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Lo Somchim Al HaNes

relying upon intercultural education instead of miracles in summer camp staff mifgashim

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LO SOMCHIM AL HANES: RELYING UPON INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION INSTEAD OF MIRACLES IN SUMMER CAMP STAFF MIFGASHIM

Sara Reichenbach Manor

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This thesis concerns the subject of preparedness, about which Martin Buber writes, "Everything depends on whether they are ready." I am deeply indebted to my teacher and mentor, Dr. Lisa Grant, without whom I would surely not be "ready." Among other things, Dr. Grant has patiently seen me through the personal process of leaning to engage in a dialogical relationship with Israel as an educator and a citizen.

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Introduction

The Summer Shlichim program, long celebrated as a successful means of teaching Israel to Americans in the Classic Zionist paradigm, is suffering from paradigm confusion. Now entrenched in the language of "mifgash" ("encounter), and the rhetoric of a Jewish Peoplehood, the Summer Shlichim program is intended to build bridges among Americans and Israelis in summer camp. Compelling contemporary research, however, dispels claims of success: the mifgash taking place in the great majority of summer camps is, in fact, detrimental to the American-Israeli relationship as participants report the fortification of cultural barriers and even hostility among two groups[1]. The shift from a Classic Zionist paradigm (in which Jews living in Israel are favored, and those in the Diaspora are disparaged) in camping to a Jewish Peoplehood paradigm (in which all Jewish communities are perceived to be legitimate and the educational focus shifts from Israel to relationships) signifies that we have begun to move beyond the detrimental, hierarchical relationship. The shift, however, is a gradual process and the Classic Zionist ethos is deeply engrained into Israeli society; where educational institutions such as the Ministry of Education and the Jewish Agency speak the language of Jewish Peoplehood, it has not fully penetrated the Israeli status quo.

In their pre-camp training seminar, The Jewish Agency feeds its summer shlichim on a combination of Jewish Peoplehood rhetoric and Classic Zionist programming. Because the

[1] Bram, Chen, and Eran Neria. (2003) "Veni, Vedi, Ii : Israeli 'Shlichim' Identity Encounters in U.S Jewish Summer camps [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Research and Development Unit, Department of Jewish Zionist Education, The Jewish Agency. ; Kopelowitz, Ezra. (2003) "Between Mifgash and Shlichut: Paradigms in Contemporary Zionist Education and the Question of the Ideological Relationship between Israel and the Diaspora." Department of Jewish-Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency. ; Ezrachi, Elan and Barbara Sutnick (1997) "Israel in Our Lives: Israel Education through Encounters with Israelis." Ed. Barry Chazan, Elan Ezrachi et al. Jerusalem, The CRB Foundation, The Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education, and the Charles R. Bronfman Centre for the Israel Experience: Mifgashim.

shlichim are – above all -trained to be Israel educators, charged with a mission to bring *their* vision of Israel to the Diaspora[2], they are still mired in the Classic Zionist educational paradigm in which Diaspora Jews are the *object* of education – not a *subject* with which they can share dialogue and learn from in turn.

The shaky paradigm shift is only one contributing complication to the Israeli-American mifgash. There are countless cultural disparities that necessarily exist between any two cultures; when an individual embarks upon an intercultural encounter without an appreciation for these differences, cultural "clashes," misunderstandings, and culturally biased judgment is likely to result; this is what is happening in URJ camps.

Intercultural Education, a field of education concerned with providing learners with the tools necessary to interact with individuals from other cultures, is the necessary device in ushering the mifgash beyond chance interpersonal chemistry to a systemic change in perspective. Granting our staffs the opportunity to evaluate the ways in which their respective cultures make meaning, and examine how the other culture knows the world, engenders a pluralistic environment in which dialogue and disagreement (without condemnation) can occur. Intercultural Education prepares learners to engage with a diversity of perspectives, and preparedness is the key to a successful mifgash.

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[2] From the "Summer Shlichim Mission Statement" handed out at the seminar, the detailed list of programming (some of which I observed), and conclusions drawn by Kopelowitz, Ezra (2003) and Bram and Neria (2003)

Chapter One: Background

Part I: The Research Question

As educational paradigms and worldviews change in Israel and abroad, the relationship among Israeli and North American Jews has reached a watershed. The Reform Movement has a terrific opportunity to shape this relationship – to build bridges based on personal relationships, and influence the manner in which young Israelis perceive progressive Judaism – in the hearts of thousands of young staff members each summer when they participate in a mifgash at camp. Because this is a critical period in the development of a new kind of relationship, I understand that it is equally critical to evaluate the mifgashim in our camps. Because the contemporary literature concerning mifgashim and the Summer Shlichim Program stresses that mifgashim are serving to fortify barriers between communities rather than build bridges, and because my personal experiences observing the summer camp mifgash were often troubling, I elected to research to following question: What factors contribute to the breakdown of the mifgash in URJ summer camps, and how can success be achieved?

Part II: Methodology

In the development of this thesis and the recommendations within, I relied upon three central sources of information: my own research, contemporary literature, and personal experience. My research consists of both observations and interviews: I attended part the Summer Shlichim Program Seminar Training Seminar in April 2007[3] where I observed a group of 35 shlichim in training with a URJ camp director. I conducted five brief interviews with shlichim

[3] I attended one day (4/26/2007) of the five day seminar– the day in which the shlichim spend the greatest amount of time with their respective camps and movements. The seminar is conducted at Kibbutz Shefayim in Israel.

at the seminar concerning their expectations for the mifgash. In July, I conducted five further interviews[4] with shlichim in the middle of their camp experience. Because my interview pool (ten total interviewees) is small, and because my findings corroborate their extensive and important findings, I relied heavily on Bram and Neria's[5] study of the summer camp mifgash, based on "broad quantitative research" of 150 shlichim, 20 of whom they selected for in-depth interviews. My research was also sustained by the work of Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz, whose reports largely provide a framework for my own. My own research and observations are affirmed by his interviewee pool of 335 shlichim in "'Israeli-Jews' vs. 'Jewish-Israelis' and the Ritual Connection to Diaspora Jewry."

It is also important for me to note that while this is a research-based study, it is also shaped by my own personal experiences in summer camp and a personal sense of the strengths and weaknesses inherent to the Israeli-American relationship. I have spent 22 summers in URJ summer camps in various capacities; since the summer of 2001, the mifgash has been of particular personal concern and since then I have observed and actively participated in mifgashim in three URJ camps (as an administrator in camp). My commentary throughout this thesis reflects not only my research, but also the emotion that was stirred from extensive personal experience.

Part II: Who are the Shlichim and American Staff?

In 1964 the Jewish Agency for Israel established the Summer Shlichim program as a means to populate Jewish American summer camps with Israelis – individuals charged with the explicit

[4] I have masked the names of the interviewees.
[5] Bram and Neria. (2003)

mission of *representing* Israel to their Diaspora hosts. American Summer Camps dually benefited from a "Hebrew/Judaic work force that was unavailable in the United States.[6]" The comingling of "Hebrew" and "Judaic" suggests that many of the camps understood the two terms to be synonymous, and this denotes the two principle benefits directors understood themselves to be receiving from the Jewish Agency: a) the ability to outsource their Israel education to the *mishlachat* (the "Judaic" work force) and b) the physical presence, at very low cost (the Jewish Agency covered the travel cost and very minimal salary of the Shlichim) of a band of staff members who are generally older, more mature, and readier to do the heavy lifting (literal or otherwise) without complaint, as a result of military training.

Today, the Jewish Agency sends approximately 1000 shlichim to North American summer camps, nearly a third of whom are assigned to one of the Union for Reform Judaism's 13 sites. The shlichim population is extremely homogenous; it is important to note, however, that the lack of diversity is not due to discriminatory practices on the part of the Jewish Agency. Ezra Kopelowitz and Pablo Markin justly call attention to the fact that despite an honest desire to include a broader population, institutions such as the Summer Shlichim program are attractive to a certain demographic and inherently unattractive to others. They describe the inclined demographic:

> Who amongst the broader Israeli population are likely to express interest in forms of Jewish expression that do not touch directly on religion? The answer is that we are more likely to find women, the more highly educated and Ashkenazim take part in non-traditional Jewish cultural frameworks that have little or nothing to do with traditionalist forms of religion. What we learn from the previous sub-section, is that we are also more likely to find third-generation Ashkenazim involved in this type of "Jewish cultural

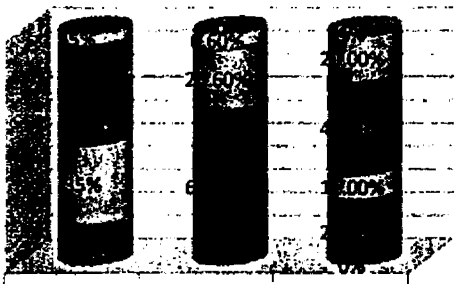
[6] Ezrachi and Sutnick. (1997) 9

expression."[7]

The summer shlichim program attracts individuals who define themselves as "secular," one factor (among others) which indicates that the Israeli staff in camp are "Israeli-Jews" as opposed to "Jewish-Israelis" (who "tend to be self-identifying 'traditionalist' and 'religious' Jews"). The "Israeli-Jewish" Shlichim, argue Kopelowitz and Markin, "do not distinguish between the Jewish and Israeli components of their identities. They view the fact that they are

Figure 1

Religious Identification among Israelis



	Israeli Population Survey	Reform Summer Shlichim Survey	Summer Shlichim Survey
Secular, Anti Religious	5%	6.60%	1%
Secular, Observe Ritual		26.60%	20.00%
Secular	43%	66.60%	40.00%
Traditional	35%		11.00%
Religious	12%		28.00%
Hareidi	5%		0%

Jewish as one and the same as living in Israel. The Israeli-Jew is proud to be a Jew, but cannot conceive of living as a Jew outside of Israel."[9] It is cardinal to acknowledge this defining feature of the mishlachat; American hosts must learn that their guests represent only a segment of Israelis society, and, further, that Israeli Jewish identity tends to be highly national– and that it might not include American Jews in the

[7] Kopelowitz, Ezra and Pablo Markin. (2002) The Question of "Success" in Contemporary Zionist Education: A Look at the Work of Short-Term Israeli Shlichim in the Diaspora. Research Unit, Department of Jewish Zionist Education, The Jewish Agency.

[8] Israeli Population Survey Data derived from: Levy, Shlomit, Hanna Levinsohn and Elihu Katz. (2002) "A Portrait of Israeli Jewry. Beliefs, Observances and Values among Israeli Jews, 2000." Highlights from an In-Depth Study Conducted by the Guttman Center of the Israel Democracy Institute for The AVI CHAI Foundation. Reform Data from my own research. Summer Shlichim Survey Data from Ezra Kopelowitz and Pablo Markin (2002).

[9] Ibid.

same way that American Jewish identity includes Israel.

Figure one depicts the uniformity of the Reform summer camp's shlichim, relative to the broader shlichim population and the Jewish population of Israel in total. When compared with column one (the data was drawn from the national survey cited below), both columns two and three depict populations which are significantly less diverse. The data in column three (collected by Ezra Kopelowitz and Pablo Markin from surveys of 335 shlichim serving in both Reform *and Conservative* Camps in the summer of 2001) juxtaposed with that in column two (derived from a survey I conducted of thirty shlichim in Reform Movement camps in May and July, 2007) indicates that while some "Jewish-Israelis" do, in fact, serve in American summer camps, they are siphoned out of the Reform Movement's pool: 100% of the interviewees from column two identify as "secular" in some way.

The American contingent of the Reform Movement summer camps staff is even more unvarying. 90 percent of campers in Union camps are affiliated with Reform congregations; Although no official statistics exist regarding the denominational affiliations of the American staff, Paul Reichenbach, Director of Camping and Israel Programs for the movement, claims that this figure is likely accurate regarding American staff as well (perhaps even higher). Reichenbach reports[10], "as much as 95 percent" of a camp's domestic staff attended said camp as a participant – they were Reform Jews when they were campers, thus they are still Reform Jews when they return to serve on staff. A 95 percent retention rate is impressive; even camps which fall below this mark inspire the kind of loyalty any organization would crave.

[10] In an interview conducted on February 1, 2008

Joining one's camp staff is understood as a right of passage to many American staff members; it is viewed as a natural extension of the camper experience. When Amy Sales and Leonard Saxe interviewed American counselors in Jewish camps (of many denominations), the two responses that received the highest ranking (as "very important") to the question, "What motivated you to choose your particular camp for summer employment?" were a) "Emotional attachment to the camp" and b) "Friends who were also going to work here" (49 and 43 percent respectively).[11] Israelis, on the other hand, are drawn to the Summer Shlichim program for other reasons. Shlichut is generally understood as a one-off; very few Israelis return to camp for a second or third summer and none attended camp as participants. Perhaps this is a measure of the camps' failure to capture the spirit of the Israelis, en masse, as to inspire them to return year after year (a subject addressed at length below). It is, however, mostly relative to built-in summer break system enjoyed by Americans and accommodating to the camps; Israelis, once they have completed their army service, either attend university (where "summer break" occurs over the fall holidays), leave the country on extended *tiyulim* (treks through South America or South-East Asia), or get "real jobs." During their orientation I asked a number of shlichim, heading to camps in two different regions, why they applied to the Summer Shlichim Program. The following three responses typify the general sentiments:

> **Asaf, age 21**: *What do you mean "why?"! I'll take you to (my army base) for one day and you'll understand why...No girls! I am kidding.. I want to get... out of here for a while and I also want to show the Americans that the Israelis aren't all what they see on the news.*
> **Maya, age 20**: *I am looking forward to bringing Israel to American kids – to teach them about my home, and give them*

[11] Sales, Amy and Leonard Saxe. (2004) "How Goodly Are Thy Tents" Brandeis University Press. 109

(Israeli chocolate). It's really much better than American candy. I know we're supposed to wait for the Americans to "come to us" and ask about Israel. I (also want) to spend time with American Jews (my own age) – it will be fun!
Ido age 21: *The Jewish Agency gives us a free ticket and I am traveling to South America after camp, so I got a free ticket! I have friends who are going to other camps who will come with me and maybe some of the American staff members will want to join us too. (While I am at camp) I guess I will want to show (the staff) that we are the same, we are all people and we all want to have fun.*

Thus the highest ranking responses to the question, "What made you choose the Summer Shlichim Program were" a) time off and/or fun b) "bringing" or "showing" Israel/Israelis to "American Jews" and c) free trip[12].

Most shlichim are nearing the end of their army service when they arrive in camp, and have received special leave from their units; their shlichut is understood (at least institutionally) as an extension of the Zionist project to which they contribute in the military. This corollary – shlichut as service to one's country – is fundamental to the educational frame by which the Summer Shlichim program was established. Once operating entirely within the scope of a Classic Zionist educational paradigm, the impetus was upon these Israelis to inspire North Americans into a romance with Israel – the ultimate expression of which was Aliyah. Kopelowitz and Wolf explain, "In this 'Classic Zionist' paradigm, the educational mission is located solely in the Diaspora. The Jewish and Zionist identity of the Israeli Jew is taken for granted[13]." Among institutions of education, both in Israel and the United States, a significant shift is occurring in the manner by which educators understand the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

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[12] It is interesting to note the similarities between these responses and the reasons why young, secular American Jews choose to attend Birthright Israel trips – and the degree to which either group is affected beyond the temporal experience.

[13] Kopelowitz, Ezra and Minna Wolf. (2003) Israeli Staff in American Jewish Summer Camps, The View of the Camp Director. Research and Development Unit, The Department for Jewish-Zionist Education, The Jewish Agency for Israel. 6

As such, a "paradigm shift" is in the process of occurring – we are presently in the process of moving from the Classic Zionist paradigm to something else.

Part III: Classic Zionism to Something Else (and back again)

Classic Zionism is the ideology which dissects the Jewish people into two classifications: those who live in Israel, and those who do not. It is a fundamentally hierarchical system; reflecting the ideology of the pioneering Political Zionists, adherents to this ideology understand that there is a "deep and principled difference between Jewish life in Israel and the diaspora[14]." Although contemporary Israeli rhetoric has largely exchanged the word "*galut*" (exile) in favor of "*tefusot*" (diaspora) – the latter significantly less loaded with "diaspora negation" associations - the zeitgeist of the New Jew is still fixed firmly into the Israeli's ethos. The system privileges Israel, and disparages diaspora communities – and it is propagated both from within and without Israel.

Many Jewish Americans have long related to Israel in terms of this hierarchy, via education, philanthropy and personal philosophy. While employing images of a mythic Israel, a nation peopled by strong individuals, dedicated to the same principles of freedom, democracy and social justice shared by American Jews, Americans at once fortified their own Jewish American identity and reinforced the status of the Israeli as the "alpha Jew" in the Israel-Diaspora dichotomy. This is a paradox in identification which persists today: Israelis are at once thought to be "just like us" and "better." The Reform Movement never actively proselytized in

[14] Ben-Gurion, David. Stars and Dust. 183.

favor of closing shop and make Aliyah[15] – a distinction which removes their educational paradigm from a precise definition of Classical Zionism. But in visioning (and teaching and guiding) a Holy Land wherein every person is holy and every city is Jerusalem – a utopian Jewish/Democratic society, Americans effectively distanced themselves from Israel, placing it heavenly-high on a pedestal – *better than, holier than, spiritually richer than* Jewish life in America. Thus a hierarchical system was fostered on both continents, even within the Reform Movement.

Classic Zionism enjoys "hegemonic ideological status in Israeli-Jewish society[16]." It is transmitted as a matter of pride, self-preservation and fear: Israelis tend toward a collective-national identity by reinforcing an us/them system. Born of the 18th century European Enlightenment, modern political Zionism absorbed the prevailing sentiments of autonomy and nationalism. However, in contrast to early Reform Judaism (also parented by the Age of Reason) which conceived that Jews could live in peace with their non-Jewish neighbors, Zionists were largely motivated by the anti-Semitism that accompanied newfound European nationalism. From its conception, Zionism spoke the rhetoric of particularism, denying the viability of Judaism outside a nation-state. The Shoah and sequential wars following the creation of the state solidified this us/them ethos. The Jewish holidays were re-conceptualized to emphasize the New Jewish vision of the few against the many, and this vision was scrupulously transmitted to new generations of Israelis.

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[15] It was not until the 1999 CCAR platform that the Reform Movement openly encouraged Aliyah http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=44&pge_prg_id=3032&pge_id=1656

[16] Kopelowitz, Ezra. (2003) "Between Mifgash and Shlichut: Paradigms in Contemporary Zionist Education and the Question of the Ideological Relationship between Israel and the Diaspora." Department of Jewish-Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency. 4

Israeli Jews, in concert with their Western contemporaries, are trending away from collective identities in favor of autonomy. The move toward the "sovereign self" is a particularly sticky transition for Israeli society, as individuals are yet required to participate in the military draft and are otherwise surrounded by a culture which has been, for so long, marked by its collective identity – the tension between autonomy and collectivity is palpable in Israel, expressed in every media of culture; the consequences of this tension are extremely complicated. In order to maintain allegiance to the state and institutions such as the military draft (which is, arguably, still a necessity) the natural psychological reaction is a sort of rationalization: to achieve assurance that life in New York (where one is not required to give years of his life to the military) is *less than* life in Tel Aviv, a collective cognitive dissonance is resolved by relying on known formulae: the Classic Zionism hierarchy and ethos.[17]

While an Israeli national identity persists, Israelis too are highly influenced by post-modern "universalist/humanist" narratives. Because this narrative stands in stark contrast to the nationalist/Zionist narrative, a new tension is born:

> Without the Zionist meta-narrative in the public culture, Israeli Jews, nonreligious in particular, remain without a mediated tie to Judaism and Jewishness and without a narrative that would help formulate their Israeli identity. The dominant narratives that have replaced Zionism – at least insofar as one can identify them at this stage of the development of a collective Israeli identity – have abandoned the effort to construct a Jewish Israeli identity. At the cultural level with which we are dealing, the dissociation of Judaism and Israeliness leaves Judaism as the property of the Orthodox and the rabbinical establishment, to whom, it should be noted, this condition is

[17] I do not disavow the fact that many Israelis enter the military from a sense of personal obligation, but I believe that this obligation is derived from a deep connection to the nation and community – thus, the two are inextricably intertwined.

quite satisfactory.[18]

Though Israelis identify strongly as both Israelis and Jews, the "Jewish" character is becoming progressively inextricable from the "Israeli" (Many Israeli-Jews cannot imagine themselves living abroad as Jews because their Judaism is bound to their nationality – it is immovable), and Judaism is evermore scorned as it is viewed as the subject of the corrupt Rabbinate. The demarcation between "secular" and "religious" grows evermore distinct. With the Orthodox monopoly on "authentic" Judaism, explains writer Zali Gurevitch

> Judaism/Jewishness was now portrayed as the obstacles to truth and peace and the symbol of extremism, violence, and ultra-nationalism. In their private lives, Jews continued to observe some Jewish ritual (folk practice might be a better term) and in their minds and hearts continued to harbor feelings of association with Jewishness and the Jewish people, but the public culture provided neither a language nor a symbol system for its expression. The consequence of all this was that in the realm of public culture, a bifurcation of Judaism/Jewishness on the one hand and Israeliness on the other emerged.[19]

Thus the binary scheme of us/them, either/or, black/white applies not only to Israel-Diaspora relations, but also to the ways in which Israelis relate to one another.

Israeli educators are, for the first time, developing curricula which address the fact that Israelis are switching off. They cater to "The Jew Within" – an individual, rather than a national conscious – a concept wholly foreign to Israel's collectivist, communist roots. Ezra Kopelowitz writes,

> The concept of Jewish Education assumes that life in the general society is not enough to ensure a meaningful connection between

[18] Liebman, Charles and Yaacob Yadgar. (2004) "Israeli Identity: The Jewish Component in Israeli Identity in Transition", Ed. Anita Shapira. Westport, CT: Praeger. 168

[19] Gurevitch, Zali (1997) "The Double Site of Israel" in: *Grasping Land. Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience*, ed. Ben-Ari, Eyal, Bilu, Yoram. New York

> Jews to one another and the Jewish People, hence it is necessary to intervene through the use of educational programming...Something is happening in Israel that is leading (organizations such as the Ministry of Education the Army and the Jewish Agency) to adopt the logic of Jewish Education, which until recently was only found in Diaspora communities.

An educational watershed occurred in 2001 when Hasia Israeli, the Deputy Director of the Department of Jewish Zionist Education at the Jewish Agency, presented a paper calling for a Jewish Peoplehood Paradigm in education. Evident of the nascent swing away from Classic Zionism, Israeli argues that Israelis have something to *learn* from interaction with extra-Israeli communities. His work, titled, "A Plan for Working with Israeli Society and Israeli Youth: Strengthening the Connection between the Jewish People and Israeli Society, from an Educational Perspective" argues,

> The Jewish Agency can and needs to stimulate among the younger generation of Israeli Jews the dimension of belonging to the entire Jewish People – as an essential component of an individual's Jewish identity. Dealing with Jewish identity demands touching the inner person by way of substantial experiences. The educational experience needs to be accompanied by understanding and continuity for internalization to occur. This is our entry point as educators dedicated to topic of Israel-Diaspora relations[20]

Rhetoric such as this signals that the hierarchy of classic Zionism is slowly being dismantled from within. The language of Israeli educators no longer places Israel atop an Israel-Diaspora echelon but instead aims to bring Israelis into conversation with Diaspora Jews, as a means of strengthening Jewish identity and a connection to the Jewish people.

The Jewish Agency makes manifest these pioneering declarations in the new ethos of the summer shlichim program. Kopelowitz and Wolf explain,

[20] As referenced in Kopelowitz, Ezra (2003)

> The innovation is that the contemporary educational mission of the Jewish Agency includes the Israeli counselors themselves. Those who train and send the counselors expect that the identity of the Israeli will be enriched by the *mifgash* (meeting) with Jews who live outside of Israel. If the summer camp work is successful, then beyond strengthening the Jewish and Zionist identities of Diaspora Jews, the taken for granted values that counselors bring to their work are also challenged and strengthened. As a result, the Israeli staff will be better educators, for when they can think critically about "what Israel means to me," they will better understand what Israel means to the campers with whom they work, and engage them in terms that are *meaningful* to all the individuals involved in the *mifgash*.[21]

Bram and Neria best describe the shift from the Classic Zionist model to a Peoplehood model in defining the differences between a *representative* mifgash and an *educational* mifgash. Shlichim operating within the *representative* mode, "comprehend themselves and are perceived, first and foremost, as 'representatives,' a kind of ambassador, (and) the central objective of their shlichut is to represent Israel in mifgash with American Jews... The ambassador counselor understands the mifgash as an opportunity solely to influence (American Jews), and his Jewish identity does not play a role in the educational goals of the mifgash[22]." An educational mifgash, on the other hand,

> ... is an experience designed to posses value and meaning for the participants – the American campers and counselors, and Israeli counselors alike –an experience that will open them up, and will also project upon their lives in their (respective) countries...participants (are encouraged) to examine anew questions concerning their lives and their identities. This outlook...is also a tool for strengthening the connection between Israeli Jews and American Jews. One of the values

[21] Kopelowitz, Ezra and Minna Wolf. (2003) "Israeli Staff in American Jewish Summer Camps: The View of the Camp Director". Jerusalem: Research and Development Unity, The Department of Jewish Zionist Education, The Jewish Agency. 7

[22] Bram and Neria. (2003).

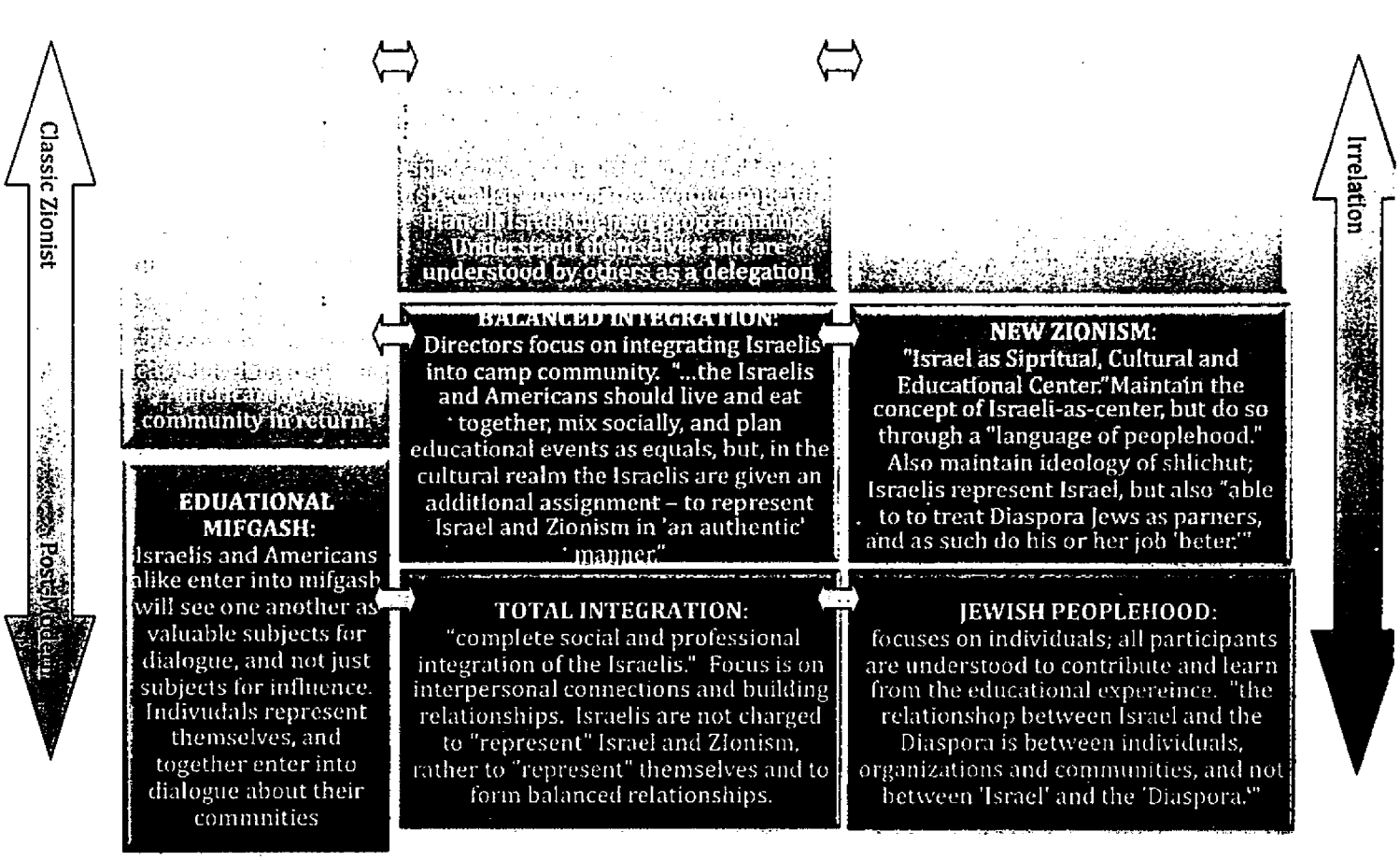
that...this is meant to foster is...partnership and camaraderie
between Jews...the manifestation of the idea of "klal yisrael.[23]"

The model of mifgash implemented in camp is ultimately left entirely to the discretion of individual camp directors. My research corroborates the findings of Kopelowitz and Wolf, who argue that even if two camps share a Movement affiliation, the place of Israel and of Israelis in those camps is likely to differ – in accordance with personalities and educational background of the directors themselves. Kopelowitz and Wolf outline three distinct ways in which Israelis are integrated within the camp community; I outline these strategies below, and align each with a) its place on the relative scale between Representative Mifgash and Educational Mifgash and b) the educational paradigm that best reflects its underlying ethos. It is clear that the three systems are interrelated, thus I present them as such.

Only in the last decade have some camps begun to sway from the old model; until very recently, all camps practiced "symbolic separation" in some form, and all mifgashim were representative in nature: there simply was no other way of conceiving the experience. The educational paradigms crafted to counter the Classic Zionist status quo are designed to address issues relative to an individual's Jewish identity – be the individual Israeli or American. Instead of assuming that that the identifier "Israeli" serves double duty as "Jewish," these new paradigms address the gradual shift away from a collective identity and the need for exploring personal modes of Jewish meaning and connection.

[23] Ibid.

Figure 2[24]



Chapter Two: Mifgash

Part I. A definition by Buber

"Mifgash," the buzzword among Israel-Diaspora educators, has become at once the goal in bringing Israelis and non-Israelis together in various educational and cultural settings as well as a general descriptor for programs of the same genre of the summer shlichim program. This

[24] Category "Types of Mifgash" derived from Bram and Neria (2003). Camp Integration Strategies categories and quotes therein borrowed from Kopelowitz and Wolf (2003). Quotes from Educational Paradigms (and category "New Zionism) borrowed from Kopelowitz (2003).

word permeates the universe of Israel-Diaspora relations, indicating that the mifgash itself is a paradigm in education – so it is essential that we understand what is actually intended by educators who invoke this term. While the question of whether or not "mifgash" is achieved in camp will be addressed in the next chapter, we must first begin with the definition of the word itself.

Regardless of whether it is actually practiced, the ubiquity of the word "mifgash" among educators asserts that the mainstream (in education) is now at least thinking beyond the Classic Zionist paradigm. The Jewish Agency speaks the language of mifgash, imagining a summer shlichim program in which the mifgash is mutually beneficial to Americans and Israelis; that each side encounters the other, comes into dialogue and ultimately leaves more firmly tied to k'lal yisrael (the Jewish People) and to a personal sense of Jewish identity. "Mifgash" means "meeting" or "encounter" – the same word employed by Martin Buber (*Begegnung*) when he describes the scenario in which an "I-Thou" relationship (*Beziehung*) can come to fruition. The practice of mifgash makes manifest much of Buber's philosophy: we live in the context of our relationships. An individual's development hinges upon his ability to be in living relation with others – the means by which two individuals relate is dialogue. Likewise, the mifgash is an educational paradigm in which individuals relate via dialogue.

Participants of a true mifgash can be understood as being in "I-Thou" relationships, or – more simply – by "relation" to one another, as described by Buber. Conversely, those *not* in mifgash can be understood being in "I-It" relationships, or by "irrelation." Buber distinguishes between the reciprocal, productive relationship, I-Thou, and the unidirectional I-It relationship. I-Thou relationships necessitate that the "I" views himself as part of a whole, a mirror to the

"Thou" whom he faces in earnest, seeking relationship. I-It relationships require the "I" to separate himself from the "It" – the "It" being the object of the "I"'s "feelings" or intentions without participation[25].

As figure one demonstrates, the shift from Classic Zionist paradigms to more post-modern paradigms in education parallel a shift from irrelation to relation. The "representative" model of shlichut is an essential I-It relationship: Israelis view Americans as the object of their educational intentions, and are not open to receiving messages from the Americans, who have been objectified – in the context of this "I-It" irrelationship, the "I" (Israeli) is incapable of viewing the "It" (American) as a partner in dialogue.

A Jewish Peoplehood paradigm, on the other hand, intrinsically revolves about the concept of an "I-Thou" relationship. Neither Israeli nor American is expected to bear the weight of representing his nation/people – rather in an "educational" model of shlichut, for example, educators foster coalition among individuals via dialogue and exercise in which each party is an equal participant: representing "I" and being necessarily receptive to "Thou."

Part II. Mifgashim are Failing

Despite the fact that both the Jewish Agency and camp directors take pride in the summer shlichim program, the mifgash is failing[26]. Whereas the Jewish Agency imagines that the experience is a transformative one for the Israelis, "stimulat(ing) among the younger generation of Israeli Jews the dimension of belonging to the entire Jewish People – as an

[25] My knowledge of Buber's interpretations/definitions is derived from a course titled "Theology of Prayer" taught my Rabbi Michael Marmur at HUC Jerusalem, Spring 2006.
[26] This claim is largely based on the findings of Bram and Neria, as well as my own research and observations.

essential component of an individual's Jewish identity,"[27] and both sides hope that personal connections are fostered to an extent that Israel-Diaspora relations are strengthened as a result of the program – the opposite is in fact more likely to take place. Ezra Kopelowitz reports that the Jewish Agency rates the summer shlichim program as a booming success:

> The rapid growth of the Summer Camp program is seen as a jewel in the crown of the Department of Jewish-Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency. The number of Israeli Youth being sent to work in Diaspora summer camps (mostly in North America) is rapidly rising each year. Department leadership has come to view the Summer Camp program as one of its most prominent means for influencing the Jewish identity of Israeli Youth... [28]

When I spoke with Dr. Kopelowitz, he affirmed that the Jewish Agency is measuring success by the popularity of the program. This is disturbing, particularly in light of new research which spells out the implicit educational failure of the program. Bram and Neria conducted an intensive study of the success of the mifgash, interviewing hundreds of shlichim on their feelings regarding their experiences at camp. The study reports,

> The Israeli counselors spoke of the great difficulty in establishing a connection (with the Americans), and they emphasized the existing social and cultural differences between Israelis and Americans, and in extreme instances (reported) "disgust/revulsion from the Americans." ... From what they said it is understood that a situation is created in camp where ethnic borders between Israelis and Americans are emphasized (though everyone is Jewish), though in its development the experience ...was intended to draw them closer to one another. We also found that ... the majority of shlichim are unwilling to see this experience as relevant to their lives in Israel.[29]

[27] Kopelowitz, Ezra. (2003) 23.
[28] Kopelowitz, Ezra. (2003) 19.
[29] Bram, Chan and Eran Neria. (2003)

This report corroborates my own findings in camp as an administrator and researcher: Israelis are, to a large degree, turned off by Americans from the mifgash experience. When I asked Israelis in camps to reflect on the mifgash, and the relationships they were forming with the Americans, I received the following (typical) feedback: "I was really surprised that the Americans were a lot less mature – we're on different levels"[30], "The Americans don't go toward the Israelis and the Israelis don't go toward the Americans. They actually walk away from them.[31]" And "The Israelis who come are usually open-minded, but (we) have a lot of criticism about the Reform movement: they pick and choose. (We) laugh about how it feels like a church – (we) want to scream 'hallelujah!' it's so not Jewish – it feels so foreign.[32]"

Why are mifgashim failing? Following a brief training seminar, the Jewish Agency leaves the success of the mifgash in the hands of each camp; Ezra Kopelowitz and Minna Wolf correctly implicate individual camp directors as the "critical agents" in the process of mifgash at camp; these directors in turn leave the relationship-building in the hands of the individual staff members, without mediation – relying on interpersonal chemistry to get to the task of mending the Israel-Diaspora relationship and building bridges. Elan Ezrachi and Barbara Sutnick[33] chastise the Jewish Agency and camp directors, calling upon the words of Talmud Bavli (Peachim 64b): לא שומחים על הנס **(Don't rely on the miracle).** When we assume that Americans and Israelis will engage in a successful mifgash (particularly one of such an intense and extended nature) because they are young, and because they share the common identifier

[30] Quote from shlicha "Mya", 20 years old. Name changed.
[31] Quote from Rosh Mishlachat "Lital", 27 years old. Name changed.
[32] Quote from from shaliach "Ron," 20 years old. Name changed.
[33] Ezrachi, Elan and Barbara Sutnick. (1997) *Israel in Our Lives: Israel Education through Encounters with Israelis.* Ed. Barry Chazan, Elan Ezrachi et al. Jerusalem, 1997 The CRB Foundation, The Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education, and the Charles R. Bronfman Centre for the Israel Experience: Mifgashim.

"Jew" and a Western culture, we rely on miracles to meet our educational goals. Preparation – in the form of Intercultural Education – is the measure by which we can mete out success, without reliance upon miracles.

Chapter Three: Intercultural Education

Part I: Introduction

Intercultural Education aims to provide learners with skills necessary in encountering individuals of other cultures. The goal is to inculcate cultural objectivity – to teach learners that the ways in which individuals make meaning is relative to a system of cultural norms that cannot be judged by any absolute measure. Intercultural education was first conceived in the early 1970s Peace Corps volunteers. Since then, it has been employed with business people, foreign service officers, missionaries, military personnel, and in the classroom, as a measure of promoting a pluralist society where there exist a diversity of cultures (in places such as the European Union[34] and the United States). [35]

Intercultural education is designed to:

Figure 3: Goals of Intercultural Education[36]

[34] An internet search on "intercultural education" or "cross-cultural education" reveals that the European Union has adopted this field as manner of increasing cultural awareness when nations' borders grow ever-more discrete.
[35] Kohls, Robert L. and John M Knight. (1994) "Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook". Boston: Intercultural Press. xii
[36] ibid

Educator Sheila Ramsey defines culture in the frame of intercultural education:

> Culture is a frame of reference consisting of learned patterns of behavior, values, assumptions and meaning, which are shared to varying degrees of interest, importance and awareness with members of a group; culture is the story of reality that individuals and groups value and accept as a guide for organizing their lives...it has to do with how we create meaning in our lives and how we behave according to the meanings we create. Patterns of behavior and values are learned and passed through generations and across groups. They are widely shared and not frequently overtly discussed. Simultaneously they provoke emotional reactions when violated, are more obvious when in contrast, can be quite paradoxical and may be both accepted and rejected at the same time...In studying culture we are studying the common rules, the common assumptions, the common values that are the foundations of the external behavior which we can see, touch and feel.[37]

The process of intercultural education includes learning a) cultural-general skills: learning about the ways in which any culture organizes itself in terms of social norms, patterns of behavior and making meaning (focusing on one's own culture as a model and means of understanding how *I* make sense of the world) and b) culture –specific skills: becoming culturally competent in the fundamentally different social norms of a foreign culture.

[37] Ramsey, Sheila. (1996) "Creating a Context: Methodologies in Intercultural Teaching and Training." In *Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning*. Ed.H Ned Seeyle. Boston: Intercultural Press. 9-10

Intercultural education concerns guiding learners to recognize and appreciate differences among cultures; it involves a distinction between sympathy and empathy: when one sympathizes, one views another's situation from one's own perspective (this is called projection). Empathy involves viewing the situation from the perspective of another – "without projecting self into it." Intercultural Education helps learners to empathize, and to move away from projection. Sheila Ramsey writes,

> (Intercultural Educators) are suggesting that one can adjust to new ways of being and doing and that life will be richer and deeper for having encountered differences. We call attention to strategies for encountering change, unfamiliarity, and ambiguity in creative ways. Our work demonstrates that it is both possible and positive to realize that **what is taken as "common sense" is indeed "cultural sense."** It becomes possible to see that the consensual reality in which one lives is only real to the extent that one believe and accepts the power of that consensus. And we suggest that such realization is partner to the development of consciousness, that is, the capability to become self-reflective about the habits of heart and mind and the ways these are expressed in daily life. [38]

The language employed by Ramsey, and throughout Intercultural Education (regarding the process of becoming self-reflective – of being able to recognize one's own paths of meaning making in confluence or contrast with the ways of others) demonstrates a goal of a pluralist attitude. In a pluralist framework, the learner strives to uncover the why a certain culture believes, practices, acts, how different people go about "knowing the world" and "making meaning." Pluralism in education directly implies the presence of dialogue – a back-and-forth exchange between different kinds of knowers. This is not possible in a system wherein there is one, all-encompassing truth or cultural system to be transmitted. And dialogue implies a presence of diversity in opinions –pluralist education appreciates the multiple truths of

[38] Ibid. 14

individuals and groups. A pluralist attitude includes acknowledging others "truths" without diminishing your own "truth." Intercultural Education would teach a pluralist attitude – the absence of which hinders the mifgash.

That both the Jewish Agency and the Union for Reform Judaism view the Summer Shlichim Program as a "success," despite the findings of Bram and Neria (and others) indicates that there is some miscommunication occurring. One only needs to speak with the shlichim, as I did, to grasp the degree of polarization taking place in even the most "fully integrated" camp. Perhaps some confusion arises due to the fact that shlichim report having had "fun" or an "overall good time" despite having been turned off to American Jews. Intercultural Education needs to be implemented at every level of the summer camp staff – including management – so that directors can internalize what Intercultural Education implicitly teaches: two culturally disparate groups cannot be tossed together and be expected to successfully communicate.

The intercultural mifgash taking place in the summer camp is further complicated by the multilayered assumptions Americans and Israelis hold regarding one another. On one hand, Americans overestimate the degree of similarity shared by the groups. A century of Israel Education in North America fostered among American Jews the feeling that Israel was the Jewish version of the American dream – a vision which served to cultivate affinity among Americans with Israel. Instead of teaching of the unique place which was incredibly dissimilar from America, the place had to be taught via an American's cultural context (the opposite of an Intercultural Education paradigm). Walter Ackerman writes,

> (Images of Israel in textbooks are) replete with themes central to the creed of American liberalism: humanitarianism and social

> justice, modernism, progress, support for the underdog, uniqueness and example. The resort to a moral fervor drawn from the vocabulary of the American ethos suggest a locus of legitimacy that conditions the terms of interest, identifications, and support[39].

The result of such education-for-emotional-attachment (versus understanding) is the following incorrect assumption, explained by Ezrachi and Sutnick: "People grow up aware of other cultures. Americans expect Japanese or Mexicans, for example, to be 'different.' However Diaspora Jews, in part because of their emotional attachment to Israel, tend to blur the key distinctions between themselves and Israelis."[40] Such an assumption sets Americans up for confusion upon meeting the unfamiliar characters who populate the shlichim program. If, instead of teaching "sameness" we explicitly teach the "key distinctions" to both Israelis and Americans (imparting "culture-specific skills"), then we can expect different results from those reported by Bram and Neria.

Though Americans tend to diminish the cultural differences between themselves and Israelis, at the same time they also the Israeli up on a pedestal, viewing him as the "exotic other" who lives out a Jewish, communal utopian existence – very different from the every-man-for-himself capitalist American lifestyle. From the comfort of his suburban enclave, the American Jew imagines the Israeli making the desert bloom, praying at the Kotel and eating falafel with his army brothers. Israelis are heroic – extraordinary figures of mythic proportions. Whereas this perception of Israel and Israelis serves to build reverence and affiliation, it is detrimental in mifgash – in the instance that an American and Israeli should actually come face to face with one another. The assumed "sameness" and paradoxical mythologizing serve to

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[39] Ackerman, Walter. (1996) "Israel in American Jewish Education." In Alon Gal, ed. *Envisioning Israel*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press 182

[40] Ezrachi and Sutnick. (1997) 4

create an uncritical identification with Israel which blinds Americans to significant cultural differences.

This speaks to the difficulty of acting as a "shaliach" – shlichim are not only expected to "represent" Israel (whatever that means), but also to represent all those mythological qualities that Americans have come – subconsciously or otherwise – to expect of them. Ezra Kopelowitz reports[41] that the mifgash is doubly confusing to Israelis, who are not adequately instructed to move away from their culturally imprinted classic Zionist way of viewing the world – a mode of operating that does *not* make room for differences and the appreciation of other Jewish cultures. While Jewish Agency personnel preach an approach of Jewish Peoplehood, they are in fact, continuing to practice a Classic Zionist paradigm. This "paradigm confusion" subsequently causes the shlichim to be confused – "in moments of uncertainty (shlichim)...revert to the representative educational posture that is the main characteristic of the Classical Zionist paradigm" because this is the mode with which they are most familiar and comfortable. However, the consequence of this confusion is a "reinforcing of a sense of 'us' vs. 'them' (Israel vs. the Diaspora)..."[42]

Martin Buber understood that this situation – the retreat to a "fall-back position" is inevitable. Buber biographer Aubrey Hodes writes, "Buber was conscious that one of the ways men avoid facing a situation unprepared is to erect around themselves a fence of dogma or 'certainty.' Then, when a situation arises, a man does not have to decide anything, but merely retreats behind the fence around him and follows the rules imposed upon him. He does not

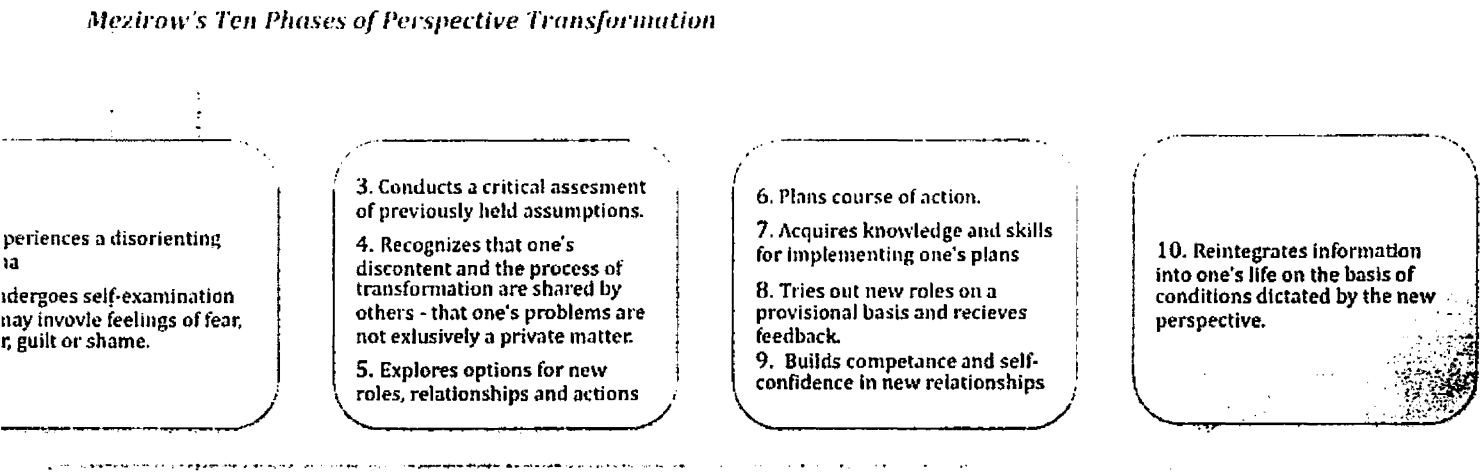
[41] Kopelowitz, Ezra. (2003) 20.
[42] Ibid,20

ask, 'What do I think?[43]" In the case of the mifgash in the Reform summer camp, the retreat is a dangerous one: the "certainty" to which Israelis in camp cling relies upon the tenets of the hierarchical classic Zionist system in which Americans – and American Reform Judaism in particular – are denigrated. Because the Israelis are not provided with appropriate intercultural training – both culture-general (teaching them, first and foremost, that the classic Zionist view of the world is entirely subjective to a certain Israeli culture and is destructive to building relationships with Diaspora Jews) and culture-specific (teaching them about Reform Judaism and American culture in general as to break down the stereotypes so rooted in the Israeli ethos).

Instead of measuring success in terms of the popularity of the shlichim program, or even the fun had by participants (although this is an important factor), perhaps we should be measuring the degree to which individuals have been able to undergo a perspective transformation because of the encounter. Psychologist Jack Mezirow's Ten Phases of Perspective Transformation can serve as a measure of our success.

[43] Hodes, Aubrey. (1971) *Martin Buber: An Intimate Portrait.* New York: Viking Press. 16

Figure 4: Mezirow[44]



When Ezra Kopelowitz reports that shlichim fall back upon comfortable Classic Zionist assumptions, we can understand that the dearth of intercultural training has impeded the shaliach from moving beyond phase one or two. The "disorienting dilemma" here represents any sort of cultural cognitive dissonance: the Israeli is confronted with an American cultural norm which deviates from his own system. Instead of interpreting the experience through culturally objective lenses (step three), he becomes confused, angry – and eventually accuses the American of being inferior ("spoiled" or "immature"). For example, when I interviewed shlichim in one camp last summer, each reported having been deeply disturbed by a particular Reform liturgical ritual: communal recitation of the *Kaddish Yatom* (the Mourner's Kaddish). Most Israeli Jews are accustomed to hearing this prayer uttered only by male mourners, and

[44] Chart adapted from Tickton Shuster, Diane. (2003) *Jewish Lives, Jewish Learning , Adult Jewish Learning in Theory and Practice.* New York: UAHC Press. 107

because they do not attend synagogue, they associate this prayer with events of extreme sadness, such as funerals and Shiva – particularly upon the death of a soldier. I received feedback such as, "It reminds us of the funerals we've been to. It's like – 'Oh my God – how can they do it?' It's like they're making a joke...it's really difficult for us to hear" and "It's really disgusting how the Americans take this prayer and turn it into something totally different. They don't even understand that we lost friends in the army." Because no one thought to prepare the Israelis to hear this prayer uttered in a wholly new environment, because no one conceived that it might be important to explain to them the significance of the liturgical change made to include non-mourners (and the implicit beauty in standing alongside your neighbor as he mourns) the Israelis were not able to view the experience through any other cultural context but their own. Thus they failed to move beyond phase two – their perspective not only remained unchanged, it was cemented.

Part II: Implementation

Directors

When I recently spoke with a few camp directors they insisted that no curriculum or paradigm could be universally implemented in all thirteen URJ camps: each camp is so different (some have less than five shlichim, some have close to forty), they argued, that any plan to mandate educational goals or standards across the board would be impossible. These directors have incredibly close ties to the Jewish Agency personnel and are devoted to the summer shlichim program – I was only privileged to share a conversation with them because they chose to travel to Israel to personally participate in the recruitment process of shlichim (only a handful of directors make this a priority) – thus they cannot be dismissed as disinterested in the mifgash

(on the contrary, each director is extremely devoted to his Israeli delegation). This conversation helped me to understand that while the camps cannot be handed a standard curriculum to implement, they should engage in a re-visioning process regarding the mifgash. In order to accomplish this, it is clear to me that intercultural education must begin at the level of professional development for the camp directors. Guided by an educator equipped to present the findings of Bram and Neria, and the ethos of Intercultural Education, the camp directors should be encouraged to create a shared vision for the mifgash at camp. They should be prepared to answer the questions, "What does success in mifgash look like?" and "How do we make this happen?" If the directors grasp the necessity of Intercultural Education, they will view it as an asset instead of a threat to their existing programs. It is only with the buy-in of the individual directors that any curriculum will find success in camp.

Pre-camp training

The Jewish Agency conducts a five-day preparatory summer for the shlichim in April, a month in advance of their departure (there is no parallel experience for American staff members: their training begins during "staff week" at camp, when the Israelis are also present). The seminar touches briefly on the areas of individual Jewish Identity (there is an hour-and-a-half program titled "Journey to my Jewish Identity"), what the Israelis should expect from American campers and staff, camp hierarchy and structure, and the specifics pertaining to the various camp movements. However, the majority of the program time at the seminar is dedicated to teaching the Israelis how to "bring Israel" to America by teaching them to teach Israel. Figure five, below, is a list of only some of the programs which aim to transform these Israelis into "shlichim."

Figure 5: Becoming a Shaliach

My Israel and programming at camp
To help Shlichim translate "their Israel" into programming opportunities in camp.
Goals of session:

- To introduce the concept of "Israel programming" in camp and the various opportunities that already exist and ones that can be created.
- To help define the meaning of "Shlichut" and its themes.
- To provide an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings about Israel from their personal journals.
- To develop several educational methods and models to be used for Israel programming.

Israel Education
The group leaders will use this time to help the Shlichim connect the various ideas and concepts that were raised over the seminar as part of their journey to find "My Israel" and introduce them to some educational methods. The emphasis is on bringing the Israel of today to camp. Not old notions, but the Israel the Shlichim themselves know and love.

Tisha B'Av
This session will address the educational values and themes around this Remembrance Day which falls in the middle of the summer and is part of camp programming.

Masa
To introduce Shlichim to "MASA- Israel Journey" a joint initiative of the Israeli Government and The Jewish Agency to promote long term programs in Israel for Jewish youth worldwide.
Goals of session:
- To stress the impact long term Israel programs have on Jewish identity.
- To show them methods and tools to bring the concept of Masa to camp staff and older campers.
- To familiarize them with the various programs and opportunities available as part of the Masa. The session will include a panel of current MASA program participants, all camp alum, who will share their experience and the impact that their time in Israel is having on them

The Summer Shlichim Mission statement, included in the packet provided to camp directors explains that they are

> "providing Jewish camps with quality educational personnel who are visionaries, with the professional skills and proficiencies in the area of informal education, enabling them to strengthen and nurture Jewish identity and the connection to Israel of the target population...through Jewish-Zionist education and by emphasizing the centrality of Israel in the Jewish life."

It is unfair to these Israelis to define them as "quality educational personnel" and "visionaries" – these are large shoes to fill. While they each bring unique talents and voices to camp, forcing them into the role of representing Israel as *educators* when they are actually

army lieutenants and artists (for example), makes these individuals act and think in the Classic Zionist mode.

So much more of the seminar should be dedicated to Intercultural learning, and not planning for camp programming. In one summer camp, I observed a conflict that erupted as a result of this educational training: the shlichim pre-planned their Yom Yisrael programming at the seminar, meaning that the American staff in camp were discouraged from participating in the process at camp. The events they planned were ill-suited for this particular camp, and simultaneously served to reinforce stereotypes Americans hold regarding a mythical Israel. The day was unsuccessful. For the second session, the Israelis abandoned their seminar training and worked with a group of American staff (many of whom had spent semesters in Israel); both the mifgash that took place as a result of the joint planning and the day were very successful. Thus, while the Israelis should be provided with some basic information regarding how to program for camp, and certainly should discuss how to translate their vision of Israel to the Americans (both campers and staff), the seminar should be a time for exploring one's own culture personal ways of making meaning, and learning about the host culture (American Reform Jews).

Staff Week

In all URJ camps, general staff training begins a week in advance of the campers' arrival. This is the time in which the mifgash formally begins, and when intercultural education should be utilized as a means of fostering dialogue and preventing future conflict between coworkers. One of my interviewees, Dana,[45] an experienced Rosh Mishlachat, explained the importance of

[45] Name has been changed

engaging the staff in intercultural conversations during staff week. "This year we didn't do it – (the administration) told me there wasn't enough time. So this year is not a good year for the Israelis. But last year I lead a program during staff week about the cultural differences and it went really well. Of course it went – whoosh! – over their heads – once the summer started, but because we did the course, (when there was conflict between Americans and Israelis) we were able to say 'Do you remember what we said during staff week?'" Dana also likes to lead the administration (unit heads, educators and directors) through a brief intercultural training seminar during their training.

Unfortunately, not all Rashei Mishlachat ("Rosh Mishlachats") are as experienced as Dana; when I spoke with one of the coordinators of the Summer Shlichim program, she admitted the program appoints Rashei Mishlachat based on whoever has the most camp experience. Some camps get lucky and become a second-home to a talented educator/shaliach who returns year after year to guide the mifgash. Most camps, however, are essentially without a qualified mifgash mediator. Such a person is necessary in camp, especially during staff week for training.[46]

Part III: Recommendations
a) culture-specific material

The Jewish Agency has incorporates some aspects of Intercultural Education into their annual weekend preparatory seminar, conducted a month in advance of the shaliach's departure for camp. The seminar includes sessions such as "My Jewish identity" (in which participants are encouraged to articulate their personal sense of Jewish identity for perhaps the

[46] Bram and Neria site this as one of the greatest barriers to mifgash

first time in their lives, an important culture-general skill), an activity called "*Raffa Raffa*" (a mistranslation of a classic Intercultural Education activity called BaFa BaFa, in the culture-general scope, originally designed for the US Navy) and a number of activities with the directors designed to discuss some basic "cultural differences" and generally set appropriate expectations for the coming summer.

But Dana the Rosh Mishlachat (and an attendee at nearly a decade of preparatory seminars) confessed to me, "Please don't tell my bosses, but (the intercultural education at the seminar) is not enough." Having observed these programs and the subsequent "mifgash" at camp, I must agree. The Jewish Agency, having briefly touched upon Intercultural Education at the seminar, leaves the rest of the training in the hands of the camp directors, to be attended to during staff- week – this may or may not happen, and even in the best of circumstances, is not thorough.

What *should* a through preparation for the Israeli-American intercultural encounter cover? Some key distinctions: appearance, social norms, language and communication, religion, historical narrative and age – separate American from Israeli in the summer camp specifically. These categorical distinctions are subject matter for culture-specific Intercultural Education. The following subheading describe the cultural differences between Americans and Israelis, and provide the background for culture-specific Intercultural Education, aimed at building cultural competence.[47]

[47] In "Israel in Our Lives," Ezrachi and Sutnick discuss the dire need for Intercultural Education prior to and during summer camp. Drawing from IE literature, they highlight the central distinguishing characteristics between American and Israeli Jews that must be addressed. I have drawn from Ezrachi and Sutnick's list of necessary

Appearance

Ezrachi and Sutnick point out that while Israelis look Western, there are discernable characteristics in their dress code that can "out" them as Israelis. One camp director with whom I've worked banned staff t-shirts from being "Israelified" – ripped at the neck (the Israelis loved this term and there was, subsequently, a silly and touching moment after the campers left at the end of the summer when many of the staff joined together in officially decommissioning their shirts by "Israelifying" them). Israelis tend to dress more casually than Americans, but this is certainly not the cause of any tension in camp. Instead, the tension arises because of an imbalance in wealth among the two staffs, and a lack of understanding regarding the discrepancies between the American and Israeli economies. Israeli's come to view the Americans as spoiled, owning "too much" clothing and judging those clothes to be "too expensive." Some of the Israelis I interviewed reported being "disgusted" with their campers and co-counselors – simply due to the breadth of their wardrobe. If in the context of intercultural education, Israelis came to learn that Americans are spending *relatively* the same amount of money on clothes as the Israelis themselves. Americans, on average (and American Reform Jews are above average), earn 2/3 more than Israelis and clothing can cost anywhere from 25% to 100% less than it does in Israel. For this reason, a popular "day-off" destination for Israeli shlichim is the outlet mall or local shopping center – I have often joked with Israelis in camp about the danger of year-round, life-long access to such prices (not to mention with a fuller wallet) – acknowledging how difficult it is to be fashionable and fabulous on an Israeli's

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subjects and have added two of my own (age and historical narrative) in order to compile a master list of the basic areas which need to be addressed in an intercultural educational preparation for mifgash.

budget in Israel. This personal and honest approach often hits home. Without an appreciation for this core economic discrepancy, harsh personal judgments often result.

Social norms

During staff week, most camps address some of the social norms which differentiate Israeli from American behavior. Central to these conversations is a discussion of Israeli communication style (direct, blunt) versus American communication style (more timid). But the conversation does not often extend far beyond "when-in-conflict-keep-in-mind." Issues such as communication style, perception of authority, need for personal space, learning habits, amount of spontaneity, individuality, gender relations, distance and intimacy and worth ethic all require our attention. Because we don't teach toward basic conversational fluency in social norms, we are setting mifgashim up for tension. What is normal or obvious in one culture simply is not normal or obvious in another. For example, on the first night of staff week, a large group of shlichim with whom I worked one summer were horrified by the behavior of their American hosts. After being greeted warmly, the Americans promptly took off to the local bars with their old camp friends – leaving the Israelis alone on the camp's main field, wondering what happened, why they had been left behind. Hospitality is central in Israeli culture - had the situation been reversed, the Israelis would have made sure that every American found a place in a car leaving camp. Americans, however, are far more reserved and less excited to invite a stranger into the home. These Americans were old friends who had not seen one another in a year or more – they were happy to meet the Israelis, but did not feel responsible for them (the Israelis would have felt responsible, had the roles been reversed). The Americans did not leave out the Israelis because they were mean, but because it was not natural for them to do so (this doesn't rule out a discussion regarding which way is "friendlier" or even "better" – such

conversations can be fruitful when the proper culture-general preparation has occurred beforehand). In another camp, however, I witnessed a highly successful policy which solved the problem and served to forge social bonds between the two groups: no car was allowed to leave camp without at least one Israeli and one American. The director was self-conscious and open regarding this policy, and it was embraced by the entire staff. The groups discussed the differences in hospitality among Americans and Israelis – and enjoyed their days off together. Intercultural education and a pluralist outlook admit that it impossible for people to entirely avoid judgment in such cases, especially when we believe, for example, that hospitality is an absolute value. Holding a pluralist attitude doesn't necessarily mean being perfectly objective, it only requires that individuals acknowledge that their definition of "normal," their ways of making meaning in the world, are not universally held, and to make room for other ways.

Language and Communication

Despite the fact that all shlichim are fluent (to varying degrees) in English, language presents a small barrier in summer camp. Israelis are constantly reminded to speak in English, even when speaking amongst themselves (when in the presence of Americans) as to prevent self-segregation, but Americans are not often reminded to be sensitive to the fact that Israelis are not native speakers. Ron, a shaliach (and an extremely competent English speaker) shared the following frustration with me: "Sometimes it sucks because I need to think about my words – if I want to say something to the kids, I need to think about the words, like 'How do you say it?' – I'm losing myself – It's really hard." Israelis explained to me repeatedly that they were often too embarrassed to ask Americans to repeat themselves. Without patronizing the Israelis,

Americans must learn to speak more slowly, avoiding complex idioms, and also to be patient, allowing Israelis fair time to process and share their thoughts.

Religion

Judaism is understood very differently by Israeli Jews and American Reform Jews. Ezrachi and Sutnick write, "One would think that religion is the *uniting* force linking Jews to one another, but this is not quite the case. To paraphrase George Bernard Shaw, North American Jews and Israelis are two people separated by a common religion."[48] Israeli Judaism and American Judaism are fundamentally distinct largely because they represent majority and minority communities, respectively. Israeli Jews are actually more comparable to American Protestants in their practice and affiliation – they are surrounded by a dominant culture which tends to their identity. Whereas all of my Protestant friends in childhood celebrated Christmas in the street and at home under the tree, none of them went to church. Similarly, my Israeli family and friends live Jewish lives on a cultural level, having a seder at Passover, but never attend synagogue. On the other hand, American Jews must *choose* to remain culturally identified.

Charles Liebman and Yaacob Yadgar explain, "(In Israel)...calling oneself a Jew and acting out basic Jewish ritual – is a consequence of an absence of real alternatives. The alternative to being Jewish (being Arab) may be unacceptable to (Israelis)."[49] Just as the Protestant American doesn't conceive an alternative (other than being totally secular, without the civil components, which is almost as impossible in America as it is in Israel), the Israeli has only one identity-choice. This is compounded by an overwhelming cultural and formal

[48] Ezrachi, Elan and Barbara Sutnick (1997) 9
[49] Liebman, Charles and Yaacob Yadgar (2004) 175

education in us-against-them philosophy, thus Judaism does appear to be the only viable option to the Israeli Jew.

On the other hand, alternatives do exist for the American Jew. Any American Jew that makes the choice to identify and participate in Judaism in making a values statement. Jan Katzew writes: "The Reform Movement is consciously non-*halachic*, accepting the axiom that the prize of autonomy, for individuals and congregations, is worth the price[50]." Katzew at once hails the choices implicit in identifying as a Reform Jew and, though declared a fair trade, he admits that for these freedoms we do pay a price. This "price" has manifested itself in our generation as the rampant deification of the self or, as Cohen and Eisen, in their now famous study *The Jew Within*, term "The Sovereign Self." Because American Judaism is so colored by the prevailing Western wind of self-government, Judaism is one of any number of choices. Cohen explains,

> On cultural and attitudinal levels, (American) Jews evince the same sorts of changes that have emerged in other religious (and ethnic) groups, albeit in ways peculiar to Jews and Judaism. To state matters more succinctly, they are more voluntary, autonomous, personalist, and non-judgementalist. Voluntarism implies a readiness to select those particular forms of activity and belief that appeal to them, with a far less sense of guilt, shame, or obligation to custom, law, and tradition. Autonomy refers to locating the source of commitment and obligation within oneself rather that in some outside (heteronymous) ideology or religious system, and to insisting upon choice and control in practicing Judaism. Personalism refers to using the extent of personal meaning as the arbiter and measure of Jewish involvement...[51]

[50] Katzew, Jan. (2004) "A Reformation in Jewish Education" in *The Ultimate Jewish Teacher's* Handbook ed by Nachama Moskowitz. 35

[51] Cohen, Steven M. (2002) "Changing Conceptions of Jewish Collectivity AmongYoung Adult Jews and Their Implications for Jewish Education." The Research Unit, Department of Jewish-Zionist Education, The Jewish Agency for Israel. 5

Yet those who do come to identify with Reform Judaism, particularly those American staff members who feel pulled to return to camp year after year, do so in large part due to a deep seated desire for communal connection in the midst of an overwhelming individualist American culture. I have found it extremely difficult for an Israeli to understand the craving Americans feel for community, because army-aged shlichim are often intensely looking forward to breaking free from such bonds. Americans become enamored with camp because it is the kind of community that many Israelis have built-in. Israelis deal with the imposition of their community: they are called upon to serve in the army, some in the younger generations have begun to adopt a post-modern attitude in rebelling against an overwhelming sense of collective interest in Israel – but even in light of the post-modern trend, Israelis remain strongly nationally identified. Following the army, many Israelis escape on their treks across the Far East, reveling in an overdose of individualism. But, as Kopelowitz reports[52], even when on these tiyyulim, Israelis tend to stick together, meeting fellow travelers and gathering at a Passover seder in Nepal, or congregating on Moon Beach in Thailand.

Because theirs is the majority culture, and because the religious symbols were appropriated by the pioneers of the State, Israeli Judaism is a public affair, involving civil ceremony and few personal choices. Kopelowitz distinguishes between Israeli Jews and Jewish Israelis by measuring the degree to which respondents were comfortable with Kashrut (a ritual religious practice) in a variety of locations[53]. Kopelowitz's study demonstrates that Israeli Jews (as opposed to Jewish Israelis) are *likely* to desire Kashrut in public institutions and gatherings

[52] Kopelowitz, Ezra and Lior Rosenberg. (2004) "'Israeli Jews' vs. 'Jewish Israelis' and the Ritual Connection to Diaspora Jewry." *Presented at Conference on "Dynamic Jewish Belonging,"* The Advanced Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
[53] Ibid.

only (such as the army and at weddings), and at the same time cannot imagine themselves living as Jews outside of Israel. Jewish ritual is thus an expression of nationality – it does not "fit" outside of Israel. Choosing to act out ritual because of any personal inclination is an Orthodox proposition (bad). Equating "religion" with the Orthodoxy, kashrut in the home is something extreme, whereas kashrut in university is expected (it is, of course, a Jewish country!).

American Reform Jews hold fast to a contrasting system of belief: the freedom to choose is both an essentially Reform and American ideal. The idea that a religious ritual should be mandated by the government or even be *expected* of them is offensive – the informed choice (although this is the best case scenario – "whim" is also clearly at work today) to either participate or deny ritual is the hallmark of Reform theology. Imposition, assumed by an Israeli, is understood by an American as a violation of one's civil liberties. Choice, celebrated by an American, is left to the Orthodox in Israel. When Israelis arrive at a camp that is not fully kosher, they are often shocked by the fact that campers are allowed to choose to put cheese on their meat taco. Despite the fact that these shlichim are not, themselves, personally kosher – they become disgusted with camp because according to their cultural-normal system, a "true" Jewish institution mandates kashrut (or doesn't play music on Shabbat, or any number of trespasses upon the same halacha that these Israelis personally reject). These shlichim do not consider themselves hypocritical when they partake in cheese or guitar playing– they believe it is the institution's job to maintain Jewish identity for the community (although they would certainly not articulate it as such). Intercultural education would help the Israelis to examine the ways in which each culture makes meaning and forms Jewish identity – when they are able

to objectively approach the Reform table, they might even come to appreciate the system of personal meaning making – just as the American would learn to appreciate the collective identity of the Israeli.

In an interview with Shalom Orzach , director of Avi Chai[54], a program for shlichim returning to camp for a second or third summer, he reported that during reflection/training seminars, he often provokes the shlichim to evoke the statement "רפורמים עושים מה שנוח להם" (Reform Jews do whatever feels comfortable to them"). He can count on at least one participant uttering this near mantra, due to a life-time of classic Zionist hierarchical education (which denigrates Reform Judaism) and a negative experience with religion at camp. Orzach prompts his participants think about what that statement really means – don't Israelis do what is comfortable? Is there something wrong with strongly identifying as an Israeli or a Jew *and* being comfortable? If this statement implies that Reform Jews are making some religious choices, does it mean we don't believe anyone should choose? He reports that this conversation is often very intense and fruitful for the participants – it forces them to stop "falling back" into familiar dogma, and instead to really focus on what it is that both Reform Jews and Israelis believe. This kind of intercultural education would benefit all of our shlichim and our American staff – not just the handful who return for a second summer.

Intercultural education not only affords the opportunity for more objective thinking, but also to begin to introduce Israelis to a more pluralist understanding of Judaism and Jewish Identity. The summer camps do a great disservice to the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism – tools provided by intercultural education would help break down the walls that

[54] October, 2008

prevent many Israelis from being open to Progressive Judaism in camp and upon return to Israel. A successful mifgash actually has the power to transform perspective, and weaken the Orthodox stronghold on Judaism in Israel.

Historical Narrative

A great barrier to the mifgash is the Israeli's us-against them conception of Jewish identity – what Professor Salo Wittmayer Baron famously labeled as 'the lachrymose view of Jewish history." In an effort to constantly remind young Israelis of the danger posed to the country and to foster a sense of urgency and relevancy for the military draft, Israelis continue to teach a version of Jewish history which paints the Jew as the constant victim. When President Bush, upon exiting Yad Vashem, stated rhetorically that he could not imagine what it was like to be a Jew or an Israeli, Israeli Foreign Minister (the representative of the Jewish State to the world at large) saw fit to present him with a written definition: "To be a Jew is to dream Shoah, to live Shoah, to die Shoah – without having been there. To be an Israeli child is to try to imagine the number six million and never get to the full understanding of what that number is .... To be a mother in Israel is to discover, surprisingly that you have transmitted to your child collective memory and the Shoah experience...To be a Jewish leader in Israel is to think whether you would have seen the writing on the wall if you were there, and if you would have made the right decision on time, to understand the breadth of responsibility and to mainly swear not to forget.[55]"

[55] Livni says that this is her "personal definition" and that she wrote it before she became Foreign Minister. Rosenblum, the author of the article in which it appeared likened her response to a scenario in which one person politey asks, "How are you?" and another takes this question as an opportunity to unload all of his ailments and personal issues. In Doron Rosenblum, "טקסט ופרשו" (translated from Hebrew) in *Musaf Ha'aretz* (supplement to *Ha'aretz*). Jan 18, 2008.

While Livni's words are particularly extreme, they make manifest the sentiment of constant victimization. The Israeli, now equipped to defend himself, is charged to play David against today's Goliath, and in the process of becoming David, the Israeli Jew (until recently) was not taught to consider that Judaism was something to celebrate, to choose and to practice.

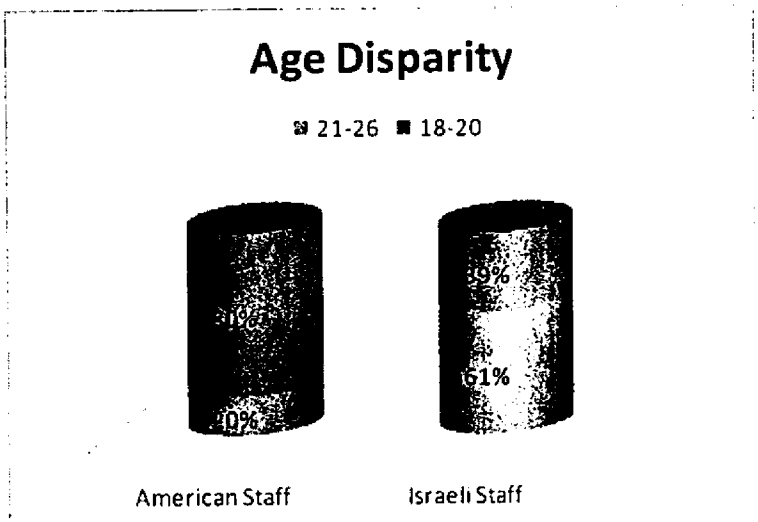
When the Israelis arrive in summer camp, they are (usually) still serving in the army, very much mired in a real David's battle, and so spoon-fed on doom and gloom that the celebratory nature of Reform Judaism (especially in summer camps) can seem suspect to them, often turns them off and even disgusts them. For the Israeli Jew, as discussed above, military service is the ultimate expression of Judaism. In a very different speech concerning the growing rift between American and Israeli Jews, Foreign Minister Livni said, "In Israel today, the common denominators are Hebrew and military service, and these represent Israeliness - not something that is a shared experience with the Jews of the Diaspora. We have to strengthen in Israel the understanding of our Jewish essence as a people, the meaning of the existence of a Jewish and democratic state[56]." Precisely because military service is the common denominator to Israeliness, and precisely because Israeli Jews equate Israeliness with Jewishness, those Americans who do not share the Israeli experienced are incorrectly judged as "less Jewish." Clashes occur in mifgashim at camp because Israelis have yet to develop a positive sense of Jewish identity – in meeting a community that necessarily relies on the positive (otherwise members would choose to identify elsewhere), Israelis become confused and angry, assuming that Americans don't "get it" – going so far as to (at least once every summer in my experience) asking if the Americans aren't worried that a holocaust will happen in the United States.

[56] Retig, Haviv. "Livni: Israel-Diaspora link weakening." Jerusalem Post, 1/7/08. http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1198517309873&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull

The development of a positive Jewish identity among Israelis must be systemic, and educators are working toward this very end. But in terms of intercultural education, both Americans and Israelis can learn an appreciation for the differing Jewish historical narratives among Israeli and American Jews – exploring the narratives and the history of each community will help both sides come into mutual understanding. The assumption that we share the same narrative (if not the same history) leads to the incorrect assumption that we share the same religious identity – so when we come into conflict with one another, we are quick to judge and denigrate. Intercultural Education in the Israeli-American mifgash context would have to include lessons aimed at guiding participants to the understanding that Jewish identity is subjective to the historical circumstances in which it was formed.

Age

Figure 6



Every Israeli I interviewed in camp listed the discrepancy in age as a (if not *the)* major barrier in mifgash. Israelis labeled Americans as "immature," Americans reported being very frustrated with this moniker. Dana, the Rosh Mishlachat (the designated leader of the mishlachat in a camp) at one camp explained to me, "Israelis are older – in the army or after the army... they're very independent people. Most of them are *commanders* in the army and they come here, and the (American) staff is at a

different maturity level... so you hear a lot of 'I'm the only one in the bunk who stresses discipline or follows rules or makes sure the kids are doing what they're supposed to do.'" Though they often choose to express their frustrations in a counterproductive manner (name-calling and retreating to the hierarchy), this problem is rooted both in a lack of intercultural education and simple fact. Figure six above[57] depicts the age discrepancy between the two groups, an equation that cannot be ignored – but as the Israelis themselves often point out, this is not merely a discussion of numbers. The Israelis in camp have served years in the army, experiencing things that the Americans simply have not. Frustrations that rise from the age difference and inadequate intercultural training tend to lead the Israelis to lord their life experience over the Americans, and can eventually lead to a belief that the Americans don't have an understanding of the basic human conditions of stress, pressure and pain.

Before arriving at camp, Israelis need to have a discussion regarding the relativity of life experience; creating a hierarchy of hardships does nothing to forge bonds, and assuming that any individual has lived a simple life is naïve (again, the economic discussion must be a precursor because the Americans appearance often prevents the Israelis from seeing them as equals). Intercultural education aims to take away the value judgment applied to time spent in army versus college. It is also important to explain to Israelis that Americans deal with a pressure usually anathema to Israelis – at the age of 18 Americans are expected by society to leave home – and virtually never return (save for holidays). Israelis are still based out of their parents' homes, usually well into their twenties, enjoying a sense of security that American life does not afford. "Security," therefore, has a very different meaning to an Israeli than it does to

[57] The figures for American staff members were provided by Paul Reichenbach at the URJ. The figures for shlichim were derived from Koppelowitz and Rosenberg (2004)

an American – this does not diminish the security concerns of the 23-year-old army sergeant; it simply aims to show that Americans and Israelis operate within different systems with different sets of expectations and pressures – and because the two groups operate in completely separate contexts, we can and should not try to compare.

b) Settings for Intercultural Education

Before Camp

There are a number of opportunities for pre-camp intercultural education. I suggest the following venues as opportunities for both learning and dialogue in advance of the actual mifgash:

www.facebook.com

Facebook is promoted as a "social utility that connects you with the people around you."[58] Facebook is the world's #1 social networking site, and teenagers report spending countless hours on it. It is a method of keeping in touch, of self-promotion, and of event promotion. The group "URJ Eisner Camp Staff 2008" (www://facebook.com/group.php?gid=10559332413) exemplifies the potential inherent in such a popular site (one on which staff members can spend multiple hours each day): if an educator were to retain administrative rites to these camp staff groups, they could be used to foster intercultural communication. Both Israelis and Americans – upon being officially hired – should be invited to join the staff group; they could even be contractually obligated to join the group and to participate in a few, brief and *fun* preparatory readings and online activities. I created such material for an intercultural dialogue group (on a separate website), and discovered that many of the participants were eager to

[58] www.facebook.com

discuss questions I posed to them in the group forum (Facebook's "message board" would serve a similar purpose). Most importantly, the online group would serve to acquaint the participants with one another prior to the summer (specifically to help the Israelis become ingratiated into the already established community of Americans) and to make space for the Israelis to ask questions about camp, Reform Judaism to the veteran American staff and educator/site moderator.

Chevruta and "American Experience"

If the Israelis were already connected with some of the American staff members prior to camp, it could make a tremendous difference in the mifgash that takes place during staff week. Naturally, the Americans gravitate immediately toward their old friends, whom they have not seen since the previous summer, and the Israelis will feel more comfortable together. I suggest that a partnership program be established wherein veteran American staff members (either as volunteers or on a stipend) are partnered with shlichim, based on common interests, age and other factors. These "chevrutot" would pair to discuss some of the questions posed on Facebook, but moreover it would be understood that the American staff member would act as hosts, or "shlichim" for the American Jewish staff, so that the Israelis would feel more welcomed into the community. Instead of travelling directly to camp from the airport, the Israelis could spend a day or two in the homes of their American partner, getting a taste of American home ("real") life beyond camp. In the best case scenario, I propose that chevrutot engage in an "American Experience" – a pre-camp, community-building tour of a local American Jewish metropolis. Much of the criticism surrounding the "Israel Experience" teen tours to Israel involves arguments pertaining to a lack of contact, on the part of the participants, with

Israelis or "real" Israel (and a significant paucity of cultural competence). Program directors have attempted to remedy this situation with brief mifgashim –encounters between the tourists and groups of Israelis. These remedies pale in comparison, however, to a fully integrated approach: in the summer of 2006, I led a group through Israel in which both Americans and Israelis were present on the bus throughout. The journey was made profound by the intercultural conversations that were enabled by community built on the bus; Because the Americans were hosted in Israel by their fellow travelers – citizens all, they truly explored a "real" Israel and were privy to complexity, beauty and challenges in Israeli society that they would not have been otherwise. The Israelis felt privileged to see their home through the wide eyes of first time pilgrims – both groups earned unique insights into the country and it was a powerful transformation to watch.

Likewise, even a brief tour of a city such as New York – with both Americans and Israelis present - would afford both the opportunity to explore the ways in which Jewish identity manifests itself in America. Caryn Aviv and David Shneer imagine that New York will become a popular Jewish tourist destination, of equal significance to Israel. They write,

> (New York) is ground zero of the diaspora business, of global Jewish tourism, philanthropy, research institutes, and non-profit organizations. It is where Jewish identity and memory are manufactured, preformed, reinvented, contested, and then circulated throughout the world. It is the prototypical home for today's new Jews, a place in which they first plant roots, even if they eventually leave there for other locales...The yeshivas, schools philanthropies, and summer programs that use Israel as a backdrop for performing identity are usually based in New York. Moreover, New York is also poised to become a key tourist destination for Jewish youth identity travel.[59]

[59] Aviv, Caryn and David Shneer (2005) "New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora" New York: NYU Press. 137-138

For example: the 40 shlichim assigned to Camp Harlam (the URJ's largest camp, located in Pennsylvania) could be met by their chevruta partners upon arrival at JFK, five days in advance of staff week. They could spend time in both New York and Philadelphia, at sites of both Jewish and American significance. The conversation, throughout, would surround the question – "What makes a Jewish community?" Such a program would serve to present to the Israelis a Jewish community based almost entirely upon a positive identity, to provoke both Israelis and Americans to discuss the differences between their communities in a constructive manner and, ultimately, to begin the construction of a new Jewish community for the summer. This sort of travel program is not unprecedented; with a grant, an innovative curriculum and experienced educator, it could transform the mifgash.

During Camp

With the cooperation of the director, an educator or social worker specially trained in Intercultural Education would be responsible for a) implementing a comprehensive curriculum during staff week, b) mediating conflicts as they arise between American and Israeli staff members in the spirit of mifgash (something, a Summer Shlichim coordinator who wished not to be named admitted, the majority of Rashei Mishlachat are not equipped to do – "they are not educators, just older shlichim") and c) implementing periodic structured conversations for the mifgash throughout the summer as part of a staff development program. It would be optimal for each of the camps' elected mifgash coordinator (particularly if this person is, as it would likely be, an HUC student educator) to attend an annual training seminar. I believe that the implications of the mifgash – the potential educational success and the proven barriers that have been erected – are great enough to warrant a position in each camp dedicated specifically

to tending this relationship. Moreover, a coordinator at the organizational level would be extremely beneficial: someone hired to ensure that the goals of mifgash are being met, and to focus entirely on camp's role in building bridges between Israel and America. This person could travel among the camps during the summer, making sure that dialogue is taking place and the principles of intercultural education are being employed. I understand that the camp directors may be wary of such micromanagement, but if we understood the project of strengthening and reimagining the Israel-Diaspora relationship as a core mission and a team effort (and a matter of Intercultural Education instead of personal domain), and then perhaps an entirely different environment might exist at URJ camps.

After Camp

Even if a mifgash in camp is relatively successful, it is a failure if the participants do not see the experience as relevant to their life at home. Mezirow's tenth and final phase of perspective change figure four above) states that a person "reintegrates information into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective." Again, we rely on miracles if we assume that an isolated experience will transform the lives of the shlichim. Diane Tickton Schuster delivers the mandate that applies unilaterally across the field of Jewish education: "Relevance, relevance, relevance: help Jewish adults to see how what they are learning relates to their lives today.[60]" The best way in which we can help mifgash participants realize the relevance of the mifgash is to *extend it* into their lives after camp. The Avi Chai program, directed by Shalom Orzach, operates on this principle and engages shlichim in a number of seminars throughout the year to process the experience and cultivate perspective change. The following two

[60] Tickton Schuster, Diane. (2003) 121

suggestions were formulated after hearing from Orzach of the great success (not in terms of numbers, but in terms of perspective change) met by Avi Chai:

Cooperation with HUC Year in Israel Students

Last year, the Avi Chai program enjoyed the partnership of a group of volunteers from HUC in Jerusalem. Many of the American Rabbinical, Cantorial and Education students were eager to join Avi Chai shlichim at their retreats, in order to engage in a sort of extended mifgash (from the one started in camp). These students, while not representative of the "average" American Jew, are able to have deeper conversations with the returning shlichim regarding Progressive Judaism and social justice issues in Israel. Both HUC administration and Orzach reported to me that this mifgash was highly successful. Unfortunately, despite continued interest from a great number of students in this year's class, the mifgash did not take place, because – as an administrator from the college told me – no one in the URJ Youth Division (the department responsible for camping) responded to repeated calls to set dates for seminars. This indicated to this administrator (and to me) that *despite* the captive, free audience, a lack of appreciation regarding the import of educational mifgashim exists. At the very least, I recommend that the URJ take the HUC students up on their offer to join in dialogue with Avi Chai fellows. Beyond this, the HUC students could (and I believe that they would be very interested in doing so; their interest stems from their experiences at camp and from an interest in interacting with "real" Israelis) serve as a task force, planning and attending mifgashim (maybe twice annually) for shlichim returning from camp. Israelis could be made aware of these mifgashim prior to their departure for camp, understanding that their participation in one is part of the package.

Birthright Israel

The Youth Division of the Union for Reform Judaism manages both camping and Israel trips. I witnessed the recruitment of American staff members to birthright trips during my visits to American summer camps, so there is already a synergy between the two units of the Youth Division. In order to extend the mifgash, these birthright trips could work in concert with the Summer Shlichim program. At best, former shlichim could be invited to travel alongside the Americans (although this would take bus seats away from the Americans, I am convinced – from my own experience leading such a trip – that this kind of mixed tour group develops the most intense kind of dialogue) for the duration or a portion of the trip. At minimum, post-summer seminars (the likes of which are described in the previous section) could be planned for week of the Birthright trip, permitting the American counselors to join their Israeli friends in the seminar to extend the mifgash and to continue to build their relationships. The shlichim themselves could help encourage Americans to join a Birthright trip following camp, so that the Israelis can return the favor of hospitality. Israelis in camp are usually excited by the prospect of sharing their home with the Americans – it is the next step in the partnership we hope to forge through mifgash.

Conclusion

Of encounters (mifgashim), Martin Buber wrote, "everything depends on whether they will be ready[61]." If everything depends on preparedness, then mifgashim in summer camps have been doomed to fail from the moment a paradigm shift began to occur. Educators in both America

[61] Buber, Martin (1949) "Paths in Utopia." Translated by R.F.C. Hull. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 137

and Israel should celebrate that we find ourselves – perhaps for the first time – truly sharing an educational mission: the cultivation of Jewish identity sense of personal ownership in the Jewish People, outside any mode of hierarchy. We must be partners in securing readiness among our learners for intercultural encounters: when we fail to prepare them, we are effectually setting back the Israel-Diaspora relationship, at the very time it is emerging from it Classic Zionist pattern. The Jewish Agency cannot assume that the work is being completed at camp, and camp directors cannot count late-adolescent hormones to build the bridges. Working from within the field of Intercultural Education, Jewish educators can prepare their learners to interact with Am'ei Yisrael (the Peoples of Israel). Diane Tickton Shuster writes, "It is only when people examine their own and others' ways of making meaning that they can authentically sort out and differentiate their own meanings and sustain genuine communication[62]" Culture-General lessons in Intercultural Education aim to help the learner examine his own way of making meaning. Culture-Specific lessons aim to help the learner examine others' ways of making meaning. The mifgash itself should include both kinds of lessons, and it should not take place unless the shaliach and his American counterpart are modestly "ready."

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[62] Tickton Shuster, Diane. (2003) 119

Sample Lessons

The following two lessons are meant to provide a basic example of intercultural education activities for the URJ camp setting. Both of these activities are intended for a mixed group of learners: both Israelis and Americans – thus they were written for the staff week milieu. They blend aspects of both culture-general and culture-specific discussion. Such lessons/discussions should be moderated by an educator or other experienced guide. A comprehensive intercultural educational curriculum for camp, however, would include preparatory lessons (in both the culture-general and culture-specific modes) for pre-staff week events (such as seminar), staff week lessons, structured discussions to take place throughout the summer, and follow-up lessons for post-camp mifgash processing and strengthening. [63]

SAMPLE LESSON 1: VALUE OBJECTIVITY (1 HOUR, 30 MINUTES)

CORE CONCEPT

Our values are culturally influenced. "Jewish values" are understood differently, relative to cultural values. Because of these facts, we must learn to be objective when interpreting the values of people from cultures different from our own.

MATERIALS

Handouts
dry erase board/large poster-board and two markers (different colors)
pens

PROCEDURE

[63] These lessons draw in small part from activities in Seelyne, H. Ned ed. (1996) " Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning." Boston: Intercultural Press

Part I: Set Induction (20 minutes)

Each participant shares a description of his most treasured possession, and a brief explanation regarding why this item is so meaningful: what value does it represent? For example, my most treasured possession is a small stuffed animal that my father won for me at a carnival when I was a child; this could signify the value of family, or of continuity/tradition (I always sleep with it).

Part II: (1 hour, 5 minutes)

1. Participants receive handout #1, titled "Value Systems" and are asked to list, in the provided boxes, the three values (from the bank on the handout) that a) are most important to them personally b)are most characteristically "American" or "Israeli" (participants respond for their own nationality) and c) are most characteristically Jewish.
2. Participants are divided by nationality: Israelis convene in one group (or two smaller groups, depending on group size) and Americans in another. Groups should address the following tasks/questions:
    - Discuss: is there a difference between the *ideal* values of our nation and the *actual* values held and practiced?
    - Participants should share their choices for "My Nation's Values" and work together to form a group consensus regarding the three values that are most characteristically Israeli/American.
    - Participants should share their choices for "Jewish Values" and work together to form a group consensus regarding the three values that are most characteristically "Jewish."
3. Participants divide into small discussion groups in which Americans and Israelis are evenly dispersed. Address the following tasks/questions
    a) A representative from each group shares the characteristic national values upon which his group decided. List these values in their appropriate place side by side on handout #2 (large paper).

    Discuss:

    - What do these values have in common?
    - What situations (historical, political, cultural) do they reflect – *why* do we value the things we value?

b) A representative from each nationality shares the Jewish values upon which his group decided. List these values side by side in the appropriate space on handout #2.

Discuss:

- How do your personal values (the three you selected) relate to/reflect the Jewish values of your nation?
- In what ways are the Americans' Jewish values and Israelis' Jewish similar/different? How does a nation's historical/political/cultural context affect shared Jewish values?

4. Participants reconvene into one large group. Group leader asks volunteers to share some of the major discussion point/thoughts that occurred in the small discussion groups. Address the following tasks/questions
    - **Discuss:** How do we know that values are culturally relative? If national values are rooted in culture and history, is it fair – or not – to say that one nation has "better" or "higher" values than another – why?
    - In turn, each participant should announce his three personal values. As participants speak, the group leader should chart the number of times each value is repeated (using two colors: one color for American respondents, one for Israelis).
    - **Discuss:** Our personal values reflect us as individuals: how much do you think our nationality and religion plays into our personal values? When we consider ourselves as individuals and not as "Israelis" or "Americans", do we share more or less in common?

Part III: Conclusion (5 minutes)

Each participant is provided with an index card upon which he is asked to record one value (from the provided list, or otherwise) which he wishes to be a central value of the mifgash at camp.

SAMPLE LESSON 2: CULTURAL OBJECTIVITY (1 HOUR)

CORE CONCEPT

Culture is learned, and it is dynamic. American and Israeli cultures are different, and we must be wary of these differences when conflicts arise in camp.

MATERIALS

Handouts
pens
paper

PROCEDURE

Part I: Set Induction (20 minutes)

Each participant is provided with a piece of paper and a pen and asked to draw a picture – like the ones we drew when we were children – of one's family in front of one's home (each participant can interpret "family" and "home" as he chooses). Participants are then asked to share their pictures, describing what they've drawn.

Part II: (35 minutes)

5. On a board or large piece of poster-board placed in front of the group, the following is written: "Intercultural communication is the process by which two individuals who do not belong to the same culture 'try' to exchange a set of ideas, feelings, symbols...meanings. Since they do not belong to the same culture, it implies that they do not share the same assumptions, beliefs, values or...same ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. This phenomenon makes the communication process more difficult and challenging than we think."
    - Group leader explains that culture is a "frame of reference consisting of learned patterns of behavior, values, assumptions and meaning, which are shared to varying degrees of interest, importance, and awareness with members of a group; culture is the story of reality that individuals and groups value and accept as a guide for organizing their lives."[64]
    - **Discuss:** What is the meaning of the quote on the board, and its implication for mifgash in camp?
6. Participants divide into discussion groups (5-10 people), in which Americans and Israelis are evenly dispersed. Each group receives handout #3 and is asked to address the questions listed thereupon.
    - **Discuss:** In what ways do the Americans' answers differ from the Israelis'? What conclusions can you draw about the differences *in general* between the groups?

[64] Ramsay (1996). 9

7. Reconvene as a large group. Group leader asks volunteers from each group to summarize the major points their group's discussion. Group leader explains: culture follows a course similar to biological evolution – humans adapt in a manner that best enables them to manage their surroundings. Each culture has its own code, and thus its own system of judging words, actions, behavior – what is "normal" in one culture may be judged as "strange" or even "deviant" in another culture.
   Discuss: Does this mean that some cultures are better than others (is "Israeli" better than "American") or are they just different? How can we remind ourselves in camp to be more culturally objective?

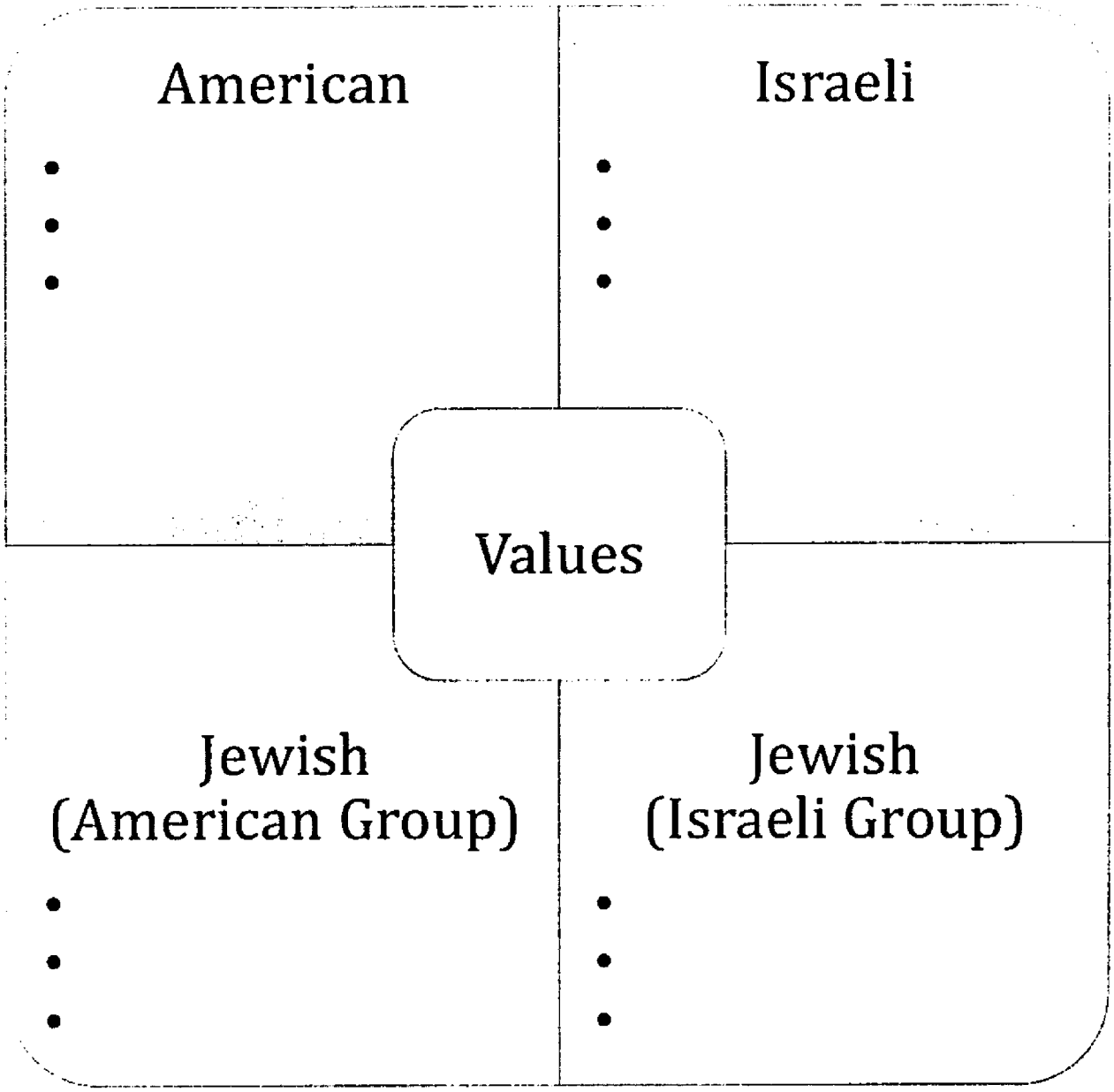
III. Conclusion (5 minutes)

As a group, participants are asked to devise a code word or sign – it can be silly or serious – to use when a cultural clash in camp arises – this word will be sounded to remind the participants in the clash to try to maintain objectivity, to remember that Americans and Israelis have very different ways of approaching situations/acting in them, and that labeling one way as "bad" or "worse" than another is not helpful to the mifgash. (This exercise is self-consciously corny – even though the participants will laugh when creating their code word/sign, and tease themselves, they will make use of it – and because it is "funny" to them, it will also help lighten tense situations that will arise in the future)

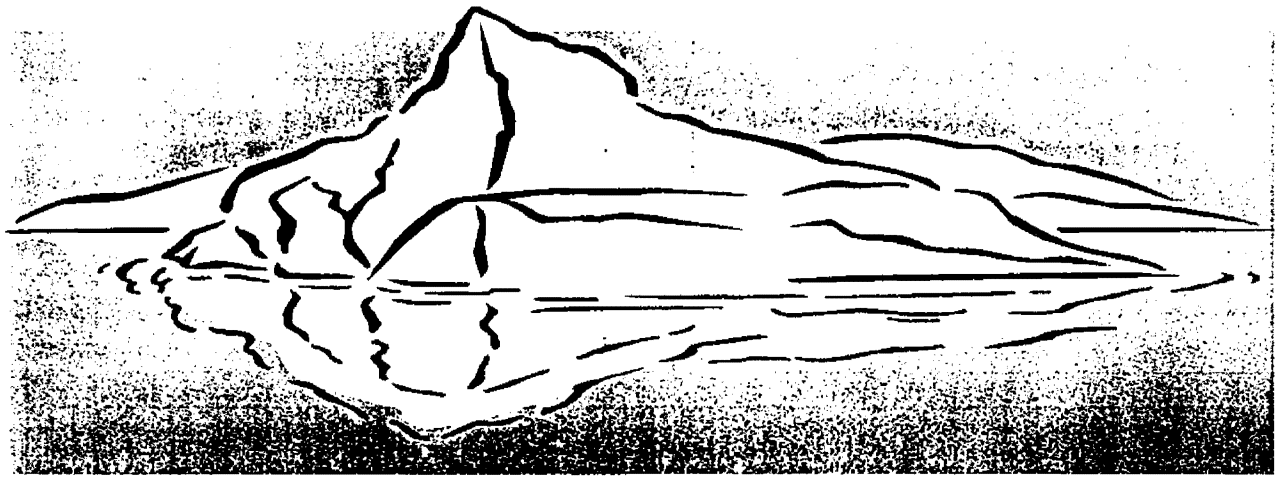
Handout 1: Value Systems

Wisdom חכונה	Competition תחרות
Close Relationships יחסים קרובים	Democracy דמוקרטיה
Beauty יופי	Purity/Modesty טוהרות/ צניעות
Autonomy/Independence עצמאות/ אוטונומיה	Physical challenge אתגר פיזי
Wealth עושר	Pleasure עונג
New Experiences חוויות חדשות	Privacy פרטיות
Health בריאות	Integrity יושר
Power/Authority כוח/ סמכות	Spirituality רוחניות
Achievement הישג	Economic security ביטחון כלכלי
Adventure הרפתקאה	Ecological awareness מודעות סביבתית
Affection חיבה	Efficiency יעילות
Social justice צדק חברתי	Stability/order יציבות/ סדר
Community קהילה	Security ביטחון
Growth צמיחה	Self-respect כבוד עצמי
Having children פרו ורבו	Cooperation שיתוף פעולה
Faith in God אמונה באלוהים	Helping other people עזרה לזולת
Recognition/Status הכרה	Honesty כנות

Handout 2: Value Systems (group worksheet)



Handout 3: Under the Iceberg



IN YOUR CULTURE[65]...

- At what age do children leave the home, and how often do families get together?
- What traditions are most important?
- How is information shared?
- Who has power and how do they get it?
- What role does religion play?
- What role does nationality play?
- What are the reactions to other cultures?
- What is funny?

CULTURES ARE DYNAMIC; THEY CHANGE, OFTEN QUICKLY, EVEN FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT.

Pick one or two of the questions above; how might your grandparents have answered it? Your parents?

[65] List adapted from similar questions found at http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/ecri/3-educational_resources/education_pack/Education_Pack_pdf.pdf

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