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Building and Dreaming Diaspora: Zionist Negotiations, Collective Life, and Jewish Summer Camp

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Building and Dreaming Diaspora:
Zionist Negotiations, Collective Life, and Jewish Summer Camp

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
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Introduction: Camp, Habonim Dror, and *Hagshamah*

Most camps are like ‘We’re a horse camp and we do horse stuff’ and it’s hard to be like: ‘We do socialism’ (both laugh).

It was a crisp fall day and I was sitting outside calling a friend, whom I will call Maya, over Zoom. Through poor connection and repeatedly frozen video we were discussing the summer camp at which we both grew up as campers and continued to be involved with as staff members. Nestled on the Northern tip of a small island 5 kilometers off the southeast end of Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Camp Miriam is in many ways different from other North American summer camps, as Maya points out above. At this point in the conversation Maya and I were discussing how difficult it often is to describe camp to those who have never been. As difficult as it may be, I attempt it below.

Sleepaway summer camps are a ubiquitous institution in North America. Images from popular movies such as *The Parent Trap* and *Wet Hot American Summer*, as well as more broad tropes shape the public imaginary of what a summer camp is. Camp Miriam is recognizable in many ways, falling enough within the imaginary to be comprehensible in its basic form. It is a Jewish summer camp, campers live in cabins or platform tents, there are counselors, campers swim and play sports, and there is a lot of singing. However, these classic summer camp features are mixed together with structures, activities, and ideologies that do not fit in the standard summer camp model. In this vein Aviva reflected,

It doesn't sound like this big deal when you're like 'it's a summer camp' (laughs) but it's more than just a summer camp um, and so, and then there's also this like layer of sort of... like... it's hard to make it- to feel like it's- seen as legitimate in other people's eyes y'know it's like... I can say to someone it's so so important that like... we shower together, it's so meaningful (laughing) and people are like 'what the fuck? What is wrong with you? That's weird, that's like, how is that meaningful? Like at best that's quirky' (both laugh).

Miriam is “more than just a summer camp” in part because it is one of six summer camps run as part of the North American branch of the youth movement Habonim Dror, hereby referred to as Habonim Dror North America or HDNA. Growing up, I routinely described camp as “a socialist, Jewish, social justice focused,” and depending on the context, “Zionist,” “summer camp that is part of an international youth movement.” The simplest way to describe it, this short explanation also aligns with the ways the movement is officially defined.

Official movement literature denotes the five pillars of the movement: progressive labor Zionism, Judaism, social justice, socialism, and *hagshamah* or actualization. These pillars have undergone minor shifts over the years as a result of continued debates, “cultural Judaism” temporarily replaced “Judaism,” for example. While these pillars are in many ways the central tenets of the movement, they do not shape camp life in uniform ways. Often sites of debate and inconsistently embodied across and within the different camps, the pillars are anything but unproblematic. In chapter one, I discuss the most contentious proposed shift of a pillar: the removal or dramatic renaming of the Zionism pillar. Although not consistent, it is the way these pillars become lived and meaningful at Camp Miram that distinguishes it from other North American summer camps.

To understand Habonim Dror it is useful to place it into the legacy of European youth movements from which it emerged. The youth movement as an institution became formalized in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries as industrialization resulted in changing definitions of childhood. Reuven Kahane writes, “Whereas children and adolescents had previously been regarded as ‘incomplete’ human beings fully controlled by adults, they now began to gain a more autonomous status” (1997, 44). Movements *of* youth *for* youth also arose out of increased

aspirations for political involvement which did not match the limited opportunities available to them (1997, 43). Youth movements in general and Jewish youth movements in particular were widespread, existing across a wide range of ideologies, political involvement, affinity, and religiosity (Reulecke 2001). There were multiple Zionist movements at work at once, operating in different places and with differing ideologies but all committed to the establishment of and later support for a Jewish state.

The story of Habonim Dror in particular begins in the early 20th century. Habonim (literally: the builders) was founded in 1929 in England by young Jews to combat assimilation and quickly spread to other English-speaking countries (Near 2007). “Dror,” the Habonim Dror North America website states, “was established in 1915 in Russia as a Socialist-Zionist youth movement. Dror soon spread to Poland and throughout Europe and by the 1930s had also opened centers in South America.” In 1982, the two movements merged and became Habonim Dror. Today Habonim Dror exists in over 20 countries around the world. From this point on, I use “the movement” as members do: to refer both to the movement as a whole and to HDNA in particular.

To think about the story of the movement in history it is also useful to adopt Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s distinction between historicity 1- “the materiality of the socio-historical process”- and historicity 2- the emergent historical narratives (1995, 29). This framework enables a focus on both the events in the movement’s history that shaped the movement today and the way the history is presented in movement spaces. In my movement education, the historical narrative was filled with images of young, European *chalutzim* (pioneers) moving to Israel to revive their connection to the land and break free of oppressive capitalism. Another oft-told story was the tale of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the armed rebellion led by young

members of the very same movement. These narratives, among others, shape the historical landscape of youth rebellion which movement members understand themselves a part. As for historicity 1, members of Dror did indeed help organize the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and both movements had close ties with the *kibbutz* movement (Near 2007; Tzur 2010).

The description of youth movements by historian Chaim Schatzker reflects well the narrative of the youth movement I experienced in my own movement education.

In its critique of society, the youth movement deplores the atomization of men in the age of technology; the dissolution of organic relationships and bonds; loneliness and heartlessness; the ugliness and constriction of modern cities; modern technology and the rational industrial society which, through its one-sided emphasis on the development of the intellect, leads to the spiritual and emotional impoverishment of mankind. Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs prompts the striving for a new lifestyle, for a community, a collectivity in which all those frustrated and withered vital shoots can thrive and blossom out in a new and satisfying life. (1990, 151)

Today, there are no members of the movement over the age of twenty-six as a result of its explicit “youth movement” status. HDNA offers year-long programming in some cities and various seminars throughout the year, but the handful of summer camps scattered across the U.S. and Canada garner by far the most participation. HDNA also runs two programs in Israel: a five week summer program for those entering their junior year of high school and a nine month long gap year program.

Camp Miriam has been deeply embedded in my life for just under a decade. I attended camp for the first time when I was fourteen, making the decision to go without knowing anyone there, prepared only with information gleaned from the promotional video and positive reviews from families in my synagogue. Going in blind, I had no way of predicting how much this decision would shape the course of my life. There was no question after that first summer that I

would be participating for many years to come and indeed have returned every summer since, excluding this past summer in which the camp did not open due to COVID-19.

In lieu of operating camp as usual, the *tzevet* (staff) of the camp designed four alternatives. The first were day camps in Vancouver and Victoria, the cities in which most of the campers and counselors reside. The closed border between the U.S. and Canada made it impossible for American campers and counselors to participate in either camp. As such, my involvement during the 2020 summer was as a *tzevet* (staff) member in the two other programs: an online camp and a twice-a-week in person program in my home city.

While the ethnographic research for this project officially occurred only during the past summer, my longstanding entanglement with Camp Miriam and Habonim Dror gives me a know-how about the world beyond my official recordings and observations. Beyond aiding me practically, this entanglement also makes the project an incredibly personal one. It would be impossible for me to write this project without taking into account the intimate relationship I have with camp, the movement, and its members. As with most close relationships, my feelings about camp and the movement are not straightforward. I hold frustrations and criticism alongside my sustained feelings of affection for the camp and movement in which I grew up and which profoundly influenced my life. The intimacy of the camp environment also holds analytical weight in this project and reproductive weight in the world of camp. Camp could not be maintained without the intimacy it fosters.

This project is primarily about a summer camp. Every other part of this analysis fundamentally returns to this basic theme. More specifically, this project is about a summer camp that is part of a movement whose members dream of a radically different world and believe that

youth can be the builders of that world. Most completely it is about how summer camp is an institution which makes possible the living differently that movement members dream about. Ideology can be realized and routinized in the sphere of camp. Importantly this occurs in the diaspora, a fact that is consequential in light of the movement's official Zionist identity. Camp is, at its core, a project of the diaspora. While in many ways oriented towards Israel, the Zionist dream as it is manifest at Camp Miriam is about more than a place-based nationalism. The project is concerned with the ideologies and values which are, I argue, more fundamental to movement life than Zionism. These are socialism, collectivism, the equality of human value, Jewish self-determination, and youth autonomy.

To understand Camp Miriam first and foremost as a diasporic project, it is important to spell out the movement's official Zionist orientation. The Zionist dream of the movement parallels that of the *chalutzim* mentioned above: that youth will pioneer a radically just society based on the values of Jewish self-determination and socialism in the land of Israel. To quote the definition of the movement's progressive labor Zionist beliefs found on the movement website, "Israel is an ongoing project for Jewish liberation that is in a state of constant revolution toward justice, pioneered by youth." This dream is a powerful one, inspiring young Jews to *aleh v'hagshem* (rise up and actualize) in the land of Israel since the respective inceptions of Habonim and Dror. As powerful as this dream may be, I explore the ways that, even with its explicitly Zionist positionality, camp is a project of creating and maintaining community in the Jewish diaspora.

Hagshamah, a word those in the movement translate as "actualization," is a useful concept in understanding the diasporic positionality of camp. Mentioned above as one of the

pillars of the movement, *hagshamah* is primarily defined in two ways. The first could be boiled down to practicing values or the conviction that it is not enough to simply hold values; values must be acted upon. The conclusion to a *peula*¹, or educational activity, on *hagshamah* reads, “At camp our *hagshamah* is learning and acting upon our values and our *hagshamah* during the year is acting upon what you learned during the summer. Educating yourself is your *hagshamah*! You guys have the power to change and influence your surroundings.” This version of *hagshamah* is not spatially bounded, it can be performed anywhere.

The second meaning, on the other hand, is definitionally tied to a certain place. My friend Aviva explained well the grander version of *hagshamah* when I asked what she would identify as the ‘point’ of camp. “The first answer that comes to mind is sort of like, the ultimate *hagshamah* path of the movement kind of thing, y'know like the ideologica- like traditional ideology of the movement and like, the goal to educate Jewish youth towards a certain end which is socialist labor *aliyah* [Jewish immigration to Israel]...” This definition of *hagshamah*, less frequently used but still common, sets up *aliyah* as the most complete way of living out the values promoted at camp, the most complete *hagshamah*.

What I intend to explore in this project are the ways in which camp can be understood as an alternative form of *hagshamah* that exists, like the simpler definition of personal responsibility, in the diaspora, yet embodies the complexity of the vision of *hagshamah* which the movement asserts is possible only in Israel. Camp is a space in which movement members live out the esteemed values of socialism, cultural Judaism, youth empowerment, feminism, etc. and they are doing it *in the diaspora*. This embodiment is mediated by certain camp

¹ Plural: *peulot*. A distinct and ubiquitous discussion-based educational structure in the movement.

characteristics such as geographic isolation, language, and temporality among others. If making *aliyah* (moving to Israel) is the “ultimate” form of *hagshamah* then the project fails. The number of people from the movement making *aliyah* is rapidly diminishing. The frame of diaspora lends to the possibility of viewing camp as “ultimate” *hagshamah* in and of itself.

A Note on Language

In chapter three I discuss the particular brand of Hebrew-infused English that is characteristic of movement life. Important to that analysis is the frequency of specific Hebrew words in movement discourse. Mirroring the analytic weight that language has, I use Hebrew words, transliterated, as movement members would. The spelling of certain words is not consistent across and even with HDNA camps. As such, I use the spellings I have encountered and used most frequently throughout my time in the movement. After initially translating the word, I typically leave it untranslated. *Machaneh* (plural, *machanot*) is used the most frequently, it means camp.

Negotiating Zionism

It was late December and Habonim Dror North America's winter seminar was gearing up to be significant. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic meant the seminar was online instead of in-person at the Poconos Environmental Education Center as it usually would be. This virtual turn meant that many more participants were registered than usual, including many who had never attended a movement seminar before. The move to digital was not the only reason that participant numbers were high; an ongoing movement dilemma also contributed to the hum of anticipation as the seminar drew near. The previous winter a proposal had been brought to the biennial decision-making seminar, *Veida*, to rename the Zionism pillar of the movement. The proposal was lengthy and included many "whereas" clauses including "Although Zionism has historically meant many things, many of them moral and beautiful, it has also meant many other things, many of them not moral nor beautiful. Zionism is also a tangible political structure that has displaced, killed, and continues to oppress millions of people" and "Habonim Dror recognizes that the fate, and therefore the liberation, of all people is tied together and therefore Palestinian liberation & Jewish liberation are not at odds, but are one and the same!" Following this list came the list of resolutions beginning with "Let it be resolved that [Habonim Dror] makes moves to rename the pillar that is currently Zionism! It should be changed to something that signifies our continued commitment to Jewish peoplehood, including those in the current state of Israel, along with our recognition of the problematic history of the word Zionism and our desire for a more pluralistic movement culture."

Some parts of the proposal passed, some did not, resulting in confusion for both those who attended the seminar and those who did not regarding the movement's Zionist status. One decision that was clear was that there would be an "emergency" *Veida* the following winter for the sole purpose of grappling with this proposal. In preparation for this significant decision, it was prescribed that each *machaneh* would undergo a summer-long process about Zionism so that movement members would be more equipped to think through the implications of either remaining Zionist or dropping the label.

Covid-19 made the already confusing outcome of the 2019 *Veida* all the more murky. *Machanot* were unable to operate in the typical fashion, rendering the pre-*Veida* summer process essentially inoperable. Additionally, as the pandemic continued into the winter it became clear that an in-person emergency *Veida* would be impossible. These two factors were cited as the primary ones in the *mazkirut artzit's* (central decision making body of the movement) decision to forego the emergency *Veida* in favor of the aforementioned virtual winter seminar. This decision was controversial as those who supported the proposal had been counting on the *Veida* to finally face the dilemma of Zionism head on in a sustained and serious way.

While Covid-19 impaired the running of a structured process, other events regarding movement Zionism continued to unfold after the proposal was introduced. With the threat of official annexation of the West Bank looming over the summer, a contingent of movement members put together a petition calling on the movement to enact specific action items to concretely demonstrate the movement's opposition to this political move. These actions included

ceasing all programming in Israel and for “Garin aliyah (moving to Israel with your *kvutza*²) [to] not be the movement’s ultimate *hagshama* (actualization)” among other things.

These two documents, the proposal and the petition, caused a large stir over the course of the year as they formally challenged the movement’s Zionist identity, an identity some members argue is part of the “DNA” of Habonim Dror. This crisis of Zionism in many ways became central to my research as movement members increasingly found themselves in the position of defending their commitments to Zionism or explaining their opposition to the ideology.

While this is not the first time the movement’s Zionist identity has been challenged—indeed the movement has regularly throughout its history defined and redefined the movement’s dream of Zionism—this proposal was the first attempt in the current movement’s collective memory to rid the movement of its Zionist label entirely, at least the first with any traction. The significance of this proposal was felt by many, highlighted in part by an email sent to the movement listserv by the educational director of the movement in which she stated, controversially, that “Labor Zionism is the foundational purpose of Habonim Dror.”

Many have pointed to the success of Jewish summer camps as places of Zionist indoctrination (Wenner 2010; Mitchell 2018; Fox 2020). The liminal context of camp paired with experiences of fun and commitments to informal education make summer camps ripe locations for imbuing ideology. Zionism, at camp, can become hegemonic. I take seriously this argument and dedicate much of this section to an examination of the ways Zionist identity is fostered and performed at *machaneh* by movement members both through discourse and the embodiment of mundane practices at *machaneh*.

² Literally: group. See chapter three for fuller explanation.

However, as much as camps can provide an ideal form for transmitting Zionist ideology, the result is not a homogenous body of young Jews committed to Zionism. In fact, as the proposal exemplifies, movement members are increasingly becoming disenchanted with Zionism and are seeking to change the movement's Zionist core. Importantly this group of dissenters frames their discontent in terms of movement values. Additionally, many members of the camp community including both those directly involved in the debate and those on the periphery do not consider Zionism *the* central or even *a* central facet of their camp experience.

Ultimately, whether Zionism takes hold or not in a given movement member, the movement experience is at its core, an upbuilding of Jewish community *in the diaspora*. This is not to obscure the political stakes of Zionism or the harm the ideology has caused to Palestinians. What I argue for instead, is a focus on the experience of campers and counselors at camp as a particularly diasporic one. While the focus of this chapter, Zionism is but one grand scheme, along with socialism and collective life, social justice, and camp fun, under which campers and counselors alike experience *machaneh*.

Making Zionism Work (On the Left)

To begin, it is important to note again that the conversation of how and even if the movement is Zionist is not a new one. For years the movement has dedicated much time and energy to crafting a Zionism that is not at odds with its progressive core. Great pains have been taken to ensure and reaffirm that we are what a friend of mine once called “asterisk Zionists” i.e. Zionists against the occupation, pro-Palestinian Zionists, Zionists who are not afraid to critique the Israeli government, etc. These lengthy definitions instill pride in some movement members

who feel that the movement is where they can hold their dreams for a Jewish state and their support of the Palestinian people in the same hand. For others in the movement, the notion of “asterisk Zionism” suggests that Zionism is a dated ideology, no longer relevant in the world of progressive politics. In this section I turn towards the philosophies of the former group, noting of course that no line could be drawn to easily divide the movement into two distinct factions. My experience growing up at Miriam certainly skewed more towards the former.

Over my time at *machaneh*, I became familiar with the different rhetorical moves that are deployed in tandem with the movement’s lengthy and specific definition of Zionism. Certain phrases are circulated which make Zionism appear the obvious ideological option including “if Palestinians deserve a state then so do Jews” and, “every peoplehood, including Palestinians and Jews, deserves self-determination” and, “if Jews aren’t indigenous to Israel then where are we from?” These assertions made sense to me as a young camper with progressive leanings especially when they came from counselors who I looked up to as thoughtful and articulate role models. It took many years before I became skeptical of what a friend once called “mental acrobatics,” or the ways in which movement rhetoric frames Zionism and specific stories about Israel to be compelling, morally righteous, and even obvious in the sphere of something that might be called North American progressive politics.

Sydney, comfortably Zionist, and a very committed movement member seriously considering making *aliyah*, is particularly comfortable within this discourse. In a *peula* (guided discussion) about Zionism during Winter Seminar we were discussing how colonialism is used when discussing Israel-Palestine and she brought up the topic of Jewish indigeneity to Israel.

I feel like when we talk about colonialism and Israel it just gets extremely complicated extremely quickly because what’s past and what’s present and like where you draw the lines really changes the framing, right? Like if you start a history in 1850, right? Like, then it’s really clear that it’s like

okay people came and we claimed a land and did this. But it's like, if you start your history a really long time ago and you understand the Jewish people to be something different, it like looks and feels really different- and still has elements of colonialism and oppression, like I don't- I in no way want to say that Israel doesn't do fucked up things to Palestinians in the name of maintaining majority because that currently is happening but I don't know- I like really struggle talking about colonialism in this case specifically because I learned a lot about colonialism in school and a lot of the examples that we used have like more clear uh, like, like end- beginning and end points to discuss from and within and I feel like it's really complicated here. Does that make sense? And that's just something that whenever colonialism comes up in the context of Israel it like, is really complicated for me because also it's like, Jews are coming back to like, a land that we are from and also there were people here before we came and like, that is extremely complicated.

Sydney positioned Jews as an indigenous people returning to their native land, while at the same time leaving open the possibility that Israeli Jews are colonists. It would be a blunder and a falsity, she knows, to paint Israeli Jews exclusively as victims in current day Israel-Palestine. To avoid this, Sydney “complexified” the history of Jewish and Palestinian power dynamics in the region. This rhetorical move is common in movement discourse, to the frustration of those members opposed to Zionism. Claims of indigeneity are one way in which movement members maintain their Zionist positionality; doing so effectively subverts the power that evidence of Israel as a settler-colonial state has to depict Zionism as a morally bankrupt ideology. It is important to note that these claims were not invented by Sydney or other movement members. The Israeli state and its supporters routinely deploy narratives of indigeneity to legitimize the claim that Jews have a right to the land.

Framing the history of Israel-Palestine as complex is its own kind of rhetorical move, in fact maybe the only one that works to convincingly shield Zionism from critique. Straightforward narratives that ignore Israel’s responsibility for Palestinian oppression fall apart quickly under progressive scrutiny. In order to make Zionism viable on the left, it is imperative

that movement members acknowledge the Palestinian struggle. Beyond simply including Palestinian voices, framing Zionism a progressive struggle requires aligning Zionism with leftist politics, in this case- indigeneity. In this way the Zionism of the movement is not only “asterisk” Zionism, as in “Zionist but also pro-Palestinian” but it is also Zionism *because*; because the Jews have been persecuted, because we were initially expelled from the land, etc. Indeed the *because* ensures the longevity of the ideology more than the *but* ever could.

The distinction Sydney drew between Israel and other settler-colonial states is also reflected in camp practices. Over the course of my time at *machaneh*, the critique of settler-colonialism in Canada has become foregrounded in movement discourse. Accompanying this discursive shift, changes have been made to at least symbolically demonstrate the camp’s condemnation of Canada’s colonial history. For example, we no longer raise the Canadian flag and there is a painted land acknowledgement hanging on the *binyan* (main building). A verbal land acknowledgement and singing of “Land of the Silver Birch” has replaced “O Canada” on Friday evenings to acknowledge our occupation of indigeneous land. Yet, also on Friday, we continue to raise the Israeli flag and sing the Israeli national anthem, *Hatikvah*. It takes members like Sydney actively distinguishing between Zionism and Canadian settler-colonialism, for example, to prevent the general critique of colonialism from turning into a delegitimization of Zionism. Sydney and others’ skillful framing of Zionism as a progressive position works in tandem with the affective bonds to Israel camp attempts to build in *chanichimot*³ (campers).

³ See chapter three for an explanation of this gendered, plural suffix.

Cultivating Affective Connections to Israel

It was the middle of the night and I was sleeping soundly in my *ohell* (platform tent) when I was awoken by the light of a flashlight in my eyes and voices encouraging me to put my shoes on and grab a jacket. My *kvutsah* (age-group⁴) mates who were returners to camp seemed unafraid and there was an air of sleepy excitement. Once we were all dressed, we were led down the path to the *migrash* (sports field). Our counselors told us that we needed to get to the other side of the *migrash* where the bus was parked but there were British soldiers who were looking for us. *Don't get spotted*, they told us. *If a flashlight touches you, you have to go back to the beginning*. Heeding those instructions we started scurrying across the field, dashing between different obstacles which had been strategically placed around to be used for hiding. It was genuinely thrilling, a game of tag with significantly higher (if fantastical) stakes.

After what felt like a long time, every member of my *kvutsah* was reassembled at the far end of the *migrash*. A gruff character (a paid off British soldier? A smuggler aiding us along the way?) instructed us to get on the bus. Giggling we obeyed, by this point all wide awake, eager to find out what was to come next. Even though we were fairly familiar with the few roads adjacent to camp, it was difficult to tell where we were going in the dark. Upon arrival at our destination we unloaded onto a beach where we were led to camp's ten-person canoes. There we donned life jackets and sat in quiet as a counselor paddled us slowly into the bay. Although in reality we turned around and returned to the exact place we had departed, we were told that we were entering a new land. Back onto the bus, then back to camp we finally entered the dining hall where we were welcomed into Israel and served hot chocolate and cookies.

⁴ See chapter three for a fuller explanation of *kvutsah*.

The experience described above is known at camp as *aliyah bet*, a term which generally refers to Jewish immigration to Palestine between 1920 and 1948. At camp, it is a simulation which occurs once a summer which draws from different tales of migration to what is now Israel including the Spanish inquisition and Jewish migration from Morocco. The various stories played out during *aliyah bet* follow clear tropes of underdog success which abound in classical Zionist narratives. Campers embody persecuted Jews tasked with outsmarting enemies who stand in the way of statehood and its associated liberation.

Aliyah bet is one way camp institutionally fosters emotional ties to Israel. In his book on diaspora tours to Israel, Shaul Kelner argues that while discourse of Palestinians and Arab Israelis is present, indeed necessary for the trips to maintain their educational legitimacy, “Israel is experienced - cognitively and emotionally, personally and interpersonally, with the senses and the body fully engaged” (Kelner 2010, 79). This holistic Israel experience fosters tour participants’ empathetic identification with Jewish Israelis in ways that are not possible for Palestinians when Palestine exists only in conversation. *Machaneh* similarly attempts to cultivate an emotional attachment to Israel through a variety of different avenues, creating intentional associations between Israel and positive camp experiences.

Many of these rituals and traditions, like *aliyah bet*, fly under the radar of contestable discourse. However, the line distinguishing what is debatable “content” from what is simply part of the fabric of *machaneh* is a blurry one. Various aspects of camp life have swung in and out of visibility even over the course of the less than decade I have been involved. For example, when I was a *chanicha* we sang *Shir Hapalmach* every week after Israeli dancing which literally translates to “Song of the *Palmach*.” The *palmach* was “an elite volunteer military force

comprising crack troops, [which] functioned as the primary and decisive military arm of the Yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine) in its struggle to establish a Jewish state in Palestine in the 1940s” (Chazan 2012). Criticized for being an anthem of the perpetrators of what Palestinians refer to as the *Nakba*, (Arabic for catastrophe) and a song associated with ethnic cleansing, the tradition of singing the song was terminated.

Various songs have since been slotted in to replace the military anthem but have had little success inspiring the same enthusiasm and energy in *chanichimot* and *tzevet*. The replacement songs were just not as fun, even if devoid of troubling politics. A small group of *tzevet* members never reconciled with the decision to stop singing *Shir Hapalmach* and four years later raised a discussion to reinstate it. We sat down as a *tzevet* to discuss the implications of the song and think through the various alternatives, a discussion which ultimately maintained the original decision. The backlash regarding that decision, resurfacing years after we stopped singing, is telling of just how connected campers and counselors are to the Zionism that takes its form in camp ritual.

There are many rituals like the one above that go largely uncontested as enactments of Zionist ideology and which are affective in important ways. The group of staff in the example above felt a sentimental attachment to the song they had grown up singing at camp. Every year a few *shlichim* (emissaries) from Israel come to work at camp, forming close bonds with staff coworkers and their *chanichimot* (campers). *Rikkud* (Israeli dancing) is a favorite part of the week for many campers and staff. Additionally, Israel, at *machaneh* is tasted during Yom Israel’s falafel lunch and sporadic Israeli breakfasts. It is heard and spoken in songs and camp

vernacular. Israeli friendships are formed. In short, Israel is routinely invoked in embodied practices.

Creating emotional attachment to Israel at camp is part of an intentional ideological map, one version of which was described in the *sikkum* (summary, conclusion) of a 2011 *tzevet peula* (staff discussion) on Zionism. Written into the *peula*, the *madrich/a/ot*⁵ is instructed to say:

In Habonim we generally start out with instilling a love and basic knowledge for Israel, and then as time goes on, we have our chanichim deal with social problems and inequalities, and lastly with the Conflict and some of the major challenges to Zionism. Ultimately, we want our chanichim to be critical, passionate, and loving towards Israel – and together this all adds up to a responsibility towards it – to learn more about it, to spend time there, and to help solve its problems.

Camp's position in the diaspora is used to justify the effort to build a connection with Israel.

While there are other structures that could be influencing campers' relationships to and knowledge about Israel (family, synagogue, Jewish day school, etc.), many campers live the majority of their lives not engaging with Israel as an idea. As part of its Zionist mission, camp has taken on the task of facilitating engagement with Israel to ideally build positive affective ties to the state. Importantly, it is not sufficient to instruct children to love Israel. Instilling love of Israel must utilize the embodied experiences particularly as they are deployed in rituals and summer camp fun.

Also outlined in the *sikkum* above is a real commitment to education about “the Conflict” and the major challenges to Zionism, including the occupation. However, these discussions remain at the level of discourse. There are no Palestinian counselors with whom campers can build emotional relationships with, Arabic is not woven into camp life, and there is no activity simulating Palestinian liberation. Inclusions of Palestinian perspectives exist only in *peulot* about

⁵ See chapter three.

“the conflict” or “the occupation.” Like Israeli homeland trips, the (not uncontested) educational goal of the movement is “to create a space for a liberal critique from within a Zionist framework, but not a radical one based on the delegitimization of the state’s existence” (Kelner 65). Camp structures and activities demonstrate a commitment to a Jewish state. However, the movement is made up of movement members, many of whom do not share that commitment.

Easy Questions and Hard Questions

The write-up of a *peula* for the *tzevet* of Miriam in 2011 begins:

Matarot [Goals]:

- Have tzevet examine the tension in our education between ‘easy’ questions about Israel and ‘hard’ questions about Zionism.
 - ‘Easy’ questions that we can all stand behind (raising cost of staple goods + Hanoar Haoved’s⁶ fight against it... Strangers No More/Eshbal... Save a Child’s Heart... etc.)
 - ‘Hard’ = the larger existential questions of Zionism (exclusivity as a foundation of a Jewish state, 1948 and its legacy, the founders as a model for settlers, etc.)
 - Which place do these two focuses have in our education? At what stage should a chanich be presented with them?

Criticisms of movement Zionism are often broadly housed in the distinction made in the guide above. One maintains that camp education must be critical of Israel in its Zionist education. The other probes the legitimacy of Zionism itself. Importantly these groups are not clearly distinguished and any one criticism related to Israel or Zionism falls ambiguously within both categories. In this section, I trace a few examples of movement members negotiating this ambiguity, navigating the tension between so called “easy” questions and “hard” questions about Israel and Zionism.

⁶ Habonim Dror’s sister movement in Israel.

During winter seminar in the same *peula* as Sydney's comment above, Mark, also from Miriam, brought up his issues with the content of one *Yom Israel*, an Israel-themed day that camp staff run once a summer:

Um I was looking at the Yom Israel from two summers ago, Guardians of the Galilee which, like at the time I had a ton of fun running and like, I thought it was like, one of the best things in the world but I think in hindsight the- after these conversations that we've had, I don't think the education was about necessarily what it needed to be and although the issues were important it- I don't think we were like, I think we were like sort of tip-toeing around this like, massive issue like we talked about issues like LGBTQ+, and like Ethiopian Jews and like pretty much nothing- and like even the Druze- but like nothing was mentioned about Palestinians or the occupation or anything like that and I didn't think about it at the time, like looking back there was like, a massive gap in... um, what we should've been talking about.

Mark acknowledges that the education of the day did not paint Israel singularly as a flawless society. He lists the societal issues that were covered including discrimination against people in the LGBTQ+ community, racism towards Ethiopian Jews, and the status of Druze in the country. Mark's critique, although in different words, is that the day focused too much on "easy" questions related to Israeli society. While those topics were faced head-on, we "tip-toed" around a discussion of Palestinians. Importantly, Mark points out that there was an absence of content relating to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. The occupation is a prime example of the ambiguity of movement criticisms because institutionally, education on the occupation should not be a "hard" question. There are official movement documents citing the movement's commitment to educating about the occupation dating back to 1993 and I have heard anecdotally that the movement has been anti-occupation since the occupation began. Many stickers proudly boast #ZIONISTSAGAINSTTHEOCCUPATION and the description of Progressive Labor Zionism on the movement's website asserts that the movement calls for "an

immediate end to the Occupation.” Established movement principles maintain that being anti-occupation does not preclude a Zionist identity.

Even while this is true institutionally, the *Yom Israel* in question is not the only example of leaving out education about the occupation. I have been routinely disappointed about the lack of occupation education during my years as a *madricha* (counselor) and have tried on many occasions to fill that gap, with varying degrees of success. Even though the movement has explicitly committed to providing education about the occupation, it often has felt like pulling teeth to make sure it is included during the summer.

One reason for this is that while it is regularly asserted that education on the occupation does not pose a challenge to the movement’s Zionist character it is treated as such. For example, in a discussion about when/if/how the movement should educate campers about the Israeli occupation of Palestine one staff member, Maggie, voiced that, growing up, she had no knowledge or connection to Israel and little connection to her Jewish identity. She asserted that learning about the occupation as a young camper would have impeded the development of her connection to Israel. Her first reaction, so she said, would have been “then why should I care about Israel?” Maggie, perhaps unwittingly, acknowledged that the occupation challenges the heart of the movement’s commitment to Zionism in a way that the Israeli state being homophobic or racist to its citizens does not. The occupation, unlike internal societal issues, points directly to questions of land control, power, and statehood.

The interaction immediately following Mark’s comment is also revealing of how movement members navigate the tension between easy questions and hard questions. Sydney pressed him with the question, “Wasn't there a section about the nation state law? In that *Yom*

Israel?” To which he responded “I believe there was but I don't think- like... I need to go back and read it I think, to remember but I think, I'm pretty sure it wasn't fully in there. But it might- I think it still tip-toed but I can look back and read it. I will do that.” By pointing out that we did talk about *something* related to Palestinians, i.e. the nation state law which stated that “The exercise of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish People” (*trans.* Rolef 2018). Sydney attempted to undermine Mark’s critique that the day neglected to engage content about Palestians. This threw Mark off balance, likely also because Sydney was the educational director during the summer in question. Sydney defended the content of the *Yom Israel* against Mark’s criticism by highlighting one example of an issue related to Palestinians. Small, token inclusions of Palestinian perspectives or issues is oft cited as evidence that the movement is, in fact, comprised of Zionists against the occupation, as many water bottle stickers proudly announce.

Another common critique of the movement’s relationship to Israel is that, whatever the language we use to define our ideology, the movement does not do work that embodies its values. A friend of mine, Ben, voiced a version of these frustrations to me in a WhatsApp voice message.

This is just like classic Habo angst thing to say but like basically it's not even that I'm an anti-Zionist or a Zionist its just that I don't care! Like, I just think like genuine political action, even though it's an educational movement mneh⁷, is just not happening and like when I was talking to Noa about it she agreed that like, yes it's important for us to define values in the movement, or it's like sure, maybe saying Zionism with ten asterisks that mean like, anti-occupation, pro-Palestinian liberation you know, the classic justify your Zionism kind of thing I'm like sure, even if that is acceptable, it literally does not matter if we're not doing the ten asterisks thing, y'know? It's like, we can spend forever arguing about whether this definition perfectly fits but at the end of the day, if we're not doing the grassroots work to like create

⁷ There is an ongoing conversation about what it means to be an “educational” movement, what the role is of direct political action in the movement, and what the distinction is between education and political action.

Palestinian liberation or to revolutionize Israeli democracy, whatever, it just doesn't matter! And it's just horrible, like at some point I'm just like, can we just, just, like we can move on okay? Like, maybe this existential threat to the movement is just a tad dramatic and I know there are significant differences in ideological beliefs of people but it's like, maybe it's just okay.

The primary frustration that Ben is voicing (although certainly not the only one) has to do with a pragmatic approach rather than a symbolic one. This voice message came in the context of almost a year of conversations orbiting around the movement dilemma of discarding or maintaining our Zionist label. For him what is important is not whether we call ourselves Zionist or not but “genuine political action” under the auspices of all of the movement’s labels which he points out also include “anti-occupation” and “pro-Palestinian liberation.” Ben attributes the movement’s political inaction to an unnecessary preoccupation with whether or not we say we are Zionist while also recognizing that the current approach to Zionism feels empty if we are not doing the work that our complex definition would seem to demand. While a poignantly voiced critique, I attribute the movement’s inaction to a different source which is that taking steps towards Palestinian liberation presents challenges to Zionism that movement members are not prepared to face.

Shivyon Erech Ha'adam (The Equality of Human Value)

The ideological education of the movement has taken root in movement members with varying degrees of success. As I have noted throughout this section, not all movement members have been sold by the often persuasive movement version of Zionism. Evidenced most strongly in the proposal to remove or change the language of the Zionism pillar there is a (seemingly growing) contingent of the movement who wish for the movement to either be less or not Zionist.

The critique of Zionism in some ways seems like an inevitable one. At the same time as the movement is deeply rooted in Zionism (some going as far as to say that Zionism is the *point* of the movement) the movement also has deep connections to progressive, leftist politics and socialism. The members who remain committed to Zionism do so with a real conviction that it is their progressive, leftist politics that lead them to Zionist conclusions. However, as leftist discourse increasingly denounces nationalism, settler colonialism, and white supremacy, it becomes harder for the leftist politics of the movement to remain in sync with Zionism. For many who have become disillusioned with Zionism, the combination is no longer tenable.

What is most poignant about the critiques of Zionism is that the members who voice them are doing so precisely because of their commitment to the movement. These members do not want to abandon the movement which in so many ways aligns with their politics. As part of their rhetorical strategy they frame their critiques in terms of the movement's other core values and ideologies. Most often this occurs under the auspices of *shivyon erech ha'adam* or, the equality of human value. The movement opposition increasingly views Zionism as paradoxical to what movement members have shortened to *shivvy*.

All of this is to say that the movement dream is bifurcating. The dream, for many, is no longer a just, socialist, youth led, collective, Jewish society in the state of Israel. It is all of those things, in the diaspora. In the next chapter, I explore the ways summer camp is an ideal place to live out that dream.

Camp as Form, Camp as Fun

Jewish camping has been identified as one of the most important influences a child can have in building Jewish identity and commitment.

-“Camp Works” study (2011) from the Foundation for Jewish Camp

It doesn't sound like this big deal when you're like 'it's a summer camp' (laughs) but it's more than just a summer camp.

-Aviva, from an interview

It has been well established that summer camps are not simply places of carefree, summer fun (Mitchell 2018, Wenner 2010, Fox 2020). Summer camps have been deployed as sites of pedagogy, secluded oases from modern suburban life, and religious enclaves. The North American Jewish community in particular has long recognized the importance of summer camps in Jewish identity formation. American Jewish historian Sandra Fox writes, “Educators across the ideological spectrum came to see the totalizing nature of camp as a model conduit for passing on their ideologically imbued visions of authentic, real, or ideal forms of Jewish life to campers, using language, performance, and ritual as their primary tools” (2020). In this section, I dig deeper into the totalizing nature of camp and explore the features of camp that make it the place to live out ideal forms of Jewish life, according to movement ideology. I am particularly interested in the elements of the camp form which make it such a “model conduit” for ideological transmission.

Part of this exploration into the camp form necessitates a serious inquiry into the role of fun at camp. While camps are not places that deal *exclusively* in fun, fun is at the forefront of the camp experience for campers and counselors alike. Many of the happiest memories of my own

life are from my time at camp and that sentiment is shared by many. This affective experience cannot be divorced from the ideologic under and over pinnings of camp and the movement. The connection however is not simply that camp has found a way to make ideology fun. I argue instead that the relationship between camp's (evolving) political projects is a dialectic relationship with fun. Each commitment shapes the other.

In the following section, I map out the connections between the form of the summer camp, movement ideology in practice, and fun. To explore why and how camps are recognized as such potent sites for political projects, I turn first to a discussion of the institution after which Camp Miriam was modeled: the *kibbutz*. Building from this analysis I examine camp's character as a total institution and the possibilities to live out camp ideologies that emerge from this characterization. Next, I examine camp's liminal status and the experience of fun and *communitas* born out of this condition. Finally, I turn to the imperfect interplay between fun and ideology.

It is not my intention to clarify that camps are indeed political places. That work has already been done (see Tillery 1997, Fox 2020, Mitchell 2018). What I am interested in is the relationship between fun and the political and the delicate, interwoven dance that the two play out in the camp setting. At a camp that is so expressly political (in its Zionism, in its socialism, etc.) fun is shaped by and shapes in return camp's ideological commitments. What is especially important for *Machaneh Miriam*, I argue, is the way in which summer camp is the place to live out the dream of Jewish self-determination, youth autonomy, and socialism in a complete, albeit temporary, way in the diaspora.

Kibbutz Genealogy: Tracing Ideological Affect

There is only one all-out effort to create a Full Cooperative, which justifies our speaking of success in the socialistic sense, and that is the Jewish Village commune in its various forms, as found in Palestine.

-Martin Buber, 1949

The specific roots for Camp Miriam and other Habonim Dror *machanot* lie in the *Kibbutz* Movement. Collectivist in nature, *kibbutzim*⁸ were early agricultural settlements in Palestine made up primarily of European middle-class youth. *Kibbutzim* began during the second *aliyah* which occurred from 1904-1914 (Bowes 2000). From the outset, *kibbutzim* were romantic, idealistic places to both live socialism and to build a Jewish nation.

The connection between these early settlements and European youth movements was made early. Anthropologist Alison Bowes writes, “News of the young pioneers’ efforts in Palestine filtered back to Zionist youth groups in Europe, and these groups began to see a clear aim for their efforts: they would train people to go to Palestine and to settle on the land, working it communally as the pioneers were doing” (Bowes 1989, 23). *Aliyah* to *kibbutzim* became the goal of labor Zionist youth movements such as Habonim and Dror, respectively. The ideals of the youth movement such as collective living, Jewish self-determination, and connection to the land, could be made manifest in the *kibbutz*, the most complete form of youth movements’ goals to live differently.

⁸ Bowes notes that the early communal settlements were referred to as *kvutsot* and not *kibbutzim* but for the purpose of this analysis I use *kibbutzim* as a general term to refer to the institution of a socialist agricultural settlement.

Aliyah to kibbutzim in Israel not only was, and in some ways still is, the end goal of the movement, but the legacy of *kibbutzim* is also an integral part of the *machanot* in North America. The ‘About’ page of the HDNA website explains, “Based on the model of a kibbutz, each machaneh (camp) creates a close-knit community based on Jewish ideals of collective responsibility, respect, equality and friendship.” Much of camp vocabulary and their associated structures and organization originated within the *kibbutz* movement such as *kvutsah*, *kupa* (collective money), and *chadar ochel* (dining hall/central building). The spirit of collectivism, investment in labor, commitment to Jewish life, and socialist organizing principles that were present in the *kibbutz* are all key components of life at *machaneh*.

When I was fifteen, I went on the HDNA summer trip to Israel. I spent five and a half weeks with a hundred other 11th grade movement members from across North America. Like many Israel tours, we drove around the country in two tour busses seeing sites, learning about Israel’s history, and speaking to young Israelis. Also like other Israel tours, the gaze of my peers and me was largely focused inward on our own group and the unfolding social dynamics within it (Kelner 2010). The trip was fairly formative for me. There are a few powerful memories that have stayed with me since: a teacher from Dror Yisrael spoke to my bus about the socialist boarding school that was run democratically by its students; a pair of Sudanese refugees described their their experience with genocide and the process by which they came to reside in Tel Aviv; and we toured one of the original *kibbutzim*, now abandoned.

We walked around the *kibbutz* peering inside houses and learning about gendered divisions of labor in the barn. The most poignant part of the tour for me was our time in the dining hall. Hot and tired my *kvutsah* mates and I sat around the large dining table. Our

madrachimot explained with pride that we were sitting in the room where they first sung *Mi*

Yatzilenu, the song we sing before meals at *machaneh*. The lyrics read

<i>Mi yatzilenu me-ra'av</i>	Who will save us who are hungry?
<i>Mi yaachilenu lechem rav x2</i>	Who will save us some bread?
<i>Umiyashkenu kos halav</i>	And who will give us a glass of milk to drink?
<i>Oy! Lemi toda?</i>	Oy! Who do we thank?
<i>Oy! Lemi brachah?</i>	Oy! Who do we praise?
<i>L'avodah v' lamelecha x2</i>	Work and labor!

As someone who very much bought into the focus on our own labor, I was excited to be able to trace the lineage of the movement from my own experiences to idealistic, socialist *chalutzim* (pioneers) through this song. Knowing that we sing the song they sang brought the *kibbutz* legacy to life.

Another element that was characteristic of *kibbutz* life was the intensity of the emotions, framed and understood as being shaped by the ideologies of the institution, something that could be called ideological affect. While life on the *kibbutz* was incredibly demanding on the body (many young *chalutzim* having had no previous agricultural experience), it was also an intensely emotional place. Joseph Baratz, member of Degania, which is recognized as the first *kibbutz*, reflected on his experience

It... was a kind of communal 'honeymoon.' We used to go out in the morning to plough while it was still dark. There were six pairs of mules and six fresh, energetic riders upon them. Here we are on the banks of the Jordan, and a mighty song bursts from our throats... We felt we had become farmers, workers of the soil - our homeland's soil. When dusk fell, we used to return... We used to sit... crowded together, and talk about the farm (qtd. in Bowes 1989, 23).

Accompanying this romantic language of emotional belonging, dripping with the reigning nationalist ideology of the movement, there was also a sense of joyful reverie in the settlements. Joseph's wife Miriam writes, "After a day of hard and grinding labor, we would sit in a circle,

begin with romantic songs, pour out all our heart, and then go over to Hassidic tunes, which brings all of us to our feet dancing, and perspiring without end” (qtd. in Bowes 1989, 23).

Various characteristics of the *kibbutz* engendered intense emotions into the experience and made possible the living out of ideologies. Most crucially, *kibbutzim* were enclosed and bound away from a constructed “other” society. This occurred both spatially in that they were physically away from the lives members came from and temporally with members spending their entire days in the physically bounded space. These two conditions are also present in *machaneh*, and making it possible for *machaneh*, like the *kibbutz*, to embody Theodor Herzl’s famous assertion: “If you will it, it is no dream.” Being so clearly demarcated away from the rest of the world, physically, temporally, and ideologically through intentional rhetoric, *machaneh* and the *kibbutz* each are able to construct new worlds with radical ways of structuring human life. The enclosedness of the *kibbutz* form makes it a transportable institution. As fairly small, highly structured places, the model of the *kibbutz* could be replicated in Palestine and on a small island in British Columbia.

Arrival: Establishing Camp as a Total Institution

After taking a bus, a ferry, another bus, another ferry, and one final bus, campers finally arrive at Camp Miriam. The song *Yesh Lanu Machaneh* (“We Have a Camp,” written for and about Camp Miriam) rings out as the bus pulls to the end of one of the few roads on the island and campers spot the *binyan* (main building) for the first time that year. With *tzevet* (staff) and *madatz* (counselors in training) singing them in from the porch above, campers spill out of the

bus and eagerly scramble up the driveway. Returning campers brim with excitement to see old friends and new campers stand by nervously as they take in the scene for the first time. Before anything else, campers must head into the *gezer* (literally “carrot,” the name of one of the basement rooms of the *binyan*) and have their heads checked for lice. Once that step is complete they can head upstairs and eat pizza bagels and wait for the rest of the campers to arrive, many of the younger kids heading immediately to the rope swing which is regularly in high demand.

Thus marks the entrance into life at camp. Campers will remain on the island for the coming weeks eating, sleeping, complaining, rejoicing, pranking, bullying, singing, confessing, dancing, swimming, crying, and playing. Cell phones, if brought, are confiscated on arrival, further disconnecting campers from their lives outside of *machaneh*. The one time campers leave camp will be for the two-night camping trip where they will be transported by bus to a campsite or trailhead on Vancouver Island or pile things into canoes and kayaks and launch them from a beach across the island or, in the case of the youngest campers, walk down the road to a regional park.

Life at camp happens from morning till night generally within camp boundaries. These characteristics give camp the quality of a total institution. Originally coined by Erving Goffman and then more relevantly deployed by Shaul Kelner to describe Israel homeland tours, a total institution is defined by four primary characteristics.

First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member’s daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day’s activities are tightly scheduled... Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution. (2010, 6)

Goffman was concerned primarily with the way in which total institutions have the power to define the entire identities of those contained within the institution, homogenizing members. It is the highly structured nature of *machaneh* that in fact makes it ripe for “ideological transmission” since camp life can be structured in ways that bring camp ideologies into practice. What the total institutional character of *machaneh* means for campers and counselors is threefold: gaze is primarily directed inward at the goings-on of camp, counselors have a sense of ownership and responsibility over the operation of camp life, and the totalizing nature allows camp to serve as an opportunity to live in accordance with movement values. The constraints created by its character as a total institution in fact liberate campers and counselors alike to shape *machaneh* according to its ideological tenets, its own experiential utopia.

Give What You Can, Take What You Need: Embodied Ideological Labor Practice

Before each meal, all of camp sings a song thanking the worker for our food. Enthusiastic chanting of “Labor! Labor! Labor!” concludes the ritual as everyone sits down to eat. Such reflects the movement’s ideological commitment to something understood as “labor.” Beyond the obvious linkages with the movement’s socialism, the valuation of labor also has roots in early Zionism. An oft-discussed quote by Zionist thinker A.D. Gordon (after whom the basketball court is named) demonstrates this genealogy

The Jewish people has been completely cut off from nature and imprisoned within city walls for two thousand years. We have been accustomed to every form of life, except a life of labor- of labor done at our behalf and for its own sake. It will require the greatest effort of will for such a people to become normal again. We lack the principal ingredient for national life. We lack the habit of labor... for it is labor which binds a people to its soil and to its national culture, which in its turn is an outgrowth of the people's toil and the people's labor. (1942, 234)

While not every movement member would agree with the nationalism of Gordon's arguments on labor, the central tenet of labor as a tool of liberation still rings true in labor-education at *machaneh*. Camp, as a total institution, creates a world in which movement members can *hagshamize* (movement slang combining *hagshamah* and actualize) their labor values, embodying labor in everyday practice.

This embodiment begins at the beginning of the summer when counselors arrive at camp for a two week long *chalutz* (construction) before any campers have arrived. Many hours during those two weeks are spent moving bunk beds and other furniture, setting up large platform tents, and deep cleaning buildings that lay unused between summers. Once campers arrive most of *tzevet* becomes occupied with being counselors but some will remain in labor jobs for the duration of the summer. In the past few years, we have not outsourced any of our kitchen labor and instead have had a *tzevet mitbach* (kitchen staff) made up entirely of young movement members. *Chalutz* is hard work but is largely considered a great part of the summer for counselors. Similarly the staff members who work in the kitchen value the labor spent to feed hundreds of hungry mouths. The practice and valuation of labor that is embodied by older movement members begins when they are campers, primarily during *avodah*.

Avodah is a part of a typical camp day which demonstrates the way the nature of camp as a total institution creates the right conditions for living out movement values. Literally translated as 'work' or 'labor,' *avodah* is the hour after breakfast in which every camper participates in some sort of work to contribute to the running of camp. On the first night of camp, *chanichimot* (campers) decide amongst their *kvutseh* (age group) which *anaf* (literally: branch, used as: working group) they are going to participate in for the rest of the session. Options include *ashpa*

(garbage), *gan* (gardening), *mitbach* (kitchen), *michzur* (recycling) and *sherutim* (bathrooms), among others. The amount that each *anaf* actually contributes to the functioning of camp ranges, but the importance of the practice lies in how labor is constructed as a cornerstone of movement ideology and, by extension, camp life. At camp, “give what you can, take what you need” is not just a slogan but is lived out in the practice of *avodah*.

Importantly, this is a valued part of the camp day even to many young campers. The 2009 promotional video for the camp demonstrates this, highlighting *avodah* as a primary feature of camp. Voices of *chanichimot* describing *avodah* narrate footage of campers washing dishes and wiping down bathroom mirrors. One camper notes that “[*avodah*] kind of gives you a sense of responsibility and so you feel like you're doing something to keep the camp running and without you, the camp wouldn't function and so it builds your community and... it's awesome.” Another declares that “I like that everyone helps out to make the camp a better place, it's a great thing that we all do” another, “It's one of those things that brings you closer” and another that, “It makes you think of other people and it makes you think of what you can do.” All the reflections are positive and not only because the video is promotional in nature. Each response is also indicative of the way that labor is effectively framed at *machaneh* as something to be celebrated.

Education at *machaneh* explicitly aims to connect the practice of labor to community building and an ethos of personal responsibility. While not the only summer camp that involves the campers in the operation of camp life, Miriam is particular in the specific ideological weight imbued into the practice of labor. Counselors are instructed to never threaten chores as punishment for unruly behavior because, among other reasons, that would interfere with the mission of creating labor as an esteemed form of community participation.

The connections the campers in the video make between labor practice and their internal experience of *avodah* also cues the concept of *dugma ishit* or “personal example.” A standard part of camp education, *dugma ishit* is often explained in the way one *peula* does as “guiding others towards living a life where values are aligned with actions through embodying those values and actions yourself.” The concept is often introduced to older campers to encourage them to set a good example for younger campers. However, what sets *dugma ishit* apart from simply setting a good example is that *dugma ishit* involves acting in line with values even when nobody is watching. In this way, *dugma ishit* is about creating a certain kind of self through actions.

This dialectic between embodied practice and internal emotions roughly maps on to Saba Mahmood’s ethnographic work of Egyptian women participating in the Mosque movement in Egypt. Mahmood asserts that the women she spoke to cultivated their emerging, pious selves through repeated and cumulative action. She argues

What is striking here is that instead of innate human desires eliciting outward forms of conduct, it is the sequence of practices and actions one is engaged in that determine one's desires and emotions. In other words, action does not issue forth from natural feelings but creates them. Furthermore, in this conception it is through repeated bodily acts that one trains one's memory, desire and intellect to behave according to established standards of conduct. (2001, 214)

Not all campers enter camp gung-ho about participating in *avodah*. As a *madricha* (counselor), I have witnessed many a camper’s initial resistance to the idea of chores. That resistance almost always dissipates as positive feelings like the ones voiced above are cultivated by camp labor practices.

The dialectic between labor practices and inner experiences is made tangible by camp’s character as a total institution. Camp being contained and separate allows for movement

members to shrink the gap between ideology and practice, connecting ideologies about labor to actual labor practices and to quality of life at camp. While obviously not entirely self-sufficient, there is a real sense of pride in the fact that counselors and even campers do almost all of the work necessary for the operation of *machaneh*.

Goffman argues that, “Total institutions do not really look for cultural victory. They create and sustain a particular kind of tension between the home world and the institutional world and use this persistent tension as strategic leverage in the management of men” (1961, 13). The tensions created between camp and home life are leveraged in this case to heighten the ideological potency of camp practices. In opposition to the home world which is individualistic, and devalues human labor, camp values community-mindedness and respects labor. The total institution of camp allows movement members to construct novel structures of labor and community participation which are consistently privileged over structures which govern life outside of camp.

In thinking about ideologies and practices to do with valuing labor, it is important also to note the ways in which labor is made fun at camp. Each morning all of *machaneh* gathers around the flagpole for *mifkad boker* (morning flag). Standing in a large circle around the “holy grass,” campers are grouped by *anaf*. The campers who have been elected at the beginning of the session to run *mifkad boker* ask in Hebrew if anyone has an announcement. Announcements at morning *mifkad* can take the form of songs, jokes, sibling smackdowns, etc. This is the chance for each *anaf* to establish their dominance as the best group. *Michzur* (recycling) will likely sing their classic song “Ooh *michzur*; that’s Hebrew for recycling. Ooh *michzur* that’s Hebrew for fun!”

and *sherutim* (bathrooms) uppers and *sherutim* lowers will almost certainly have a showdown of some sort, performing their long standing rivalry in creative ways.

These morning rituals serve to foster pride and playfulness in the practice of *avodah*. Campers become invested in coming up with creative songs that have to do with their *anaf*, demonstrating that their *anaf* has the most fun or does the most to help camp. The groups that clean the bathrooms have particularly strong *ruach* (spirit), with campers staying loyal to *sherutim* uppers or *sherutim* lowers respectively year after year, in no small part due to the work of counselors to make the potentially least desirable job the most fun. In the total institution of camp, labor can be disaggregated from negative associations attached to it in the outside world and reformulated to be a meaningful and joyful part of collective life.

Liminality & Fun

Anthropologist Riv-Ellen Prell writes,

Summer camps were classical liminal settings in most senses of the concept. They were located outside of the boundaries of school and family life and they existed temporally between the book-ends of the school year. They were created in remote places and easily cut off campers from the outside world. Traditional relations of authority were somewhat altered by a relationship between counselor and camper that was far more informal than teacher and student. (2006)

Maya, a friend of mine, connected the liminal status of camp (albeit in her own words) to the experience of camp as a “fun and carefree space”

I mean just the fact that it's a summer camp and there's nothing- there's nothing expected of the kids for the most part besides just enjoying the moment that they're in like, right now. I feel like summer camp is a very ‘in the moment’ space like you're not like getting ready for anything you're just like, okay today we're gonna like do this, um and it's kinda the same for I mean it's a little bit higher stress for *tzevet*, but it's more like (pause) yeah it's more like just day to day... focused on just like simple things like we're gonna do this one *peula* or like we're gonna run this one activity and its not um... not as high pressure as like, school or like having a job.

Maya directly connected fun to being “in the moment” and living “day to day” which she contrasts with school or a job which are, by implication, not “in the moment” spaces. Victor Turner describes the experience of liminality as homogenizing, egalitarian, and outside of social categorization (1969, 95). For both campers and counselors, these features are experienced at camp as fun.

It is unsurprising that Camp Miriam is a place of intense fun. Contrasted with the presumably un-fun life of school, summertime in general and summer camps in particular are treated as respite (for the privileged) from the work of the school year. The extended liminality of the summer camp lends itself to experiences that participants label as fun. What is particular about fun at Miriam is the way it is woven into the ideological world of the movement, similar to labor above. Fun is both an experience which increases the efficacy of the transmission of movement values and emerges out of movement values. In an interview, Aviva commented on the potency of fun at *machaneh* while explaining why it can be difficult to explain camp to outsiders. She noted, “*machaneh* is just fun. I think part of the power of *machaneh* is fun and that fun is not something that is taken seriously in our society and not something that is taken seriously especially in adult society so that kind of lends a certain illegitimacy to it because it's like, a crazy fun experience and that is powerful and people don't see fun as powerful.”

Fun, games, and playfulness are built into the structures of *machaneh* in many ways. Among the most recognizable moments of fun are the swimming, the sports, the dancing, and the special themed days. Additionally, every guided educational activity for counselors and campers alike begins with a game. Beyond these activities pre-designated as fun, playfulness also seeps into the less obviously fun moments at camp and anywhere that might be considered a camp or

movement space such as planning an activity or making democratic decisions about the movement at *Veida* where proposal authors sign their name with nicknames alongside their real names. The behaviors and patterns of fun interactions that are shaped in part by the liminality of camp are replicated in all the facets of camp life.

One ethnographic vignette from my time working with a small group of counselors to run programming for campers in Portland during the summer of 2020 demonstrates these patterns of fun. Deep into the summer filled with hours of Zoom planning calls, my fellow Portland staff and I were about forty minutes into our regular Sunday call. There was Lily, a fifth year staff member, Aviva, a third year staff member, my sister a first year and myself, a fourth year. Also on the call was Rafael who technically was a counselor in training but in our Covid-reduced programming was in practice no different from the rest of us.

Sunday was the day dedicated primarily to selecting the locations for the coming week's events and determining if campers needed to bring anything in particular. Of course, to make those decisions we needed to determine the general theme of each day. We had two three-hour blocks in the coming week that we had to fill with socially-distanced education and entertainment for the kids participating in our program.

The conversation meandered around the benefits and drawbacks of potential event locations and themes. One park looked beautiful but we worried it might be crowded. Another seemed good but did not have any covered area and the forecast said rain. At one point, Aviva suggested that the theme of one of the days be "bicycle pirates."

With no explicit structure for the meeting, the conversation ebbed and flowed with people's bursts of energy. We were tossing out ideas of things we could do during programming

and Lily took the reigns. “Let's all- let's all, let's go in a circle thing and we all say, like one after the other just say ideas or is that insane?” Aviva reassured her, “No I think that's a great idea. In the transcription below, / marks where another person starts talking over the person speaking, // marks if this happens more than once during one person’s utterance.

L: K.. um... K I'll start... art.

T (mock indignation): I was gonna say that!

A: I'm thinking about eggs right now.

L: Eggs.

M: Uh, I'm thinking about umm gymnastics.

T: I'm thinking about um, um brain games.

(M laughs)

R: I'm thinking about um, like circle games. We could do mafia kids like mafia.

A: Kids looove mafia.

M: I'm thinking about silent football but active.

(M laughs, short pause)

R: So real football?

(M laughs)

M: Yeah

A: Oh passing a football.

M: I'm thinking about/ another relay race obstacle course type thing.

A: /Oh that's a good idea

T: I'm thinking about we, like/ a remember day where we remember// thanks Mica.

M: /I'm thinking we-

A://A remember day? What do you mean by that?

(T&L laugh)

T (through laughter): Where we remember (puts on a baby voice) everything we've done// and they get to ch- at the ken events⁹- and they get to choose what they want to do from each day we go through every day but they have to remember like what we did on every day and then they get to choose what they wanna choose (becomes jolty) from the day that they're... remembering.

M: Ever.

A: Wouldn't that require ex- like supplies though/ we need to bring all the supplies

T: /We just take all the supplies.

M: All the supplies. I'm thinking about- aw I forgot.

T: Remember! (laughs)

L: //Crazy characters I'm thinking crazy characters everyone's a character.

M: Wait you said remember day and I said.... Oh I'm thinking about I like I'm liking crazy characters- oh I'm thinking about like we give them slips of paper with their characters/ I'm thinking about murder mystery.

⁹ We referred to the program as “the ken,” a word that also refers to movement run year-round programming.

T: /Oooh.

A: I love that.

As we listed what we were thinking about Lily kept track of each idea in the Google document. Eggs made the list alongside circle games. We ultimately settled on the theme of games for one day and decided to save a murder mystery and/or character activity for our final celebration.

A seemingly banal summer Zoom call, this moment is emblematic of the fun and playfulness that characterizes camp life. While we were not physically at camp the Zoom room was a camp space, marked by the same behaviors and structures of camp. Our brainstorm included absurd suggestions (eggs), finishing each other's thoughts, and interruptions. We also spontaneously adopted a pattern for beginning each thought (I'm thinking about...). These features of the conversation are not obviously "fun," but the informality and playfulness of calls like these distinguish camp modes of interacting from other forms in campers lives.

Counselors consciously deploy fun and playfulness as ways to build community both amongst their campers and amongst themselves. In doing so, movement members create an atmosphere in which movement values of collective living and egalitarianism are directly associated with playfulness, fun, and joy. Additionally, it is those very values that in part produce the dedication to fun. A friend once reflected to me that she loves camp because it is the time of the year when she is surrounded by people who are invested in collaboratively building fun experiences for the group. A rejection of individualism inspires movement members to include fun in their actualization of the movement dream. This can be seen not only in the games that are

played (of which there are many) but in the playfulness which seeps into even less explicitly fun practices such as planning an event or activity.

However, while often the case, fun and ideology are not universally accepted as bedfellows in the camp project. In an interview with my friend Shoshana, I asked what she made of camp being such an expressly ideological place. She responded

I think that like for me, like I love the majority of the movement's values and like I really agree with them and I identify with them... but like, I think that to be... when... as a *madricha* it's like important for me to be like- yes you're like in an ideological place and yes we want to make this a space to like, discuss these things but like I think it's important to like not let ideologies get in the way of just like summer camp fun um and that kind of thing.... I think it's important to like, try and balance the cult- the existence of fun and values and like the intermingling, like they don't cancel each other out in any means.... I think it's like, important to talk about our values, and like implement our values and also like, show ways that like standing behind our values can be a fun thing but I think that it's also like, we are a summer camp and like, there are children and I think it's okay to like, put fun before values um, so long as the fun is not inherently... y'know like, whatever, like if the kid's fun is like, saying racist things to another child (laughs) like, no that's not okay.

Shoshana shares the general camp commitment to both camp ideology and fun, but for her, these two elements of camp are not always cohesive partners. In her critique, she argues that by virtue of being a summer camp and serving children, fun should at times be privileged over not-always-fun ideological commitments. Counselors consistently negotiate this tension, attempting to shrink the divide between their ideological educational goals and their equally valued (and, I argue, related) fun-building goals.

Communitas: Egalitarian Community Life at Machaneh

The liminality of camp is experienced in large part as richer, more together time, what anthropologist Victor Turner terms “communitas.” In one explanation of communitas, Turner quotes Martin Buber’s definition of community. Buber, who also happens to be one of the

foundational thinkers in movement Zionist education, writes, “Community is the being no longer side by side (and, one might add, above and below) but *with* one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from I to Thou. Community is where community happens” (qtd. in Turner 1969, 127).

Maya explains, “I spend more time each day just thinking about like... the people around me rather than like, the tasks that I have to do and also I'm like spending more intense time with the people around me, like it's more intense socializing like, back to back than any other part of the year.” The conditions that lead Maya to characterize time at *mahaneh* as “intense” are those of extended togetherness, or *communitas*. Aviva, after stating that one point of *machaneh* is educating youth to make socialist *aliyah* followed up with, “I think the point is community. I really do. I think the two biggest things that are central to *machaneh* are community and youth empowerment.” An important theme that threaded through interviews and my own camp experience, community or *communitas* occurs in the liminal context of camp.

In a similar line of thinking, anthropologist Randal K. Tillery reflects on his own summer camp experience growing up writing, “Camp was a place based on communal transactions... At camp, every emotional and social aspect of life was heightened. The fun times were ecstatically so, the serious times were the most serious of my life, and the communal nature of the experience was more intimate than any other social experience of my life” (1992, 376). Miriam is also communal in nature and similarly emotional and intimate. Like labor above, the experience of *communitas* generated by the totalizing and liminal quality of camp is capitalized

on by counselors to further educational goals, framing the fun and intimacy in terms of socialism and collective living.

These features make camp ripe for the actualization of movement ideology at camp. In the liminal space of *machaneh*, campers and perhaps to a lesser extent staff are liberated to focus on creating new structures of relationality. Whereas at school, the pressure to which Maya refers is born out of the long-term stakes of a given event, at camp, campers need only think about the activity at hand. The same is true for counselors who, as Maya acknowledges, have more responsibilities yet still never have to plan for things past the end of the summer.

Communitas is expanded by intentional attempts to structure camp relationships in egalitarian ways. While no one considers *machaneh* to be totally free of hierarchy, great pains are taken to minimize differences in power between counselors. The *tzevet* request process that occurs at the beginning of each camp session particularly reflects this commitment. Each *madrichol* (counselor) has a one-on-one conversation with a member of *mazkirut* (the managerial body) in which they discuss if there is a particular age group the *madrichol* would like to work with and if there are particular members of *tzevet* they would be exciting about working with or would feel uncomfortable working with. The result of this conversation is not necessarily that the *madrichol* will be placed on a *tzevet katan* (staff group) that aligns with all of their preferences but it serves to at least attempt to blur the distinction between “manager” and “employee” and mitigate against arbitrary decision making.

In this way experiencing communitas is produced by and produces movement ideology. Collective living characterized by intentional relationships pioneered by youth is the crux of the movement’s vision for the world. The conditions of liminality at *machaneh* paired with the

communitas and associated joy experienced make possible, I argue, the experience of *machaneh* as *hagshamah* in the diaspora. Prell writes, “Summer camps created a holistic environment. Judaism and Jewishness were made the norm of the camp experience” (2006). At *machaneh* not only are Judaism and Jewishness made the norm but also are certain elements of socialism, social justice, and intentional relationships/community. It is precisely this holistic environment that characterizes the movement’s dream of life in Zion. If living full socialist, Jewish lives is the Zionist dream of the movement then in some ways, *machaneh* is a sort of temporary Zionism-only in the diaspora instead of in Israel. *Machaneh* is, in this way, *hagshamah* in the most complete sense of the word.

Language, Youth, and Time: Reproducing a Place Apart

Maya: 2009 through 2015 I was a camper (laughs) I guess I don't have to say "camper" to you (both laugh) I forget that like... yeah... um

Mica: Actually Aviva was doing that yesterday too, I feel like she was translating (M laughs) and it's funny that the interview context...

Maya: Yeah, I know you will translate but yeah...

I was interviewing Maya about her experience at camp. We were about 5 minutes in and she used the word 'camper' which, she immediately reflected, was unnecessary when speaking to me. She could have used the word *chanicha*, the Hebrew word for camper and I would have understood her. That the conversation occurred under the context of an interview led Maya to account for those unfamiliar with camp Hebrew, an act which people who attend camp are familiar with. While the primary language spoken at camp is English, the camp is intentionally infused with Hebrew.

In their book on Hebrew infusion at North American Jewish summer camps Sarah Bunin Benor, Jonathan Krasner, and Sharon Avni write "when camp leaders incorporate additional Hebrew loanwords - especially those referring to camp locations, roles, and activities - they transform English into a camp code, a youth code, and an insider Jewish and/or Zionist code" (2020, 9). While English remains the primary language spoken at camp it is transformed into a language that is distinct to camp life. Following a similar line of thinking anthropologist Jonathan Boyarin and historian Daniel Boyarin write, "Diaspora culture and identity allows... for a complex continuation of Jewish cultural creativity and identity at the same time that the same people participate fully in the common cultural life of their surroundings.... Diasporic cultural

identity teaches us that cultures are not preserved by being protected from ‘mixing’ but probably can only continue to exist as a product of such mixing¹⁰ (1993, 721).

The camp-specific Hebrew-English fusion language is both representative of camp’s diasporic identity and aids in constituting camp as its own fully formed iteration of *hagshamah* in the diaspora. More specifically, the particular vocabulary of camp serves as a vehicle through which to introduce movement-specific socialist ideology; it ties the camp to Judaism and Israel (the stated purpose of the use); and it creates a powerful sense of group identity and exceptionalism firmly placed in the diaspora, reinforced through the act of translation. All of this does not happen without tension, with language use and meta-linguistic discourse fraught with contradictions. Ultimately, camp-specific language is a tool by which camp is experienced as a fully formed version of the world that movement members are working to build.

The experience of camp as a place distinct from the rest of campers’ and counselors’ lives is mediated along a variety of axes. In the chapter above, I traced the conditions of this difference and noted the way it is mediated through labor practices and fun at camp. I turn now to an analysis of language use at camp, the spirit and experience of youth autonomy, and a brief discussion of time as it is experienced and manipulated at camp. All three of these elements of camp life shape camp as a world of its own and all work to reproduce that world every year in the diaspora.

The Vocabulary of Movement Socialism

¹⁰ The idea of mixing here, while useful in thinking about Hebrew-English language fusion, has limitations in its presupposition of a contained Jewish cultural life and a separate general cultural life. Anna Tsing provides a more useful analysis of productive cultural difference, see later in this chapter.

Because Hebrew is so integral to the camp vocabulary, speaking about camp with non-Hebrew speaking friends and family requires constant translation. When I returned home from camp, or *machaneh* as I called it, my mother, unfamiliar with Hebrew or Jewish summer camping experiences, would often note that to her it felt as though I were speaking another language, one that she could not follow. The task of translation is fairly straightforward with some words. *Sherutim* literally translates to bathrooms, *mitbach* to kitchen, *tzifria* to library, and most often used, *machaneh* to camp. The words I found much harder to explain were the words that convey structures unique to the movement and the particular brand of socialism that exists within it. To give literal translations of these ideologically loaded words is possible but inadequate since understanding the words in Hebrew does not necessarily convey the full meaning.

For instance *kvutsah* literally translates to “group.” On the simplest level the word is used to reference a group of campers going into the same grade who sleep in the same place, have the same *tzevet* (staff), and do many of their activities together. The glossary of camp terms, found on the camp website goes one step further stating, “At Machaneh (camp), Kvutsah describes the close friendships you form with the other campers your age, and the welcoming and open feeling being with your *shichva* (age group) brings.” This definition, oriented towards outsiders, attempts to push beyond the literal translation of “group,” while not quite describing the full meaning of *kvutsah* as it is understood by movement members.

A full explanation of *kvutsah* to someone outside the world of camp is not brief or simple. I asked Aviva to tell me what *kvutsah* means to her:

I actually wrote one of my college essays on the word *kvutsah* (both laugh) um... to me- I mean it's like evolved a lot over the years, especially now that I've been on Workshop¹¹ and am in a *shlav bet*¹² process um, but... I think there's like a familial aspect to *kvutsah* which is like y'know- I don't know if this is the healthiest way to look at family but there's like a, you don't have to like em to love em, kind of thing about it that it's like these are- it's a group of people who are always there for you that you are- not like always there for you in like a... I don't know... yeah I'll go with that (laughs). Always there for you and I think it's- the thing for me that is really valuable about *kvutsah* is that it's a group of people who you are like, growing with, it's not a stagnant experience its som- it's like... it's not just your friends that you're existing alongside of or like doing stuff with, it's like a group that has forward moving intention, um, and is trying to like, support each other in some- some sort of growth process.

Part of what makes the word *kvutsah* hard to explain is all of the explicit ideological weight that is attached to it. Aviva's explanation of *kvutsah* echoes frequent education on the notion of *kvutsah*, both from *machaneh* and her other movement experiences. Just about every group of kids participates in a *peula* (guided educational discussion) dedicated to the concept of *kvutsah* every year. A written *matara* (goal) of one such *peula* reads, "Introduce the concept of *kvutza* as a radical alternative to individualism." Another says, "Instill motivation [in campers] to create intentional relationships and undergo a *kvutzah* process even with people they aren't close to already." Aviva, who has been participating in camp as both a camper and counselor for almost a decade, has been on both sides of *peulot* (plural of *peula*) like this for as long. Her own definition of *kvutsah* reflects the language of intentional collectivism written into the socialist education of the movement.

Emphasizing the ideological gravitas of *kvutsah*, Aviva contrasts *kvutsah* with the word *shichva*, "that's why there's a distinction between *shichva* and *kvutsah* right? Like, I'm in a *shichva* with a lot of people who I'm not in *kvutsah* with. I think part of it really is like, how you direct your energy towards each other..." *Shichva* literally translates to "layer" (as in a layer

¹¹ The movement run gap-year program.

¹² The post-Workshop, pre-*aliyah* movement process.

cake) but is also frequently used to mean “age group.” *Kvutsah* also means group, which is, at *machaneh*, determined by age. So, for instance, if a camper is going into seventh grade their *shichvah* would be made up of all the other campers also going into seventh grade. And their *kvutsah* would likely also be made up of those going into seventh grade. *Shichva*, however, is expansive. All campers going into seventh grade at all other HDNA camps are in the same *shichva* but not in the same *kvutsah*. Additionally, *kvutsah* is not necessarily bounded by age group. My first summer at *machaneh* there were not enough kids also going into ninth grade so the few of us joined the campers a year younger than us. For that summer we were in the same *kvutsah* but not the same *shichva*.

Anthropologist Mark Allen Peterson helps us to understand the distinction between *shichva* and *kvutsah* in terms of deixis, writing that “[t]he notion of deixis has become crucial in understanding how situated language use not only indexes immediate situational contexts but also broader social relations” (2003, 21). To Aviva, what is important in the distinction between the two words is that the word *shichva* says nothing about the relationships between group members, or rather that the relationships are purely circumstantial, lacking social significance. By contrast, *kvutsah* speaks to how energy is directed “towards each other,” towards “growth.” *Kvutsah* and *shichva* can, in some contexts, be used interchangeably. However, to fully grasp the distinction between the words requires a comprehension of which social relations are indexed by each word. Additionally, *kvutsah* indexes the movement’s socialist ideology in a way that *shichva* does not.

As mentioned above, many conversations thick with explicitly stated ideology occur each summer reinforcing the definition of *kvutsah*. In this way, the word is indexing all of the

conversations about the word making it a challenge to explain to those who have not participated. *Machaneh*-specific words also come to be understood through lived practice. Campers and counselors know what *kvutsah* means because their lives at camp are organized around *kvutsah* as a structure. Particular words used at *machaneh*, then, require thick description to adequately translate to the outsider all that is meant by them. Aviva recognized the need for thick description when she told me it was challenging for her when she was asked about *machaneh* or the movement reflecting, “a big part of my identity was like I'm a member of HDNA. I like, go to this summer camp and I do this - like I am in this youth movement um and it was so incomprehensible (laughing) to the people around me.”

Many of the words in the *machaneh* lexicon label complex systems of sociality. The vocabulary, then, does two things. It allows movement members to understand themselves as part of those systems and enables those systems to be lived in the diaspora even more successfully than they could in Israel, a moment of diasporic *hagshamah*. Bunin et. al come to a similar conclusion in their discussion of Camp Galil, another HDNA *machaneh*, “If the Israel they prefer does not exist, they can at least represent it symbolically at camp. Hebrew plays a role in this representation, enabling the camp to prompt a form of Jewishness and Zionism based in collectivity and social justice” (2020, 119). Creating a group identity and a way to talk about and in turn practice systems of socialism is part of the construction of *machaneh* as an iteration of the Labor Zionist dream.

Hebrew: Commitment and Frictive Negotiations

About two weeks into my first summer at camp, I was in my *shetach* (tent area) with some of my friends during post-lunch *zman chofshi* (free time). As we lazed about in the sun one friend asked me to pronounce the word *kvutsah*. I took up the prompt and said the word how I understood it to be pronounced. However, according to my friends who were seasoned with many years of camp experience, I was saying it wrong. “It’s not *kutsah*; it’s *kvutsah*!” critiqued one friend, attributing my failing to the dropping of the subtle “v” sound after the initial “k.” The “kv” sound is not found at the beginning of English words so for those without practice it is a hard sound to articulate. In other words, I was, in all likelihood, accidentally dropping the “v.” However, I was thirteen and proud so I protested that I was not mispronouncing the word, holding firm that I said it the same way as everyone else. In retrospect it is hard to imagine that I was not also, at least to some degree, aware that the correct pronunciation of this common word in the camp vernacular was necessary to being a full-fledged member of the community, a status I certainly desired. Put differently, I was determined to gain what Bourdieu labeled “linguistic capital” or competence in the dominant language of the world as a way to build a broader “cultural capital” (1991).

A short scene that has held in my memory, the moment above demonstrates how Hebrew is a tool which marks a clear ingroup and outgroup in the camp sphere. Benor et. al argue that “[the] infusion of camp Hebrew words created a distinctive register, [Camp Hebrew English], which functioned as a powerful agent for the cultivation of identification and belonging” (2020, 14). Beyond the comfortable wielding of ideologically-rich words, full membership in the

community is signaled by the more basic act of pronunciation. To belong at Miriam requires a certain degree of mastery over camp-specific Hebrew, a fact which has its own ideological weight.

When I was a counselor in training (*madatz*), my counselors told my fellow *madatz* and me that due to external pressure, *machaneh* would be changing the schedule. They passed out slips of paper with the new schedule and instructed us to familiarize ourselves with it. Looking it over we saw that none of the activities had changed nor any of the times. It was a typical camp day only it was written in English. *Chuggim* had turned into “interest groups,” *zman chofshi* to “free time,” *aruchat tzohorayim* had become “lunch.” After asking us how we felt about the change (confused, weird, bad) it was revealed to us that there were, in fact, no plans to change the schedule. Our counselors had fabricated the story as a way to spark discussion on the use of Hebrew at *machaneh*. As I remember it, the general consensus in the conversation that followed was that using Hebrew was important to us and made us feel connected to our Judaism and to Israel.

This conclusion falls neatly into the established education of the movement which adopts a particular language ideology which is in many ways a holdover from early Zionism in general and Labor Zionism in particular. The segment of the movement’s website dedicated to explaining its particular brand of Zionism reads,

Israel is an ongoing project for Jewish liberation that is in a state of constant revolution toward justice, pioneered by youth. This liberation must include, and must not be limited to a true commitment from *chaverimot*¹³ in the *tnua*¹⁴ to learning Hebrew with the goal of continuing its revival as the Jewish language and the development of Hebrew culture.

¹³ Friends, or in this context, members.

¹⁴ Movement.

Language, as espoused by the movement, is understood as a tool of liberation, a liberation that lies in both statehood and in socialism. Embedded in this assertion is an ethos of ownership, in which Jews, even those living in the diaspora, have not only the responsibility to learn Hebrew but also the agency to use it to develop a “Hebrew culture.”

The ethos of agency over Hebrew became especially apparent with a move to change the Hebrew language. A few years ago, a proposal was brought to the biennial democratic decision making seminar of the movement to change the way Hebrew was used throughout the movement. Hebrew has masculine and feminine suffixes and, like other gendered languages, if a word refers to a group of people and at least one of those people is male, the masculine ending is typically used. A proposal titled “Revolutionizing the Hebrew language” was brought to the seminar. The proposal suggested that when using words that demarcated groups of people the default, instead of the masculine ending (-im), should be a hybrid of the masculine and feminine endings (-im + -ot= -imot). Additionally, a new singular ending (-chol “from the word כלול meaning inclusive”) was introduced for members of the movement who do not identify within the gender binary. The proposal and its resolutions passed, making the new language the expectation at HDNA camps.

This move to change language in the name of gender equality falls into a history of linguistic criticism in the feminist movement, with which HDNA explicitly identifies. Amanda Laugesen, an Australian cultural scholar, examines similar linguistic moves that occurred during second wave feminism in Australia. She describes the “feminist campaign to change language... as ‘linguistic activism: an effort to change speech as part of a broader attitude to change cultural attitudes and from there to create social change and, in this case to achieve greater equality for,

and less discrimination against women” (2019, 242). In their own move of “linguistic activism,” the authors of the proposal were able to work within the framework of *hagshamah* which asserts that it is important not only to hold values but to act on them.

The change, however, was not immediately accepted by all. One of my interlocutors, Shoshana, reflected on her experience of the shift:

I initially was very resistant to the whole "-imot" thing, like adding that to the *kvutsot* and like words and stuff, of like, this isn't.... like if we're gonna just... Like I was like, if we're gonna try and like, introduce Hebrew as like, a thing, then we can't be like- actually we're gonna make it a new language and not that we're gonna just use English which is like, a gender neutral language (laughing) I really didn't like it.

Shoshana’s language ideology is conservative in comparison with the writers of the proposal who wish to “revolutionize the Hebrew language,” voicing what Laugesen describes as the “the conservative argument against language change [which] was often couched in terms of arguing against the notion that language could be ‘engineered.’ This argument was often based on the idea that language was ‘natural,’ and could not be artificially changed (and even if it could, this would be impractical and difficult)” (2019, 256). Importantly, rather than simply reflecting this “conservative” viewpoint, Shoshana’s criticism taps into issues of authenticity and hybridity with Hebrew, her first language.

Shoshana, as a second-generation Israeli, has a commitment and know-how that non-native Hebrew speakers at camp do not share. However, her argument was not simply that the “-imot” ending is “wrong.” Reflecting on Hebrew use more generally, Shoshana accepted other instances of incorrect Hebrew, “I was always just kinda like ‘you’re all saying this wrong’ but like, not in like a- like it didn’t bother me. I was just like that’s not [right].” Accidental

misuse of Hebrew did not bother her, the problem lay in the intentional “mis”use of the language.

Importantly, she points to two dueling ideologies by highlighting that we could use English, which is a “gender neutral language,” instead of Hebrew. On the one hand, the movement members who created the proposal participated in an act of *hagshamah* in the form of “linguistic activism,” changing the language used in the movement with the hope of changing social conditions for movement members. On the other hand, the commitment to using Hebrew, explained above, is its own act of linguistic activism, using language as a tool to revitalize the Jewish people and achieve Jewish liberation. Shoshana rightly points out that in some ways the two commitments feel mutually exclusive. To reinvent Hebrew, in her eyes, strays from the commitment to its revitalization.

Anna Tsing’s concept of “friction” is helpful in understanding this political linguistic move. Tsing argues that, “cultures are continually co-produced in the interactions I call ‘friction’: the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (2005, 4). The encounter between Hebrew language conventions and the movement brand of feminism and gender equality produced a change in external language to reflect internal values, a new culture per se. In Shoshana’s resistance, we see the awkward and unstable quality of this production, the friction. The friction of this moment also produces new possibilities for a socio-linguistic Jewish cultural life with broader gender horizons.

A similar kind of cultural-linguistic friction can be found in the discourse on the use of the word “Latinx.” While now more widely accepted, “Latinx” faced criticism because as María DeGuzmán, a scholar specializing in Latina/o Studies notes, “[c]ategories such as “‘Latina/o’

and ‘Latinx’ primarily reference people within US territories, whether for more than 500 years or arrived today. The geopolitical space connected with Latina/o or Latinx is US/domestic, including the extra-continental domestic” (2017, 215). That the word primarily circulated in the U.S. was evidence to a group of students writing for the Swarthmore student newspaper of American “linguistic imperialism” (Guerrera & Orbea 19 Nov. 2015). They wrote, “It seems that U.S. English speakers came upon Spanish, deemed it too backwards compared to their own progressive leanings, and rather than working within the language to address any of their concerns, “fixed” it from a foreign perspective that has already had too much influence on Latino and Latin American culture” (Guerrera & Orbea 19 Nov. 2015).

Especially resonant with the change to the “-imot” ending at *machaneh* is the Swarthmore students’ argument that “by replacing o’s and a’s with x’s, the word ‘Latinx’ is rendered laughably incomprehensible to any Spanish speaker without some fluency in English.” The incomprehension they reference holds true for fluent Hebrew speakers encountering ‘*machaneh* Hebrew,’ evident each year with the arrival of Israeli counselors. Each respective linguistic move, “-imot” and “Latinx,” was made in the diaspora as a frictive act, placing strain on notions of authenticity and commitment to the homeland.

In part due to the commitment to Israeli authenticity, language was privileged as “natural” by Shoshana and many others in a way that other structures were not. Two years after the change was formally adopted, another structural change relating to gender came about. *Tzevet* (staff) in collaboration with the Camp Committee¹⁵ made the decision to make the two multi-stall bathrooms in the *binyan* (main building) gender-neutral. While the decision to make

¹⁵ A group made up of parents and other older adults as well as current movement members.

this change was not hiccup-free, raising concerns with some of the older adults who make up the camp committee, once adopted, there were essentially no complaints about it from either campers or staff. Unlike the linguistic change, the change in bathrooms was firmly rooted in a certain brand of North American progressive politics with no issues of hybridization to complicate the choice.

Like Latinx, the “-imot” ending caught on in the sphere of its use. Shoshana concedes that “at this point I’m just used to it, I don’t really think about it when I say [it].” While still acceptable to use gendered suffixes, the “-imot” ending has become a part of camp Hebrew much like *kvutseh*. Laugesen would likely argue that this act of linguistic activism worked in that it has become largely naturalized at camp. The agency movement members feel over the Hebrew language, even as subjects in the diaspora, is one example of how at *machaneh*, members *hagshamize* (an oft-used movement verb: *hagshamah* + actualize) on their values of youth autonomy and self-determination. One HDNA staff member, quoted in *Hebrew Infusion* said to the authors on the topic of the “-imot” ending,

Whenever we encounter resistance, whether it’s from the kids, from the parents, or from whoever else in the community, our response as movement members was always, ‘Hebrew was a language that people created, and that means that it’s a language that we can change to meet our own needs, aims, and beliefs (2020, 246).

The educational trajectory of the movement insists that participants are “builders and dreamers,” dreaming of a better future and building the world they wish to see.

Youth Autonomy

Children are not the people of tomorrow but people today.

-Janusz Korscek

I think the two biggest things that are central to machaneh are community and youth empowerment.

-Aviva, from interview

Machaneh feels like a different world not only because it is far away from home and uses a different vernacular but also because camp is run by youth. Habonim and Dror, the two movements that eventually combined into Habonim Dror, have been youth movements since their respective inceptions. A theme throughout movement education, youth empowerment is something the movement sees itself as doing particularly well. It was young people *just like us* who organized the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, so the oft-told story goes. It was Jewish youth who moved to Palestine to work the land and live on *kibbutzim*. This investment in youth was also demonstrated by Sydney, the education director of a few years ago, in the opening message of her *tochnit* (educational resource) writing,

Youth have a unique ability to imagine and create alternatives to the society that they are in, as well as to have so much creative, silly, fun, and that's so much of the magic that we create at machaneh each summer and in the ken year-round. Buber says that 'The youth are humanity's eternal possibility for happiness,' and this tochnit brings that in all of our educational experiences this summer.

Sydney opens with a romantic notion of youth as a unique period of life, marked by creative imagination and playfulness, a notion which is consistent throughout movement education.

The romantic vision of youth is a powerful mobilizing tool. At the beginning of summer 2020, when everyone was unsure how the pandemic would affect the running of camp, the

mazkirut (managerial body) ran a series of discussions and reflections for those who had earlier that year applied to work on *tzevet*. During one such session we read a text about Dror youth during the holocaust who continued their movement programming even in the Warsaw Ghetto. They also called to memory the 2014 five-week B.C. teacher strike when movement members provided childcare and tutoring for camp families who usually relied on schools. The point of these distant and recent historical examples was to highlight that youth, our youth, step in when times are hard. *Mazkirut* wanted to encourage *tzevet* to not back away from their youth movement goals in the face of the pandemic. In fact, the spirit of the movement, the spirit of youth, demanded that we confront the challenge head on.

In many ways that is what happened. Movement leadership decided that instead of running camp as usual, they would run a day camp in Vancouver called *Kaytana*. At the end of the summer Shoshana reflected,

I didn't even think about it like during the *kaytana* I like didn't- I was like oh yeah like a day camp, like whatever, and then at the end of the summer when we had like, the camp committee dinner and all of the adults were like, this is like a crazy thing you guys just did, and I was like (through laughter) this was a crazy thing we just did um which is pretty, pretty cool.

It seemed at first matter of fact to Shoshana that people under the age of 25 were responsible for the creation and implementation of an entirely new program that served hundreds of children. Youth autonomy is such the norm at *machaneh* that this was initially unremarkable. Upon reflection however, it seemed even more extraordinary than even an entirely youth run overnight camp because this program needed to be invented on the fly. A great deal of satisfaction arises from the sentiment “we did this ourselves.”

As seen above, youth autonomy is not only a pride-filled object of movement discourse and education, it is also structured into camp life. During normal summers, as with other camp values, the camp form is an ideal place for mobilizing and “hagshamizing” the commitment to youth autonomy and empowerment. I can count on one hand the older adults who work in the camp space. These figures include our registrar, a beloved older woman, an occasional doctor (most often the parent of a camper), an island resident who manages camp maintenance year-round, and the bus driver. In the past this list has also included a few professional kitchen staff but in more recent years the camp has transitioned to a kitchen run only by *ma'apilimot* (movement members). Aside from these individuals, the camp is run by all movement members, by definition those under the age of 25.

The commitment to youth autonomy extends beyond young counselors. Once a session the *madatz* (counselors in training) run an entire theme day by themselves, symbolically kicking the counselors out of camp at the beginning of the day. The eldest campers, the *bonimot* (literally: builders), also get the chance to take charge, kicking both *tzevet* and *madatz* out of camp just before dinner, running their own themed activities for the rest of the day. These theme days and events along with the democratic process held each summer amongst campers to elect nominees to various positions create camp as a place that takes seriously the quote opening this section, that children are people today. It is not surprising then that *tzevet* members like Shoshana understand camp as a place of youth autonomy, particularly when it comes to education. The absence of direct influence from older adults in the content of camp education is part of why *tzevet* can craft education deemed radical. How else, a *madricha* might say, would we be able to provide sex education or teach kids about socialism?

Youth autonomy is also one of the explanations given for why camp is so fun. In an interview with Aviva I asked why she described *machaneh* as fun.

A: I think part of it is the age thing. That there's- it's all young people, that young people know what is fun for young people so, (through closed lips) I mean, I don't but (laughs, puts on a grandma voice) cuz I'm a boring old grandma but (through laughter) you gotta have some of those in every group also (returns to a more serious tone) but I do think it's like- somebody who's eighteen knows way better what's gonna be fun for a fourteen year old than somebody who's thirty-four.

M: Mhhmm.

A: So I think there's that and I also think that it's um, there's like- it's exciting to have, y'know, to be trusted and to be given agency, um, and I also think that it's a safe space. That like it's a- or safer space- that it's a place where people feel really really comfortable being themselves and exploring themselves, and because it's like, all youth, there's a lot of identity exploration that goes on and a lot of sort of, y'know bending things and trying to figure things out and that can be really fun when it's done in a safe, supported way, which it is for the most part at *machaneh*.

Aviva presented the connection between fun and youth - particularly youth autonomy - as an obvious one. Simply put, youth have fun so when it is young people in charge, fun is a natural result. Youth autonomy is another discursive element of camp deployed as an explanation for why camp, for many, feels so different from participants' home lives.

As freeing and fun as youth autonomy may feel, camp is never completely free from the influence of older adults. The summer I was in *madatz* (the counselor-in-training program), our *madrichimot* (counselors) let us decide how we wanted to divide ourselves amongst the two *ohellim* (platform tents). As a *kvutsah* we decided that we did not want to divide according to gender. There were only a few of us and we planned to have all beds in one *ohell* and use the other as a hang out space. However, that arrangement never came to be because *machaneh* was being audited that summer and there were concerns about how a mixed-gender sleeping

arrangement would appear to the auditor. The surveillance of camp by powerful adults made visible the limits on our presumed autonomy.

Even when adults are not physically present at camp they still exercise a certain amount of influence. My third summer as a *madricha*, I was on the *va'ad* (group) responsible for planning an evening activity for the whole camp about the occupation. The *chinuch* (education director) at various times expressed her hesitation about the inclusion of some detail or story, citing fear of parent backlash. I suspect that, knowing her politics, concern about a potential parental reaction was not the sole reason for her hesitation. However, she was able to deploy the spectre of the observing parent to place limits on the educational content of the activity. As much as camp may feel like it at times, it is not completely insular and the gaze of parents and other adult institutions is always looming, shaping the goings on of camp even from a distance.

Final Wills and Zionist Time: Cyclical and Linear Temporality

The experience of *machaneh* is mediated through a camp-specific language and its spirit of youth autonomy. Also influencing participants' experience of *machaneh* is the way *machaneh* is situated in time. There is, by virtue of the camp's Zionist ideology, an orientation towards the future, a time when we live in the land of Israel. At camp, that future is eternally deferred, given that the camp is located in the diaspora. This in turn illustrates the dialectic of this particular version of Zionism: the stated (although largely not practiced) goal of the movement is to educate youth to eventually make *aliyah* but in doing so a strong diasporic community is created.

Camp also offers a temporary summertime respite from capitalist time, "as a regulatory force that obliges the mode of production to reach compulsively for the future, (Castree: 2009,

36) and the opportunity to focus on a socialist Jewish life, which in the camp's resolute Zionist ideology, exists only in Israel. In this section, I explore the ways the temporality experienced by campers and counselors in the summertime deepens connections to and heightens experiences of actualizing a socialist Jewish life in diaspora, even while at times mediated through an imaginary future in Israel. This occurs within two temporal registers: the cyclical nature of *machaneh* as a strictly summer-time occurrence and a linear orientation towards an imagined future.

It was the last Zoom call of the summer. In the background of Lily's screen was an Ansel Adams photograph that appeared behind her frequently during Zoom calls. Aviva was in her bedroom. Rafael was outside. Tali and I were sitting on our back porch, sharing one computer. Everyone, according to the icons appearing on my screen, had the shared Google documents open as we talked.

L: Um so right now I'm looking at like animals that have really unique ways that they adapt to their surroundings and then I'm gonna give that to Rachel.

A: (softly laughing) I like it.

L: Um because she just like came in and handled it pretty well. I was thinking chameleon but I have - somehow I could see that being misconstrued as like... I don't know just trying to...

M: Yeah just blend - or conformist.

T: (laughing) blending in.

M: You callin' her a conformist?

L: Yeah, that's not what I'm trying to say.

Lily was proposing to give camper Rachel not a live animal but a symbolic one. We were meeting to write the Final Wills for our campers. A Final Will is distributed to each camper at the end of their time at *machaneh* for the summer. On the outside of the card made of folded construction paper is the camper's name artfully decorated. The inside contains the symbolic substance of the tradition: what has been bequeathed by their counselors. Apropos the name, the wording resembles that of a will. After the opening statement, three unique items are bequeathed

to the camper in question, chosen by the counselors after serious deliberation while appearing random to the camper. Following the three personalized gifts is a list of inside jokes that are bequeathed to all campers in the age group.

Final Wills are an important ritual in the cycle of *machaneh*. They mark the end of the summer but also serve as a reminder of summers to come and summers past. Next summer will come and with it the next Final Will. That camp will be reborn each year makes up for its temporary status. The holistic life referenced in the previous section then reifies participants' Jewish, socialist identities as woven into their "North American" lives.

While primarily a practice marking the cyclical nature of *machaneh* there is also an element of the Final Will tradition that points to a linear construction of the camp experience. If campers ask why they received a particular item, the traditional response is "you'll find out when you're on *tzevet*." The scripted response cues a future yet to come, following the linear trajectory that those involved in camp follow, moving up the years as a camper then eventually becoming a counselor in training and then finally a counselor. Notably, the future referenced - the end goal encouraged by the response "you'll find out when you're on *tzevet*" - is not a future in Zion. The future remains in the diaspora. Counselors, in that response, encourage kids to return to camp as counselors, demonstrating a primarily diasporic commitment.

It is important also to acknowledge the ways camp positions itself as a step on a linear path that leads to Zion. The word *hagshamah* is again useful here as futurity is deeply embedded in one meaning of the word. Every day after lunch the whole camp jubilantly sings a song in which every verse concludes with the phrase "*aleh v'hagshem, be'eretz yisrael*" or, rise up and actualize in the land of Israel. *Hagshamah*, used in this way in the diaspora, necessarily invokes

a deferred future, one in Israel. One construction of *machaneh* is as a stepping stone in the process of eventually making *aliyah*. Those from the movement who choose to make *aliyah* are structurally supported throughout the process. Partner movements in Israel make the transition smooth and simple - everything from living accommodations to employment to income are arranged in advance.

For the most part, however, that future remains deferred throughout movement members' lives. Most movement graduates remain in the diaspora their entire lives - camp has done such a good job at creating happy subjects, and arguably with values that make it troubling to want to move to Israel that they choose to remain in the diaspora. It was the dwindling number of people making *aliyah* combined with a growing disillusionment with Zionism that served as the impetus for a new idea crafted by Natasha, a friend of mine, and a few others.

We just started playing around with the idea of a North American graduate movement. We were like, well people live in, like, a *bayit*¹⁶ during college like why couldn't that continue. Like when you're in college and you're living in a *bayit* like that's considered movement work to some degree. Like, you're running a *ken*¹⁷ probably because if there are a lot of you in the city like probably there are camp kids there or you're like doing other work throughout the year or something like that so like why- why couldn't that continue um...the purpose of this graduate movement wasn't to like, usurp Dror Yis,¹⁸ although it would inevitably do that because people would go down that *hagshamah* path and they would just stop trying to make *aliyah* as a means of staying in the movement.

Born out of a combination of love for the movement and resistance to Zionism, this idea aims to offer movement members another opportunity to continue participating in the movement without moving to Israel. As mentioned before, the linear nature of camp ends at being a

¹⁶ Literally translates to house. In the movement, references a house made up of movement members, often hosts year-round activities for campers.

¹⁷ Year-round movement programming.

¹⁸ Dror Yisrael, the graduate movement in Israel.

counselor for the vast majority of participants. Mina's observation that people "make *aliyah* as a means of staying in the movement" is an important one. Whereas, according to Mina and in my observations "it's a minority of people who are Zionist in the movement or like, enthusiastically Zionist at least," most of the people I know at camp and the movement deeply love the *machaneh* in which they grew up and the movement it is a part of, a movement that, by definition, only exists in the diaspora. The proposal taps into the growing group of movement members who remain committed to the movement and increasingly less committed to the state of Israel. While not single handedly, the movement is producing diasporic subjects who want to remain in the diaspora.

THE JEWISH RENAISSANCE MOVEMENT IN POLAND:

A MANIFESTO

- We want to return!
 Not to Uganda, not to Argentina or to Madagascar, not even to Palestine.
 It is Poland that we long for, the land of our fathers and forefathers.
 In real-life and in our dreams we continue to have Poland on our minds.
- We want to see the squares in Warsaw, Łódź and Kraków filled with new settlements. Next to the cemeteries we will build schools and clinics. We will plant trees and build new roads and bridges.
- We wish to heal our mutual trauma once and for all. We believe that we are fated to live here, to raise families here, die and bury the remains of our dead here.
- We are revivifying the early Zionist phantasmagoria. We reach back to the past — to the imagined world of migration, political and geographical displacement, to the disintegration of reality as we knew it — in order to shape a new future.
- This is the response we propose for these times of crisis, when faith has been exhausted and old utopias have failed. Optimism is dying out. The promised paradise has been privatized. The Kibbutz apples and watermelons are no longer as ripe.
- We welcome new settlers whose presence shall be the embodiment of our desire for another history. We shall face many potential futures as we leave behind our safe, familiar, and one-dimensional world.
- We direct our appeal not only to Jews. We accept into our ranks all those for whom there is no place in their homelands — the expelled and the persecuted. There will be no discrimination in our movement. We shall not ask about your life stories, check your residence cards or question your refugee status. We shall be strong in our weakness.
- Our Polish brothers and sisters! We plan no invasion. Rather we shall arrive like a procession of the ghosts of your old neighbours, the ones haunting you in your dreams, the neighbours you have never had a chance to meet. And we shall speak out about all the evil things that have happened between us.
- We long to write new pages into a history that never quite took the course we wanted. We count on being able to govern our cities, work the land, and bring up our children in peace and together with you. Welcome us with open arms, as we will welcome you!
- With one religion, we cannot listen.
 With one color, we cannot see.
 With one culture, we cannot feel.
 Without you we can't even remember.
- Join us, and Europe will be stunned!

Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland

Manifesto created for Yael Bartana's "...And Europe Will Be Stunned"

Conclusion: Towards a New Dream

I was twelve when I first saw Yael Bartana's short film "Wall and Tower." I was in the Centre Pompidou with my family and had wandered by myself into a small room playing the 15 minute film on loop. Documenting the building of a *kibbutz* style structure in a park in what appears to be a residential neighborhood of Warsaw, the film opens with a man addressing a group of Polish young adults, dressed in clothes that evoke life on early *kibbutzim*. With intensity he explains, "We have 24 hours to build a settlement and to rebuild the Jewish community in Warsaw." The footage that follows displays the group doing just that: hammering, digging, screwing, carrying, constructing the wall and tower that became emblematic of *kibbutz* architecture. One powerful shot shows all the members of the group heaving on ropes to bring the constructed tower to its upright position. Closing the film is an aerial shot of some of the women workers lying close together, some on top of others, talking, holding mugs, smiling and looking contentedly up at the sky.

At the time, I knew nothing of *kibbutzim* or the stakes of building one in Warsaw. But I was enthralled. Two years later, I was in a small gallery in Israel with my extended family and discovered that the film I had been enraptured by years earlier was the second in a trilogy titled "...And Europe Will be Stunned." The trilogy, which I was able to watch in full in that gallery, centers a fictional (but perhaps also a little real) movement to return three million Jews to Poland, the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland. A description of the series found on the Guggenheim's "collection online" web page provides a good summary.

The series opens with *Mary Koszmary (Nightmares)* set in the ruins of Warsaw's Stadion Dziesięciolecia (Decennial Stadium), where politician Sławomir Sierakowski issues a cry to the vacant fields, summoning the return of the Jewish people to Poland. In the second film, *Mur I*

Wieza (Wall and Tower), the politician's idealistic followers, members of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP), heed his behest; at the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto, they build a tower-and-stockade-style kibbutz, a settlement method developed by Zionists in the British Mandate of Palestine during the 1936–39 Arab Revolt. . . . The concluding film, *Zamach* (Assassination), presents the assassination of Sierakowski's character by an unknown assailant, a tragedy that, as seen through his followers' words of eulogy, solidifies the imagined JRMiP. (Guggenheim, n.d.)

The series in its entirety draws upon many themes that overlap and complement the themes of this project. One element of the series that is particularly poignant to me is the way it highlights the mobility of the *kibbutz* as an institution. Bartana quite intentionally uproots the *kibbutz* from Israel-Palestine, troubling the notion of *kibbutz* as a settlement for the purpose of building a Jewish state. "Wall and Tower" insists in some ways that it is the *kibbutz* as an institution, or the Jewish collective life that it represents, that is important for a vital Jewish life, not the existence of a Jewish state. It is the act of building, the doing of community that revitalizes the Jewish people, not statehood. That this act is encouraged, in the series, to occur in the diaspora serves as a model for broader Jewish diasporic revitalization.

However, despite the possibilities and hope that the series invokes, the films are also marked by warnings against nationalism and fascism. The imagery in "Wall and Tower" that evokes *kibbutzim* also at times is reminiscent of the Holocaust. Additionally, embedded in the film is the implicit point that settlement also necessarily requires occupation. In the case of *kibbutzim*, the occupation was of previously Arab land. In the film, the occupation is of a park in Warsaw. "...And Europe Will Be Stunned" both allows me to think through the exciting possibilities for a renewed commitment to Jewish life in the diaspora and serves as a reminder that the radical potential is tempered by on-going settler colonialism. Holding these elements, I look to the movement's future.

In many ways, I believe in the movement's current dream. Nowhere else than camp have I lived in a way that could be called socialist. The socialist elements of camp such as having a communal economy, sharing labor responsibilities, and working to minimize hierarchy and arbitrary decision making through personal conversations shape the way I relate to my movement partners. Work is less alienating and more community focused and relationships feel more intimate. At various places and points in my life, I have attempted to replicate elements of camp life, seeking to foster the same meaningful experiences for me and the people around me. The difficulty of doing this outside of camp highlights the efficacy of camp as a total institution in implementing socialist structures and the exponential benefits of being surrounded by partners with shared experiences.

Hagshamizing movement values, however, does not need to be relegated to camp life exclusively. The possibility of developing a North American graduate movement is particularly exciting to me as a way to stretch the possibilities that camp creates for a Jewish life in the diaspora beyond the scope of summer camps. The movement dream for me, like many movement members, does not lie in the state of Israel. In the chapter above, Natasha noted that people make *aliyah* as a way to extend their movement participation into their adult lives. Throughout the course of this project, I have explored the reasons why people have this desire. Life at camp is characterized by intentional collective fun, intimate relationships, and a broader sense of living differently. With this alternative *hagshamah* path, movement members could continue to live differently in their relationships and affective experiences without moving to Israel.

Regardless of the trajectory of this specific idea, I feel generally hopeful for the future of the movement. Recent conversations I have had with movement friends have focused on the potential to develop a new dream; a dream that does not simply revise Zionism but one that imagines something totally new, a dream that does not hinge on nationalism but invents a new path to actualize the movement's core belief of *shivyon erech ha'adam*, the equality of human value. With a movement in many ways attuned to critiques of settler-colonialism and nationalism more generally, a new dream seems consistent with the movement conviction that youth can and must dream of and pioneer a radically new, radically just society.

Throughout this project I have argued that Camp Miriam is primarily a project of upbuilding Jewish life in the diaspora. With this assertion foregrounded, it is possible to imagine a world in which Habonim Dror takes up Boyarin and Boyarin's proposal to "[privilege]... diaspora, a dissociation of ethnicities and political hegemonies, as the only social structure that even begins to make possible a maintenance of cultural identity in a world grown thoroughly and inextricably interdependent" (1993, 723). The task for the movement now is to remember how to dream.

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