

American Zionist Youth Council 2025-2026

February 2026 Update



From Sunday, December 7th to Monday, December 8th, 2025 in NYC 28 Jewish teens from 10 Zionist youth movements and Jewish organizations gathered for a Teen Leaders Summit, under the umbrella of the American Zionist Youth Council [AZYC](#) of the American Zionist Movement, as part of the [AZM Biennial](#).

The movements represented were BBYO, Bnei Akiva, Club Z, Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, NCSY, NFTY, Tzofim, USY, and Young Judeaea. The participants, who hold leadership positions within their movements, were recommended for the AZYC Teen Leaders Council and came from ten states and from a wide spectrum of religious backgrounds including Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and unaffiliated. There were numerous teens from Israeli and Russian-speaking families and a mix of students from Jewish, non-Jewish private, and public schools. All in all, the group was extremely diverse.

Key funding for the AZYC Teen Leaders Summit was provided by KKL-JNF and we are grateful for their sponsorship and ongoing support.

What is being accomplished by AZYC is critical. Despite the clear need for Jewish unity, many Jewish teens remain siloed within their communities. They are entering what is arguably the most formative period of their life, young adulthood, yet they are still at the stage in which they are unlikely to have many interactions beyond their local community.

AZYC aims to change this reality through the framework of youth movements. The participants learn from and alongside each other about Zionism, Jewish identity, how to bridge divides, and general leadership skills. In the process, they are also forming a cohesive group and are gaining an understanding of how the story behind each person forms the spectrum of the Jewish community.

Before the conference, AZM staff held two Zoom calls for AZYC participants with programs on leadership development which incorporated Zionist education. The second call was also used to prepare for the Biennial.

Throughout the Biennial, the teens met with an array of speakers including:

1. Rabbi Doron Perez, WZO President
2. Esther Panitch, Georgia Democratic State Representative
3. Adela Cojab, Zionist activist
4. Kami Salman, Talk Israel social media workshop
5. Adam Scott Bellos, The Israel Innovation Fund CEO
6. Sarri Singer, terror survivor and founder of Strength to Strength

Rabbi Perez started the conference off on a strong foot, providing words of inspiration while drawing upon his own personal background. Kami's workshop equipped the teens with the tools and knowledge of how to maximize their social media posts, particularly on Instagram and TikTok. Sarri led a powerful conversation and engaging conversation, providing an opportunity for many of those present to share their own stories. Before she even left the room, she had been asked by one of the groups to present at their own conference in a few months.

On the second day, the teens had a brief, but very special conversation with President Isaac Herzog before he addressed the entire Biennial.

In addition to these presentations and discussions, there were opportunities throughout the conference for the teens to interact with the adult attendees. A particular highlight for a lot of the teens was meeting with senior leaders in their movements. For example, those from NCSY had a long conversation with the head of the OU and the NFTY representative was able to attend a URJ reception with many of the organization's top leaders.

The most valuable takeaway for the teens was the interaction between them. They came from a variety of different backgrounds that don't typically mix within the context of the American Jewish community. From sharing hotel rooms to eating meals together, we ensured that difference did not set the teens apart, but taught them how to come together. The effects of this were almost immediate. While the conference was still going on, the teens were independently making plans to convene inter-movement meetings.

This is only the beginning of what promises to be an amazing year together. We held a few follow-up meetings after the Biennial and the continued enthusiasm was palpable. With much input from the teens, AZM has a plan for the rest of the year which includes Zoom meetings at least once a month, more in-person events, and a mentorship program.

Some upcoming highlights include learning about Jewish peoplehood with Avraham Infeld, the importance of public service with Rep. Esther Panitch, and navigating division within the Jewish community with William Daroff. We are also planning to bring all of them together again, hopefully to coincide with the Celebrate Israel Parade in New York at the end of May. Additionally, we are providing opportunities for them to attend major community events and conferences such as the ADL summit in New York and Z3 conference in Florida.

The meetings will continue to focus on developing their leadership skills through the lens of Zionism and Jewish identity. As these are top leaders in each of their respective movements, they will be able to take what they have learned and apply the lessons among their peers.

Articles on AZYC

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/teens-on-the-front-lines-of-antisemitism/>

<https://www.youngjudaea.org/a-teen-leaders-experience-at-the-azm-conference/>

Quotes from AZYC Participants

“Attending the 2025 AZM Biennial as part of AZYC was an amazing opportunity to connect with other teen leaders from across North America. I walked away having expanded my worldview and readiness for combatting antisemitism in my daily life. I'm excited for the year ahead, working with my fellow teens to create programming and foster more connections within the Jewish world.”

- Young Judaea National Israel and Jewish Education Programmer

“My experience at AZYC representing JSU/NCSY was truly eye-opening. I got to meet and talk with Jewish leaders and see Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox come together to help Israel. This conference really gave me the opportunity to see what I can do in the future.”

- NCSY/Jewish Student Union President from Houston

“The conference was an absolutely amazing experience and I was honored to have been part of it. I loved getting the chance to network with and meet some of the people who have most inspired my Israel advocacy journey. Hearing from the speakers and meeting peers dealing with similar struggles in their Zionist journey allowed me to be myself, relate to others, and have truly meaningful conversations.”

- Young Judaea National Social Action Programmer

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to attend the AZM Biennial. Meeting and connecting with so many influential Jewish leaders helped me gain both a stronger understanding of how to deal with antisemitism directly and made me feel less alone.”

- NCSY/JSU Student Union President from New Jersey

“I had an amazing time at the AZM conference representing Bnei Akiva. Something I enjoyed so much was engaging in dialogue with those who come from different religious backgrounds. I loved the opportunity the conference gave to meet people and I made connections with so many leaders.”

- Bnai Akiva Maryland leader

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Selected Photos



