say, I was very surprised that the opposite happened and in a big way. What surprised me most was that even during the time he was allowed to use his phone, he didn't have time to talk to me... except to say, "Mom, everything's fine, we'll talk later."

So, while I still don't fully know his feelings and experiences from his point of view, I can say with certainty that he had a great time and a very meaningful experience, otherwise he wouldn't have stayed.

*What also touched me deeply was the fact that you didn't ask for reassurances or even for me to share details about my child before registering him. In other words, you didn't choose to screen or test whether the child had this or that difficulty; you simply welcomed a child as a surprise. That says a lot about your incredible professional ability, which goes hand in hand with **Shlomo Carlebach's famous saying: "Every child needs an adult who believes in them."***

So, just before we wrap up, it's important for me to thank you personally, and your entire team, for your blessed work, meaningful, enriching, inclusive, and connecting a group of children who didn't know each other, and turning them, for a short while, into a family for 10 days.

With appreciation and gratitude to you all. May you always have the privilege to give of your talents and your hearts for the sake of the next generation."

From Amit's parents, another participant in the camp:

"Hi Boaz, I wanted to thank you for your recommendation and encouragement, Amit joined the summer camp you suggested to us. Now, after almost 10 days, we can wholeheartedly say that he is thriving, enjoying himself, and truly having a meaningful experience. This Thursday, God willing, he will complete a special journey, one that has been both enjoyable and very important for him. Thank you for the push, and the space you gave him along the way during this important time at Kfar Silver."

From Liraz Ifergan, one of the camp participants

"When I arrived at the camp, I was the girl at the table alone at breakfast, no one came up nor laughed nor played nor hugged the girl who has been sitting on the sidelines for nine years. I came to the camp without knowing anyone, just with hopes and expectations to meet someone; a friend."

After nine days in the camp, I met two friends, but more importantly than that, I got to know myself. I discovered traits that I had never seen in me, and faced challenges that I was never able to deal with, the strengths and weaknesses. I realized that I am capable and can handle anything that I set my mind to, and even if I don't fit in with everyone, I fit with myself and that's what's important and what matters."

I stayed true to my principles and values the whole way, I focused on me and what makes me feel good. In the end I left here with life skills that will serve me along the way, and this is one of the best things that I have ever done for myself."

Closing Remarks from Royi Yablonchik, Psychologist, in charge of the summer camp: "Summing Up a Journey: Resilience, Connection, and Meaning"

Ten days. Twenty boys and girls. Twenty young hearts embarking together on a journey, both inward and outward. A journey of body, mind, belonging, and challenge.

From the very first moment, we knew this wouldn't be just another camp. We knew it wasn't only about schedules, activities, food, or rooms. We knew we were building something deeper, a foundation of resilience, a base of identity, a ground of connection.

Throughout the camp, we tried to teach, and also to learn, what resilience truly means. Not just standing strong, but knowing how to feel, how to ask for help, how to keep going even when it's hard. Not just succeeding, but understanding what holds us back, and how to overcome obstacles.

*The boys and girls who stood here ten days ago are not exactly the same ones who stand here now. Each one of them experienced something, sometimes small, sometimes profound, sometimes a moment, sometimes a process. **Some discovered they are capable. Some learned they don't have to be perfect. Some met themselves for the first time, without filters.***

Alongside all of this, we journeyed together through connection. We began at the Jewish Sports Museum in Ramat Gan, a place few know, yet holding a powerful story of identity, survival, and pride. Sports as a place of connection and belonging, not just physical ability, but values: perseverance, fairness, respect, friendship.

We toured Jerusalem and the Western Wall, perhaps the most personal and yet most national place. Visiting the Western Wall tunnels allowed us to pause, remember, and feel a sense of belonging, not as distant observers, but as part of the story of our people.

*At the camp's close, we paused for a meaningful conversation, one of those talks that stays with you long after it ends. With Meirav Shaynes, mother of Eyal Shaynes, of blessed memory, who was killed in the Swords of Iron War in Gaza, defending the land he loved so much. Meirav shared with us, with strength and sensitivity, details about her son, a gentle human being, and also a warrior. **It was not a talk about loss, but about life. About choice. About values.** A painful yet uplifting reminder of why we are here, why we choose to act, and why it is so important to know who we are.*

Not everything was simple. In the beginning, there were moments when the group didn't always connect or lift one another up. There were moments of loneliness, gaps, and misunderstandings. This is part of the truth, not every social process matures within ten days.

But precisely within this, within the authenticity, within the struggle with "not easy", that is when resilience grew. Because true resilience is not measured when things are easy and pleasant; it is tested in those difficult moments.

And now, standing at the end, we can say with confidence: this was an amazing camp. A camp with substance. With meaning. With heart. A camp where seeds were planted, some sprouting now, others perhaps only in months or years to come.

Thank you, dear boys and girls, for your courage, your honesty, your willingness to try. Thank you to the staff, the guides, the counselors, and everyone who took part in this journey. And thank you, life, for the privilege to touch the hearts of young people and to remember time and again how much strength they carry within."

Moshe Leiba, Chief Pedagogy and R&D Officer at World ORT Kadima Mada added:

"This camp was more than a break from the challenges of the year, it was a safe space for our youth to heal, to rediscover joy, and to strengthen the bonds that will support them long after the summer ends. Watching their resilience grow through shared experiences has been deeply inspiring."

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the generous sponsors whose support made this meaningful experience possible. Your commitment and care have given these young people not only moments of joy, but also the tools and confidence to move forward with hope. Thank you!

Photos Appendix



Team activity in Kfar Silver: building mutual support



Visit to the Sports Museum in Ramat Gan



Royi discussing personal strength and building resilience



Krav Maga session



A participant wearing a camp T-Shirt

WORLD ORT
קדימה מדע

ORT ZÜRICH

תעודת סיום

מוענקת בזאת ל:

על השתתפות במחנה הקיץ "WORLD ORT קדימה אתכם"
מחנה חוסן וזיקה
אשר התקיים בתאריכים 22 ביולי עד 31 ביולי 2025 בכפר סילבר



ד"ר ירמיהו
מנהל המחנה
World ORT קדימה אתכם



ד"ר משה לייבה
סמנכ"ל פדגוגיה ומחנכים
World ORT קדימה מדע

The design of the certificate given to each participant