

Limud by the Lake Revisited:
GROWTH AND CHANGE
AT JEWISH
SUMMER CAMP

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INTRODUCTION

To learn about the field of Jewish overnight summer camps and explore its potential addition to our philanthropic portfolio, AVI CHAI commissioned leading researchers Leonard Saxe, PhD and Amy Sales, PhD from Brandeis University to spend time visiting 18 Jewish camps during Summer 2000 and report what they saw. Their findings were included in a study called *Limud by the Lake: Fulfilling the Potential of Jewish Summer Camps* and in a subsequent book, “*How Goodly Are Thy Tents*”: *Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences*. In addition to a survey of best practices and standards, the study contained rich insights about the needs of the camps and how they can become more effective in creating and delivering memorable Jewish experiences for their campers. The researchers offered specific suggestions for growing and strengthening the field, and their recommendations guided the Foundation’s initial investments for helping camps deliver a strong Jewish program, a core focus for our work.

When *Limud by the Lake* was published, the Jewish camping field was just beginning to attract broader attention and philanthropic support. What a difference a decade can make! The Foundation for Jewish Camp, which was started by philanthropic visionaries Rob and Elisa Bildner just two years before the Brandeis study was conducted, has become a powerhouse in the Jewish communal world, a much admired and effective advocate and fundraiser for the camps. Other philanthropists have joined pioneers such as the Harold Grinspoon Foundation to invest in the camps’ infrastructure and to assist with recruitment, marketing, fundraising, board development, alumni outreach, and other needs of a vibrant and sustainable field. The Marcus Foundation has invested in senior camp professional leadership development and expansion of camp capacity. The Jim Joseph Foundation helped seed new specialty camps to attract Jewish families that in the past would have looked elsewhere to send their child for the summer. Inspired and funded in

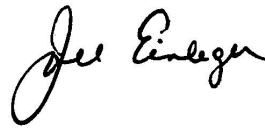
part by an anonymous donor, dozens of communities around the country have made “camperships”—subsidies for first-time campers—available to thousands of Jewish families. By all measures, these are indeed exciting times for Jewish camps.

During the past decade AVI CHAI has focused on helping camps deliver an engaging and powerful Jewish experience. Because of the programming creativity and training skills of staff from the FJC, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the JCCA, and the various Jewish camping movements—our partners in developing additional resources for the field—many camp directors have raised the bar for creating a lasting impression on their campers and staff. The yearly reports and thoughtful reflections we receive from Aileen Goldstein, AVI CHAI’s camp programs evaluator and a former camp director who has visited dozens of camps for us over the past six years, attests to positive changes in the Jewish and

Israel education programming in many camps and in the enhanced skills of staff to initiate and implement new programs.

For an updated snapshot of the field, in Summer 2008 we commissioned Amy Sales and her Brandeis colleagues to revisit many of the same camps and some new ones to report on progress and changes. Using the baseline developed during the first study, the new research looks at changes over time and also expands the scope of inquiry to cover new ground, including the attitudes of staff before and after their summer experience and the considerations of families who are choosing between Jewish and non-Jewish summer camps. Many of the findings within this extensive report add to the growing body of knowledge about excellence in Jewish camps and opportunities for further enhancement. We hope you will enjoy reading the study and discover new opportunities to strengthen this vibrant and growing field.

Because of their 24/7 controlled environment, we anticipate that Jewish overnight camps will continue to offer exceptional opportunities for children to grow Jewishly, make new Jewish friends, and deepen connections with Israel and the Israelis who work in camp. We hope that gains in the field will continue for many decades, with more children experiencing the magic created every summer at Jewish camps across North America.



Joel Einleger

Director of Strategy, Camp Programs
The AVI CHAI Foundation

Limud by the Lake Revisited: GROWTH AND CHANGE AT JEWISH SUMMER CAMP

It is a bright blue-green day in Summer 2008 as we leave the highway and head up into the foothills toward camp. We have not been here for eight years, but the image in our minds is so vivid and the sights and smells so familiar, it could have been yesterday. We expect (and hope) that the camp will be unchanged. After all, in *How Goodly Are Thy Tents*, we documented summer camps' "vigorous adherence to tradition" and the power of camp culture (Sales & Saxe, 2004). The affection that members of the camp community have for the camp would surely maintain everything as we had last seen it.

At the same time, we expect (and hope) that it will be different, closer to its full potential as an educational and socializing institution. Indeed, we had also written about summer camps' "great flexibility and openness to experimentation." Eight years marks a generation of campers and staff, and it seems only reasonable to us that as members of the camp community have grown and changed, the camp too will have evolved.

This report presents the results of our Summer 2008 study of Jewish summer camps. It describes changes in the field over the previous eight years and presents new data on the families and staff that comprise the camp community. It concludes with a set of questions about the future of the field and five recommendations for expanding and deepening the Jewish summer camp experience.

METHOD¹

In 2000, The AVI CHAI Foundation asked the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies to undertake a study of Jewish summer camp with the purpose of mapping the landscape of Jewish residential camps and exploring how these camps socialize young people as members of the Jewish community.

Findings, first presented in *Limud by the Lake: Fulfilling the Educational Potential of Jewish Summer Camps* (Sales & Saxe, 2002), led to seven recommendations:

1. Expand the reach of Jewish camping.
2. Make camp a model of Jewish education.
3. Prepare directors to enhance Jewish life at camp.
4. Focus on Jewish staff as a target group in their own right.
5. Bring more Jewish counselors to camp.
6. Provide the training and support counselors need to advance on their personal Jewish journeys and flourish in their work as Jewish role models.
7. Conduct research to inform the field of Jewish camping and ground its future development in reliable information.

¹ More information on method can be found at <http://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/24197/Limud.Revisited.Method.01.31.11.pdf>

Eight years after our first foray into the camp world, the Foundation asked us to return to camp to examine how much progress has been made in these areas and what lies ahead for the field. The new study is based on field observations at 22 Jewish overnight camps selected to represent different types of camps in three regions of the country (Northeast, South, and West). Fourteen of these camps took part in the original study. Four were added to round out our sample and three other camps, new on the landscape, were added so that we might learn how startup camps think about and enact their Jewish purposes. For the purposes of contrast, one for-profit private camp was added to this portion of the study only. During the course of our site visits, we spoke with nearly 500 informants at all levels in the camp system—executive directors, directors, assistant directors, unit heads, specialists, bunk counselors, and *shlichim* (Israeli emissaries).

The new study also includes:

- Two surveys of staff at 20 of the camps in our sample. The first was administered at the beginning of the 2008 camp season (n=2,195, 82% response rate) and the second the following spring (n=1,475, 55% response rate). The former gathered demographic and job information. The latter looked at what counselors brought from camp into their lives back home.
- A survey of 4,100 families (60% response rate) with children at these camps. Administered in Spring 2009, the survey included questions about what children take away from their camp experience.
- A survey of 423 families with a child of camp age who has *never* been to a Jewish overnight camp. These families were compared with 1,456 camp families matched to them on location, child's age and gender, denomination, and marriage type (i.e., intermarried and inmarried).
- An analysis of data from the Foundation for Jewish Camp's 2008 census of the field.
- A re-analysis of data from 2008 applicants to Taglit-Birthright Israel, both those who have been to a Jewish summer camp and those who have not.

The multi-method approach enabled us to examine the camp experience from various perspectives, while the replication of methods and questions from the earlier study enabled us to document changes between 2001 and 2008.

CHANGES OBSERVED 2000-2008

The very beginnings of the new study hinted at change in the Jewish camp world. In 2000 we encountered great difficulty getting camps to participate in the study. They could not see the value of the research and neither Brandeis University, The AVI CHAI Foundation, nor Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) were in a position to leverage camps' participation. Eight years later the situation was completely changed. Camp, which had been ignored as an area for study for decades, had become a hot topic.

Several forces ignited interest and activity in Jewish summer camp: the original *Limud by the Lake* report; the emergence of FJC with its new chief executive officer, Jerry Silverman, and his vision to "push the field into the 21st century;" and the support of The AVI CHAI Foundation and Harold Grinspoon Foundation. As these forces aligned, a number of other funders, foundations, and federations joined in serious support of Jewish summer camp. The resultant changes can be seen in four areas: new initiatives, the new reality of camps, new programming, and emerging target groups.

NEW INITIATIVES

The past eight years have seen a plethora of capacity-building initiatives in the areas of fundraising, enhancement of program and facilities, professional development for top leadership, retention and training of North American and Israeli staff, and incentives for first-time campers. Each area of endeavor obviously depends on and contributes to the others: Fundraising depends on executive leadership; improved facilities depend on funding; and the expansion of camp requires the facilities and staff to serve the additional campers.

Taken together, these initiatives have generated palpable excitement and momentum in the field.

Fundraising

One of the most stunning changes in the field is the dramatic expansion and increasing sophistication of fundraising efforts, both capital and endowment campaigns. The Grinspoon Foundation, for one, has begun a Camp Legacy Program and a technology initiative. The former helps create and implement legacy giving plans; the latter helps provide the software needed for fundraising campaigns and related communications and alumni relations efforts. During our site visits in Summer 2008, we found that the shift toward fundraising has led not only to more resources for the camps, but often to changes in the job responsibilities of the director, the hiring of development professionals, the reorganization of the lay board, and greatly increased activity in communications and alumni relations. One camp that underwent these changes raised a half million dollars in the first year, more than ten times the amount it had raised in any previous year. Numbers from the 2008 FJC camp census indicate at least 40 development directors now work in the field, almost half of whom have been in their positions for under five years. Seven of the 21 nonprofit camps in our study now have a professional fundraiser on staff.

Improved Facilities

In concert with the emphasis on fundraising is a new focus on expanding and upgrading facilities. FJC has led the charge, arguing that the nonprofit Jewish summer camps need to upgrade their facilities to be competitive with the for-profit sector. Help with capital improvements has come from all quarters. FJC has offered capacity grants, consultation, and technical support for the creation of site master plans, strategic plans, quality control systems, marketing and consumer research, and the like. The Grinspoon Foundation has offered a set of challenge grants and The AVI CHAI Foundation established an interest-free loan program for capital projects. The result is obvious in our field observations and in interviews with staff who invariably comment on new and upgraded facilities.

Staff Development

Various staff development programs have been implemented in this time frame as well, each targeting different positions within the camp hierarchy. At one end is FJC's Executive Leadership Institute which helps camp directors acquire business, management, and leadership skills for raising their camp's level of excellence and deepening its Jewish impact. At the other end is the Cornerstone Fellowship, created and sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation to retain North American Jewish bunk counselors into their third year at camp and empower them to serve as Jewish educators and role models. AVI CHAI also instituted the *Achva* program for returning Israeli counselors and encouraged and supported the hiring of *roshei mishlachot* (heads of delegation) at camps with large contingents of *shlichim*. In 2000, this position did not exist at any of the camps in our study; in 2008, 11 of the camps had a head of delegation. Indeed, so much professional development is now available that we invariably encountered camp leaders who had participated in at least one initiative. In addition, several of the directors in our study were preparing for the rabbinate or pursuing advanced degrees in Jewish education or management.

Expansion

The number of children attending Jewish overnight camps is growing. Lacking full information from all camps in 2000 and 2008, it is not possible to specify the exact number and percentage increase. Nonetheless, in the 87 camps responding to the question of total enrollment in the two years, we see an increase of over 1,300 campers, approximately 3% growth. These camps represent a broad swath of the field, and this pattern of growth likely holds throughout.

In the 2008 FJC census, 120 camps provided information on number of beds, a measure of total capacity at any one point in time during the summer. Camp capacity ranges from 65 to 1,000 beds and averages just over 300. Total number of beds across all 120 camps is 36,270 (8,947 in Canada and 27,323 in the United States).

Table 1: TOTAL EXCESS CAPACITY 2008

	Camper Capacity	Campers Served	% Excess Capacity
<i>Boys only camps (n=10)</i>	4,917	3,457	30%
<i>Girls only camps (n=7)</i>	5,926	5,057	15%
<i>Coed camps (n=87)</i>	53,515	42,960	20%
<i>Camps serving boys and girls separately (n=2)</i>	632	382	40%
Overall (n=106)	64,990	51,856	20%

Because most camps offer more than one session, the total number of campers they can serve over the course of the season is greater than the number of beds. The total number of individual campers who could have been served ranges from 65 to 2,100 with a mean of 613. All totaled, the 106 camps providing data could potentially have served 64,990 campers (9,407 in Canada and 55,583 in the United States). As seen in Table 1, there was 20% excess capacity in the field in 2008.²

Incentive grants. One strategy for increasing the reach of Jewish summer camp is to bring more first-time campers into the system through incentive grants. Millions of dollars in incentive grants have been proffered in the past few years with the expectation that a reduction in tuition cost in the first year will motivate families to choose a Jewish summer camp for their child. Overall, 30% of the children in our study were first-time campers in Summer 2008. Half of these campers received some form of monetary assistance, an incentive grant and/or scholarship.

There are only a few differences between surveyed families who came in with an incentive grant and those who came in without one. Incentivized families are less likely to be members of a Jewish congregation; the parents are less likely to have attended or worked at the particular camp; and the incentivized campers have fewer close friends who are Jewish. The numbers bear out our commonsense notions: Many synagogues have become active about getting their children to a Jewish summer camp so it is reasonable that synagogue members would be more likely to choose such a camp

without a monetary incentive. Children of parents who have attended camp are more likely to go to camp, and a parent's strong connection to a particular camp understandably establishes a preference that his or her child attend there as well, without additional incentive. Importantly, friendship circles are implicated in many Jewish choices, and it is not surprising that they show up in the camp decision. Lacking dense social friendship circles, the monetary incentive would logically become a more important factor in the decision.

All things being equal among first-time campers, families with lower household incomes are significantly more likely to receive an incentive grant than are those with higher incomes. The grants are not just functioning as an incentive but also appear to serve as financial aid.

Camp growth. The second strategy for expanding the field is to increase the size and number of camps. Census data from the 87 camps responding in both 2000 and 2008 show an increase in average size from 314 beds to 322 beds. The total across these camps represents a 2.3% increase in capacity over the eight years. In addition, new Jewish overnight camps opened during this time period, just as they have in every decade of the 20th century. The ten new nonprofit camps added some 2,000 beds to the field and, in 2008, served over 2,500 children and teens. For the first time, there is now a concerted national effort to prime the creation of new camps. With funding from the Jim

² N.B. This analysis is based only on the 106 camps providing information on both capacity and numbers served.

Joseph Foundation, FJC established a Specialty Camps Incubator to support the development of new camp models. The first of these camps opened in Summer 2010, and we should expect to see continuing expansion through this effort.

In some regards our field observations reveal no discernible difference between the new and more established camps. For example, they think about their facilities in similar ways, even though the new camps have had less time to customize their properties to their purposes (e.g., kashering the kitchen, building a *beit midrash*). In other regards, the new camps lag behind the more established camps. Patterns in Jewish ritual and Jewish and Israel education look like those identified eight years ago in similar camps—low on creative experimentation, high on centralization and missed opportunities. It appears that the other camps have progressed in the development of Jewish life while the new camps are just beginning to move in this direction.

NEW REALITY

The camps still feel remote. Some are, in fact, miles away from the highway, an hour or more on winding, one-lane back roads. But even those situated close to the highway feel isolated once inside the gate. Some camps still turn the clock back one hour and literally exist within their own time zone. Nonetheless, the bubble is not as air-tight as it was eight years ago.

For one, technology has come to camp. Eight years ago, we commonly found one dial-up computer for staff to research materials for their activities. Today we find wireless hotspots throughout the camps and multiple computers in constant use in the staff lounge and the Jewish education center. Staff are not only doing research for activities but are using email and social media to be in regular contact with friends in the “outside” world. Although the camps try to control the use of cell phones, everyone has them, and certain spots at camp are known to have adequate reception.

Security is a more prominent issue than it was in 2000. At many of the camps new security measures were put in place after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

For example, in addition to an electronic security gate, the administration at one camp has “strangers” come onto the property to test the length of time it takes for a counselor to approach them and ask who they are.

Safety has always been a key concern of the camps, but the nature of this concern has changed. New laws and increased awareness of liability have led to more intrusive camp policies and practices. Counselors feel the new pressure and sense a more serious tone at orientation training. The concerns with safety are exacerbated by the “helicopter parents” who hover over their children. Directors report that these parents have added immeasurably to the burden of communications. It seems there can never be enough photographs on the website, letters from the director, emails from counselors, or telephone calls from the Camp Mom to satisfy the parents’ concerns.

The bubble of camp is also threatened by new scheduling options, with many of the camps offering more sessions of different lengths than they did eight years ago. According to the FJC census, in 2000 about one-fourth of the camps offered three or more different session lengths; by 2008 half of the camps did so. The result is that parents show up periodically as more campers move in and out over the course of the summer.

The bubble is similarly threatened by the increasing openness of the camps to outsiders—researchers, funders, board members, alumni, visiting faculty and special guests, and parents who are invited to stay in the guest house for a weekend at camp. The openness of the Jewish nonprofit camps to visitors stands in stark contrast to that of the for-profit camp in our study. Here the director discourages all visitors outside of visiting day. He reasons that children are the camp’s focus and every minute of the staff and administration’s attention should go to them.

NEW PROGRAMMING

As compared with 2000, the camps evidence an increased awareness of their educational mandate, stronger Judaic programming, and more openness to experimentation.

Some camps increased the number of educational staff and opened up more space in the schedule for them, revised their educational programs to be more responsive to different age groups, or began experimenting with new forms of prayer. Others raised the importance of Judaic competence as a criterion for new hires. Camps whose Jewish programming was relatively weak in 2000 cite increases and improvements in their Jewish education: more Jewish content in activities, more use of Hebrew, more *t'fillah* during the week, and more spontaneous Jewish teaching. Camps with previously strong education are experimenting with new programs. One such camp, for example, experimented with a service learning program in the local community. "We always talk about *tikkun olam*," the director explains, "but why not do it here?" The pilot was so successful that the camp is now considering ways to expand it.

Despite this activity, Jewish education at camp is still very much a work in progress with great opportunity for further development.

Emphasis

The emphasis on Judaism varies from camp to camp. One of the newer camps is still grappling with core questions: How much should we focus on instruction in basic Judaism versus higher levels? How much emphasis should we place on transmitting Jewish content versus inspiring Jewish feelings? The other camps have largely resolved these issues, most often along the lines of their movements and markets.

Jewish Values

Across the spectrum, camps routinely use Jewish values as a basis for Jewish programming and practice, but the application varies greatly. At one end are camps that simply apply Hebrew names to the value, for example, placing recycling, environmental education, volunteerism and social action activities under the umbrella of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). At the other end are camps that teach the Jewish perspective and the textual sources that support the focal value.

Formal and Informal Jewish Education

As described in 2000, instruction at camp takes place through informal and formal education. In either case, the quality of the learning depends on its success in engaging the campers. Although one might assume that informal, experiential learning is ipso facto the more engaging, we observed several instances of formal Jewish education that worked. For example, disturbed by the raucous *Birkat Hamazon* at a denominational camp, one of the rabbis created a lesson about the blessing. He began by asking a group of teenagers if they had ever stolen anything and several admitted to having done so. He then linked stealing to eating something and not saying a blessing. He analogized thanking God to writing thank you notes for bar mitzvah gifts. The campers bombarded him with questions about blessings, and it was clear that dialogue and learning were occurring. Lessons that engage the campers to this degree all have similar elements: a topic that is grounded in Judaism and relevant to camp and the campers; and an able facilitator who creates safe space for the campers, invites their questions, and answers them intelligently.

Decentralization

The original *Limud by the Lake* study posited that Jewish education at camp benefits when rabbis and educators share responsibility for it with bunk counselors and activity specialists. Only then, we argued, can Judaism infuse the camp. A great deal has been done over the past eight years to raise the level of the staff's Judaic and pedagogic skills so that more Jewish education can be placed in their hands. These efforts include the institution of regular lunch-and-learn programs for the staff at several of the Reform, Zionist, and community camps.

The current study found that the quality of the Jewish education at camp is influenced not only by the capacity of counselors to teach but also by the role they play in developing the educational program. In a movement camp with highly decentralized education, themes are developed using a waterfall design. The director of education draws up ideas for addressing the theme in each unit; the unit heads

invent lesson plans for each idea; and the staff work together to write activities; and then individual bunk counselors select the activities best suited to their campers. Many hands thus take part in the development task. As well, the front-line counselors have the support of senior educators and the opportunity to exercise their own creativity. Another movement camp also organizes Jewish education by bunk, but in this case the curriculum is in the hands of the unit heads who in turn relay it to the counselors. According to the program director, the design has two shortcomings: In terms of motivation, the counselors are not invested in the Jewish education they are delivering, and in terms of content, they lack knowledge of the larger context.

Although more prevalent than it was in 2000, decentralization is not yet possible at all of the camps. The two most extreme examples are a community camp in the Northeast with a number of non-Jewish staff members who lack Jewish knowledge and a Southern camp with Jewish counselors who do not see themselves as Jewish educators and do not feel prepared to lead Jewish programming.

Integration

The original study noted that Jewish education at camp benefits when it is integrated into different activities and is not compartmentalized in its own time block, separated from the rest of camp life. Integrated programming, we argued, can create a more harmonious and fully involving experience of life in a Jewish community.

In 2008, we found evidence of increased experimentation with integration at a handful of the camps. At one camp, for example, science workshops led by scientists-in-residence integrate Jewish education in highly creative ways. A project on yeast becomes a chance to learn about challah; an activity creating ink from cabbage turns into an opportunity to teach about the writing of a Torah scroll. In addition to integrating Jewish/Zionist education into its everyday activities, a Zionist camp insinuates Jewish content into the physical environment.

There is constant conversation at this camp about Judaism and Israel because there are boards around camp with news from Israel, notes, puzzles, magnetic letters, or other conversation triggers. Even in free time—at the pool, on the ropes course, or waiting to go into the dining hall for meals—the campers are learning from the postings.

There also remain a number of settings where integration has not taken hold. In some places understanding of the concept is simplistic. For example, the head of the drama program at a new camp mounts classic Broadway plays, overlaying Jewish content by throwing in Yiddish words (many ‘oy veys’) and giving the characters Jewish names. In other places, the specialty staff lack the necessary Jewish preparedness or do not feel integration of Jewish content is necessary.

Challenges Going Forward

Regardless of positive changes, the camps face challenges and opportunities that vary from setting to setting. A denominational camp must plan Jewish education for a camper community that increasingly includes a mix of day school and part-time school children. Another denominational camp would consider implementing a Hebrew immersion model but suffers from insufficient Hebrew proficiency among its staff. A new community camp has to build Jewish education from the ground up. Its current program is minimal, has no textual basis, and employs no informal educational techniques. Another community camp has been reinvigorating and upgrading its Judaic programming but still follows a one-size-fits-all model for Shabbat learning. The centralized curriculum requires the counselors to adapt the materials for their units, a task for which they are not yet prepared. Every nonprofit camp in our study has opportunities to further develop experiential learning and to ignite its campers with a love for Jewish learning.

EMERGING TARGET GROUPS

Teens and special needs campers are potentially valuable markets for camps. Camps, however, are currently challenged to serve them well.

Teens

According to our family survey, 72% of the eligible high schoolers at camp in Summer 2008 returned the following year as compared with 89% of the middle-schoolers and 85% of those in younger grades. As well, only 7% of the older teens were first-timers in 2008. In other words, the camps are not bringing in new campers in the upper grades and are challenged to find ways to retain and serve those already a part of their community. In the ideologically-based camps, the retention of the older teens takes on added meaning as they are not only the future leadership of the camp but also of the movement.

According to interviewees, camps need to program differently for teens by providing more freedom, options and choice, leadership opportunities, challenges, and special experiences. Camps are experimenting with more mature programming for teens, higher levels of specialization and choice (e.g., using a university model in which campers choose a “major” for the summer); more responsibility, and special privileges. In addition, they are developing a number of programmatic innovations in the areas of counselors- or leaders-in-training, outdoor adventure, service learning, social action, and Israel-camp combination programs. One of the camps has seen an explosion of teen programs over the past ten years as it extended into all of these realms and added a full-time teen program director to its staff. The director’s dream is to grow these efforts to include year-round offerings. Success at this camp suggests that diversity of program offerings may be important to achieving significant growth.

In addition to program content, physical space is an important dimension of teen programs. Some of the camps have managed to create a teen camp whose space feels quite separate from the main (younger) camp. The location and design of these spaces contribute to the feeling of a special community among the teen campers.

Special Needs

Children with special needs account for 5% of the campers in our study. They attend all of the camps in our sample, although four out of ten are at one of the Conservative camps.

Some of the camps recognize the need to expand their capacity to work with this growing population but have not, as yet, responded effectively to the challenge. Indeed, one of these camps had to send home a special needs child because it could not provide for him adequately. According to a senior staff member, this moment was the low point of the summer as management had to “acknowledge that we—our camp and the Jewish community—don’t have the resources to deal with special needs kids.”

Three of the camps have hired an inclusion coordinator to deal with the growing numbers of campers with Attention Deficit Disorder, Asperger’s, and other social and learning disabilities. Regardless, at two of these camps, counselors still find that these children take up a great deal of their time and uniformly report inadequate support.

At the same time, there are a few camps that can provide the field with models of inclusion programming. Notable among these are the Ramah camps and an Orthodox camp that is a site for Yachad, the National Jewish Council for Disabilities (an affiliate of the Orthodox Union). Yachad makes it possible for children with special needs to attend camp. These children have their own staff but are mainstreamed into the camp’s bunks and activities to the extent that their age and abilities allow. When older, the Yachad campers can graduate to a vocational program that enables them to work for pay at camp. Importantly for our purposes, these programs have made provisions for Jewish education for the campers in their charge. Those who are mainstreamed join their counterparts for learning. Those who cannot be mainstreamed learn with an educator who has been hired specifically to work with them.

CAMPERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The family survey provides a portrait of the children who attend the Jewish summer camps in our study.

- Mirroring the national gender gap, 55% of the campers at the coed camps in our sample are girls and 45% are boys.
- Some 57% of the children in our study are in middle school (grades 5-8). Only 13% are in elementary school (grades K-4) and 30% are in high school (grades 9-12).
- About 13% of the campers live in single-parent households. A mere 2% live in intergenerational households, with parents and grandparents.
- About 13% of the sample, or close to 500 campers, are linguistic minorities, mostly Hebrew, Spanish, or Russian speakers. The largest percentage of Hebrew speakers are at the Zionist camps where 17% use Hebrew regularly at home.
- Some 43% of the campers are being raised Conservative, 27% Reform, 4% Reconstructionist, 21% secular, and 1% in another religion. With no Orthodox camps participating in the family survey, only 4% of our sample reported that the child is being raised Orthodox. These numbers vary significantly by camp type (see Table 2).

- Overall, 14% are the children of intermarriage. This number is highest in the West (18%) and at the community camps (23%). It is lowest in the Northeast (9%) and in the Zionist camps (8%).
- Some 31% of the campers in our sample were first-timers in summer 2008; 69% were returning campers. On average these campers had spent 2.79 summers at the particular camp. This figure is generally the same across camps (taking into account the more recently established camps that have been in operation for fewer than six years).

Very few (15%) have attended another Jewish overnight camp other than this one, supporting the notion that getting children to camp in the first year gives the camps an opportunity to turn them into long-time “customers” and, more importantly, members of the camp community.³ As well, very few (17%) have attended a non-Jewish overnight camp and those that did so spent an average of only 1.8 summers there.

JEWISH “ELITES”

In many regards, the campers in our study are Jewish “elites.” This is not to say all of the campers are elites; however, it is notable that the campers and families in our sample are relatively educated and affiliated as compared with the general Jewish population. Much of this variation is accounted for by the number of movement camps in the study.

Table 2: CHILD’S DENOMINATION BY TYPE OF CAMP

Child being raised	Type of Camp		
	Denominational movement	Zionist movement	Community
<i>In a denomination</i>	86%	79%	61%
<i>Secular/just Jewish</i>	13%	20%	36%
<i>Other religion</i>	1%	1%	3%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%

³ This analysis excludes the teen-only camp in our sample.

Almost one-fourth of the campers (23%) attend a Jewish day school, a remarkable number given that only a fraction of the sample are Orthodox. About 64% attend a public school and 13% go to other independent schools. Numbers differ significantly for the community camps where only 11% attend a Jewish day school.

The majority of the campers received some type of formal Jewish education during the 2008-09 school year. The percentage varies significantly by grade: 90% of those in elementary school and 88% of those in middle school received Jewish education, but only 65% of the high school students did. It also varies significantly by type of camp: 91% of those at the denominational camps received Jewish education during the school year as compared with approximately 70% at the Zionist movement camps and community camps.

Combining these two facts, it becomes clear that, as a source of Jewish education, camp is most important for the high school teens at the Zionist and the community camps where 44% and 61% respectively would otherwise be receiving *no* Jewish education. The growth and development of teen programs at some of these camps is an important step for the field.

The majority of campers have some connection to Israel: 37% have visited Israel, 52% have family and friends there, and 4% have lived there. The number of campers with some connection to Israel varies by camp type: 83% of the campers at the Zionist movement camps have such a connection, as do 63% at the denominational camps, and 46% at the community camps.

Camp families are largely an affiliated group: Overall, 91% are members of a congregation. This number ranges from 98% affiliation rates at the denominational camps to 79% at the community camps. The overall high rates are expected given that these are families with school-aged children, most in middle school, the years of the pervasive bar/t mitzvah celebration. These rates also suggest that the Jewish nonprofit camps, for whatever reasons (e.g., lack of effort or appeal), are less likely to be bringing the unaffiliated into the tent.

Camp parents are disproportionately involved in the Jewish community. About 15% of the campers in our study have a parent who works professionally for a Jewish organization and about half have a parent who is an active volunteer in a Jewish organization.

Most parents who choose a Jewish camp for their child have, themselves, had the benefit of Jewish education. Over 80% of the survey respondents had, on average, eight years of formal Jewish education growing up.⁴ Half of the parents were at least somewhat involved in a Jewish youth group during their high school years and one-third were similarly involved in Jewish activities during their college years. Close to one-third have participated in an extended adult education program.

Parents have also had the benefit of a Jewish camp experience. The vast majority of campers (86%) have a parent with some experience at a Jewish residential camp, and a quarter of the campers in our study (28%) have at least one parent who attended this same camp as a camper or staff member.⁵ It is hardly surprising that these children ended up at a Jewish overnight camp themselves.

JEWISH ACTIVITIES

During the school year, children are more likely to be spending time with their camp friends than they are to be engaging in formal activities (see Table 3). Such self-organizing, distributed behaviors are probably more important in the lives of today's youth than are organized, leadership-driven activities. As well, it is clear that advances in communication technologies are having an impact on these behaviors.

⁴ This percentage is based on respondents only and does not include spouses. Among the 3,899 respondents to this question are a small number (n=101) who describe themselves as currently having "no religion" or "other religion." Some of these respondents, however, did receive Jewish education growing up.

⁵ This analysis is based only on the 12 camps that were founded before 1980 and, therefore, a place the parents might have attended or worked at.

Table 3: JEWISH ACTIVITIES (% OCCASIONALLY OR FREQUENTLY)

Jewish Activities	% Occasionally or Frequently
<i>Spend time with friends from this camp online, on the phone, texting, etc.</i>	70%
<i>Spend face-to-face time with friends from this camp</i>	54%
<i>Participate in Jewish youth group</i>	46%
<i>Volunteer or work for a Jewish cause, organization, or synagogue</i>	42%
<i>Participate in a Jewish extracurricular program</i>	30%

JEWISH FRIENDSHIPS

The original *Limud by the Lake* study argued that relationships are the essential elements of the camp experience. The current study asked parents how many of their child's closest friends are Jewish, and it asked them how many of their own closest friends are Jewish. The children have less Jewishly dense friendship circles than do their parents. About 47% say that most or all of their child's closest friends are Jewish, and 64% say that their own friendship circle is mainly Jewish.

Close friendships that began at camp abound: 66% of the campers met at least one of their closest friends at camp. Moreover, in Summer 2008, 80% of the campers had at least one of their closest friends with them at camp. Data from our Taglit-Birthright Israel research further establishes the connection between attendance at a Jewish summer camp and the density of the Jewish friendship group in the young adult years, and data from the camp family survey similarly establishes the connection into the adult years. As well, our research shows that children who do not attend Jewish overnight camp have significantly sparser Jewish friendship circles than those who do. And children who came to a Jewish camp by means of an incentive grant have significantly sparser Jewish friendship circles than those who came without being incentivized. Taken together, these analyses suggest that causality flows in both directions: Having Jewish friends is implicated in the decision to attend a Jewish camp; and the camp experience, in turn, is the source of close Jewish friendships.

STAFF

The original study identified the critical role played by staff in creating Jewish life at camp and delivering Jewish education. The report also identified a number of shortcomings in staffing practices and pointed to opportunities for improvement. Difficulties included turnover; staffing shortages leading to staff stress and exhaustion; reliance on non-Jewish, international, and/or younger, less qualified hires; relatively few male counselors; lack of incentives; and few opportunities for Jewish education for staff at camp. With the exception of the gender gap, the picture looks very different eight years later.

STAFFING PATTERNS

Some camps have elaborated their summer staff structure, adding new layers to their supervisory staff. The change has resulted in a slight decrease in the proportion of bunk counselors, a slight increase in the proportion of activity specialists, and a large increase in the proportion of senior staff (assistant directors, unit heads, program directors, etc.).

The average age of staff has risen. As camp has professionalized, it has also become more "adult." The current average age of staff is 21.7 years, an increase of 1.1 years since 2001. As noted above, staffing shortages in 2001 caused some of the camps to assign 17-year-old staff members to bunk counselor positions. In 2008, this practice was reduced by half. At the same time, attendant to the addition of senior staff positions, the proportion of those 30 or older doubled.

Table 4: STAFF DENOMINATION BY CAMP DENOMINATION (ALL STAFF)

Staff Identification	Camp Denomination			
	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Non-denominational
<i>Orthodox</i>	96	11	1	3
<i>Conservative</i>	0	66	7	28
<i>Reform</i>	0	1	57	17
<i>Secular/just Jewish</i>	2	15	25	35
<i>Other Jewish</i>	3	5	3	5
<i>No religion</i>	0	<1	5	7
<i>Other religion</i>	<1	<1	3	4

The increase in average age is least noticeable in the Zionist movement camps where the activity specialists, educators, and senior staff are significantly younger than those at the denominational and community camps. Most striking, educators at the Zionist camps are, on average, almost nine years younger than those at the denominational camps; senior staff are about four and a half years younger. This age differential is consistent with the peer leadership model common to the Zionist camps.

Camps are developing year-round offices with more permanent staff. The average size of year-round staff, across the 106 camps providing census information, is now seven professionals.

As compared with eight years ago, the camps are relying less on international staff. At the 12 camps where time comparison is possible, we find a smaller percentage of international staff (not including Israelis) offset by a larger percentage of American staff. The near-crisis staffing situation that led to large numbers of international hires in 2001 no longer holds.

There have been significant increases between 2001 and 2008 in the percentage of staff with prior experience at the camp (whether as camper, CIT, or counselor) and in the length of that experience at all 12 camps for which time

comparison is possible. In 2001, fewer than 60% of the staff at these camps had prior experience at the camp; in 2008 just over 70% did. In 2001, the average number of summers at camp was about three; in 2008 it was about six. These numbers suggest that the camps are “growing their own” and/or successfully retaining staff.

For the most part, staff at the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movement camps personally identify with the camp’s denomination. Staff at the Reform and non-denominational camps, in contrast, are more denominationally diverse (see Table 4).

AMERICAN JEWISH STAFF

As compared with 2000, today’s staff appears to have higher levels of Jewish preparedness and greater capacity to fulfill their educational roles. Informants attribute this development to more staff having been to Israel and greater numbers of Jewish day school alumni on staff. Indeed our staff survey shows that 89% of the American staff have been to Israel at some point in their lives (14% on Taglit-Birthright Israel) and some 37% have attended a Jewish day school. The growth in the presence and popularity of Jewish studies courses on college campuses may also be a factor. And importantly, the camps have done more to make Jewish learning part of the staff experience.

A comparison of staff at the Jewish summer camps with the broader population of Jewish emerging adults shows that, similar to the campers and their families, the American Jewish staff are relative “elites” when it comes to their Jewish backgrounds and connections.⁶

The majority of the American Jewish staff identify with one of the major Jewish denominations. Fewer than one in five describe themselves in secular terms, as cultural Jews or “just Jewish.” This number is noticeably lower than it is in the broader population.

Almost all of the American Jewish respondents (98%) had some form of formal Jewish education growing up and, on average, this education extended over seven years or more. Their years of Jewish education exceed those of the broader population by two to three years.

In terms of Hebrew language proficiency, almost three-quarters understand at least some of what they read. This proficiency co-varies with Jewish upbringing and education in the expected direction. It also greatly exceeds that of the broader population where only 7% report similar levels of comprehension.

The majority of American Jewish staff report strong connections to the land of Israel and to Jewish traditions and customs (see Table 5). Most of those who are not at the high end of the scale on these items report at least some connection. The lowest level of Jewish connection concerns Israelis, indicating a disjunction between Americans’ feelings toward Israel and toward the Israeli people. These numbers are all significantly higher than what we find in the broader population.

Formal Jewish involvement is less central to the identity of camp staff as compared with other dimensions of life. Not surprisingly, given their generation and lifestyles, most camp staff define themselves by their friendships and intellectual pursuits and not by their Jewish affiliations and practices (see Table 6 on page 16). The surprising results, perhaps, are the low ranking given to physical fitness (given that camp is largely oriented toward an active outdoor life) and the low ranking of social activism (given that many have claimed that this generation is characterized by such activism).

Table 5: JEWISH CONNECTIONS

	% Feeling Very Connected
<i>Jewish traditions and customs</i>	67
<i>Israel</i>	67
<i>Jewish community where you live</i>	56
<i>Jewish history</i>	55
<i>Worldwide Jewish community</i>	51
<i>Israelis</i>	47

⁶ Comparison is based on identical items included in our staff survey and the registration survey for Taglit-Birthright Israel. The Birthright Israel data come from 37,215 emerging adults, ages 18 to 26, who applied for the program in Summer 2008. These data largely come from the same age group and the same time period as data from the camp study. They are the largest dataset available on this cohort and match up well with national data on young adult Jews (as extrapolated from the 2000 National Jewish Population Study).

Table 6: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING DEFINE YOU AND YOUR LIFE?

	% Very much or totally
<i>Friendships</i>	94
<i>Intellectual growth and challenge</i>	84
<i>Community involvement</i>	58
<i>Jewish home observances</i>	52
<i>Professional achievement</i>	49
<i>Jewish learning</i>	48
<i>Israel/Zionism</i>	48
<i>Artistic and cultural expression</i>	40
<i>Volunteer work for Jewish organizations or causes</i>	35
<i>Synagogue life</i>	34
<i>Physical fitness</i>	34
<i>Political involvement or social activism</i>	30

ISRAELI STAFF

Israeli staff have a greater presence at camp in 2008 than they did in 2000. Importantly, there are larger numbers of returning *shlichim* (40%) as compared with Summer 2000 when virtually all of the Israelis were first-time staff.

Research results make clear that Israeli staff differ in fundamental ways from their American Jewish counterparts. The Israelis are, on average, older and more mature and come to camp with distinctive life experiences (most notably, military service). Their reasons for coming to camp, especially if they are on *shlichut*, are different from those of their American peers. And their Jewish identification, practice, and understanding have little correspondence to that of their American colleagues.

Preparation

As compared with 2000, more directors now go to Israel to interview potential *shlichim* in person and some of the camps run a special orientation in Israel.

Outside of these few camps, the main form of preparation for staff recruited through JAFI is a week-long orientation seminar in Israel. Across camp types, Israeli staff speak of the disjunction between the expectations generated at this seminar and the reality of their summer jobs. “During the seminar there was this feeling that we were coming to camp to be the *shlichim* and everyone would look up to us to represent Israel. But the reality is at camp you’re not a *shaliach*, but a regular counselor with all the duties of a regular counselor,” says one Israeli, echoing a sentiment we heard at various camps throughout the summer. Indeed, on the staff survey, most of the Israelis report their primary position as activity specialist (43%) or bunk counselor (28%) and not as educator or *shaliach* (13%).

Although the *shlichim* are generally critical of the seminar in Israel, they suspect that “there is no good way to prepare” beforehand. As the returning *shlichim* say, the best preparation is spending a summer at camp and then coming back.

The Work

Although the camps generally intend to inspire a love of Israel, many are now trying to present a “realer Israel,” an effort made possible by what returning *shlichim* see as a higher level of comfort with Israel amongst the American campers and staff. The Americans are familiar with Israeli music, they know Israelis, and keep in contact with their Israeli friends during the year. “Israel is just not that far away any more,” notes one. At various camps we observe exercises run by the *shlichim* that intend to help campers think critically and ask difficult questions about Israel.

At the community and Reform camps in our study, Israel Day is regnant—the one day that the *shlichim* are able to control the program and show off Israel to the whole camp. Asserting that “every day is Israel Day,” camps in the Conservative and Zionist movements have moved past Israel Day as the primary vehicle for Israel education, preferring instead to have regular Israel program blocks and/or incorporating a variety of Israel-related activities into the camp schedule. Where there are larger delegations and more time for Israel education, results are impressive. The *shlichim* at one such camp, for example, say they feel more Israeli here than in Israel. The use of Hebrew is pervasive and there is a regular effort to keep the camp community abreast of current events in Israel. Much of the learning is through games and informal activities—a simulation of illegal immigration, trivia games about famous Israelis, a marketplace with the diverse cultures in Israel on display, and so on.

Position and program, however, may prove not to be the most important factor for successful *shlichut*. Across the camps, many Israelis find that their most significant work is done one-on-one. “I believe that the most powerful connections and learning are among cabin staff and campers,” one director concurs. “My goal was to have an Israeli staff member in every cabin. Kids aren’t going to make a connection through *Yom Yisrael*.

Hummus and military exercises don’t create a permanent connection and desire to go to Israel. But when a camper falls in love with their counselors, they want to know everything about them and they want to go to Israel.”

Adjustment

First-year *shlichim* face multifold difficulties in their initial adjustment to camp. They are unfamiliar with camp; they do not understand the American mentality; they do not feel part of the community; and language can be an obstacle for them.

They also encounter many surprises during their first weeks at camp. They are variously surprised by the expectations of their job, the amount of power and autonomy individual counselors have, the nature of the campers (not as spoiled and difficult as the seminar had led them to believe), and by their American co-workers (more capable and supportive than the seminar had suggested). They express amazement that so many American Jews care about Israel, are aware of what happens there, and have a genuine concern for the country.

Integration into the Camp Community

In 2000, the research showed the Israelis to be socially isolated and poorly integrated into the camp community. In 2008, social isolation was no longer an issue. Even at camps where there is still a barrier between the two groups—with the Israelis and the Americans heading off in different directions on their days off—reports indicate that relationships have perceptibly improved over the years. Relationship building has been aided by returning *shlichim*, American visits to Israel during the year, and social networking media. These factors make it easier than ever to build and maintain relationships across the year. Indeed, one-third of the Israeli staff report face-to-face contact with their American colleagues during the year; two-thirds report being in touch with them via electronic media.

FACTORS IN CAMPER AND STAFF RETENTION

Retention is the coin of the realm for the Jewish summer camp. A high return rate among campers is good for camp business and for the camp's mission. A high return rate among staff equally benefits the staff members and the camp. The more experience the staff have at camp, the better prepared they are to do their work and carry the camp's message.

Among participants in our surveys, 51% of the staff and 84% of the campers who were eligible to return to their camp in 2009 did so.⁷

Return rates among staff vary greatly among the camps, from a low of 9% at a new camp to a high of 65% at a large, established camp. Seven of the 20 camps in our study have return rates under 50%. Camps fare poorest in retaining staff for a fourth season. The numbers suggest, however, that returning for a fourth season increases the likelihood that the staff member will continue in the fifth year and beyond. The return rate also varies significantly by nationality, with 53% of the Jewish American staff returning versus 26% of the Israelis. This difference is largely attributable to the motivations for choosing camp work and the difficulty Israelis have finding the time to spend another full summer at camp.

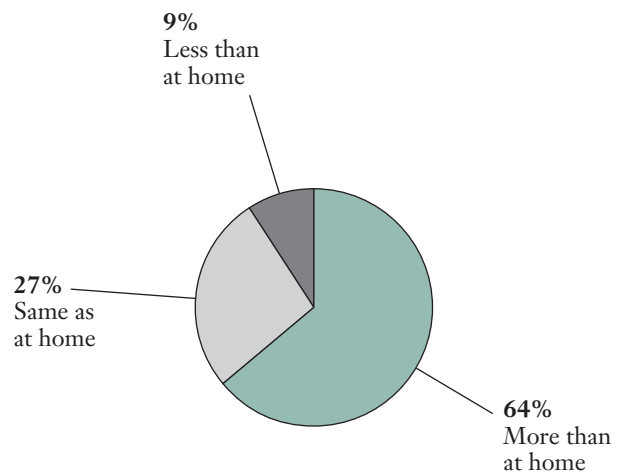
WHY CAMPERS RETURN

All things being equal, the most important factor in a camper returning is his/her camp friends—the more friends, the more likely the child is to return the following year. The second most powerful factor is parental satisfaction with the camp.

⁷ The percentage of returning staff is lower than the national average reported in the FJC census (based on the 2007 to 2008 return rate), which showed 64% of bunk counselors and 59% of activity specialists returning. The difference may be attributable in part to the economic downturn and the subsequent downsizing of summer staff. It is also possible that camps report upper bounds on their estimates of the percentage of returning staff rather than a count of individuals. The calculation of camper retention does not include those who aged out. Aging out was determined by camps' responses to the "age of oldest camper" question in the FJC 2008 camp census. Nationally this number was 74% the previous year.

Also important is the extent to which the camp is consistent with parents' desires regarding Jewish practice. The survey asked the parents how the observance level at camp compares with their family's practices. In most cases, the camp is perceived to be *more* observant than the family; in only a few cases is it seen as *less* observant (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: JEWISH OBSERVANCE AT CAMP VERSUS HOME



We then asked how Jewish life and practices at the camp compared to what parents would like for this child. Most of the parents (81%) say that the Jewish life at this camp is close to what they would want for this child. Another 12% say it is less, and 8% say it is more than they would like for this child.

Putting these two items together, we see that the majority of parents think the level of Jewish practice at the camp is right for this child—in some instances, the level of observance is the same as at home, but more often the level of observance at camp is greater than it is at home. In other words, in 53% of the cases camp is more Jewishly observant than the home, and that is precisely what the parents want for their child's summer experience (see Table 7).

Importantly, return rate is affected by what parents want their child's summer experience to be. The match between actual observance levels at home and at camp is not a factor in retention.

Table 7: JEWISH OBSERVANCE AT CAMP VERSUS WHAT THE PARENT WOULD LIKE FOR CHILD

Jewish observance at camp compared with family's observance				
Jewish practice at camp compared to what would like for this child	Less	Same	More	Total
<i>Too little</i>	4	2	1	7
<i>About right</i>	4	24	53	81
<i>Too much</i>	<1	1	10	12
<i>Total</i>	9	27	64	100

Notably, incentive grants made no difference in return rates. A key assumption was that giving families a subsidized taste of camp would build their appetites for more, and that families would thus send their child to camp in succeeding years even after the incentive was ended or reduced. Since these families presumably were less likely to send their child to camp in the first place, we might posit that they would be less likely than other families to send them in succeeding years. That proves, however, not to be the case. Children who arrived at camp for the first time through an incentive program were as likely to return for a second year as were the children whose parents paid full tuition.

WHY STAFF RETURN

All things being equal, three primary factors contribute to staff members' decision about returning to camp: overall satisfaction with the camp experience, contact with camp colleagues during the year, and age.

Returnees were asked how important various aspects of the camp experience were to their decision. Across the board, American Jewish staff that return to camp give little weight to the administrative aspects of the job (salary, hours, workload, camp administration). They also give relatively little weight to Jewish learning at camp. Rather, the vast majority make their decision based on personal relationships (80%) and an emotional attachment to the camp (76%). The role of friends in the camp decision is not surprising given that friendships are key to self-definition and contact with camp friends

over the course of the year statistically predictive of a positive decision to return.

The top factors that draw the Israelis back to camp are the work (76%) and their camp friends (61%). Similar to their American counterparts, the Israelis are generally uninfluenced by the practical matters of salary, hours, workload, and camp administration, or by Jewish learning. And most are not impelled back to camp because it is an opportunity to travel, to improve their English, or to get a break from obligations back home. The work, for them, is paramount.

GAINS FROM THE SUMMER EXPERIENCE

CAMPER TAKE-AWAYS

Asked about their child's greatest "take-away" from camp, close to 2,500 parents (60%) wrote comments, almost all positive.

Camp is "Amazing" (996 comments)

Almost one thousand parents wrote enthusiastically about camp. They refer to it as a summer home, a "good place to be a kid," a supportive environment, a place suffused with a sense of community. One parent who describes camp as her son's "home away from home" is convinced that "he would live there permanently if we allowed it." Parents write about their children's desire to return to camp the next summer, and they observe their children counting the days until they can return to camp.

Social Connections (2,434 comments)

The overwhelming majority of comments focus on social connections and the bonds children form with peers and counselors. It is clear that campers feel “part of something” at camp—whether it is their group of friends, their bunk, or the overall community. This finding holds across camp type, as parents report that “camaraderie” and “lifelong friendships” are among the greatest benefits their child derives from camp.

Personal Development (621 comments)

Parents routinely describe the camp experience as “life changing” and their returned child as “more independent,” “stronger” and “confident” as a result of the experience. Their children learned “leadership skills” and gained an “increased sense of self-esteem” and a “strong sense of self.” As well, camp helps develop interpersonal skills. Children learned how to live with others and how to be part of the group. Parents observe that their children return home from camp more mature in their relationships and in their behaviors.

Other Benefits of Camp (472 comments)

Parents say that their children acquired new skills at camp, largely because camp allowed them to try new activities and build on strengths. Campers were exposed to certain activities for the first time, whether these were sports, adventure activities, theater, music, arts, or aquatics.

Jewish/Zionist Development (461 comments)

For several hundred parents, the key take-away from camp is an enhanced Jewish identity. They note, for instance, that their child returned from camp “proud to be Jewish” and “more enthusiastic.” Children came home with an increased awareness and knowledge of Hebrew (especially at the Conservative and Zionist camps). These parents see camp as a critical part of their child’s Jewish education, often because it complements the child’s formal Jewish education back home. They note that camp is a place where Jewish observance can be “fun” and “cool,” in contrast to the year-round activities of synagogue and school.

Negative comments, albeit few, center on the camper’s individual experience: A child did not enjoy camp or did not make as close a group of friends as the parents had hoped. A child had fun but did not learn anything new in Summer 2008. A child returned from camp with lice or vulgar language. The camp was too religious for the child or devoted too little time to Jewish observance and education. The camp offered too little structure, inadequate supervision, too few activities, and too much “hanging around” time. For a few parents of older campers, “the programming became less challenging and engaging as the kids got older.”

STAFF TAKE-AWAYS

Jewish Practices During the Year

One measure we used for staff take-aways was the extent to which the American Jewish staff brought Jewish practices from camp into their lives back home. Results indicate that fewer than half engage in Shabbat observance (other than a Friday night meal), *t’fillot*, and Jewish study during the year following their summer at camp. These data point to the importance of camp in providing these experiences for staff but also to the opportunity to encourage such practices over time.

Learning

Over the summer, Americans and Israelis learned a great deal about each other’s cultures and life styles. Beyond that, the differences are stark: American Jews most often learned about Jewish rituals and customs, the Israelis about camp operations. This latter finding is not surprising given that American Jewish summer camp is a totally new experience for most Israelis. (see Table 8).

When it comes to Israelis’ learning about Americans, most agree that working with the Americans at camp helped them feel connected to their American peers (74%) and showed them both their differences and their commonalities (88% and 81% respectively). These findings hold regardless of camp type or denomination. At the same time 79% came away somewhat or very critical of the American lifestyle.

Table 8: CAMP LEARNING

Learned about	% Very much	
	American Jews	Israelis
<i>Israeli life and culture</i>	60	
<i>Jewish life in the United States</i>		63
<i>Jewish rituals and customs</i>	53	17
<i>New or improved skills</i>	41	31
<i>Yourself as a person</i>	25	15
<i>Jewish denominations</i>	21	42
<i>How camp is run/managed</i>	10	70

The secular Israelis in our study also learned about non-Orthodox Judaism. At first, most find it difficult to adjust to worship at camp. Regardless of their background, they are not accustomed to seeing mixed seating, female prayer leaders, and nontraditional forms of worship. By the time we arrived at the camps, however, almost every Israeli we spoke with had come—much to their own surprise—to find enjoyment in camp services and an appreciation for the easy way that religion is presented at camp.

For the Israelis, the strongest feelings evoked by camp are a sense of pride—in being Israeli (86%), in serving their country (73%), and in being Jewish (60%). The Israelis are an object lesson in the dictum that we can only understand our native culture by stepping into another culture. In interviews and focus groups, they tell us that their camp experience has given them a greater appreciation for life in Israel and for the Israeli way of thinking and being.

LESSONS LEARNED 2000-2008

The research findings give a sense of the dynamism of the field of Jewish summer camp and the significant accomplishments possible with concerted effort from the Jewish community. They also expose needs, raise questions, and suggest possibilities for the future of Jewish summer camp.

DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

In the years between 2000 and 2008, Jewish summer camp emerged as a field of practice in its own right. For one, the field enjoyed a plethora of capacity-building initiatives. On the business side, camps now see themselves as nonprofits and are getting serious about fundraising, governance, long-term investment, and the like. On the program side, they evidence an increased awareness of their educational mandate, stronger Judaic programming, and more openness to experimentation.

These changes would not have happened without advocates and resources. In 2000, The AVI CHAI Foundation was seeking a way, in addition to day schools, to bring Jewish education to Jewish youth. The Foundation had no experience with camp and Jewish overnight camp was barely a field. Succeeding years saw the emergence of Foundation for Jewish Camp as a powerful umbrella organization. Early investment and commitment from The AVI CHAI Foundation and the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the fundraising success and marketing brilliance of FJC paved the way for other funders and federations to enter the game. Success bred success. Within a few years, the field arrived at a “tipping point” where relatively small change became a national movement (Gladwell, 2000).

Change required ideas and, indeed, ideas have been in no short supply. Although some never gained traction (e.g., a Jewish education program for directors of private camps), others became institutionalized and grew (e.g., Cornerstone Fellows). Evaluation research on the various initiatives that sprang from these ideas led to modifications in program design and to further ideas. In this regard, the change efforts have become a generative process.

Change also required the assent of camp leadership. In 2000, we listed several conditions necessary for changes in Jewish life and education at camp to be accepted and institutionalized. Because camps are top-down organizations, one requirement was that camp leadership embrace the change. We argued that the directors set the tone at camp and unless they understand and value Jewish growth, they will not incorporate it fully into their camp's mission or program in a meaningful way. At the time, we could not have predicted the great extent to which the directors would become captivated by new possibilities for their camps' business and program. This shift in attitude is partly attributable to new programs for camp executives and the advent of a new generation of directors with graduate degrees and professional training in camp leadership. It is notable that half of the camps that we revisited in 2008 had a new director at the helm.

All totaled, the change in Jewish summer camp is stunning—a wide-reaching and fast-paced development of a field of practice. In a few short years, movement has been made on every item in the list of recommendations in *Limud by the Lake* (2002): capacity and recruitment, focus on Jewish education, preparation of directors, improved staffing, work with Jewish staff as a target group in their own right, and research to inform the field and ground its progress in reliable information. The work is far from complete, but major areas for development have been identified and various attempts made to affect each one.

In terms of the dynamics of change, we are left with two questions:

- What will it take to sustain such momentum—to keep funders interested, to attract top talent to the field, to continue growing, and to demonstrate impact?
- Is there a limit to what individual camps can support in terms of new initiatives by sponsoring and funding agencies?

Some of the camps that have benefited from the recent bounty of attention and resources have participated in multiple initiatives. Organizational change may necessitate exactly this type of layering: simultaneous interventions with every level of staff, with program, and with marketing and operations to transform the camp. Equally possible, camps may reach a saturation point at which initiatives start to trip over one another and leaders become distracted by multiple theories, special projects, and research studies pulling them from their core vision and practice.

JEWISH FOCUS

At different camps we variously found leadership granting Jewish education more importance at camp, increased numbers of educational staff and more space in the schedule for Jewish-related programming, revitalization of Jewish programming animated by Cornerstone Fellows and other specially trained counselors, more Jewish content in activities, greater use of Hebrew, more reference to Jewish values, more *t'fillah* during the week, and more spontaneous Jewish teaching. As well, since 2000, much has been done to raise the level of the staff's Judaic and pedagogic skills so that more Jewish education can be placed in their hands.

Nonetheless, Jewish education at camp is still very much a work in progress with great opportunity for further development in terms of decentralization (which is still not possible at all of the camps), integration of Judaic content (which has not taken hold in some places and is applied only superficially in others),

and Israel education (where the Conservative and Zionist movement camps are modeling an integrated approach in which “every day is Israel Day”).

There are limits, however, to how much Judaism at camp can be pushed from the outside. In 2000, we posited that integrated, decentralized education was preferable and that the field should create initiatives that would increase the likelihood that camps would program in this way. A key lesson from the 2008 study is that camps are organic systems in which culture, community, personnel, and program fit together into a coherent whole. The result is that every camp must create Jewish life and learning that authentically suits itself. The goal for outside initiatives cannot be to create fundamental change at the camps but rather to help each camp reach its potential as an educational organization.

With regard to the Jewish focus of camps the lingering question is:

- “How Jewish” do the camps, particularly the community camps, want to become?

The camps recognize that they operate in a competitive environment. They further recognize that they must fill their beds culling from an increasingly demanding market. In 2000, we concluded that directors who believed that they had the correct blend of Jewish life and secular activities to suit the campers and their families would be loath to intensify the Jewish experiences they offered. In 2008, we saw enhanced Jewish life and learning in several such settings where we would not have expected change. Nonetheless, changes in the Jewish program are gauged against the reaction of the market. Until there are systematic, empirical data on the degree to which donors and customers are swayed by the Jewishness of the camp, decisions about intensifying the Jewish focus of a camp are likely to be made with caution.

EXPANSION

Another major thrust of camp initiatives has been to expand the reach of camp by increasing the number of Jewish youth participating in a Jewish summer

camp experience. The effort, which is both good business and good communal policy, has received the support of the directors, the community, and the funders. Our informants in the field expect the push toward expansion to continue.

In order to examine the implications of expansion, we first need to consider who is already at camp. Findings from the research suggest that the families, campers, and staff who comprise the camp communities in our study are largely Jewish “elites.” The great majority of the parents have themselves had the benefit of some Jewish education and some experience at a Jewish overnight camp. At the present time, almost all of them are affiliated with a congregation and about half of them are deeply involved in a Jewish organization. The choices they have made for their children are, therefore, not surprising: The great majority of the campers receive formal Jewish education during the year, attend religious services at least once a month, and have a connection to Israel. Many of the parents chose a camp for their child that does not match home practice but is, in fact, more Jewishly observant than the home. Regardless of the differential between home and camp, the majority of parents think the level of Jewish practice at the camp is right for their child.

Similarly, the staff are distinguished among the general population of Jewish young adults. They have, for example, markedly stronger connections to Jewish tradition, Israel, the Jewish community, and the Jewish people. On the whole, staff hired for Summer 2008 had stronger Jewish backgrounds than staff eight years prior. In 2000 counselors and specialists shied away from their potential role as Jewish educators. In 2008, they articulated higher awareness of their responsibility as teachers and role models, and forays into increased decentralization and integration of Jewish education at camp were underway. This change is supported by new elements on the American Jewish landscape (e.g., Taglit-Birthright Israel, independent minyanim, alternative organizations) that are causing an uptick in Jewish consciousness among Jewish emerging adults, the population from which most camp staff are selected.

This is not to suggest that camps have a monolithic population for, in fact, they are dealing with increasing diversity. For example, all of the camps in our study serve children with special needs. Some have instituted inclusion programs; others recognize the need to expand their capacity to work with this growing population but have not, as yet, done so. There is a rethinking of teen programs and experimentation with new forms for engaging teens at camp. If successful, these will sustain and possibly increase the age range of campers. There is great denominational diversity at the Zionist movement camps and community camps but also at the denominational movement camps, where at least a quarter of the camp community personally identify as secular Jews or as part of a denomination other than that of the camp's. Within the ranks of staff, Israelis are a greater presence at camp in 2008 than they were in 2000. There is now a designated head of the delegation and more returning *shlichim*. Handled properly, this diversity presents an opportunity for the camps to model *K'lal Yisrael* across religious/secular lines, the Israel/Diaspora divide, denominational groups, and between mainstream and special needs campers.

At best, the camps currently serve only 10% of the Jewish youth population, so, for all intents and purposes, the potential market is limitless. The current approach to expansion is to build new camps, increase the physical capacity of existing camps, upgrade marketing of camp, and incentivize first-time campers. The outstanding questions are:

- To what extent are the current approaches to expansion bearing fruit?
- Are there other possible approaches that might extend the reach of camp more rapidly and/or more cost-effectively?

The former question will soon be answered by evaluation research on the marketing and incentive programs and by the FJC camp census. The latter will take a creative effort from leadership in the field.

Efforts to expand the reach of camp also raise the question of the limits of growth. Camps that increase

their numbers greatly will eventually have to diversify their camper population even further. Directors in movement camps already have raised the question of how much filling beds will dilute their educational, religious, or Zionist mission. They recognize that the tens of millions of dollars available for incentive grants could very well change the character of the camps, not only by increasing numbers but by bringing in different types of children from those who currently comprise the camp community.

At the same time, it can be argued that a more diversified population at camp might support the camps' Jewish focus by giving them greater impetus to become models of *K'lal Yisrael*. In terms of Israel-Diaspora relations, the research shows that the majority of American and Israeli staff learn a great deal about each other's culture and lifestyles over the course of the summer, and to some extent, they become more connected to one another across national lines. Yet, asked about their connections to various aspects of the Jewish world, American Jewish staff gave the lowest rating to their connection to Israelis. For their part, a quarter of the Israeli staff came away from their summer at camp feeling very critical of the American lifestyle. Contextual factors are likely to smooth these relationships in the future. Americans increasingly have had an Israel experience or studied Israel in school. Israelis are living in a society that is increasingly westernized, at least in its youth culture. The meaning of Zionism is changing and the goal of *shlichut* at camp is no longer *aliyah*. With these changes comes the possibility of seeing Israeli-American relationships not as a bipartition of Israel and Diaspora but as part of a worldwide Jewish community.

Beyond the Israel-Diaspora divide, the greatest opportunity for developing a sense of Jewish peoplehood may be at the community camps, where campers and staff have the most diverse Jewish backgrounds. As compared with the movement camps, the community camps have a greater representation of campers who receive no formal Jewish education during the year, are less connected to Israel, and less often engage in every Jewish behavior measured in the survey.

There is also greater representation of children from interfaith families and those being raised with no denominational identification. As compared with the movement camps, the community camps also have greater representation of staff who are less observant, and who feel less connected to and place lower personal value on Judaism and Israel. These findings are not a judgment on the community camps. Rather they underscore the importance of these camps in serving a diverse and often less engaged Jewish population. For many of the staff and campers at these camps, summer is the only time during the year when they are immersed in a Jewish program. Of any of the camps, the community camps thus have the greatest opportunity and obligation to figure out how to foster Jewish life with Jews from across the spectrum.

Whether diversity resides in nationality, ideology, or religion, we are left with the question of how to turn it to the camps' advantage:

- What shifts in attitude, community building skills, program innovations, training programs, or structural adjustments are needed to enable camps to become models of a diverse but unified community?

THE FUNDAMENTALS

With all of these changes, opportunities, and questions, we ought not lose sight of the fundamentals. The strong camp communities we found in 2000 still dot the landscape during the summer months. These are precious and should not be taken for granted. The challenge in 2008 is that the camps' boundaries with the outside world have become more permeable in terms of technology, visitors, scheduling, and communication with families.

These forces are likely to endure. Technology will continue to advance, helicopter parents will continue to hover, the market will continue to press for more scheduling options, and the camps will increasingly need to bring their supporters to camp during the summer to witness the magic. The result is that camps are increasingly challenged in their efforts to give children the experience of living away from home; to develop their independence, self-confidence, and resourcefulness; and to give them the open, freewheeling time that is one of the great pleasures of camp. Camps walk a fine line between accepting change and holding on to tradition.

The data are incontrovertible: Camp is a great source of Jewish friendships. But it is not just a numbers game. Camp friendships are special. They are born of intensive living together over weeks or months, in an isolated youth community, apart from the outside world and all of its distractions. The bonding among camp friends can be profound.

Asked what their child took away from camp, close to 2,500 parents wrote about how much their children love camp, how eager they are to return. They wrote about social and personal development, skills learning, and Jewish learning and experiences. In all of the data and lists of gains from camp, one constant stands out; namely, the centrality of friendships to the camp experience. Camp creates friendships and it is these friendships that determine whether or not campers and staff will return, not just after the first year but in each succeeding year, as well. Camps will do well to remember that fun and friendships are Job #1.

INTO THE FUTURE

The future requires a strong vision for the field of Jewish summer camp, one that can inspire its planning and actions in the next eight years and help sustain the remarkable dynamism of the past eight years. Fulfilling the vision calls for continued efforts to expand the reach of camp, support innovation, raise the level of professionalization, develop camp's full potential to create powerful Jewish life and learning, and make the most of camp's greatest asset—its people.

1. EXPAND THE REACH OF CAMP

Eight years ago, our first recommendation was to expand the reach of Jewish camp by increasing capacity, extending beyond the summer months, and increasing scholarships. Today, despite significant progress, only a small fraction of Jewish youth has a Jewish summer camp experience. Simply put, current efforts by the Foundation for Jewish Camp, philanthropists, movements, local communities, and camps need to be redoubled.

a. Retool marketing and recruitment.

J-West and other incentive programs have introduced new ideas for marketing Jewish summer camp and for recruiting first-time campers. While these ideas are being studied and further developed, more experimentation is needed in the use of social media, community organizing, strategic partnerships with schools, synagogues, JCCs and other local organizations, use of alumni networks, and other vehicles for stimulating interest in the Jewish camps.

b. Bring cost under control.

To some extent, enrollment is linked to cost. Incentive programs are one way to reduce the cost to families, but other efforts are needed as well. These include,

for example, building endowments for scholarship, developing new pricing structures, generating other sources of income to reduce reliance on tuition, and seeking more efficiencies in camp operations.

c. Expand opportunities for teens.

Teens have a lower retention rate than younger age groups. At the same time, they are especially precious to the camps because they are carriers of the camp spirit and the most promising candidates for future staff. The research makes clear that the camps need to program differently for teens by providing them more freedom, choice, leadership opportunities, challenges, and special experiences. There are pockets of innovation in teen programming but the need remains for more, whether they be travel programs, programs that permit serious engagement in a specialty area, or other experiences. Now is the time to convene a taskforce on teens at camp to learn from current models and to develop pilot projects that might help keep camp relevant to teens through their high school years.

d. Expand services for the special needs population.

All of the camps in our study have campers with special needs but many of these camps are not well prepared

to serve this population effectively. Moreover there are few places for children with moderate to severe needs, particularly when they get older. It is clear from the research that camp is a highly valued experience for this growing population of children and their families. More opportunities are needed for these children to attend summer camp. Also needed is a triage system that would enable each camp to focus on particular segments of the special needs population. There is much to be learned from the camps that have established programs for special needs campers and their expertise should be made widely available to the field.

2. MAINTAIN MOMENTUM IN THE FIELD

Camps run on unbridled creative energy. This energy explains how the camp environment generates fun, risk-taking, and constant invention. Indeed, camp is full of surprises (Sales & Saxe, 2004). The field as a whole needs to embrace this same creative spirit and continue to surprise the community with new ideas. Many of the initiatives in the past eight years (e.g., incubator camps, incentive programs) show just such imagination and willingness to take risk. These efforts suggest that this is a time of great opportunity. Momentum increases uncertainty about old assumptions and opens the way for new thinking. Continuing the momentum requires not only vision but also leaders and resources.

Foundations, federations, and philanthropists are currently investing tens of millions of dollars in Jewish summer camp. Appropriately, a key concern of grantors and grantees is sustainability. Philanthropists are often looking to create or support something new, leaving open the question of the future of programs already created.

a. Support capacity building for camps.

Camps need to determine which initiatives are most compatible and beneficial for them. They then need to devise business plans that will enable them to develop and grow the initiative on their own or in partnership with their funders. Such a plan may include fundraising campaigns, off-season revenue-generating programs,

interest from endowment funds or other investments, government grants, and so on. Regardless of the vehicle, camps will need significant capacity building in terms of budgeting and planning in order to take on this responsibility.

b. Make the most of evaluation research on innovation.

Evaluation research covering both process and outcomes is needed for the field to make the most of innovative and entrepreneurial efforts. Camp is modeling how a field can change and grow over a relatively short period of time. It behooves us to study each move to understand not only its impact but also the conditions under which it is most effective and possibilities for adapting it to other settings. Results of evaluation studies should not sit in a file cabinet but should be shared broadly and deliberated. The understanding that emerges from such a process can be used to gain continued support for innovation and to inform plans for bringing good ideas to scale.

c. Pay special attention to the start-up camps.

The research reveals the extraordinary excitement found in new ventures but also the great challenges. The rule of thumb in venture capital is that only 10% of new businesses last a decade (Herman, 2009). Start-up Jewish camps are not immune from the difficulties faced by other new organizations. The new camps play an important role in expanding the reach of camp and in creating new venues for innovation. They need to be watched carefully and supported in their early years when they are developing their brand, markets, program, staff, leadership, culture, and mission. Consultation, mentoring, communities of practice, and other forms of support can help the start-up camps take advantage of the opportunities of newness while avoiding the pitfalls of new ventures.

3. RAISE THE LEVEL OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

In 2000, our recommendations for the training of camp directors focused singularly on preparing them to enhance Jewish life at their camps. Advances in the field now highlight the critical need for advanced training in executive leadership and management.

Camp directors need to match the skills and expertise of top leadership in the nonprofit world. The list is lengthy and includes, among other requirements, the ability to inspire with vision; to identify, recruit, train, and motivate an excellent board of directors (or camp committee) and a cadre of volunteer leaders; to raise funds; to build and work effectively with a top-notch management team. The great leaders are not mired in everyday operations but are able to think intelligently about the mission of the camp—its role in Jewish education; its impact on child, teen, and young adult development; its contribution to Jewish life, and so on. These skills and habits of thought cannot be learned at a weekend conference.

a. Support advanced degree programs for top professionals.

Serious thought should be applied to developing a graduate program for camp directors and assistant directors that not only imparts technical skills but also the intellectual content that makes for thoughtful leadership in the field. A new model is needed that takes into account the camp calendar, the difficulty directors have in absenting themselves from camp for any period of time, and other logistical hurdles. As well, philanthropists will need to build scholarship funds and lay leadership will need to appreciate the value of this education to their camp. Such a posture increases the likelihood of the professional's being able to take a sabbatical for intensive learning. The model would not target a mass audience but rather seek select talent capable of undertaking a serious course of study and using it to enhance not only their own camp but the field overall.

b. Continue to expand year-round staff.

The assumption in 2000 was that almost all staff members were hired on an annual basis and worked only in the summer months. In the ensuing years, the FJC camp census has shown an increase in the number of year-round employees. Nonetheless, more year-round staff will be needed as camps grow in size and complexity, as the demand increases for them to extend their program into the school year, and as the need grows for continuous marketing,

recruitment, fundraising, Judaic and general program development, and planning. The number of year-round staff will necessarily be tiny compared to seasonal staff, but all camps will need an optimal number of professionals expert in the tasks that camps must perform continuously in order to excel. As well, by providing more opportunities for year-round employment, the field might attract more talent, as young people who love camp come to see that it can be a “real” job and a career.

4. DEVELOP CAMP'S FULL POTENTIAL TO CREATE POWERFUL JEWISH LIFE AND LEARNING

The research makes clear that camps have been able to incorporate greater Jewish content without compromising the character of camp nor its appeal to parents, children, and staff. The field should no longer be debating whether or not it is possible to move in this direction but rather how to further develop the role of Jewish learning and living at camp, particularly in those places where the efforts to date have been simplistic or superficial.

a. Work with camps one-on-one to strengthen Judaic programming.

Camps share a great deal in common with one another, but when it comes to Jewish programming, the differences among them are notable. Differences generally break out along the lines of camp type (denominational vs. Zionist movement vs. community) and region (Northeast vs. South vs. West) but are also accentuated by the age of the camp (established vs. start-up), the proclivities of top leadership, the capabilities of staff, the expectations of parents, and so on. Given the importance of integrating the Jewish program into the life and culture of the particular camp, the most effective approach to improvement would be individualized consultation. Just as the Grinspoon Institute for Jewish Philanthropy provides consultation on fundraising, governance, strategic planning, and technology, so too should the camps have access to consultation that will help them imagine, design, implement, test, and further develop ideas for Jewish experiences that are excellent in quality and in their appropriateness to the specific camp community.

b. Bring summer camp to a central place in the Jewish educational system.

One reason camps are popular and effective is that they are not school, and one would not want to conflate the two institutions in the minds of participants. However, if camp were seen to be as key to a child's education as the bar/t mitzvah is, then the field would be able to move much faster in expanding its reach. Moreover, closer ties between camp and other arms of the educational system may be valuable at the level of idea generation, curriculum planning, and program development. Such a connection can be especially important to the denominational camps, whose mission is not only to socialize children as Jews but as Jews who understand and appreciate the perspective of the movement and are being groomed for its future leadership.

5. ENVISION CAMP AS LABORATORY FOR JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD

Diversity at camp—the mix of American, Israeli, and international staff and the inclusion of campers from varied backgrounds—is one of camp's great assets. To take full advantage of this asset, however, the camps must recognize it as such and incorporate the value of *K'lal Yisrael* into their culture and program. The advent of the Peoplehood Index Project and the flurry of debate and writing on the topic of Jewish peoplehood make this a particularly propitious time for camps to model themselves as laboratories in Jewish peoplehood.

a. Intentionally recruit and program for diversity.

To become demonstration projects in how to build a cohesive Jewish community, camps will need to develop intentional recruitment strategies for bringing in diverse campers and staff. They can then design activities around the principles of inter-group dynamics and community building and the concept of Jewish peoplehood. They can elevate the value of exploring and appreciating commonalities and differences within the camp community. Succeeding in this endeavor will require special training for staff as the camps will need to develop sensitivity to differences and mechanisms for confronting the challenges that inevitably surface in such work.

b. Create a forum for raising the level of *shlichut*.

Israelis play a very important role at camp not only by their contribution to Jewish, Zionist, and Israel education but also by their mere participation in the camp community. At the same time, we have seen the impact that camp has on the Israelis themselves. In recent years, camp directors have become more involved in the recruitment of Israeli staff, traveling to Israel to meet with prospective *shlichim*. They now need to become more involved in the preparation of Israeli staff for their summer at camp. Training and preparation—on the part of both the camps and the Jewish Agency—could be improved if camp and JAFI professionals came together to learn from one another about what is needed and share ideas for meeting those needs.

CONCLUSION

Each summer is an opportunity for camps to influence the Jewish life trajectory of the children, teens, and young adults who form the camp community. Job #1 for camps, therefore, is assuring that camp is fun and that friendships flourish. The emphasis on camp operations and program must not distract leadership from this fundamental responsibility.

As well, camps must steer a clear course through the new reality of customer demands, “helicopter parents,” security concerns, and omnipresent technology. They must understand that they are, in fact, the antidote to these forces. They offer children and teens the opportunity to be part of a real (not virtual) community—a community dedicated to fun, attentive to personal growth and development, and committed to Judaism and Jewish values.

The goal for the field of Jewish summer camp is to expand the reach of camp and to continue to strengthen its role in Jewish education. The field must not only preserve the goodly tents but also enlarge and strengthen them.

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