Shnat Netzer, the Netzer gap year programme, is a unique 8-month programme run by Netzer Olami in Israel for progressive Jews from across the globe who are taking a gap year.

Be inspired to explore Israel, your Jewish identity and what it means to be part of the Jewish people; all whilst developing personal and transferable skills.

You'll make life-long friendships within your group and with other Jews from around the world as you spend the year living, learning and growing with other gap year students from all over, including South Africa, Australia, South America, Canada, Europe, the Former Soviet Union, Israel, and the U.S.
GROUP EXPERIENCE

For the first month participants live together on Kibbutz Lotan. This is when the group can get to know each other and Israel in great detail. There will also be chances to learn about Israeli life and to speak Hebrew, as well as day trips around the country, all to help the participants settle in and prepare for the months ahead.

TIKKUN OLAM OPTIONS

During this period participants select one of two options: Kibbutz or Shnat B’ir (Shnat ‘in the city’). This involves 3 months to explore an important aspect of life in Israel. On Kibbutz or in the city, participants will have the chance to integrate in the local community whilst working and volunteering in the surrounding area.

JERUSALEM

For the final four and a half months the participants choose between two different innovative living and learning communities: Machon and Etgar. Separate programmes, both of which are joint with participants from South Africa and Australia. During this period the participants will have free time most evenings and weekends which they can spend with participants on the other programme.
GROUP EXPERIENCE

Based together on a Kibbutz, this period bonds the group and helps them adjust to life in Israel.

This period has three main activities

VOLUNTEERING

This part of the week is an excellent way to meet, talk with, and work with the Israelis on the kibbutz, offering a real insight into the life of a kibbutznik (someone who lives on a kibbutz). You will spend time working with the other residents, workers and volunteers. It also provides the group with a great opportunity to get to know each other better.

ULPAN

Learning Ivrit (Modern Hebrew) will be a central part of this period. An intensive part of each week will be dedicated to learning to speak and understand the language. In the half day ulpan sessions, participants will be immersed in Ivrit, learning through a mixture of conversations, activities and worksheets. By the end of the Group Period, participants will have been given a basic level of Ivrit so that they are able to travel around the country with ease.

INFORMAL CHINUCH

Each week the informal chinuch will be themed around a different topic central to the Shnat experience. The learning will be done in a wide range of styles and by a myriad of top educators. Methods of education will include informal lessons run by expert educators, youth movement style programmes run by the group and the Netzer team, and day tours around Israel to places of Israel relevant to the theme of the week.
Themes for the weeks can include:

- **Jewish Identity** – what connects the individuals in the group to their Judaism, and what affect might this have on their Netzer experience?

- **Jewish History** – what is the group’s common heritage and how does this impact their sense of identity?

- **Progressive Judaism** – Where does modern Progressive Judaism come from and what does it actually mean to be a progressive Jew?

- **Israel and Reform Zionism** – What is the history and modern reality of the country they are living in, and how does our Reform Zionism affect how we relate to it?
During the ‘Options Period’ of the programme participants select one of two options: Kibbutz or Shnat B’ir (Shnat ‘in the city’)

The “kibbutz”, a type of socialist farming community, formed the heart of the Jewish settlement in Israel at the start of the 20th century and they still exist today. Now, rather than just farming the land, different kibbutzim (plural of kibbutz) take on a variety of roles in Israeli society, from farming to local schools to factories to ecological havens.

Lotan is situated in the south of Israel and was founded by members of Netzer in the 1980s. Whatever job they do, our participants always leave with a real sense of community and of belonging to Lotan, having studied, prayed and played with its members. They will make friends with the kids of the kibbutz that will last for years, and they will always be welcomed back when they choose to visit.

**ON KIBBUTZ OUR PARTICIPANTS CAN HAVE A RANGE OF JOBS. THEY COULD WORK:**

- As a gardener, working in the fields.

- In the guest house, doing housekeeping and accompanying school groups on tours of the local desert.

- In the cattle farm, helping to care for, clean, and milk the animals kept by the kibbutz.

- In the packing house, a surprisingly social job where they meet and get to know a range of other residents and volunteers.

- On a world renowned ecological project, building a hut or designing a garden for the eco-tourists that visit the kibbutz.
Based in the scenic Galil region of Israel, the group live together in flats around the city and spend their days volunteering with the local residents.

Ma'alot Tarshicha is a small city with a diverse population, a vibrant youth culture and a wide variety of meaningful volunteering options. In teh Galil, participants will live as a Shnat Netzer group in flats. Families of the youth leaders in the community will host our participants; inviting them over for Friday night dinners and other events, and generally helping them integrate with the community. The city boasts a diverse community with residents from many different backgrounds. All this makes Ma'alot Tarshicha an exciting place to live and work.

WHilst living in ma'alot our participants can volunteer in a variety of placements

These can include a mixture of:

• Assisting in local schools for handicapped or underprivileged children

• Writing for local or national newspapers such as Ha’aretz

• Volunteering with refugees to provide shelter and food

  • Building and maintaining an urban farm

• Entertaining patients both young and old in hospitals

• Running activities at local coexistence youth centres

• Packing food to send out to the underprivileged of the community

We tailor our shnat programme around individuals. If there is a particular area of interest that participants want to explore on their gap year we try to find opportunities to suit them. In the past we have arranged placements in the following areas.

* Volunteering with MDA, the Israeli ambulance service
* Volunteering on an army base with Sar’el
* Studying Judaism at Pardes, a cross communal learning community
The Machon is a Jewish leadership programme based in Israel that has been running since 1946, before the state was founded. Its purpose has always been to train the leadership of Diaspora Jewry to a high standard in terms of leadership skills and Jewish knowledge. Participants from many different backgrounds live, sleep and eat together in a campus style environment at Kiryat Moriah in Jerusalem.

In order to achieve these aims, the participants on the Machon study 5 core topics each week, as well as spending one morning per week studying other topics of their choosing; participants also have the opportunity to volunteer at local community projects for one afternoon every week.

The core topics are:

• Leadership Training – Learning new methods and educational philosophies as well as gaining practical experience
• Israeli History and Society – Studying the history of Zionism and Israel, and learning about and experiencing modern Israeli Society
• Ivrit – Learning to speak, read, and understand modern Hebrew so that participants can better understand Jewish texts and so that they can better integrate with Israeli society during their stay.
  • Jewish Culture – Looking at the history of the Jewish people, and its many modern manifestations
  • Jewish Religion – In depth study of Jewish texts, philosophies and practices.

The final structured aspects of the Machon are its “tiyulim” (hikes) and “siyurim” (tours). The tours and the two hikes, one in the north and one in the south, provide a space for the participants to form strong bonds as a community whilst experiencing the diverse nature of Israel’s landscape and culture.

By studying and living together, this group can form a vibrant community in which all the individuals are able to flourish and come to understand and develop their own personal philosophy and ideology.
Etgar, meaning challenge, is a programme run by Netzer purely for people on Shnat Netzer. Etgar’s aim is to create top quality leaders for Diaspora Jewry. Etgar is in a progressive Jewish environment, bringing together members of Netzer from across Europe, North America, the UK, South Africa, and Australia. The education is built around a Reform ideology, and the community that is created is encouraged to live according to the values of that ideology, and those of their youth movements.

Participants on Etgar live together in a flat, where they are given a weekly budget and are responsible for forming their own community. How they spend their money and what and how they cook and clean will be up to them to decide as a community.

The core areas of study are leadership, Israeli history and society, Ivrit, Judaism and more. The course of discussions is shaped by the nature of the individuals, education on Etgar is targeted at Reform ideology, teaching the participants the tools they need to be engaged progressive Jews in today’s society. They will study traditional sources, texts and philosophies, but always bringing it back to how this tradition can be meaningful to us today.

On Etgar, classroom study is not the only way that they will learn. Each week they will spend an afternoon volunteering in Jerusalem, and go on day tours. They will also go on two hikes, one to the north of Israel and one to the south. These tours and hikes provide a space for the participants to form strong bonds as a community whilst experiencing the diverse nature of the Israeli landscape and culture.
The **Orientation seminar** at the beginning of the programme is a space for the participants to begin to bond and form a cohesive group whilst being introduced to life in Israel and the basic skills and knowledge they will need to get around.

The **Jewish Identity Seminar** in the middle of the year is where participants will immerse themselves in Jewish texts and struggle with the questions facing them, both as a group and as individuals, about what it means to be Jewish.

The **Sikkum (conclusion) Seminar** is a fun and exciting period to celebrate the year’s accomplishments and to look to the future. Participants will be given the chance to process all that they have learnt over the year, and consider how they take their new skills and knowledge back to their personal and communal life at home.

The **MASA Seminars**, each lasting for a few days, are spaced throughout the year and are an opportunity for participants to get to know other gap year students from the UK. People from a wide range of movements come together to have fun, pray, and study together in a unique, cross communal environment.

A **Shabbat b’yachad** (Shabbat together) is a chance for every participant in a Netzer gap year programme in Israel at the time to come together and celebrate being part of a vibrant worldwide movement. Depending on the time of year this will include South Africans, Australians, Israelis and South Americans. Together they will form a memorable Shabbat by leading each other in prayer, study, and fun activities.

During the course of their time in Israel, the Shnat Netzer participants will be given **Chofesh** (periods off) to explore the land and culture of Israel that they may not have otherwise had a chance to see. During these periods the group can explore the cultural events that are happening around the country in order to discover Israel in ways that the structured programme time might not provide.
How to Apply
Please fill in an initial enrolment form. For more information contact Alyson Joseph at aly.joseph@reformjudaism.org.uk or on 020 8349 5666. Once this has been filled in we will send you details of the next steps in the process and how to pay your deposit.

The Cost of Shnat
The cost of Shnat Netzer includes:
• All accommodation*
• Food throughout the year**
• Transport for programmed activities
• Basic medical and travel insurance
• Full time staff in Israel (programme director, education director, and leaders)

*During holiday periods at a central hostel
** Not including holiday periods

Please note: we are constantly working with Netzer Olami to develop shnat netzer, so the detail of the programme may change slightly

Financial Assistance
RSY-Netzer strongly believes that our young people should have the opportunity to take part in our events and we strive to support this in every way we can. Financial assistance is available through the MRJ and UJIA to applicants who can’t meet the full cost of the programme. Through bursary funding the MRJ, the UJIA and MASA aim to offer young people the opportunity to take part in a youth Movement programme. These bursary funds will assist individuals to the best of their ability based on a means tested process AND new this year, leadership scholarships.

Leadership Scholarships
The UJIA recognise how returnees from Shnat programs often go on to harness what they have experienced at this pivotal time, sharing their passion and skills through playing key roles in the Jewish community – whether that is by leading their youth organisations, being active on campus or later on in life through their professional or lay-leadership choices. They are keen to support young people in helping bring these ambitions to fruition. To this end, this year they offer various types of scholarship awards – which can be accessed by a wider audience, facing different circumstances.
Shnat Netzer develops skills and knowledge, giving participants the tools to become leaders in our community and the wider world. The programme facilitates personal development and study of progressive Jewish, and Reform Zionist, ideology in a variety of immersive environments.