

Programs for “Soviet Jewry Day”-Immersing students or campers into the life and struggle of Jewish activists in the U.S.S.R. - 1977 Soviet Jewry Camp Kit

Contributed by: Enid L. Wurtman's Soviet Jewry Archives on the History of the Zionist Movement from the Soviet Union

Introduction: Soviet Jewry Day is the second activity of many listed in the “1977 Soviet Jewry Camp Kit”. Educators have the option of implementing these activities as a historical dramatization, or it can be easily adapted to today. While these particular activities are written for a summer camp, many parts can be done at a school or synagogue. These activities can be used in correlation with many of the other lesson plans available in our Lesson Plan Library.

The aim of the following activities will be to create an atmosphere in camp which recreates the daily realities of life of a Soviet jew, a life filled with tension, feelings of isolation, self- consciousness regarding his Jewish identity and mistrust, stemming from constant surveillance by authorities and informers.

Objectives:

- Students will have a firm understanding of the difficulties facing Jews in the former Soviet Union.
- Students will have an understanding of the importance of religious freedom.

Big Ideas	Jews are responsible for one another (solidarity).
	You can make a difference.
Content	To explain the Jewish values that led Jewish people to fight for Soviet Jewish rights.
	To relate the historical events that led to freedom for Soviet Jews.
Skills	To build a civic engagement plan.
	To contribute to causes relating to (Jewish/all) human freedom.
Meaning	To reflect on your obligation to help (Jewish/all) people in need.
	To reflect on the power of a common (Jewish) voice.

Duration: one day

Materials:

- By Order of the government: “Services Forbidden” sign https://drive.google.com/open?id=1MN_wOPha5OngcoQMnualpI9VV3rX8U29
- Posters https://drive.google.com/open?id=1MN_wOPha5OngcoQMnualpI9VV3rX8U29
- Skits https://drive.google.com/open?id=1btFXljmABWCcmbk3Ez_uZA5ybHJNllmf
- Dramatic Readings <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1pZS112SJiHmtpbsrbsRp2BWyYoQPhxHf>
- Soviet Jewry Song Sheet <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1e3-ao9auH1eauxDQ4PVokjZ1okT2s150>
- Identification Papers https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hEgDc7tT4rp_lxQBZWlB8ZLRH38A0P0apXilDs2dKC8/edit?usp=sharing

Procedure:

Daytime program - Scenario 1

1. As campers wake up and dress, counselors should, as inconspicuously as possible, record bits of their conversation containing Jewish references, e.g. Hebrew words, mention of Israel, religious ritual, Jewish songs, etc.
2. At flag-raising, “officials” dressed in uniforms, or with name tags, should prevent the Israeli flag from being raised and detain those who had made the attempt to raise it.
3. Sign at prayer site should announce: “By Order of the government: “Services Forbidden” (see materials). Post uniformed guards at each entrance to the site. Alternative prayer site should be used. Short discussion following services should be lead by a counselor. Campers should be encouraging to express their reactions to these disruptions in the morning routine.
4. As campers enter the dining hall, bunks should be divided and friends separated. Breakfast, lunch and dinner should be conducted in silence. Grace after the meal should be recited silently. Throughout the meal, a voice over the loudspeaker should read a list of harassments of Soviet Jews. This steady drone should continue unabated until close of the meal. At that time an “official: should announce a list of those being “detained” for questioning. (Detention site should be prepared beforehand with guards, etc.) Those being detained are those whose remarks were overheard by counselors that morning. Remarks could be read over the loudspeaker as a warning to others.

Daytime program- Scenario 2

1. Awaken campers in the middle of the night or at dawn. Have uniformed guards hand out special “identification papers” to each camper.
2. “Identification Papers” should contain:
 1. Internal Soviet passport, bearing camper’s new identity as a Soviet citizen;
 2. Information regarding his or her profession and family;
 3. A Short history of his or her emigration status: I.e., how many times visa application was filed, was it granted or denied, were any close relatives permitted to leave, etc.
 4. Money (to some campers) for bribes, fees or taxes;
 5. Special information: whether exit will be hampered by the dependency of a sick relative, prior military service, access to classified information, knowledge of Hebrew etc.
 6. Specific instructions on obtaining visas.
 7. Map of government offices, guarded checkpoints throughout the camp and the location of the “airport”, “secret hiding place”, “Israel”, etc.
 8. Each set of identification papers should be different
3. Set up the following in various locations:
 1. Dutch Embassy (which process invitations from Israel);OVIR (Visa Office); Bank;
 2. Places of business where character references must be obtained from the employers
 3. Housing Authority (to certify the sale or return of apartment and to arrange for necessary repairs before departure).
 4. Post guards at each location
4. Give campers a strict deadline by which time they have to have escaped to freedom or be arrested.
5. Rowboats and canoes might well serve as escape vehicles. One part of the pier or shoreline could be “Israel,” complete with Israeli music, refreshments, and a Hebrew-speaking welcoming committee.
6. Morning and Afternoon Activities
 1. Build model labor camp or prison cell.

2. Have campers set up a Soviet Jewry poster, song, slogan, or art display museum using referenced from the Resource Library.

7. Evening Activities

1. Performance of “Utopian Chronicles” or “Mother Russia,” (see skits in materials)
2. Invite a former Refusenik or activist to speak to your campers
3. Watch one of the many films in our resource library to show what life was like in the Soviet Union and the work of the Refuseniks and activists.
4. Have a Soviet Jewry campfire: include Dramatic readings and freedom songs the Soviet Jewry movement (Included in the materials).