

FAQs ABOUT THE *YIDISH-VOKH*

Many or most questions about the *Yidish-vokh* ("Yiddish Week") are answered in this year's Yugntruf *Yidish-vokh* Registration Letter ("Description with Prices") which is on the website and which is sent out to many Yiddish-related lists. The FAQs that follow will answer most questions which are not answered in that letter.

THE GENERAL QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE *YIDISH-VOKH* (hereafter, "YV")?

It is the only annual week-long, all-Yiddish retreat. 150-170 people come from all over the world each August in order to live in Yiddishland, to be in the place where everyone speaks Yiddish. Yugntruf sponsors the event, and the YV has been going on now well over 20 years. It has been described as a mixture of Woodstock and a Kibbutz - only without the drugs and loud music - because it is a community in the truest sense of the word. Anyone can volunteer to lend their talents, knowledge and ability in any way they can. Because some of the top Yiddish experts and talents come to the YV, the program is always top-notch. The YV invites the participation of the young and the young at heart. It does not discriminate in terms of religion, race or political affiliation, only in terms of readiness and willingness to speak Yiddish for the entire week.

YIDDISH-CAPABILITY

I CAN'T READ OR WRITE YIDDISH. CAN I STILL COME TO THE YV?

Yes! All the handouts at the YV are written in both Yiddish (the Hebrew alphabet) and in Yiddish transliteration (the English/Latin alphabet). If you can not read Yiddish in English transliteration either, that will make it difficult for you, as nothing written (or spoken, for that matter) is translated into English.

I HAVEN'T SPOKEN YIDDISH IN MANY YEARS, BUT I UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING. CAN I COME?

There is an involved answer and a simple one.

1) The involved answer. At the YV, speaking Yiddish is no less important than understanding it. Anyone who comes needs to be ready, willing and able to speak Yiddish. Chances are, if you haven't spoken the language in *that* many years, it will be *very* hard for you to start speaking it suddenly. And to have people who come and speak English would defeat the whole raison d'etre of the YV, which is for everyone to spend one week of the year in a place where all the participants speak only Yiddish. I would recommend that you find Yiddish classes, Yiddish cassettes, Yiddish "vinkles" and private Yiddish tutors. Start speaking Yiddish with people who know the language, and hopefully after a few months of speaking more and more Yiddish, you will eventually be comfortable speaking it again. That is the time that you would be able both to enjoy and thrive at the YV, as well as not be a disturbance to others.

2) The simple answer. Contact one of those who help organize the YV. While conversing with you in Yiddish, they'll ascertain whether the YV is appropriate for you.

I'M TAKING A BEGINNERS YIDDISH COURSE THIS SUMMER. IS THE YV FOR ME?

1) If the Beginner's Yiddish course is at one of the intensive summer programs - like the Uriel Weinreich Program now at New York University (NYU) - then it's safe to assume that you are really committed to learning to speak Yiddish, to dig your heels in, to dive in, etc. In that case, the YV is the next natural step.

2) If the Beginner's Yiddish course meets, on the other hand, once a week for 1 1/2 hours, chances are you will not be ready for the YV, unless you study Yiddish on your own as well. Again, call one of the YV organizers to see if you are able to maintain a Yiddish conversation.

CAN I AT LEAST SPEAK ENGLISH IN ORDER TO ASK "HOW DO YOU SAY... IN YIDDISH?"

Of course. P.S. In Yiddish, it's "Vi zogt men ... af yidish?"

I'M COMING WITH MY HUSBAND/WIFE. HE/SHE DOESN'T SPEAK YIDDISH, BUT I'LL TRANSLATE EVERYTHING FOR THEM.

Sorry, but the YV is only for Yiddish speakers. There is very limited space at the YV - room for 180 at most, and that is with very few private rooms. (If more people want private rooms, the capacity is ca. 170.) People from all over the world who want to speak Yiddish for an entire week clamor every year for the limited spaces that there are. We simply can't afford to give any of those spaces to people who won't be speaking Yiddish.

DEMOGRAPHICS

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE COME TO THE YV?

All kinds. All ages, from newborns through nonagenarians. Observant and secular. Orthodox and egalitarian. Mainly Jews, and usually a handful of non-Jews. Singles, couples, parents with and without their children, husbands/wives with and without their spouses, widows, widowers and divorcées. From as far as Australia, and as near as Housatonic, Mass.

WILL THERE BE ANYONE MY AGE?

No matter what your age, there are other people your age that come. There are children, college and graduate students and people in their 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER SINGLES THAT COME?

See answer above under "WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE COME TO THE YV?"

ACTIVITIES

WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES ARE THERE?

First of all, of course, everything is in Yiddish. Each morning (except Shabes) there are activities, with occasional multiple options, including lectures, discussions, workshops, computer-groups, Yiddish classes. The lectures and discussions are sometimes on Yiddish issues, sometimes on Jewish issues, and sometimes about nothing Jewish whatsoever (like the genome). Immediately after lunch, one more such activity. Then, from say 2:30 on, there's swimming (both in a pool and a lake), boating (rowboats and pedal-boats), softball, volleyball and basketball and a mishna and/or gemoreh class. In the evenings, there are campfires, talent shows, concerts, films, TV game shows and klezmer dancing. Those are the organized activities. Then there's always time for socializing and relaxing, reading, writing and/or studying.

MUST I ATTEND ALL THE ACTIVITIES?

You can go to as many or as few as you like. Some people come to the YV because they want to relax, read books, go swimming, etc. in a place where everyone speaks Yiddish. Others come because they want to go to every lecture and discussion they can.

WHAT ACTIVITIES WILL THERE BE FOR MY CHILD?

If your child can speak Yiddish pretty well, there are *lots* of activities for your child. If you would like your child to start learning Yiddish, look into Yiddish classes, Yiddish cassettes and private Yiddish tutors for your children. If you know Yiddish yourself, start working it into your everyday interactions with your child, and after a few months of speaking more and more Yiddish with your child, the child will understand more and more, and will eventually be able to answer more and more. When your child can understand everything and speak at least haltingly, that is the time that they would be able to enjoy and thrive at the YV.

ARE THERE ALSO YIDDISH CLASSES FOR BEGINNERS?

No. The YV is the event to aspire to once you can already communicate in Yiddish.

CAN I BE INVITED TO BE A SPEAKER / MUSICIAN / PERFORMER?

Yes and no. If "be invited" means have an opportunity to give a talk or perform in Yiddish, yes. If "be invited" means be hired, no. The YV is a *heykish* community. Those who lead activities at the YV volunteer to do so. But because some of the top Yiddish experts and talents come to the YV, the program is always top-notch.

CAN YOU SEND ME A SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES?

No. The activities are determined only after everyone has signed up, and the coordinator sees who has volunteered to lead an activity, and what activity they have volunteered to lead. The schedule is usually completed mid-August. If you want, though, there is a copy of last year's schedule on the website for your perusal.

ARE THE POOL AND LAKE ONLY OPEN IN THE AFTERNOON?

No, they're also open in the morning.

REGISTRATION

DO I HAVE TO COME FOR THE FULL WEEK?

No. You can come for as short as one meal. See the YV Registration Letter on the website for all the options.

WHY IS THE DAILY RATE HIGHER ON THE WEEKEND?

Supply and demand. There is always room on the weekdays, but we get filled to the brim on the weekends.

WHY IS THE RATE FOR THE FULL WEEK CHEAPER IN SOME CASES THAN THE RATE FOR THREE DAYS?

When someone comes for just a few days, they are occupying a space which could otherwise be used for the full week. We prefer for participants to be full-weekers.

CAN I HAVE A TIME SHARE WITH SOMEONE, WHERE I PAY FOR THE ROOM FOR HALF THE WEEK, THEY PAY FOR THE OTHER HALF OF THE WEEK?

No.

I HAVE A SUMMER HOUSE NEARBY. IS THERE A SPECIAL COMMUTER RATE?

Yes. See this year's YV Registration Letter for the prices.

ARE THERE ANY DISCOUNTS FOR STUDENTS? FOR SENIORS? FOR DISTANT TRAVELLERS?

- 1) For students, yes - the work-study discount. See this year's YV Registration Letter for the prices.
- 2) For seniors, no.
- 3) For distant travellers - in very rare instances, and only if financial hardship can be proven.

CAN I JUST SEND MY YV REGISTRATION FORM NOW AND PAY CLOSER TO THE DEADLINE?

The filled-out YV Registration Form is only valid together with the payment. Do send them together.

HOW SOON CAN I REGISTER?

We accept the YV Registration Forms from April on.

CAN I JUST MAKE A DOWNPAYMENT NOW AND PAY THE REMAINDER LATER?

No. Pay the entire amount together as soon as you can, together with the YV Registration Form. Also, if you haven't paid membership yet this year, do include that in the check as well.

WILL I RECEIVE A CONFIRMATION OF THE RECEIPT OF MY YV REGISTRATION FORM?

See under "confirmation" in this year's YV Registration Letter.

IF I HAVE TO CANCEL, WHAT IS MY REFUND?

See under "cancellation fee" in this year's YV Registration Letter.

HOW LATE CAN I DECIDE THAT I WANT TO COME TO THIS YEAR'S YV?

You can decide as late as you want, but at your own risk. With only some 170 spaces, it is quite likely that we would fill up well before the YV. Still, 1) there are sometimes cancellations in August, 2) if you have a car and you're willing and able either to bring and stay in a tent or to commute (Johanna Motel 518-329-3000) it may allow you to sign up to the last minute (though it's not recommended), and 3) if you're coming just for a day or two on the week*days*, we may be able to squeeze you in pretty late in the game. Finally, if you need a specific kind of room - in size, location or any other parameter - the answer is: sign up as soon as possible. You will be informed if your room request cannot be granted. P.S. - anyone who signs up after the dates indicated on the YV Registration Letter will pay the regular rate (rather than the early-bird rate).

WOULD YOU ACCEPT PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD? WIRE TRANSFER?

- 1) Yugntruf *does* now have a PayPal account, but we request that those who want to pay via PayPal include the 3% more for the fee that Yugntruf would incur (ex., instead of \$500, pay \$515; instead of \$1000: \$1030).
- 2) If it's easier, you can also send a wire transfer from your bank to Yugntruf's bank. But Yugntruf has to pay a \$15 fee for it, so we ask that you include that \$15 fee in your payment.
- 3) For more details re paying by one of these two special methods, write to yvokh@yugntruf.org or call 718-222-0908.
- 4) Otherwise, payment is by check or money order in US dollars (drawn on a US bank), or cash if paid in person (at the Yugntruf office).

CAN I HAVE A VISITOR/GUEST COME FOR A MEAL?

Any visitor who comes for a meal will give a \$25 contribution per visitor to Yugntruf at the meal.

WHO WILL MY ROOMMATE BE? I'M WORRIED THAT WE'LL BE TOO DIFFERENT.

The organizers try to get a sense of the people who have requested roommates, and try to match them up accordingly. Age is one determining factor – people of like age are usually matched up. Another factor may be level of Yiddish; i.e., sometimes a weaker Yiddish speaker requests to be with one who is more fluent, and if we can find a complement, we have a match. Regarding smoking: nobody is allowed to smoke, not in the buildings not on the verandas. Beyond that, we have no idea in advance who wears lots of perfume, who snores and the like.

IF THERE IS ONLY ROOM FOR 170 PEOPLE AT THE SITE WHERE THE YV IS HELD, WHY DON'T THE ORGANIZERS LOOK FOR A NEW SITE?

The current site, for its combination of its price, beauty and kashres, would be impossible to beat.

I ALREADY PAID MY MEMBERSHIP LAST YEAR. WHY DO I HAVE TO PAY AGAIN?

As with most other organizations, Yugntruf membership is annual, and a paid-up member is one who has paid during the current year. Any adult who comes to the YV must be a paid-up member.

LOCATION AND TRANSPORTATION

WHERE IS THE YV LOCATED?

At the Berkshire Hills Emanuel Adult Vacation Center, Box A, Empire Rd, Copake, NY 12516, USA.

WHAT ARE THE PHONE AND FAX NUMBERS OF THE CAMP?

They are listed in the “Travel Instructions by Car” as well as in the “Last-minute details” on the Yidish-vokh web page (<http://www.yugntruf.org/yidvokh/index.htm>).

WHAT IS THE CLOSEST AIRPORT? HOW WOULD I GET FROM THAT AIRPORT TO THE YV?

Albany airport. It's about 1 hour away. Pick-ups are not made from there by the camp van. You would either need to take a taxi (ca. \$80; Decker Taxi, 518-943-4530) or rent a car for the week.

WHICH NYC-AREA AIRPORT IS CLOSEST TO THE YV BUS THAT LEAVES FROM THE WORKMEN'S CIRCLE/ARBETER RING ON EAST 33 ST?

LaGuardia Airport – ca. 20 minutes with no traffic. Kennedy and Newark – ca. 40 minutes with no traffic.

IF MY PLANE FLIES INTO NEW YORK THE EVENING BEFORE THE YV STARTS, WITH WHOM CAN I STAY?

We can find out during the summer if there are any willing hosts. If not, you would need to stay in a hotel, at your expense.

CAN I BE PICKED UP FROM THE AIRPORT?

We can find out during the summer whether someone can be available to do that. But we can not promise it, and you should therefore be prepared to make other arrangements, i.e., a bus or a taxi.

CAN I RENT A CAR AND DRIVE THERE?

Sure. It's up to you. There are no rental car places near the YV for you to return a car; thus you'd keep the car for the week. If neither the long drive nor the expense are an obstacle, and if you feel you may need to come and go from the campus during the YV, then renting a car may make life easier for you.

CAN YOU SEND ME THE CAR DIRECTIONS?

They are on the website. They'll be sent out in early August to those who have signed up for the YV who don't have internet access.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO DRIVE FROM NEW YORK CITY?

Depending on the driving speed, an average estimate is two and a half hours from midtown Manhattan.

IF I THINK I WILL BE ARRIVING LATE FOR THE YV-BUS, WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHOM SHOULD I CALL?

That will all be answered in the letter that will be e-mailed and snail-mailed in early August to all those who will have registered at that point.

WHAT IS THE NEAREST TRAIN/BUS STATION TO THE YV? HOW DO I GET IT? WHAT IS THE COST?

The nearest is the Wassaic station on the Harlem Line of the Metro-North Railroad (212-532-4900). It comes from Grand Central Station, NYC. The one-way fare is \$9.50 off-peak, and \$13.00 peak. There is also a Bonanza Bus Lines bus from Port Authority (NYC) to Great Barrington, MA, but it costs more, runs less often and takes longer, and is therefore not recommended.

CAN I BE PICKED UP ANYTIME FROM THE TRAIN STATION?

The train station is 40 minutes from the camp. The arrival/pick-up (or departure/drop-off) time would need to be worked out in advance, as the camp personnel cannot make 3-4 trips a day to and from the station. Departures and arrivals of participants would be coordinated so as to alleviate this difficulty. There are no trips to the station on the Sabbath. Cost of the van pick-up or drop-off is \$20 per person, payable to the driver.

I NEED TO LEAVE THE YV EARLY. CAN I BE DROPPED OFF AT THE TRAIN STATION ANY TIME?

See answer to "CAN I BE PICKED UP ANYTIME..." above.

CAN I CATCH A 2:30 FLIGHT BACK HOME ON THE LAST DAY OF THE YV?

If you're driving by car straight to the airport, yes. But if you're traveling by the YV bus, no. The return-time of the YV bus to the Port Authority is unpredictable due to traffic, pit stops, and the like. So those going by bus should not plan a flight back home on the last day of the YV before 4:30 from LaGuardia, or before 5:00 from Kennedy and Newark. If you make flight reservations earlier than those times, you are doing so at your own risk.

THE YV-BUS MAKES ADDITIONAL STOPS ON THE WAY BACK INTO NYC AFTER THE YV, GOING TO BRIGHTON BEACH AFTER STOPPING AT PORT AUTHORITY. IS THERE ANY CHANCE IT CAN MAKE *ADDITIONAL* STOPS? ALSO, CAN IT MAKE ADDITIONAL STOPS ON THE WAY *TO* THE YV, MAYBE IN BROOKLYN OR QUEENS?

Alas, no. There is only one pick-up point on the way to the YV (Workmen's Circle, 45 E 33 St, NYC) and only three dropoffs on the way back (Port Authority and Brighton Beach).

SOMEONE HAS TO MEET ME AT THE DROP-OFF POINT ON THE WAY HOME. EXACTLY WHERE AND AT WHAT TIME SHOULD I TELL THEM TO MEET ME?

The bus will drop off at the Port Authority Bus Terminal (West 41 St between 8th and 9th Aves, under the Terminal) between 12:30 and 2:00 (depending on traffic). It would then arrive in Brighton Beach between 2:00 and 3:00. If you bring a cell / mobile phone, that should help you immeasurably on this front.

FOOD

IS THE FOOD KOSHER?

Yes. This is answered in depth under "KASHRES AND RELIGION: HOW KOSHER IS THE FOOD?" below.

WHAT IS THE FOOD LIKE?

It's good. It's pretty healthy, it's kosher, and it's tasty. Gourmet cuisine it's not.

CAN A VEGETARIAN GET BY?

Absolutely. There are vegetarian alternatives at all meat meals.

KASHRES (KASHRUT) AND RELIGION

HOW KOSHER IS THE FOOD?

An Orthodox meshkiekh kashers the kitchen the day before the YV. The food that's prepared during the week only uses the most universally recognized *hekhsherim*. Products with *hekhsherim* that many Orthodox don't accept – specifically: K, triangle-K, half-moon-K and square-K – are not used during the course of the week. In addition, there is also an Orthodox meshkiekh on the premises for the week (and sometimes he leaves his teenage sons in charge). The meat is Glatt kosher, but the dairy is not Kholov yisroel.

DO ORTHODOX JEWS ATTEND THE YV?

Yes. Usually about 10% of those attending are Orthodox.

ARE THERE ORTHODOX AND/OR EGALITARIAN SERVICES?

Every year there are shabes services, both Friday evening and Saturday morning. On Friday evening, as no *seyfer-toyre* is needed, there can be 2 services simultaneously, an Orthodox and an Egalitarian. In years where someone has brought along an additional *seyfer-toyre* (there is one already at the Camp), there have been 2 services simultaneously on Saturday morning. Without a second *seyfer-toyre*, one service could follow the other... It's important to note that both services happen only when there are participants who undertake beforehand the organizing of it (as with everything else at the YV, the volunteers make it happen). There have been Orthodox services every YV since 1995 because the Orthodox that attend organize it in advance. Some years there are weekday Orthodox minyonim, both in the morning and in the evening. We expect that with enough interest, we will have weekday services this year as well.

CAN NON-JEWS COME?

Non-Jews have come many times, and from as far away as Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland and Japan.