



On Course for a Jewish Life: The Impact of FZY Year Course

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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As an ideological youth movement, FZY believes in providing educational, fun experiences that increase commitment to Israel, Judaism and the wider community. As FZY marks 100 years since its beginnings in 1910 as a small collection of students determined to further the Zionist ideals, we look forward to celebrating a further 100 years and more as a movement that inspires young people to change and improve the world that they live in through the prism of FZY's ideology.

Of all of FZY's programmes and activities, Year Course is the most formative. FZY Year Course regularly takes 50% of all of those who take a movement gap year in Israel and, throughout that time, Year Course graduates have long espoused what a life changing experience Year Course was. In truth, it has always been pretty difficult to get them, including myself as a Year Course 2004/5 graduate, to shut up about it! However, there has never been any research to support these claims, that is... until now.

FZY Year Course is a fantastic gap year programme which has a deep and long-term impact on the Jewish and Zionist identity of its participants. FZY is rightly proud of Year Course and we are constantly working to make the programme better and better.

With a record 120 participants in 2008 on FZY Year Course, it is great news for the British Jewish community that FZY is succeeding in delivering its high quality programme for more and more young British Jews.

Jamie Slavin,
FZY Mazkir



At face value, this research measures the impact of the FZY Year Course on its participants. It documents and records the remarkably positive outcomes resulting from successful participation on the programme and attests to the qualitative effects of Year Course in reinforcing Jewish identity and involvement and a commitment to Israel.

However, this is merely the subtext for an even more important narrative: over twenty years of FZY Year Course alumni have been responsible for transforming a struggling youth movement into an important British Jewish community phenomenon. Today, as the movement celebrates 100 years, FZY regularly takes over 100 participants on year course and a further 480 on Israel Tour. It also has over 450 members on its domestic summer camps. These are outstanding quantitative measures of the incredible FZY success story.

UJIA has been a proud sponsor of FZY throughout this period and continues to provide guidance and training to its movement workers and madrichim. We look forward to strengthening our partnership and wish FZY every success in the future.

UJIA Tsevet

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study seeks to explore the long-term impact of participation in FZY Year Course, on its graduates' Jewish identity, communal involvement, and connection to Israel.

In order to explore this, an online survey was conducted, along with a small number of in-depth telephone interviews.

The findings are clear:

FZY Year Course impacts in three key areas:

1. Relationship with Israel
2. Jewish identity
3. Jewish and Hebrew knowledge

Respondents reported that Year Course strengthened their relationship with Israel and their Jewish identity, and increased their Jewish and Hebrew knowledge.

In general it is clear that the impact of Year Course on the Jewish life of the respondents is most pronounced for those who had less Jewish experience beforehand, whether it be Jewish schooling, trips to Israel or frequent synagogue attendance. Nevertheless, the impact of Year Course on those who had attended Jewish schools, visited Israel frequently and had regularly attended synagogue before Year Course was still found to be very strong.

Another finding was the very high level of Jewish communal involvement and leadership of Year Course graduates, with more than two thirds of respondents having held a leadership position with the community.

Of the respondents who were married, only 4% were married to non-Jews. This is far lower than the general intermarriage rate (estimated by researchers as 30%)¹. Remarkably, 26% of the married respondents met their husband or wife directly through their involvement in FZY. A further 15% met their spouse through FZY connections. FZY has certainly provided an important network for many young Jews to meet each other and form relationships.

Another factor that emerged very clearly from the research was the impact of Year Course on personal development, with respondents frequently describing their experience as 'life-changing' and 'confidence-building'.

Whilst we do not know why some of the Year Course participants over the last twenty years did not respond to the survey, we do know that the ones that did generally reported that they are Jewishly engaged, and they say that Year Course heavily impacted on their Jewish and Zionist involvement.

¹ Miller, Stephen, Marlena Schmool and Antony Lerman (1996), *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews: Some Key Findings of the JPR Survey* (London, Institute for Jewish Policy Research)

SOME KEY FINDINGS:

- 96% of married respondents had married someone Jewish
- 92% said Year Course strengthened their commitment to Israel
- 89% reported that Year Course strengthened their Jewish identity
- 88% were extremely or very attached to Israel
- 82% attended at least one Jewish community event in the previous year
- 74% said Year Course improved their Hebrew and Jewish knowledge
- 67% had held a leadership position in the Jewish community
- 60% donated money mostly or exclusively to Jewish charities
- 58% had engaged in Jewish volunteer work in the previous year.
- 41% met their spouse through FZY or FZY connections

WHO ARE FZY?

The Federation of Zionist Youth (FZY) is a Jewish Zionist Youth Movement based in the United Kingdom that has been active for one hundred years. FZY provides informal educational programmes on a weekly basis, and on camps, seminars, tours to Israel and Europe and events for British Jewish youth aged 14 and upwards.

FZY is a pluralist movement, welcoming members from all streams of Judaism, and from varying political beliefs. For the past decade FZY has been the largest Zionist youth movement in Britain.

WHAT IS FZY YEAR COURSE?

For the past thirty years, FZY members have participated in the Year Course programme in Israel. In its early days four or five members participated every year, joining with the US Young Judea programme. In 1988 the numbers of participants on the programme reached double figures. By 1991 there were over 40 participants on the programme and by 2000 this number reached 70.

The FZY Year Course programme is currently the leading gap year programme to Israel for British Jews. In August 2007, 120 young British Jewish began the latest FZY Year Course.

Currently a nine month gap year programme in Israel, the programme is designed to give a wide range of challenging personal and educational opportunities and experiences to its participants. FZY Year Course states its aims as 'to provide leaders for the Jewish Community of the future in the UK and Israel, to increase commitment to Israel, the Jewish Community and Judaism, and by extension reduce assimilation and intermarriage'.

There is plenty of anecdotal and non-scientific evidence that this is indeed true. However, there has never been any study or research carried out to examine if the Year Course programme does have any effect, if so how significant it is and in what areas is it particularly successful. Therefore, FZY commissioned research examining the effects of Year Course on its participants regarding their commitment to Israel, Judaism and the Jewish community.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Census reports have shown that the British Jewish community has been steadily declining in size over the last few decades. There has been much concern over the future of the Jewish community, particularly regarding the numbers of Jews marrying out.

These concerns have been supported by research. In the wake of the Second World War, the Jewish population of Britain was estimated at approximately 430,000, but after the 2001 UK census, it was estimated that there were approximately 300,000 Jews in Britain, with 270,499 describing themselves as Jewish in response to the optional question about religion². In 1996 it was estimated that the rate of intermarriage amongst British Jews was 30%³. Sergio Della Pergola, a demographer at Hebrew University, has predicted that, combined with emigration rates, if these trends continue, ‘the UK’s Jewish population will decline to 240,000 in 2020, 180,000 in 2050, and 140,000 in 2080’⁴.

The Zionist youth movements in Britain have consistently sought to instil a strong sense of Jewish identity, an attachment to Israel and a high level of Jewish communal involvement in their members, partly in order to encourage Jewish continuity. Year programmes in Israel have long been a tradition of the youth movements, and are considered by the movements to be the most significant of their programmes in terms of long-term impact on the participants.

A 1999 study by Steven M. Cohen on graduates of the American Young Judea programme found that Young Judea alumni score higher than comparable US Jews on measures of Jewish Identity, have far lower levels of intermarriage, show higher levels of religious observance and have more communal involvement⁵. As the FZY and the Young Judea programmes are very similar, and in some cases, has been run jointly, we would expect to find similar effects amongst the British FZY participants.

Four questions were central to this research:

1. To what extent do FZY Year Course graduates have a sense of Jewish identity?
2. To what extent do FZY Year Course graduates get involved in their Jewish community, including leadership roles?
3. What is the role of FZY Year Course in its graduates’ relationship with Israel?
4. To what extent does FZY Year Course affect its graduates’ religious practice?

2. Graham, David, Marlena Schmool and Stanley Waterman (2007), *Jews in Britain: A snapshot from the 2001 census*. (London, Institute for Jewish Policy Research)

3. Miller, Stephen, Marlena Schmool and Antony Lerman (1996), *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews: Some Key Findings of the JPR Survey* (London, Institute for Jewish Policy Research)

4. Sergio Della Pergola (2003), “World Jewish Population 2002”, in Singer, David and Lawrence Grossman (eds.) (2003) *American Jewish Year Book*, (New York, American Jewish Committee)

5. Steven M. Cohen (1999), *Building Jewish Identity: A Study of Young Judea Alumni* (New York, Young Judea)

METHOD

A combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques were used in this study. In the first phase, an online survey was used. In the second phase, eight in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with Year Course graduates from a range of year groups, in order to explore more fully the issues raised by the survey data.

It is difficult to assess the impact of FZY Year Course on its participants, as these young people are self-selecting to a certain degree. Looking at the results, we can see that these were individuals who had largely attended synagogue regularly before, and visited Israel before. A considerable proportion of them also had Jewish schooling. Furthermore, the fact that these participants made a choice to go on Year Course in the first place suggests that they already had a sense of Jewish identity and a relationship with Israel. This leaves us with a methodological problem of separating out the impact of these other factors, from the impact of Year Course and FZY.

A second methodological problem is that those that completed the survey were also self-selected, and the population may not be representative of all those who have ever participated in Year Course. This is further compounded by the fact that the contact details of Year Course participants were incomplete or out of date, therefore we were limited by those that we were able to reach, and it is reasonable to assume that those that were asked to complete the survey in the first place were more connected to the Jewish social network.

In order to address some of these issues in this study, people were asked to self-assess the relative impact of Year Course as compared to some of these other factors. Therefore, we were able to see how the impact of Year Course was perceived by the individuals themselves.

Secondly, we broke the respondents down into various subgroups based on measures of synagogue attendance, visits to Israel and Jewish schooling. These subgroups were not mutually exclusive. Within each category, we compared the responses of respondents who fell into a high, medium or low category, to see whether their responses were more a reflection of their pre-Year Course upbringing or their Year Course experience.

As 1988 was the first year that Year Course participants reached double figures, it was felt that this group of participants would be a logical place to start this research and to look at all Year Course graduates until 2006-2007. This allowed information to be collated from graduates at different stages of life.

The survey was based in part on the Young Judaea alumni study by Steven M. Cohen (1999)⁶. The survey, which can be seen in the appendix, asked participants to report:

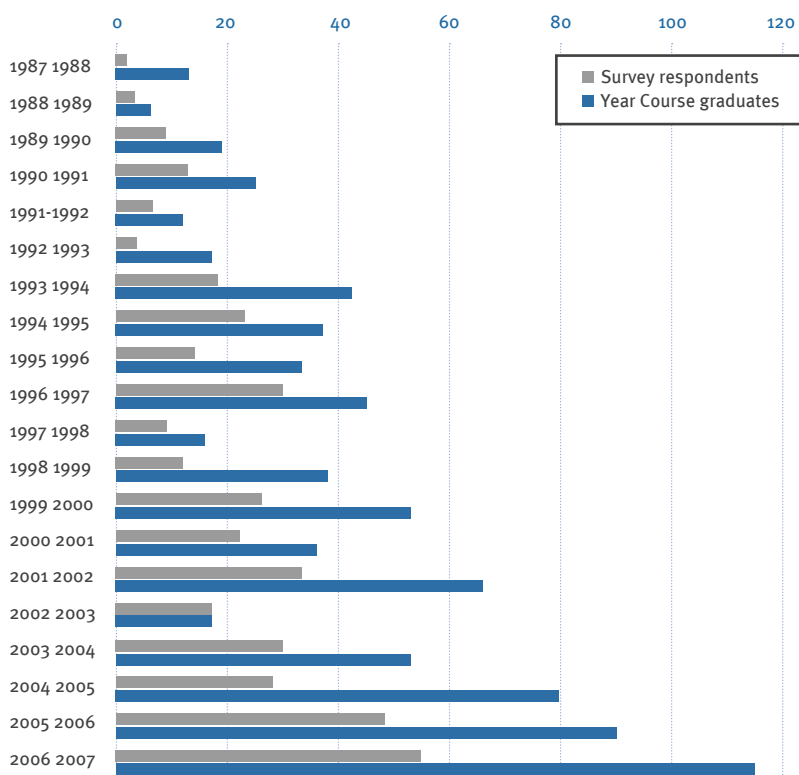
- FZY participation
- Religious practice
- Synagogue attendance
- Visits to Israel
- Jewish education
- Leadership and communal roles
- Jewish identity
- Attitudes regarding intermarriage
- Social network
- Charity donations
- Children's Jewish involvement

6. Steven M. Cohen (1999), *Building Jewish Identity: A Study of Young Judaea Alumni* (New York, Young Judaea)

RESULTS

400 graduates of Year Course completed the survey out of an estimated 796 Year Course participants in the relevant years. The respondents to the survey were aged between 19 and 40. Figure 1 shows the responses per year group.

Figure 1: Survey respondents and Year Course graduates by year



Of the respondents 27% are married, and 17 % have children. They were a very highly educated group: 95% of the respondents have attended or are currently attending university; the general rate for Jews in Britain aged 25-34 with a degree level or equivalent qualification is 56%⁷.

The respondents had generally had some kind of Jewish education prior to Year Course. Nearly half of the respondents, 48%, had attended a Jewish school at either the Junior or Secondary level. Only 2% had not had any formal Jewish education.

7. Graham, David, Marlena Schmool and Stanley Waterman (2007), Jews in Britain: A snapshot from the 2001 census. (London, Institute for Jewish Policy Research)

Table 1 shows the breakdown of how the respondents labelled themselves in terms of their current stream of Judaism:

Table 1: Stream of Judaism

Stream	percentage
Modern Orthodox	55%
Just Jewish	20%
Secular	11%
Masorti	7%
Reform	4%
Liberal	2%
Charedi	1%
Not Jewish	0%

FZY Background

All those who completed the survey participated in FZY Year Course. Many of them had also been highly involved with the youth movement both as chanichim (participants) and as madrichim (leaders). Tables 2 and 3 show their FZY involvement as chanichim and madrichim.

Table 2: FZY involvement as a chanich/a

FZY Activities	percentage
Local meetings	74%
Israel tour	77%
Weekend residentials	65%
Veida (Annual conference)	56%
Day events	53%
Summer camp	43%
Winter camp	36%
Second timers trip to Israel ⁸	26%
Europe tour ⁹	12%

Table 3: FZY involvement as a madrich/a

FZY Activities	percentage
Summer camp	77%
Weekend residentials	62%
Local meetings	54%
Day events	46%
Veida (Annual conference)	41%
Israel tour	38%
Winter camp	38%
Second timers trip to Israel ⁸	7%
Europe tour ⁹	4%

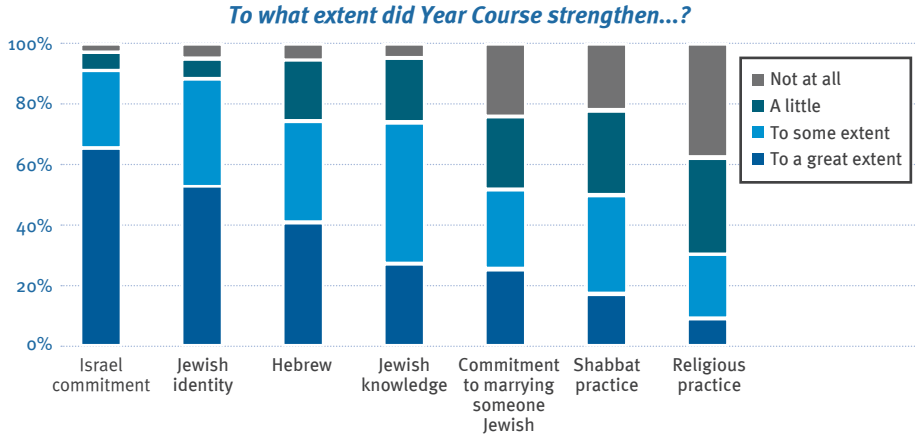
8. Did not run every year

9. Only started in 2002

General Impact of Year Course

We asked the respondents the extent to which Year Course impacted on various elements of their Jewish life. Figure 2 shows the reported impact of Year Course on a number of factors.

Figure 2: Impact of Year Course.



To what extent did Year Course strengthen...?				
	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Increased commitment to Israel	65.9	25.7	5.9	2.5
Strengthened Jewish identity	55.2	33.9	6.8	4.1
Improved Hebrew	41.3	33.2	20.2	5.4
Increased Jewish knowledge	27.5	46.6	21.1	4.8
Increased commitment to marrying someone Jewish	25.8	26.3	23.7	24.2
Enhanced Shabbat practice	22.2	29.6	33.4	17.9
Winter camp	9.9	20.9	31.6	37.7

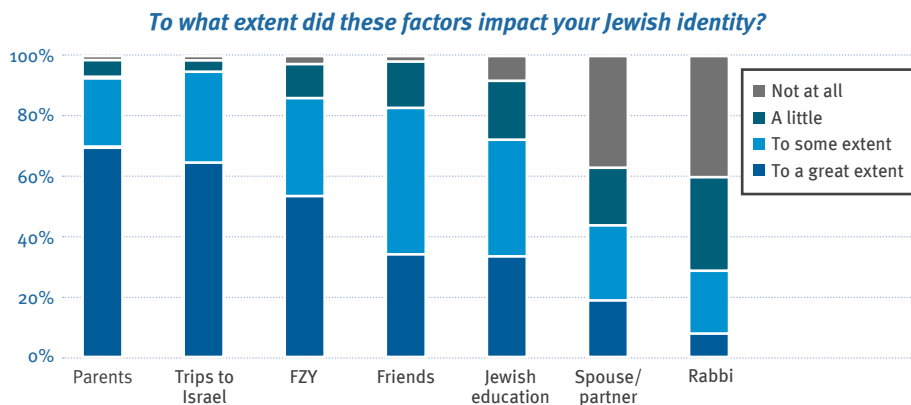
Responses showed that Year Course had a very high impact on Israel commitment (66% 'great extent' and 92% 'some or great extent'), Jewish identity (55% 'great extent' and 89% 'some or great extent'), Hebrew knowledge (41% 'great extent' and 74% 'some or great extent') and Jewish knowledge (28% 'great extent' and 74% 'some or great extent').

The impact on commitment to marrying someone Jewish (52% 'some or great extent'), and Shabbat practice (52% 'some or great extent') was less pronounced but still considerable, and impact on religious practice was relatively low (31% 'some or great extent').

Jewish Identity

The respondents mostly reported that being Jewish was ‘very important’ to them (88%). 76% reported that it was ‘very important’ to them that their children marry someone Jewish. 60% donated money mostly or exclusively to Jewish charities. Figure 3 shows the factors that impacted on the respondents’ Jewish identity.

Figure 3: Factors impacting on Jewish identity.



When we look at ‘to a great extent’, we see that parents are the most important factor, followed by trips to Israel and then FZY. When we look at ‘to some extent’ and ‘to a great extent’ together we see that trips to Israel have had the most impact. Friends were the next most important factor followed only then by Jewish education.

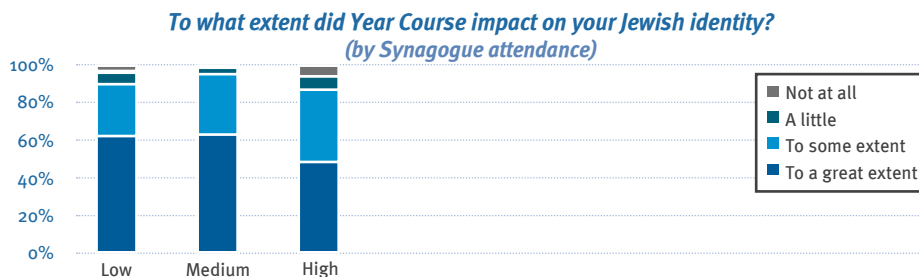
Table 4 shows the percentages for the impact of Year Course on Jewish identity.

Table 4: Impact of Year Course on Jewish identity (%)

	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Strengthened Jewish Identity	55.2	33.9	6.8	4.1

These responses were broken down to see whether Year Course had a different impact on those who had been regularly attended synagogue before Year Course. Figure 4 shows this breakdown.

Figure 4: Comparison of impact of Year Course on Jewish identity, by pre-Year Course synagogue attendance.

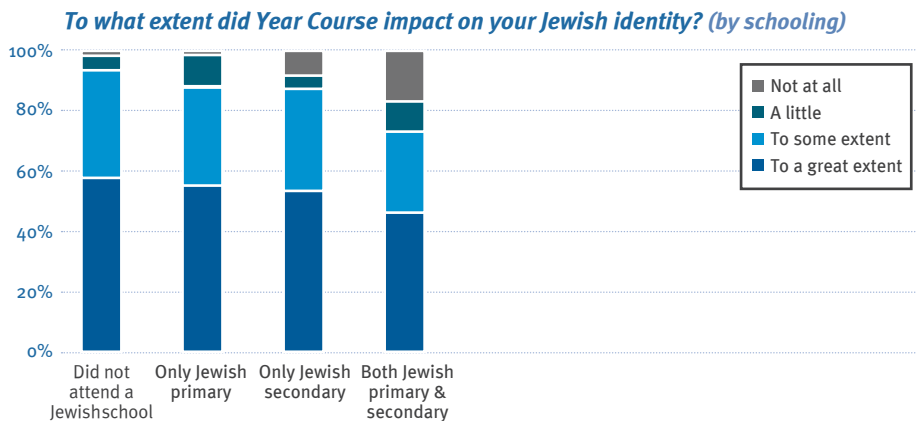


There seems to be little difference between the low and medium synagogue attendance groups regarding the impact that Year Course had on Jewish identity: 61.6% and 62.7% respectively report Year Course impacted to a great extent. Year Course had a lower impact on the Jewish identity of the high synagogue attendance group with 47.8% reporting 'to a great extent'. It is reasonable to assume that this group already had a stronger sense of Jewish identity relative to the other two groups, so this may explain the difference. Taking this into account, it is impressive that nearly half of the group who were high synagogue attendance pre-Year Course nevertheless report that their Jewish identity was strengthened to a great extent by Year Course (48%), and nearly all say either 'to some or to a great extent' (86%).

One of the interviewees, 'T', a female student in her twenties, illustrates this point. When asked about the impact of Year Course on her Jewish identity she said that 'it is quite hard because I was already involved in Jewish things before and I think if you'd asked me before Year Course if I wanted to marry Jewish then I would have said yes... but if anything I think it cemented it. It really, really consolidated the fact that it was a huge part of my identity and a huge influence on my life'.

We then broke down the responses looking at Jewish schooling - something that we also speculated would have given a strong sense of Jewish identity prior to Year Course. Figure 5 shows this breakdown.

Figure 5: Impact of Year Course on Jewish identity by Jewish school attendance.



These results suggest that the Jewish identity of those that did not attend Jewish schools was particularly strengthened by Year Course. 'T' said that Year Course was 'particularly important because I went to a non-Jewish secondary school... it was particularly useful for me to have an avenue to channel my Jewish identity when I couldn't necessarily do that at school'. The relationship between Year Course, Jewish identity and Jewish schooling is seen most clearly by comparing respondents who had not attended Jewish schools with those who had attended both Jewish primary and secondary schools as shown in table 5.

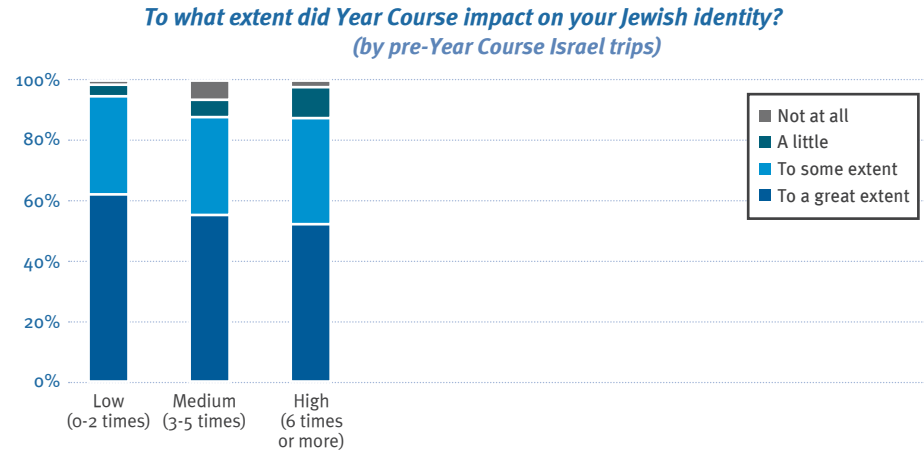
Table 5: Comparison of impact of Year Course on Jewish identity by schooling (%)

	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Did not attend Jewish Schools	57.8	35.4	4.4	2.4
Attended both Jewish Primary and Secondary school	46.3	26.8	9.8	17.1

In this case again however, in nearly half of those who attended both Jewish Primary and Secondary schools, Year Course nevertheless strengthened their Jewish identity to a great extent and 73% ‘to some or to a great extent’.

Finally, we then broke down the results of the impact of Year Course on Jewish identity by frequency of Israel visits pre-Year Course as seen in figure 6.

Figure 6: Impact of Year Course on Jewish identity by Israel visits.



These results are consistent with the previous two findings; Year Course strengthened Jewish identity more in those who had a low frequency of visits to Israel pre-Year Course (94% to ‘some or to a great extent’), than the medium (87% ‘to some or to a great extent’) or high (88% ‘to some or to a great extent’) groups. As respondents reported that trips to Israel had a high impact on their Jewish identity, this is what we would expect to see.

Year Course made more of an impact on those that did not regularly attend synagogue, attend Jewish schools or regularly visit Israel before Year Course. However, it is striking that even amongst those that had high synagogue attendance and attended a Jewish school and had a visited Israel six times or more pre-Year Course, 87% reported that Year Course strengthened their Jewish identity ‘to some or to a great extent’.

Relationship with Israel

Survey respondents generally had a very positive relationship with Israel. 53% of respondents reported being ‘extremely attached’, and a further 35% were ‘very attached’ to Israel. 14% of respondents have made aliya with a further 61% reporting that they have seriously considered moving to Israel. 91% of those not living in Israel are planning to visit Israel in the next two years. 60% have attended a Zionist event in the previous year. 49% regularly donate to Zionist or Israel charities.

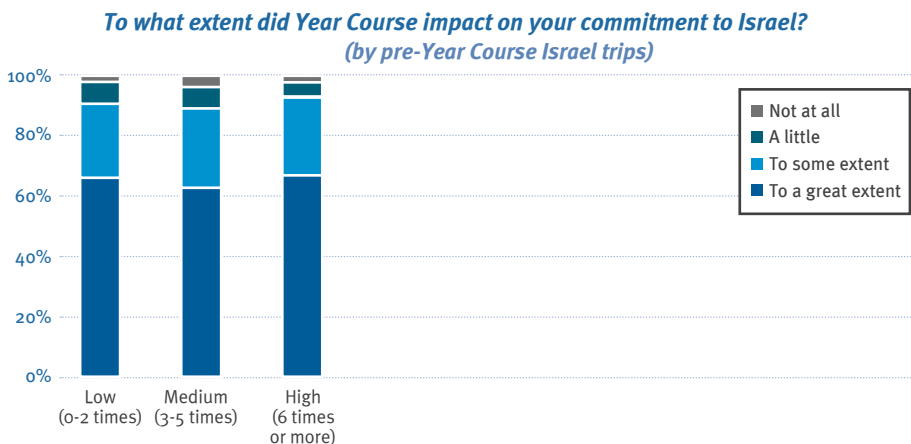
Respondents ranked ‘I wanted to spend a year in Israel’ as the most important factor for why they chose to go on Year Course, with 75% reporting that this impacted on their decision ‘to a great extent’. This suggests that the respondents already had a good relationship with Israel before Year Course. Nevertheless, of all the various measures that we looked at, increased commitment to Israel was the biggest change. 66% of respondents reported that Year Course impacted on their relationship with Israel ‘to a great extent’, with a further 26% reporting it impacted ‘to some extent’.

One of the interviewees, ‘K’ in his thirties and living in the UK, describing the impact of Year Course on his relationship with Israel said ‘you could say I was a big lover of Israel before, but I came back a big Zionist’. Another of the interviewees, ‘P’ also in his thirties and living in the UK, said despite the fact that he was not considering moving to Israel, that since Year Course his relationship with Israel has been ‘completely different. I’m passionate about it, it’s central to my identity, it is absolutely a focal point.’

Amongst those who have made aliya, 79% of them reported that Year Course increased their commitment to Israel. One of the interviewees ‘N’, in his thirties and who now lives in Israel, said that he had considered aliya before Year Course, but that Year Course nevertheless had a very strong influence on his Zionist ideology. ‘S’, in her thirties who also lives in Israel said, ‘I got a stronger love for Israel from FZY... before I went to FZY Israel was the place my parents used to take me where I got nosebleeds... and didn’t like the food, so FZY definitely helped on that one, and Year Course for sure’.

We compared the results to see if increased commitment to Israel was affected by pre-Year Course visits to Israel. This can be seen in figure 7.

Figure 7: Year Course and commitment to Israel by pre-Year Course visits to Israel.



There appears to be little difference between the three groups, suggesting that regardless of prior visits to Israel, participation in Year Course increased commitment to Israel.

Jewish and Hebrew Knowledge

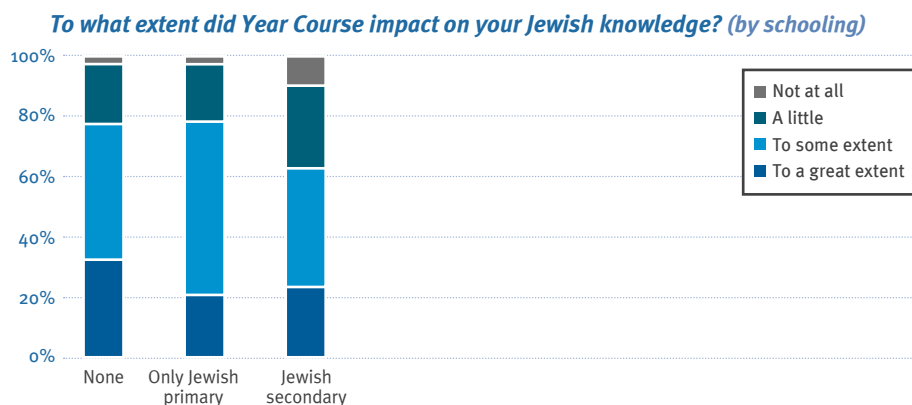
We asked respondents to report the extent to which Year Course impacted on Jewish and Hebrew knowledge. Table 6 shows the results.

Table 6: Impact of Year Course on Hebrew and Jewish knowledge

	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Improved Hebrew	41.3	33.2	20.2	5.4
Increased Jewish knowledge	27.5	46.6	21.1	4.8

We also broke down the results, based on Jewish schooling. No clear trend emerged for improved Hebrew. The results for Jewish knowledge are shown in figure 8.

Figure 8: Impact of Year Course on Jewish knowledge by schooling.



Year Course improved Jewish knowledge more amongst those who had not attended a Jewish school (77% ‘to some or to a great extent’), or only a Jewish primary school (78% ‘to some or to a great extent’), compared to those who had attended a Jewish secondary school (62% ‘to some or to a great extent’).

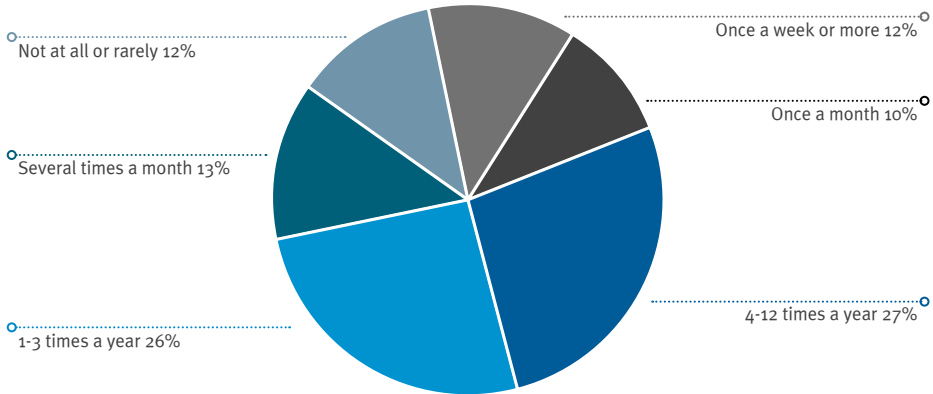
‘T’ said, ‘I took a lot of interest in what I was learning... at the time I did enjoy it, but it was when I came back that I really appreciated the full impact, you know - all the different things I’d learnt that I could then apply to being a madricha (leader) in FZY and also running things with JSoc and all of that.’

Jewish Practice

Most respondents reported some observance of religious traditions. For example, 83% reported that someone in their household lit Shabbat candles and 70% keep separate dishes for milk and meat in their home. Almost all of the respondents attend a seder at Pesach (98%). Figure 9 shows synagogue attendance in the last year.

Figure 9: Synagogue attendance over the previous year.

How many times did you attend synagogue in the last year?



We asked the respondents to rate the extent to which Year Course enhanced their Shabbat and religious practice. This is shown in table 7.

Table 7: Impact of Year Course on Shabbat practice and religious practice (%)

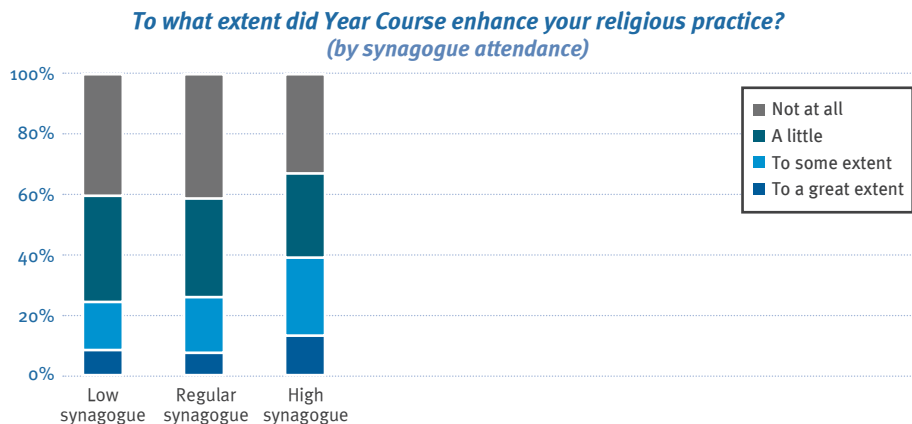
	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Enhanced Shabbat practice	22.2	29.6	33.4	17.9
Enhanced religious practice	9.9	20.9	31.6	37.7

Respondents reported that Year Course impacted on them to a lower extent regarding their Shabbat and religious practice in comparison to the effect it had on their relationship with Israel, Jewish identity, Jewish knowledge and Hebrew knowledge.

This was confirmed in the interviews. One interviewee ‘G’ stated that ‘Year Course had a much bigger impact on my Jewish identity, my Zionist aspirations, my view of the world, rather than religious observance’.

We compared the responses of those who had low, regular and high synagogue attendance pre-Year Course to see if there were any differences between these groups on the impact of Year Course on religious practice. This is shown in figure 10.

Figure 10: Impact of Year Course on religious practice, by pre-Year Course synagogue attendance.



We found that there was little difference between the low synagogue and regular synagogue groups in terms of the extent to which Year Course enhanced their religious practice. Those that attended synagogue once a month or more when they were 16 years old, reported that Year Course had more of an impact on their religious practice. Year Course made more of an impact regarding religious practice on those that were already more religiously engaged before Year Course.

Jewish Community Involvement and Leadership

Generally the respondents were very involved in the Jewish community:

- 83% had been involved with UJS or JSoc whilst at university
- 82% had attended at least one Jewish community event in the previous year
- 74% were members of a synagogue
- 58% had engaged in Jewish volunteer work in the previous year

‘T’ said: ‘I’d always volunteered even before Year Course, but it really cemented a commitment to volunteering within me, which is something I’ve done ever since I’ve been on Year Course as well’. She was JSoc president at her University. She said: ‘I’m pretty sure that the reason I decided to stand for that was because of being on Year Course and being so proactive and realising how much my Jewish identity meant to me. It definitely inspired me, I mean I was always active, but it inspired me to become even more active and really take it forward.’

Something that was particularly striking was the high level of leadership roles that respondents had held. 67% of respondents reported that they had held a leadership position within the Jewish community, not including their FZY involvement. 24% of respondents had held leadership positions whilst at university with UJS or JSoc.

One of the interviewees ‘P’, who is currently highly involved in Jewish community lay leadership stated that without Year Course there was ‘no way I would have done any of this’.

‘G’ similarly reported that Year Course provided him with the skills, motivation and desire to get involved with the Jewish community back in the UK. He stated that Year Course ‘gave him a sense of responsibility... if I’m not going to do it, who else is going to?’

Friends and Relationships

79% reported that currently most or all of their friends were Jewish. Only 7% had no or few Jewish friends.

The social element of Year Course was seen to be very important. In response to the question of the impact of Year Course, 61% reported that it gave them new Jewish friends 'to a great extent'. The interviewees reported that the friends made through Year Course were particularly important and close to them. 'L' said: 'the friends I made... friends that you spend an intense year with on Year Course - that's what sticks'. 'K' said he had made 'friends for life' and 'S' also referred to 'lifelong friends'.

Of those who are married, 96% are married to someone Jewish. Of all those in any kind of relationship, 95% of them had a Jewish partner. This is much higher than the general British Jewish population. It is reasonable to assume that those that chose to go on Year Course were already more likely to marry somebody Jewish. However, over half of the respondents responded that Year Course had made them more committed to marrying a Jew either 'to some or a great extent' (52%). Even if they were already likely to marry someone Jewish, for many, Year Course strengthened this intent. All of the interviewees reported that it was or had been important for them to marry someone Jewish.

Many respondents actually met their spouse through FZY. 26% of those married reported that their spouse had also been involved in FZY and that they met through their involvement, whilst a further 15% reported that they had met their spouse through FZY connections.

Year Course and Personal Development

A theme that came up repeatedly in the interviews was that Year Course was a period of personal and skills development, helping respondents gain both confidence and focus. Many of them described Year Course as pivotal, or as a 'life changing experience'. One interviewee, 'R' in her thirties, used the phrase 'self-growth', 'G' described it as 'huge personal development'. 'N' said 'Year Course took me to a place where everything changed... it had a very, very, very profound effect'

'G' said:

'The influences that I got whilst on Year Course, both from the people I was with, from the people I met and the things we did, and the stuff we learnt and everything else, it changes you as a human being as well... It is one of the most formative periods of your life as a human being, so as a place to grow up, being on Year Course is massively influential in terms of who you end up being.'

'P' stated:

'Year Course was a real crossroads for me, and the path that it has taken me down I think is completely different than what I would have done. It enabled me to do all the other stuff I did, it inspired me to do all of the other stuff I did.'

'T' said:

'With any gap year programme there is that element of growth and independence. You know arriving at university being able to cook for yourself and knowing how to turn the washing machine on, but also huge growth and development in terms of my Judaism and Israel and my commitment to being active. It was very empowering.'

Skills development was also a recurring theme. 59% reported that Year Course gave them skills that they had used in their professional career 'to some extent' or 'to a great extent'. This rises to 64% amongst those over 23 years old. It may be that it takes some time for all of the skills gained to be fully appreciated. 'K' said that through FZY he gained 'huge leadership skills, things I've used every day in my work'.

'P', who was highly involved in FZY, including working a sabbatical year after university for the movement, described his first day of his law conversion course:

'I felt ten feet taller than all these other people just in terms of the confidence I had and the experiences I felt I had and the understanding I had. I didn't do all that stuff to make me a barrister, but I would never have become a barrister if I hadn't. It left me a different person than the one I went out as.'

'L', who is training as a teacher said:

'I'm sure that some of the skills I gained - all the youth leadership stuff through FZY... have helped me training as a teacher and will help me when I become a teacher and will help me get jobs because it was great experience and on a CV... it looks quite impressive.'

'S' said that Year Course gave her:

'leadership skills - to walk into any room, especially when you go into any sort of work environment, job environment, anything, that you can work a room in a way. You can sit, you can talk to people and you can read situations and you know when to be more confident, when to hold back or to take charge and I think that I definitely got from FZY, and I've used in everything I've done in the future.'

Survey Respondents' Comments

At the end of the survey, respondents were invited to make further comments about the impact of Year Course. Over 25 % made comments. Almost all of these comments were extremely positive. The following is a selection of these comments:

'Year Course impacted greatly on my life more than anything else had ever done previously. I came back a more focused and organised person and without doubt if I didn't go on Year Course I wouldn't be who I am today.'

'It helped me figure out the person that I am and the type of person I want to become. Year Course had a huge personal impact on me and really changed my thoughts about myself made me more confident.'

'The best year of my life - I would do it a hundred times! It has had such a positive effect on my life in so many ways and deciding to go on Year Course was the best decision I've made. Thank you FZY'

'It was one of the best years of my life and I learned so much and met amazing people. It shaped my attitude towards Israel and Judaism throughout my time at University. My parents really didn't want me to go and even 13 years on, I'm so pleased I managed to convince them to let me!'

'It was a truly wonderful life changing experience - I only wish I was 18 again so that I could do it again!'

'It changed me as a person, not only did I become more attached to Israel, and the way I think about Israel and the people, it also changed me as a person. I matured, as well as becoming more passionate about travelling, meeting new people, helping others and challenging myself.'

'Lasting memories, enduring friendships, and a motivational force in exploring and rediscovering my connection to Israel and my Jewishness in a more personal and independent way in the years that followed.'

'FZY Year Course was without a doubt the best year of my life. It has given me a strongly Zionist identity, a really positive Jewish identity and most importantly the most important friends in my life. I also married a former FZY-nik and look forward to my children joining and progressing through the movement.'

'It was the most amazing year of my life, absolutely inspiring, and totally unforgettable.'

'Regardless of the religious effects Year Course had, or the building of a connection to Israel, more than anything else, which to me is VERY important, it taught me to be a good person. Simple as.'

'Year Course was the greatest decision I ever made.'

'The opportunities to develop life skills afforded by Year Course/FZY involvement meant that I have been well-equipped to face various challenges in the work place which others treat as novel situations of which they should be frightened.'

'Year Course for sure changed my life in the respect that it made me a more learned person and provided me the stepping stones for adulthood.'

'Year Course was a privilege to be on. Aside from the Jewish aspects which are without doubt of enormous benefit, I think its main impact is that it encourages people to think about themselves and their place within a group. This process is enormously helpful for settling into university and beyond.'

'The impact that Year Course had on me is in many ways immeasurable. Before the year my Jewish identity was very limited, my friends were mostly non-Jewish from school and Israel was not so much more than a holiday destination. My self-identity as a Jew is now what defines me most.'

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions from this research are clear. Both the survey and the interviews show that in the opinion of the respondents, Year Course has a profound and lasting impact on its respondents. The impact is strongest on the respondents' relationship with Israel Jewish identity, Jewish and Hebrew knowledge. Year Course also has a very considerable impact on developing its respondents' general life skills and personal development. Furthermore, the respondents to this survey showed a very high level of Jewish communal involvement and an exceptionally high level of participation in communal leadership positions.

The impact of Year Course appears to be most pronounced among those who had less Jewish involvement beforehand in terms of synagogue attendance, Jewish schooling and visits to Israel. Nevertheless, even those who attended Jewish schools, regularly visited Israel or frequently attended synagogue before Year Course, reported that the impact of Year Course on them was considerable.

The very deep sense of appreciation that Year Course graduates have for their gap year experience is shown most impressively through the comments that respondents wrote at the end of the survey and through the interviews.

This research strongly supports the claim that FZY Year Course has achieved its aims, by enhancing its participant's Jewish life and ensuring their long term commitment to Israel, their Jewish identity and the Jewish community.

APPENDIX

One to One Interview Schedule

Interview schedule	<p>Thank you for agreeing to be involved in the FZY Year Course Research project.</p> <p>The interviews are being used to expand on the information gathered in the surveys. I will be using the interviews as case studies and to give quotes, but your name will not be used in any publication and if I used your words I will completely disguise your identity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would it be alright if I recorded our interview?• Do you have any questions before we begin?
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How old are you?• What year did you go on Year Course?• Where do you live?• What is your relationship status?
FZY Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you tell me about your involvement with FZY? (When did you start, what did you do before Year Course)• Why did you decide to go on Year Course? (i.e. friends, parents, Israel, the programme?)• Are there any specific Year Course moments that you would pick out as particularly important?• What were the various components of your programme?• Is there anything you wished might have been part of Year Course that wasn't?• What involvement did you have in FZY after Year Course?
Pre-YC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you tell me about your Jewish background with regards to your family?• What Jewish education did you have before going on Year Course? (school, cheder, tutoring etc)• Did you enjoy it?• What was your relationship with Israel like pre-Year Course?

Post- YC

- In what ways did Year Course affect your Jewish Identity?
- How was Year Course different to your previous Jewish education?
- Have you continued your Jewish education since Year Course? What? How often?
- Do you have children?

[If yes]

- Do they attend a Jewish school?

[If no]

- Do you imagine you will send your children to a Jewish school?
- Do you think your involvement/practice will change after children?

Social

Partner

- Are you seeing someone?

[If no]

- Would you/have you dated a non-Jewish person?
- Would you marry a non-Jewish person?

[If yes]

- Is your partner Jewish? How did you meet (was it through FZY or FZY connections?)

[If Jewish]

- Is it important for you that they are Jewish?
- If you were to get married/are married, is a Jewish wedding important?

[If not Jewish]

- How does your being Jewish affect your relationship?
- Have you maintained a connection with the Jewish community?

Friends

- Are they mostly Jewish or non-Jewish?
- Did you meet many of your friends through FZY?

Religious Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you regularly mark Shabbat in some way?• When (if ever) do you attend synagogue?• Why do you go?• Are you a member of a synagogue?• Do you keep kosher in some way? Why?• Which festivals do you celebrate?• Did your Jewish practise change during the course of the year?• In what ways do you feel that Year Course influenced your Jewish beliefs?
Leadership & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you held any leadership positions in the Jewish community?• Do you have any other involvement in the community? (synagogue, attend Limmud, volunteering)?• In what ways do you feel that Year Course influenced your decisions?
Israel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you tell me about your relationship with Israel?• Have you considered aliya?/What made you consider aliya?• In what ways do you feel that Year Course affected your relationship with Israel?• Has that level changed over the years? Why?
Finishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you feel you gained from your participation in Year Course?• What do feel you gained from your involvement in FZY?• What is your opinion on Year Course today?• Is there anything you would like to add? Anything I should have asked that I didn't?• Why did you agree to be involved?• Thank you

SURVEY

1. Introduction

Shalom!

So what have you been up to since you graduated from FZY Year Course? We in the FZY team really want to know all about the impact that Year Course had on you, so we are asking you to complete a short online survey. It will only take about ten minutes of your time and you will be really helping FZY.

This is the first time that anyone has ever conducted a comprehensive survey of FZY Year Course. We are hoping to get responses from every single FZY Year Course graduate from the last 20 years, so please help us spread the word. We will use the results to improve the Year Course programme.

We will keep all of your answers anonymous and we will not use your name in any publication of the results. If you would prefer to discuss this with someone, you are welcome to contact Fiona Prince at the FZY office on 020 8201 6661.

When you have completed the survey you will be automatically included in our prize draw to win £75 Amazon vouchers. Don't forget to include your contact details so that we are able to let you know if you have won.

Thank you again.

2. FZY Background

1. Which FZY events did you ever attend? (Please mark all applicable)

	As a participant (chanich)	As a leader (madrich)
Local meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summer residential camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Winter residential camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residential weekends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-residential day events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Israel Tour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Second-timers Israel Trip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Europe Tour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Veida	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year Course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What year did you attend Year Course? _____

3. What factors impacted on your decision to go on Year Course?

	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Friends were going	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents wanted me to go	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wanted to spend a year in Israel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Needed a break before university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To meet new people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commitment to FZY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):				

4. To what extent did Year Course...?

	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Improve your knowledge of Judaism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strengthen your Jewish identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enhance your religious practice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increase your commitment to Israel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enhance your appreciation of Shabbat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make you more committed to marrying a Jew	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve your command of the Hebrew language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Give you new Jewish friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Affect your choice of profession	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Give you skills you have used in your professional career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Did you ever regularly attend any other Jewish youth movement? ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Were you ever an FZY movement worker? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Jewish Background

1. Regarding religious denominations, do you consider yourself to be...?

- ☐ Charedi
 ☐ Modern Orthodox
 ☐ Masorti
☐ Reform
 ☐ Liberal
 ☐ Secular
☐ Just Jewish
 ☐ Not Jewish

2. What Jewish schooling did you have? (Please mark all applicable)

- ☐ None
 ☐ Cheder
 ☐ Private tutoring
☐ Jewish junior school
 ☐ Jewish secondary school

3. How often did you attend synagogue services?

	Not at all or only very rarely	1-3 times a year	4-12 times a year	About once a month	Several times a month	Once a week or more
When you were 16 years old?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the last year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Which of the following apply to you? (Mark either Yes or No)

	Yes	No
Does someone in your household usually light candles on a Friday night?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you usually attend a Seder?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your household use separate dishes for meat and dairy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you currently a member of a synagogue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the last year have you attended any type of Jewish class or discussion group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. How important would you say being Jewish is in your life?

- ☐ Not sure
 ☐ Not very important
 ☐ Fairly important
 ☐ Very important

6. How important is it to you that your children marry someone Jewish?

☐ Not sure
 ☐ Not very important
 ☐ Fairly important
 ☐ Very important

7. University?

	Yes	No
Did you attend university?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you went to university, were you ever involved with UJS/J Soc?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you ever take any university-level courses or write a dissertation specifically focusing on Jewish subjects, such as Jewish history or Hebrew?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Please rate the impact the following have had on your Jewish identity?

	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spouse/partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rabbi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FZY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trips to Israel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify):				

4. Community Involvement

1. Have you attended any Jewish community events in the last year? (Please mark all applicable)

☐ Independence Day events

☐ Jewish charity events

☐ Limmud

☐ Jewish social events

Other (please specify): _____

2. Have you engaged in any Jewish volunteer work in the last year? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Have you at any time in your life held any of the following Jewish leadership positions, in either a voluntary or a professional capacity? (Please mark all applicable)

☐ FZY

☐ Modern Orthodox

☐ Volunteer Management

☐ UJS

☐ Liberal

☐ Professional leadership

☐ UJIA

☐ ZF

☐ JNF

☐ Limmud

☐ CST

☐ Rabbi

☐ Synagogue positions

☐ Charity committee

☐ PTA of Jewish school

☐ Teacher in a
Jewish school

☐ Jewish studies teacher
(cheder or private)

☐ Charitable/
Organisational board

Other (please specify): _____

4. Are your charity donations...?

☐ Almost never to Jewish charities

☐ Occasionally to Jewish charities

☐ Some to Jewish charities

☐ Mostly to Jewish charities

☐ Nearly always to Jewish charities

5. Friends and family

1. Among your close friends would say that...?

- ☐ None are Jewish
 ☐ Some are Jewish
 ☐ About half are Jewish
☐ Most are Jewish
 ☐ All or almost all are Jewish

2. Relationship Status?

- ☐ Single
 ☐ Dating
 ☐ In a serious relationship
☐ Engaged
 ☐ Living with a partner
 ☐ Married
☐ Divorced or separated
 ☐ Widowed
 ☐ Married

3. In thinking about the people you have recently dated, or dated in the 3-5 years before marrying, did you go out with...?

- ☐ Only non-Jews
 ☐ Mostly non-Jews
 ☐ Both Jews and non-Jews
☐ Mostly Jews
 ☐ Only Jews

4. If you are currently in a relationship, is your spouse/partner Jewish?

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No
 ☐ Not applicable

5. Did you meet your spouse/partner through FZY?

- ☐ I don't have a partner at the moment
 ☐ Yes - Indirectly, through FZY connections
☐ No
 ☐ Yes - they were involved in FZY too

Other (please specify): _____

6. Children?

	Yes	No
Do you have children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, are they of school age?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, do any of them attend a Jewish school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you currently a member of a synagogue?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In the last year have you attended any type of Jewish class or discussion group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Israel

1. How many times did you visit Israel?

	Never	1-2 times	3-5 times a year	6 times or more	I was born in Israel	I have lived there for the last 6 months
Before Year Course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Since Year Course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Are you planning to visit Israel in the next 2 years?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. How emotionally attached are you to Israel?

☐ Don't know
 ☐ Not attached
 ☐ Somewhat attached

☐ Very attached
 ☐ Extremely attached

4. During the last year have you attended a event, rally or meeting that was sponsored by a Zionist organisation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Have you ever seriously considered living in Israel?

☐ Yes
 ☐ I have made aliya

☐ No
 ☐ I am currently living in Israel (not as an oleh)

6. Do you regularly donate to Israeli or Zionist charities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Please rate the impact the following have had on your commitment to Israel?

	To a great extent	To some extent	A little	Not at all
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spouse/partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rabbi	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FZY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trips to Israel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Survey Completed

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this research project. We really appreciate your support. If you have any further questions please contact Fiona Prince at the FZY office (020 8201 6661).

Please complete the contact details section below so that we can contact you if you have won Amazon vouchers. We will not pass on any of your details to any other organisation.

Toda Raba!

1. Name:

2. Contact Details

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Address 1:

Address 2:

City/Town:

Post Code:

Country:

3. How would you best describe your occupation?

4. If there is anything else that you would like to tell us about the impact that Year Course had on you?



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On Course for a Jewish Life: The Impact of FZY Year Course



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