

Israeli Staff in American Jewish Summer Camps: The View of the Camp Director

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Abstract

This research report describes three strategies that directors of American Jewish summer camps adopt vis-à-vis the Israeli staff who work in their camps. Each strategy comes with a distinct set of practices with both practical and ideological implications. Practically speaking, each strategy involves basic issues such as where a person eats, sleeps, socializes and works. Ideologically speaking each strategy represents a distinct understanding of the relationship between Israeli and American Jews, as it comes to expression in the life of the summer camp.

Key Findings and Policy Questions

Finding 1: All the directors we interviewed agree about the importance of having Israeli staff in their camps, but only some view themselves as responsible for promoting a transformative identity for *both* the Israeli staff and the American camper and staff.

- **Policy Question: Should the Jewish Agency encourage all directors to promote a formative experience for their Israeli staff?**

Finding 2: Summer camp directors pursue strategies vis-à-vis the Israeli staff that have distinct ideological implications. Some directors advocate a strategy that fits with a “Classic Zionist agenda.” Other directors adopt strategies that come closer to the “New Zionist agenda” that is the stated goal of the Department of Jewish Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency.

- **Policy Question: Does the Jewish Agency view as part of its mission to engage Camp Directors who pursue the “Classic Zionist agenda” and encourage them to adopt elements of the “New Zionist agenda”?**

Finding 3: Different ideological approaches to the place of Israeli staff in American Jewish summer camps correlate with basic decisions such as where the staff eat, sleep, socialize and work? To the extent that a “Classic Zionist agenda” is pursued the Israeli staff are separated out from the American campers and staff in order that they appear as a symbolically distinct group within the camp. To the extent that a “New Zionist agenda” is implemented, the boundary between the Israeli and American staff is blurred in order to facilitate greater interpersonal contact between the groups.

- **Policy Questions: From the perspective of the Jewish Agency:**
 1. **What is the ideal balance between the symbolic and the interpersonal?**
 2. **Should the “Israeli” remain a separate, distinct, and special symbolic entity in the life of the camp or other Diaspora educational institution?**

¹ This report is a part of a larger research project on shlichim which is conducted by the Research and Development Unit of the Department of Jewish-Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency. We would like to thank Lior Shmueli, former Director of the Jewish Agency Summer Camp program whose input was invaluable for shaping this project. We would also like to thank the directors who participated in this study: Louis Bordman, Louis Dobin, Jonah Geller, Brian Lefkoff, Cheryl Magen, Frank Silberleicht, and Loren Sykes. Their thoughts and insights were extremely useful in building this report and furthering our thinking on shlichim.

3. If not, then to what extent should the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora be “normalized” – that is, to what extent should the “Israeli” be integrated into the life of the camp and turned into “just another staff member”?

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Introduction

What is the role of an Israeli staff member in an American Jewish summer camp? We posed this question to summer camp directors as part of a larger research project sponsored by the Department of Jewish Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency.² The project uses summer camps as a case study to understand the educational implications of changes taking place in the relationship between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora. Of particular interest are changes in the approach of Israeli educators to questions of Jewish identity and the place of the Jewish Diaspora in Israeli life (Bar-Shalom 2003; Kopelowitz 2003).

The Jewish Agency summer camp program sends approximately 1200 Israeli staff with the explicit mission of “bringing Israel” to the camps (Bram and Neria 2003a; Bram and Neria 2003b; Neria 2003). Until recently, the mission of the Israeli staff, also referred to by the Jewish Agency staff as *shlichim* (emissaries) in the American camp was straightforward. The role of the *shaliach* was to *represent* Israel to Diaspora Jewry. Successful educational work meant convincing Diaspora Jews to make *aliyah* (immigrate) to Israel. If immigration was not possible, then the next mission was to strengthen the connection of Diaspora Jews with the Jewish homeland. 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.

Increasing numbers of Israeli educators, including Jewish Agency personnel, are beginning to measure educational success in terms of strengthening the connection of *both* Israeli and Diaspora Jews to the Jewish people. While loyalty and commitment to the Jewish State is regarded as important, there is an equally important need to make concepts such as “Israel,” “Zionism” and the “Jewish People” relevant and meaningful to the younger

² Reports to date include (Bram and Neria 2003a; Bram and Neria 2003b; Kopelowitz 2003; Kopelowitz and Markin 2003; Neria 2003). Also connected with the larger question, although not directly concerned with summer camps is (Bar-Shalom 2003).

generation in both Israel and the Diaspora (Kopelowitz 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*.

In this new form of Zionist education, the nature of the interaction between the Israeli staff and the Americans with whom he or she works receives special emphasis.³ What types of social and educational interactions between the Israeli and American must occur in order for both to undergo a transformative identity experience? We know from prior research on *mifgashim* between Israeli and Diaspora Jews on the Israel experience (Bar-Shalom 1998; Feldman and Katz 2002) and in the summer camps (Bram and Neria 2003b) that if certain conditions are not met, the encounter can bring about the unintended consequence of strengthening negative stereotypes of the “other” and hence educational failure. Yet, research on *mifgashim* also tells us that under favorable conditions, the encounter has the potential to

³ The reader should note that there are several behavioral strategies that are used in facilitating understanding and integration between groups. One strategy is to focus on the “other” as a member of a different group. A second strategy is to build a super-ordinate identity, while a third strategy focuses on building interpersonal relations. The different strategies can all bring about positive (or negative) outcomes, each with its own educational limitations. For example, focusing on the interpersonal is considered good for building relations between individuals, but the question remains as to whether the relationship will bring each individual to apply the positive feelings towards the group as a whole. These questions are beyond the scope of this paper but are addressed in the paper written by Bram and Neria (2003b). Also see Feldman and Katz (2002) and Wolf (forthcoming). For a more general understanding of how these behavioral strategies are used to facilitate integration between groups, see (Vivian, Hewstone and Brown 1997).

reduce stereotypes and bring about positive change in one's perception of the "other". A positive *mifgash* experience enables group members to see the other group as more similar to their own group (Horenczyk and Bekerman 1997; Kujawski 2000; Wolf forthcoming). Furthermore, it allows both groups to broaden their insights into Jewish possibilities as they encounter the other group's approach to Judaism (Bar-Shalom 1998; Ezrachi 1994).

What policies must be pursued in order to create work conditions that will enable Israeli staff, both to bring Israel to the summer camp, and at the same time to undergo a transformative Jewish-Zionist experience themselves? As part of our efforts to answer this question, we decided to interview summer camp directors. The directors are key actors in the world of summer camps and in any change process that might occur in the future. While there exists a research literature on *mifgashim* (see above) and the meeting of Israeli and American Jews in summer camps (Bekerman 1986; Bram and Neria 2003a; Bram and Neria 2003b; Ezrachi 1994; Neria 2003; Sales and Saxe 2001), to date no systematic attention has been paid to what directors think about the *mifgash* between Israelis and Americans in their camps. Thus, it is difficult to know how to engage directors in order to encourage an environment in which Israeli staff, and not only the American campers and staff, will benefit from the meeting between them.

In the coming pages we will learn that among the directors whom we interviewed, all agree about the importance of having Israeli staff in their camps, but only some view themselves as responsible for promoting a transformative identity for *both* the Israeli counselor and the American camper and staff. This report will detail different ideological approaches of the directors to the place of the Israeli staff in their camps, with a focus on the practical implications of where the counselors eat, sleep and work, and the educational responsibilities that they are given within the camp.

Research Method

Our goal is not to give a representative picture of the way all summer camp directors think, but rather, to describe the work of directors with different approaches to the question of Israeli staff in American camps. With this goal in mind, we created a small and extremely focused sample of seven directors of Jewish summer camps in North America. The directors were selected with the help of the director of the Summer Camp Program at the Jewish Agency with the goal of creating a sample of movement and organization⁴ based camps that he felt represent a variety of approaches towards the Israeli shlichim. The interviews include directors with two Ramah (Conservative movement) camps, two UAHC (Reform movement) camps, two JCC (Jewish Community Center) camps, and one Young Judea camp. Some of the directors included in this sample are known to regard Israeli staff as important to the life and ideology of their camp, and invest a relatively large amount of time trying to make the work experience of the shlichim successful. In other words, we made an effort to find directors who are serious about Israel and Israelis in their camps, yet pursue very different strategies vis-à-vis the question at hand.

Each director was interviewed in person or by phone. The semi-structured interviews focused on five areas, including: description of the work of the shlichim in the camps; factual integration of the shlichim into the specific camp programs; the role of the director in encouraging integration; the philosophical approaches of the director to the shlichim in the camps; and suggestions on the part of the director for the Jewish Agency. The interviews took between half an hour and an hour to conduct.

Three Strategies vis-à-vis the Work of Israeli Summer Camp Staff

The interviews revealed three distinct approaches of the directors towards Israeli staff in their camps. To understand the approaches we begin by introducing two sets of concepts. We will

⁴ By movement based camps we mean camps affiliated with different Jewish religious streams, in this case, the Reform and Conservative movements. In regards to organization-based camps, we mean camps affiliated with particular Jewish or Zionist organizations, in this case, the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA) and Young Judeaea.

then offer a detailed description of each of the three approaches as seen through the eyes of the summer camp directors.

Integration vs. Separation

The first set of concepts revolves around directors who strive for a *functional separation* of the Israeli staff from the camp community versus directors who view *functional integration* of the Israeli staff as their ideal. For those who emphasize separation, the Israeli staff tends to work only as specialists⁵ (e.g., Hebrew teachers, nature instructors), and often eat and/or sleep separately from the campers. The involvement of the Israelis in the planning and implementation of camp-wide activities generally focuses on Israel-specific programs, which they tend to plan as a separate organized group (*mishlachot*), rather than in partnership with non-Israeli staff. Shlichim in functionally separate camps also tend to socialize among themselves, tending to spend their days off and free-time as a group.

In contrast, the directors who emphasize integration have the Israelis working as cabin counselors (*madrichim*), division heads and as specialists.⁶ In many cases, they sleep in the cabins with the campers and often eat at camper tables. Though much of the Israeli involvement in planning and implementation of camp-wide activities also tends to focus on Israel-related programs, they do so in partnership with non-Israeli staff. Furthermore, the Israeli counselors are encouraged to get involved in planning programs unrelated to Israel. In functionally integrated camps, shlichim also tend to socialize with non-Israeli staff during free-time and days off.

Representative vs. Interpersonal

⁵ Based on interviews with camp directors, it appears that the role of the specialist has changed during the last decade. Specialists are now more integrated into the camps and into the lives of the campers than in previous years (when they were hired primarily for their specialty skills). However, in many camps there is still a distinct difference between the role of the counselor and the specialist in the campers' lives).

⁶ It is worth noting that until recently the majority of summer camp shlichim worked in specialist positions. In more recent years however they also fill cabin counselor positions. This change reflects a shift in ideology among camp directors and also within the Summer Shlichim Program at the Jewish Agency.

The second distinction between directors is between those who highlight the *representative value* of the counselor, qua Israeli, in the camp versus those who are interested in the educational payoff of the *interpersonal interactions* between Israelis and Americans in the everyday life of the camp.⁷

The directors who view the Israelis as representatives see them as representing “Israel” and “Israelis,” in both a real and symbolic sense to the campers. The Israeli staff makes palpable for the camper what is otherwise a distant reality, bringing a specific educational style, ways of behavior and the spoken Hebrew language to the camp. Beyond their day-to-day responsibilities, the Israelis are encouraged to invest time in planning camp-wide events that are rich in symbolic value, such as an Israel Day celebration or a commemoration ceremony for victims of terrorist attacks. The goal of these events is to emphasize the symbolic importance of Israel in the life of the camp, an act that is enhanced by the involvement of Israeli staff in running the events.

In contrast, the directors who emphasize the interpersonal dimension focus on the ability of the Israeli staff to connect at the emotional level with campers and other staff in the course of everyday life. Through the “little moments” as opposed to larger symbolic events, the directors expect members of the camp community to learn about Israel.⁸

Three Strategies

In combination, the integration/separation and representation/personalization distinctions enable us to place the directors on a spectrum with two end points and a middle position. On one end of the continuum are directors who envision the work of the Israeli counselors in terms of *symbolic separation*. These directors tend to utilize the Israelis in a functionally

⁷ For a more detailed discussion about the difference between the representative and interpersonal approaches in education see the report by Bram and Neria (2003b).

⁸ In addition to the symbolic, many directors describe an additional value. This value relates to the *professional* abilities of shlichim. Directors describe the specific expertise of Israel staff, their older (more mature) age, and their ability to function as productive staff members. This value is referred to within the report, though it is not considered one of the central conceptual approaches to shlichim in the camps.

separate capacity and see the educational benefits of the Israeli presence as occurring along the representative/symbolic dimension. Near the middle of the continuum are those who want the Israeli staff to integrate into the life of the camp and try to **balance** the educational importance of both the representative and personal role of the Israeli in the camp. Finally, at the other end of the continuum are directors who strive for complete **interpersonal integration** of the Israeli counselors into the camp. These directors utilize Israeli counselors in a functionally integrated capacity, and conceptualize their educational value in terms of the “little events” of everyday life that occur in the course of interpersonal interaction.

It is worth noting that none of the directors as individuals fall entirely at one end or the spectrum or the other. While some directors stressed integration rather than separation, and vice-versa, in all cases at least some elements of the representative and interpersonal aspects of the Israeli presence was voiced by all directors. The difference between them was in the way each director emphasized one aspect rather than the other.

In summation, when we consider the various ways that directors spoke about their Israel staff in relation to the jobs they are assigned; where they eat and sleep; how the Israelis spend their days off; how they as directors involve the Israeli staff in activities falling outside their main job descriptions; what additional roles are played by of returning counselors (*vatikim*); how the directors encourage their Israeli staff to bring their “Israeliness” or Israeli identity into their jobs; and finally, how the directors describe the overall role or place of the shlichim in the camp – we arrive at the three strategies, “symbolic separation,” “balanced integration” and “interpersonal integration” strategies.

Strategy One: Symbolic Separation

Two of the seven directors interviewed adopt a strategy of *symbolic separation*. These directors want the Israeli staff to remain a distinct group within the life of the camp, and tend

to emphasize the representative or symbolic educational benefits, as opposed to interpersonal benefits, of having Israelis present in camp.

In these two camps, the Israelis work in specialist positions as Hebrew teachers, woodworking and *teva* (nature) instructors, camping and *tzofnut* (scouts) programmers, and sports instructors for “certain sports that Israelis have more experience in”. At one of the camps, the Israelis are housed with Israeli roommates (though they share a building with American staff) and are assigned by the director to staff tables with other specialists (or at family tables). The director notes that,

They start out mixed and it depends on the year, it depends on the group. There are times that the Israelis tend to eat together. We try to have them mix as much as possible but, you know, there is something about being able to come in and just be with your friends you know, you don’t get to see otherwise. And the Americans feel the same way.

The other director in the symbolic separation category feels that it is “much more of a challenge for them [the Israelis] to be cabin counselors than...specialists”.

Last year’s group just felt, ...they thought that the cultural differences, the language barriers would be too much and actually historically that’s been the case. When I tried to put folks from Israel in cabin counselor positions, the kids may be the wrong people also. You never know, but it has been a very difficult challenge.

At both camps, the Israelis generally spend their days off with each other and not with the Americans. One of the directors points to a “language factor” in explaining why Israelis tend to spend their days off together.

“[A]s much as [our movement's] camps stress the use of Hebrew, a lot of the work the shlichim do with the kids is in English. You know, it’s exhausting to speak in a different language and so on their day off, you know, they need breaks. I think that’s part of the attraction.

In terms of camp-wide events at these two camps, the Israeli staff plan and implement particular camp-wide activities on their own, as a *mishlachat*, rather than as part of a mixed group involving Israeli and American staff. For example, the Hebrew teaching staff designs *peulot erev* (evening activities) focusing on the Hebrew language. The mishlachat “really run the show” on *Yom Yisrael* (the Israel Day celebration at camp), with tangential support from

non-Israeli staff. In relation to initiatives by *vatikim* (returning Israelis), one director mentions their ability to run “Israeli” memorial ceremonies.

[W]hen there is a *pigua*, Sbarro, you know we want to do a *tekess* to commemorate people or put up a *pinat zikaron*...[W]e turn to those Israelis who know the camp, know the situation and also, unfortunately, have that type of experience of what you do in Israel. How you appropriately respond with kids. Things that are not in our mind set as much.

The other director encourages Israeli staff to use Hebrew to name items in the camp environment.

Yes. That’s why I want them in so many areas... I would put one staff from Israel in every single area...What has been happening is, like all the horses... have Hebrew names as well as Israeli names. It is typical things like that. Kids are so inquisitive, they’ll talk to everybody from every country. So they learn, because they have a connection with Israel so they are inherently more interested... in that than the other countries, or people from other countries.

Thus, in summation, we see that these two directors facilitate a situation that enables the Israeli staff to live, eat and socialize together as a distinct group separate from the American counselors and campers. They also view the presence of the Israeli staff as a benefit to the camp in terms of their ability to “make Israel real” by representing the country and her people by functioning as living symbols. While both directors mention the importance of the interpersonal dimension, such as everyday conversations and interactions, this is secondary in their overall notion of the role of Israeli staff in their camp.

Strategy Two: Balanced Integration

Three of the seven directors pursue a strategy of *balanced integration*. When they speak about how they utilize Israeli staff, they focus on integrating them into the life of the camp; and, when speaking of the overall educational benefits of an Israeli presence in their camps, they refer to both representative and interpersonal dimensions.

All three directors work to integrate the Israeli staff into the social life of the camp. They put the Israeli staff to work as cabin counselors and as specialists. As counselors, the Israelis eat and sleep in cabins with their campers, and jointly with American staff, plan and implement programs for their unit. One director describes the Israelis as “fully integrated

[into the camp]...because the camp is a Zionist camp. We have quite a few staff who have been to Israel. So they are really a part of the staff. They don't hang out with just each other."

Before one of the director's took on his position last summer, the Israelis worked only as specialists. This director decided to integrate them into the camp by assigning the Israelis positions as cabin counselors. Counselors for the younger age group sleep in the cabins with the campers, all staff for the older campers sleep in staff housing (mixed Israelis and Americans).

The directors also encourage the Israeli and American staff to mix during their days off, although in comparison to our third group of directors below, this policy is informal in nature.

I find that they spend their nights out together. Some of them spend their days off together, but in a lot of cases the mishlachta will rent a car for five people and go off on their own day off. But it varies quite a bit. They'll do days off with American staff and a couple of days off with their Israeli friends. Different people have different patterns. Some of the Israeli staff never went with the Israelis and some of the Israeli staff never went with the Americans. But I can't think of many of those. It has to be mixed.

In some of the camp-wide activities the Israeli staff work alone, and in others they mix with the American staff. During staff week in one camp, the mishlachta solely plans an activity for the rest of the staff, and during the summer they run one camp-wide activity related to Israel. They also take responsibility for the "Hebrew word of the day" and Yom Yisrael celebrations, but they work in partnership with non-Israeli staff in planning and implementing these projects. On Yom Yisrael, "the Israelis take on a leadership role," but the day is planned and carried out through integrated efforts.

I would say my first couple of years the Israelis solely planned Yom Yisrael. But we found it is better now, we have a committee, so it is anyone who wants to be on the committee can be on it. So usually it's about half the mishlachta and maybe ten other counselors are on it that are not from the mishlachta.

One of these three directors insists on complete integration. He sees it as the responsibility of all staff members to get involved in planning educational activities. Whether or not a program focuses on Israel, an integrated staff committee works on the planning and implementation of

the program. He also opposes the idea that only Israelis plan Jewish or Israel-related events, such as Israel Day, Kabbalat Shabbat, or even “take charge of the singing of the Hatikva”.

All three directors who pursue the balanced integration strategy emphasize both the interpersonal and representative dimension when they speak of the benefits of having Israelis in camp, but the emphasis is always on the representative function of the *shlichim*. On the one hand they want the Israelis to integrate into the life of the camp, but on the other hand the Israelis still maintain a special status as representatives. For example, we see in the quote below how one director wants the Israelis to be distinctly “Israeli” so that they can symbolize Israel for the campers.

We want [them] to talk about their army experiences, you know, things that are appropriate for the kids. They have to be talking about Israel all the time to the kids, the stories, everything. We want them to be Israelis, we don’t want them to be Americans. We don’t want them to be anything but Israelis.

This same director mixes in his admiration for the professional skills of the Israelis when emphasizing their role as representatives of an authentic Zionist ethos.

It’s a group, because they are older, more experienced, like when I look at the mishlachat as a group, it’s a group that if I ever need something done I can count on that group, if I ask them to do something as a group. It’s a group that usually comes with a lot of *ruach*, lots of spirit. I expect them to be some of the best counselors in camp just because they have the maturity, they have the age and they have had quite a varied life experience. So I expect them to be some of the best staff at camp. I also expect them to be very pro Zionist, very pro Israel and always teaching with the kids.

Another director states that the Israelis are expected to be productive staff members, but “more so than the rest of the staff”. Though earlier he mentions that their responsibilities are equal to the other staff (and that he does not think of them as “special”), he acknowledges that they have extra responsibilities as emissaries (“shlichim, mishlachat, it doesn’t matter what they are called”); from culture, to morals, to religion, to society, to the situation (“but not just the situation”).

We see a two-pronged strategy on the part of the directors who attempt to balance the integration of the Israeli counselors into the social life of the camp, but at the same time try to

maintain them as a symbolically distinct group for the purpose of representing Israel to the campers. That is, the Israelis and Americans should live and eat together, mix socially, and plan educational events as equals, but, in the cultural realm the Israelis are given an additional assignment – to represent Israel and Zionism in “an authentic” manner.

Strategy Three: Interpersonal Integration

Two of the seven directors follow the strategy that we label *interpersonal integration*. They both strive for complete social and professional integration of the Israelis and heavily emphasize the interpersonal dimension when describing their value in camp.

For one director the Israeli shlichim “play all the roles” in camp. They work as both madrichim and specialists, though most first-timers work as counselors. In addition to their responsibilities as cabin counselors, some also teach *yahadut* (Judaism), Hebrew, sport, and *omanut* (arts and crafts). Almost all the Israelis sleep and eat with their cabins, unless someone comes “in a highly professional capacity.”

In our camp, if you are a specialist, unless you are really *beramah gevoha*, really *mikzo'i*, then you live in a *tzrif*. You have a role that the kids can answer. It's not just renting a bed. You have to be with the kids, you eat meals with the kids. We don't even call them live-ins... They eat with their *tzrif* and the kids think of them as their counselors too. It's just that some counselors hop and get from place to place and those counselors also do *peulat tzrif*, *peulat erev*. Then there are other counselors who they see if they signed up for [certain *hugim*]... But they also,... The kids think of them as their counselors.

Among the directors who pursue a balanced integration strategy, it is viewed as a beneficial for the Israelis and Americans to mix in their free-time, but there are no formal camp policies in this direction. In contrast, the two directors who strive for interpersonal integration make an active attempt to achieve Israeli-American mixing during free-time and days off. One director describes the day off as an opportunity for integration between Israeli and American staff, and therefore he makes an effort to “push [the Israelis] to go with our Americans”.

Along with his *rosh mishlachot* (a veteran Israeli counselor), he actively encourages Israelis to make plans with their American friends, and goes so far as to frown upon those who spend

more than two days off with only Israelis. The Israelis are generally successful in getting close to the American staff, and this director credits his *rosh mishlachah* for furthering this integration. When an individual Israeli does not succeed in connecting well with the Americans, it is sometimes “an issue of the language, [but] usually it’s an issue of personality”.

Beginning with staff week, both directors actively promote intercultural dialogue.

We always do, for the last three years we have done a piece during the week on Israeli culture.... One year the shlichim broke up everybody and sat down with them. The first person like, okay, tell us what annoys you about Israelis. This is a very Israeli question to ask. But what they had heard was that the previous year there were some difficulties between people learning how to work. “Yashar la’inyan, tell us and what drives you nuts about us”. And then they sort of explained what drives them nuts about Israelis, what drives them nuts about Americans and that was a really good sicha. Last summer it was mevasas of where people lived. Shlichim from Ra'anana sat together and the shlichim from Tel Aviv sat together and from Yerushalayim sat together and then everybody sort of rotated through. There was ... sort of about, a little bit about the place and about the kinds of people and then there was some kind shared ... sichot. That’s planned by the shlichim here with the Rosh Mishlachah.

The Israeli staff do an activity during staff orientation. You know, they sing a song and introduce themselves, that kind of thing. But also what I found, we create a kind of a program related around dialogue between American staff and Israeli staff so that the American staff can walk away with a better understanding of where the Israeli mindset is and about what is going on currently and how they feel about it. And so also that the Israeli staff can walk away with a better understanding of where the American staff mindset is. That’s something that we do. Actually we run another couple of programs, staff programs, during the summer to continue to promote that dialogue.

In the same spirit, American and Israeli staff jointly plan and implement a variety of activities.

As for camp-wide camp activities during the summer, integrated groups also plan and implement such programs. Evening activities are the responsibility of a set of counselors within each unit, so the Israeli staff works alongside their American peers on a range of programming. There are times during the summer in each camp when “the entire mishlachah will work together at... creating one Israel-related evening activity, one to two evening activities per session for each unit”. In one of the camps, planning for Yom Yisrael involves Americans and Israelis staff working together on all aspects of the day.

[The Israelis] work on [Yom Yisrael] along with help of the American staff. We wanted them to be involved in it as well, so it wouldn't just be perceived as Israelis have the only, the connection to Israel. So I found that the more involved I get the American and Israeli staff together on anything they are working on, the better the outcome. Sometimes we have Yom Yisrael, sometimes we do it through half days, some days full days, bazaars, fairs and so forth. We try to find a different approach each time that we do it so that it is not just a shuk. We want to deal with - or them just enacting what it is like to be in the army, which tends to be one of their focuses. Want to show that life in Israel is good and meaningful and not just war. So we try to approach it from different ways.

Such programming works on a voluntary basis. "Volunteerism is big at camp and so we ask who would like to work on this big program. We always want to have a mix of staff."

The other director told us that there is no Israel Day celebration at his camp for in his opinion "such a day is a waste of planning time and resources." In this director's eyes, the "little events" and not the symbolic days like Yom Yisrael constitute the primary payoff of having Israelis present in camp.

I think that the real nature of the question [is] [h]ow do you build shlichut? It doesn't come from Yom Israel or from these big *tekassim*. It comes from the day-to-day regular interactions the kids have. You get to know each other and then [the campers] say, "we want to know about you. I am going to ask you. You were in the army? What did you do? You were in the *tzanchanim*, did you go to the West Bank? Were you ever shot at that you had to kill somebody? Do you know somebody who was killed in a *pigua*? What does your family know?" From those individual interactions that have nothing to do with being a shaliach... So then you build that strong *kesher ishi* and then they invite each other during the year. My campers e-mail my shlichim, they send messages with them. It is not just when things happen in Israel, when there is a *pigua*. But when there is a *pigua* the kids know somebody in Israel and they write to them and say, "gosh, I hope you are okay". Then they get back this message, "It's a very sad thing, but that happened in Haifa and I live in south Jerusalem"... It is from those *kesherim* that you get ... shlichut. The same thing with the staff. Now I got two staff members [in Israel}, so they have a whole family of people who take care of them, who make sure they have a place for Shabbat, who call them on Thursday night to make sure that they have some place to go. Once you have that *kesher*, then you want to come to Israel.

The other director who follows the interpersonal integration strategy adopts a similar approach.

You might be thrown off by this. I have said to you what my feelings are about where the most successful connection is formed. But I say to them during my seminar in Israel and again during staff orientation, to bring your Israeli flag with you, but to keep it in your suitcase for now. Once you form that relationship, then they want to know everything about you and that's when you can bring out the flag. However if you just came and were waving the flag shouting Israel, Israel, Israel, people would be thrown off by that. They want to get to know you first. Again, I found that. So I ask them to be

more subtle in the beginning and then they can certainly be more outspoken, per se, or more patriotic, if you will, as time goes on.

This same director argues that the most effective way in which the Israelis share their identity is through interpersonal encounters that are created between individuals in the camp community.

Everyone always talks about the big Israel activity about teaching Israel and their connection and so forth. I found that the greatest teaching that goes on is when a camper falls in love with their counselor, whether it's specialist or they are cabin counselors. When they fall in love with someone, they end up asking them and wanting to [know] everything about that person. That's where the greatest connection for counselors, our American counselors and our American campers towards Israel is created. Because they love Yoni and they love everything about Yoni and then because Yoni is Israeli and loves Israel, they start to fall in love with Israel just because of him. When we work with our Israeli staff during the seminar and again during staff orientation I really emphasize that. That it is incredibly important that they understand that when they are really the most significant emissary of Israel it is not during Yom Yisrael. When they are walking on the path on the way to soccer and talking with a group of kids, that's when the greatest amount of teaching and we found that that's been mutually successful.... When you are really talking about having someone want to come Israel, someone wants to be supportive of Israel, they need that on a more personal level, rather than to go and have the Israelis run them through a drill - an army exercise - and then cooking some pita over an open fire. Those are all fine and nice activities. However, they don't really promote that real true connection. That true connection comes through interpersonal relationships. We found that we have been doing fairly well with that because campers are now taking semesters in Israel and they have been - there is ongoing correspondence with past shlichim. We hear about all the time.

Table: Summary of Directors' Strategies to Israel Staff

	Symbolic Separation	Balanced Integration	Interpersonal integration
Primary job/position	Specialists	Counselors & Specialists	Counselors, few specialists
Sleep in cabin?	No	Some	Most
Eat with cabin?	No	Some	Most
Spending days off	With Other Israelis	Either Israelis or Americans	Either Israelis or Americans, but encouraged to go with Americans
Involvement in camp-wide activities	Mishlachat plans Israel-related programs on their own	Work with other Israelis and non-Israeli staff on various programs (some, though not all related to Israel)	Work with other Israelis and non-Israeli staff on various programs (some, though not all related to Israel)
Bringing Israeli identity into their work	Yes, sole emphasis on representative value	Yes, main emphasis on their representative value, with slight mention of personal value	Yes, both representative and personal values mentioned, with emphasis on personal value

Overall role of the shaliach	Main emphasis on representative value, with slight mention of personal value	Main emphasis on representative value; also reference to professional value	Emphasis on either representative or personal value; also reference to professional value
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Summary Discussion

Our role as researchers is not to declare which of the three strategies described above is better or worse; but, rather to first describe and then to clarify the practical and ideological implications of the different strategies. As we learned in the discussion and can see in the above table, the three strategies that the directors adopt vis-à-vis the Israeli staff come with a distinct set of practices with both practical and ideological implications. Practically speaking, each strategy involves basic issues such as where a person eats, sleeps, socializes and works. Ideologically speaking each strategy represents a distinct understanding of the relationship between Israeli and American Jews, as it comes to expression in the life of the summer camp.

In the introduction to this paper we distinguished between Israeli-Jewish educators in terms of those who adopt “Classic” as opposed to “New Zionist” approaches to the question of Israel-Diaspora relations. The camp directors who adopt a strategy of “symbolic-separation” come closest to the Classic-Zionist model. In their camps a sharp binary distinction exists between Jews who live in Israel and those who live in America, and their policy is to maintain the differences between the groups for educational purposes.

In our opinion, the New Zionist model of education can correspond with either the “balanced integration” or “interpersonal integration” approaches. In both these strategies the directors want to break down the difference between “the Israeli” and “the American” in order to endorse the idea that there is one staff in their camps. Practically speaking, this is done by having the staff eat, sleep, socialize and work together. The ideological significance is that “Israelis” and “Israel” do not have a formally structured “representative” or “symbolic” status in the camp, but bring Israel into the life of the camp in a more fluid and informal manner.

The difference between the “balanced integration” and “interpersonal integration” approaches is in the extent to which Israel continues to appear as a separate symbolic entity. We can understand the difference through our most extreme “interpersonal integration” example – that is, the one director who not only strives for complete integration of the staff in all areas of camp life, but also got rid of “Israel Day” which is the most basic way that camps “represent” and “symbolize” Israel in their camps. None of the other directors went this far.

This last example, as well as the other illustrative material provided in the body of the report should provide fertilizer for an active discussion among those involved with Jewish and Zionist education in the camps and elsewhere about the way to balance the symbolic and interpersonal dimensions. What is the ideal balance between the symbolic and the interpersonal? Should the “Israeli” remain a separate, distinct, and special symbolic entity in the life of the camp or other Diaspora educational institution? If not, then to what extent should the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora be “normalized” – that is, to what extent should the “Israeli” be integrated into the life of the camp and turned into “just another staff member”?

Finally, we want to note an interesting finding. In the interviews we did not find a correlation between the type of movement/organization (Conservative, Reform, JCCA, Young Judaea) and the strategy adopted by the director vis-à-vis the Israeli staff in his or her camp. In other words, the personal strategy of the director and not the ideological movement with which the camp is affiliated seems to determine (at least in our small sample) the integration of Israel within the life of the summer camp. If this is correct, then the directors are indeed critical agents in the process of Israel education in American Jewish summer camps and should be fully engaged in any change strategy pursued by Israeli organization such as the Jewish Agency.

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