Hebrew camping is probably the most effective medium to transmit social, affective, and cognitive Jewish educational experiences to new generations of Jews. The two principal American camping movements that attempted to achieve this goal were Massad and Ramah.

The late Dr. Shimon Frost was familiar with both organizations. In a lengthy Hebrew article published in 1988, he compared their respective educational purposes and programs and reached evaluative conclusions which should be studied by those truly interested in Jewish education. Frost, a survivor of the Holocaust, was a person of wide culture and erudition, a highly respected Jewish educator, the head of J.E.S.N.A., and an associate of the Melton Institute at the Hebrew University.

The original article appeared in ***Kovetz Massad****, vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1989, and was translated from Hebrew by Peggy Frost in loving memory of her husband. It has been abridged and edited by the editor and is published in two parts. This issue of* ***Avar ve'Atid*** *carries the Massad story; the following issue, scheduled for spring 1995, will cover the Ramah experience.*

Camps Massad

Shimon Frost

The renaissance of Hebrew, which inflamed hearts and spirits in East European Jewish communities, especially in Poland and Lithuania between the two World Wars, began in the 1920s and 30s of this century to strike roots on the American continent. The periodicals *Hatoren, Hadoar Hayomi* and afterwards *Hadoar* — a weekly still in existence — were founded, as was the *Histadrut Ivrit*, an organization aiming to spread the use of the Hebrew language and culture.

Jewish education in America was blessed at that time with European-born, well-educated leaders, whose ideal was the renewal of Jewish nationalism and a revival of Hebrew as the spiritual–cultural underpinning of the Jewish national renaissance. Students of these educators, graduates of intensive *talmud torah* frameworks, elementary yeshivot, and Hebrew teachers colleges, combined youthful enthusiasm with ideological–national consciousness. In 1937, they established *HaNoar Ha'Ivri*, a

movement to disseminate Hebrew throughout America. With youthful daring, they set themselves the task of building in the United States "as complete a Hebrew life as possible," and succeeded in arousing enthusiasm and attracting young people with vision, intellectual vigor and devotion to an ideal. One who reads the publications of *HaNoar Ha'Ivri* finds such future educators as Chaim Abramowitz, founder-principal of the Bialik School in Brooklyn; Moshe Davis, former Dean of the Teachers Institute at The Jewish Theological Seminary, and first director of The Institute for Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Sylvia Cutler (Ettenberg), Dean of Development at the J.T.S.; and Jacob Kabakoff, Dean of the Hebrew Teachers College in Cleveland.

Branches of *HaNoar Ha'Ivri* were established at Hebrew teacher colleges, and in New York special groups were formed: the Kinor orchestra, the Hebrew theater group Pargod, and a dance troupe under the direction of Corinne Hakham; outings for Hebrew-speaking young people were organized. The declared intention was to create in America "a Jewish life based on the revival of the Hebrew language" without negating the Zionist ideal of building Eretz Yisrael.

In response to a speech by Shlomo Shulsinger, the *HaNoar Ha'Ivri* conference in September 1940 reached a unanimous decision to establish a Hebrew-speaking camp. In the Heshvan issue of the movement's journal *Niv*, an entire page was dedicated to the idea of a Hebrew camp. The editorial stated:

> In order to bind him (a child who is learning Hebrew) more closely to his people and culture, and to implant within him the desire to guard his people's heritage, we must create a Hebrew environment that will be limited not only to studies, but will include all of daily life.... We must seek the means to help us build a Hebrew world comprising Hebrew and American culture, in which the child will be able to live a full life of creativity and joy.

In the same issue, Mordekhai Kaplan, Dean of the Seminary's Teachers' College, welcomed the Hebrew camp idea:

> It is good news that a Hebrew. camp for our youth will soon be founded.... We must create for our children an educational atmosphere whose influence will be deep and lasting. For this, there is nothing better than a summer camp.

Shlomo Shulsinger, initiator of the idea and its driving force, was born to an old Jerusalem family. He arrived in the United States with his mother in 1929 at the age of 16; his father preceded them in 1920. Despite Shlomo's roots in the old Yishuv —he had studied in a Meah She'arim-type heder — his family was drawn to the Zionist-national revival. After graduating high school in Brooklyn, he studied at Baltimore City College and at The Baltimore Hebrew Teachers College. His first professional work was teaching Hebrew in Baltimore (in the United Talmud Torah), and his first Zionist communal involvement was with Gordonia — (a mildly socialist-Zionist youth organization named for A.D. Gordon) — as head of the Baltimore branch and as national secretary. In 1939, Joel Braverman, principal of the Flatbush Yeshivah in

Brooklyn, invited him to join the faculty; Shulsinger then began his activities with *HaNoar Ha'Ivri*.

Camp Massad opened in 1941 as a day-camp in Far Rockaway, New York. There were many difficulties in acquiring a site for the camp, not least of which was the antipathy of a large private Jewish day-camp in the vicinity. A house was finally rented only two days before the opening of the season; the camp was launched with 23 children. Shulsinger was appointed camp director and subsequently served as head of all Massad camps until his retirement in 1977. Moshe Davis recalls:

> We had a budget for a month but the money ran out by the third week. That weekend proved to be critical for the future of the entire undertaking. For help, I turned to three people active in the Hebrew movement: Boris Margolin refused me out-right; Israel Matz gave a generous contribution; Rabbi Simon Greenberg of the Har Zion Synagogue in Philadelphia gave a similarly generous check. Altogether we raised $2,000 from many sources and this sum saved the day-camp. We had been literally on the brink of despair.

The crisis was caused by the fact that half of the campers were registered for only one month. Chaim Abramowitz succeeded in recruiting an additional twelve children from Hebrew schools in Brownsville (Brooklyn), but they were not charged tuition. Due to the lack of money, only one of the four counsellors was paid; the other three and the director waived their salaries.

The next steps were easier. There is an American saying: "Nothing succeeds like success," and the day-camp had been successful. In 1942, the day-camp became an overnight camp whose 45 campers shared the facilities of Camp Machanaim in the Catskill mountains. A Board of Trustees was formed with Professor Zvi Scharfstein as its first president. The moving spirit and principal activist was the Hebraist Shmuel Fishman, who later became the president. Massad was set up legally as a non-profit organization. There were a number of American-style fund-raising affairs, and before the third season Massad had relocated to its own camp in Tannersville, Pa., which was rented for a two-year period, and then bought for $35,000.

The Lifestyle of Massad

Massad's symbol was a date-palm tree with two letters: initials *ayin* for *Ivri* (Hebrew) and *tzade* for *tzair* (young). The organization of the camp was patterned on parts of a tree: roots, ages 6–8 (Shoresh); trunk, ages 8–11 (Geza); branches, ages 11–12½ (Anaf); treetops, ages 12½+ (Tzameret). Later, special programs were established: Prozdor, age 15; Makhon for counsellor training, ages 16–17; and in the final years, a program called Alufim was organized for 14-year-olds.

The educational administration of each camp consisted of a director, two head counsellors, one for boys and one for girls, unit leaders for each age group, Prozdor and Makhon heads, a camp rabbi and a cultural director. In addition, there were special counsellors for various activities: sports, swimming, music, dance, drama, and scouting. From 1967 on, most of them were drawn from the Israeli contingent sent by the World Zionist Organization.

The daily schedule included wake-up at 6:30 a.m., roll call (with flag-raising), morning prayers, breakfast, cabin inspection, sports or discussions, lunch, swimming, elective activities (art, dance, drama, athletics, life-saving), supper and an evening program. Beginning in the 1960s, there were also afternoon prayers for the older groups. Special days and events were celebrated with ceremonies and programs in which the entire camp participated (Herzl Day, Ongei Shabbat, plays, song and dance festivals, etc.) Towards the end of the season, all campers and counsellors were divided into two groups (as equal as possible in age and talents) which participated in a Maccabiah — an all-camp tournament of song, contests and athletic competition.

Programs relating to religious life played a special role at camp: prayer, Shabbat, *havdala, birkat hamazon,* Tisha B'Av, etc. As the camps developed, libraries were established in each of them. To emphasize and strengthen the Hebraic atmosphere at camp, buildings, paths, and gardens were given Hebrew names or places in Israel, or of Zionist heroes, and signs were in Hebrew. In order to facilitate the daily use of Hebrew, a Massad dictionary, including a terminology appropriate to camp life, was distributed; for example, vocabulary terms were coined for the game of baseball (virtually unknown outside of America). To encourage creative writing in Hebrew, there were publications for each camp unit. From 1970 on, the camps issued an annual publication called *Alim* which included selections from all the camp writings of that year. The publication was sent after the summer to the home of each camper and counsellor.

Every camp season had a central theme (e.g. "the ingathering of exiles", "the people of the book"), which served as a focus for cultural-educational activities, especially for periodic discussions and camp ceremonies. Charitable activities and fund-raising fairs enhanced camp life; these funds were distributed to Jewish and general causes at a special ceremony. Massad also "adopted" a number of places in Israel (a recuperation center, a development town, etc.) and sent $1000 to each of them every season. Altogether some $5000 were raised from campers and counsellors each summer. Recipients of this money included the United Jewish Appeal, *Hadoar* and local charities.

As in all educational ventures — not only summer camps — the leadership wrestled with problems of updating and adapting their institutions to the surrounding social changes. After 1971, campers were given more individual choice in programming their activities. But unlike other camps, Massad never accepted revolutionary changes which were viewed as "a sign of the confusion reigning today in the face of innovations in education" (Administration meeting, March 15, 1971).

Nevertheless, many adaptations were effected. The Makhon (for youth leadership) had been established in 1951 and Professor Hillel Bavli served as its first director. At the beginning, only sixteen - and seventeen-year-olds from Jewish secondary day-schools were accepted, and the program, in addition to sports and recreation, focused on formal studies for two hours each day, five days a week: Hebrew, Tanach, midrash, literature, Zionism and leadership skills (e.g., psychology of adolescence, leading discussions). The dramatic changes taking place in American society in the 1970s led to a steep decline in the number of campers in the Makhon

program and indeed, in the camp as a whole. In 1971, for the first time, campers were accepted for a one-month period.

A new framework, (Prozdor — a preparatory program for the Makhon), was opened in 1960 for fifteen-year-olds. Besides intensive cultural activities, participants waited on tables in the dining hall for two meals a day, six days a week; Makhon campers served the third meal. This also solved the problem of providing waiters for the camp. The lack of qualified personnel was felt at Massad as at all other Jewish camps. This led to bringing an Israeli delegation to the camps. The initiative for inviting an educational corps from Israel to work in Jewish camping (not only in Hebrew camping) came from the Ramah camps in 1967. In 1968, Massad joined this project which was directed in Israel by the Youth and Hechalutz Department of the World Zionist Organization. In the summer of 1978, according to Rivka Shulsinger, the idea spread, and 283 Israelis were sent to 68 Jewish camps throughout North America. The aims of the Israeli delegation were: 1) to make up for the lack of Hebrew-speaking personnel; 2) to impart an Israeli atmosphere to the camp; and, 3) to create conditions of mutual influence between Israeli and American youth.

Massad generally had a large Israeli contingent (15 to 30 each season) who participated in all areas of camping. As counsellors, they served mainly with Alufim (age 14), Prozdor (age 15) and Makhon (age 16). A conference of the delegation in August 1969 grappled with the question of how to reach American youth. Most of the Israeli assessments were positive. One said: "At times we were amazed by the richness of Jewish–Israeli life offered to the campers in the framework of Massad.... It was like a little Israel." A member of a Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz wrote:

> More than I taught at camp, I learned... first of all, about Jewish religious life.... A world I hadn't known (and really had not wanted to know) was opened up to me — a wide world full of ethical content, spiritual and joyful experiences (which we were lacking). I learned to value people for their faith and not to belittle them....

In the early years of Massad, growth both in numbers and in programs was rapid. After the first camp was firmly established in Tannersville, Pa., Massad Bet opened (1948) in Dingman's Ferry, also in the Poconos in Pennsylvania. The camp was bought for $110,000. In 1966 a third campsite was acquired in Effort, Pa. for $175,000. The camps had their largest number of campers in the 1966-68 summers: in 1966 — 914 campers, including Prozdor and Makhon; in 1967 — 937; and in 1968 — 925. From this point on there was a downward trend which will be discussed below. Massad campers represented a wide geographical range of thirty communities in North America. The educational background of the campers was nearly uniform: 65% were pupils at modern Jewish day-schools. (This differed from Ramah where the majority of campers came from congregational afternoon-schools.)

All three camps had a single, educational–organizational framework, but there were differences in methodology among them. Each camp had a director; Shlomo Shulsinger oversaw the entire system. He interviewed and hired the educational staffs with the advice of the camp directors; during the summer season he spent one day a week at Massad Bet and Gimmel (the rest of the time his headquarters were at

Massad Aleph.) The geographical proximity of the camps allowed for joint activities, visits, sports and swimming tournaments, meetings of camp groups, and special events. The staffs also met together for sport competitions and social gatherings.

With the disappearance from the scene of *HaNoar Ha'Ivri*, *Noar Massad* became the ideological and social framework for the older campers. Groups met in the New York area during the school year and also published a newsletter.

Throughout its existence, Massad was an independent body, and did not receive funds from any mother-institution. A scholarship fund for campers needing financial aid was maintained from contributions of Massad and other donors. For large outlays of money, (such as constructing new buildings or purchasing camp sites), loans were taken from Board members and from parents. These loans were always repaid promptly.

The Idea and its Implementation

The French writer Romain Roland said that "Ideas do not conquer the world as ideas but as powers". The transition from abstract ideas to their realization always causes problems both for the idea itself and for its implementors.

The name Massad is taken from the fourth stanza of Ch.N. Bialik's "Birkat Am" ("Techezaknah" — "Be strong"):

> If you do not complete the roof and build only the foundations (massad) —
> It is enough for you, my brothers, your work is not in vain!

The first two stanzas of the poem became Massad's hymn and were always sung before "Hatikvah". The name Massad itself testifies to the vision of the Hebrew renaissance in its widest meaning; it connotes only a beginning, the foundation, the underpinnings. Upon these must be erected an edifice of cultural–national renewal, of a return to Jewish sources and a deepening of the nation's historic roots. Within this ideological framework, the Hebrew language was seen as a principal instrument in the struggle against assimilation and estrangement, and as the bond with a glorious shared past.

Massad's educational ideology therefore, included a number of principles: a) the Hebrew language as the primary element in the national culture; b) the Zionist ideal as the power that embodies the process of national renewal; c) the religious tradition as the basis of spiritual and ethical values; and, d) beyond the Zionist ideal, creation of a rich, creative and authentic Jewish life in America.

The tension between a pure ideal and the pains of fulfilling it has two aspects: the difficulties of transition from idea to reality, and the dynamics of a changing society. Massad's leadership-thinkers and doers alike was constantly coping with these problems. Imposing the Hebrew language as a means of communication in the cabin (not only between campers, but also between counsellors and campers), and in all camp activities, was a difficult goal to accomplish. This difficulty arose in the early days of Massad. The director's report of 1945 noted "a slight decline" in Hebrew speech "due to the sudden growth in the number of campers." The problem of communicating in Hebrew received attention at all meetings of Massad's leadership. This question had two components: a) a general difficulty in making the transition from monolingual thinking and speaking (monolingualism is characteristic of American-born children) to active

bilingualism; and b) the obstacle of using Hebrew terminology for sports, swimming, arts and crafts etc. In the older groups, there was an additional problem of not being able to express oneself freely on political and intellectual subjects.

The dramatic victory of Hebrew in Eretz Yisrael and its becoming the language of communication for millions of people, among them non-Jews, made Hebrew speaking a fact and no longer an ideal. It was now more difficult to excite the counsellors (and campers) about the "holiness" and stubborn devotion to that ideal. Attempts to encourage the reading of Israeli publications also met with difficulties. There was a struggle over presenting modern attractive programs (for example, American–Hebrew musicals) as against the concern for classical material. At a 1977 meeting of the leadership, Shulsinger said: "I object to Hebrew speaking if it is only the mouthing of words; Hebrew words do not signify Hebrew culture. There is a tendency in Massad Bet to concentrate on plays that are devoid of Hebrew content. We must do more in the camps with regard to Zionism."

These ideological struggles carried over into other areas. Massad's founders and idealists saw religious traditions "as the basis of spiritual and ethical values." In a manifesto of 1950, this religious point was unambiguously stated:

> The values of the Jewish religion and tradition, renewed and ongoing from generation to generation in accord with the needs of the people and the conditions of the time, are the building blocks of the heritage of Israel.

This formulation can be interpreted in diverse ways, and in the course of time led to differences of opinion on the practical level; these were reflected in tensions affecting the daily religious life of the camps, e.g. swimming on Shabbat, the type of clothing worn for prayer, the *mehitza*, etc. During the final years of Massad, in the late seventies, these questions, which echoed the religious–ideological polarization evident in America Jewry, assumed great — perhaps exaggerated — importance in the inner crisis that befell the Massad movement.

During all the years of Massad's existence, its ideology was concretized in programs and educational publications. Hebrew was the language of the camps in discussions, in the dining hall, at the Maccabiah, and in all public activities. Special motivational devices were instituted to strengthen the status of Hebrew in camp (e.g. awarding an insignia "Ayin" to those who excelled in speaking Hebrew, specific recognition of cabins speaking the most Hebrew, a "week of Hebrew improvement" etc.). The Massad camps were really islands of Hebrew in an ocean of linguistic assimilation. In addition, a religious–national atmosphere characterized the camps and made a profound impression on campers and staff alike. An alumnus, now a well-known lawyer active in a Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, states: "One Shabbat at camp was more impressive than hundreds of hours studying the *Shulhan Arukh*."

More than this, Massad in its early days was the epitome of *klal yisrael*. Children from Orthodox Zionist families and the elite from Conservative and Reform homes lived together with children from secular Jewish nationalist backgrounds. Hebrew and Zionism united them all. The camp symbol of the date-palm tree taught that even in arid soil it is possible to grow fruit-bearing trees. And the moral was taken to heart.

Problems

This ideological–educational underpinning, though clear, defined and understood in the early years, clashed in the course of time with the rapidly changing sociological circumstances both in American society and in the Jewish community. Factors in the new reality include the following:

1. The growth of the religious denominational streams of Judaism in North America led to a weakening and even the disappearance of the *klal yisrael* concept. During the early years, the staff was composed of 33% Yeshivah University students, with the rest divided between students at The Jewish Theological Seminary–Teachers Institute and Herzliyah — the former, a Conservative institution, and the latter leaning towards Zionist-nationalism. With the establishment of Ramah camps in the late forties, the number of Conservative staff members declined.

The flourishing of Hebrew camping at that time justified establishing more Hebrew camps and the leadership emphasized what was different and unique at Massad. The director's report stated categorically:

> Hebrew camping in the future will be divided into two types: a) Intensive camps like Massad where Hebrew is a natural language; b) Camps like Ramah (and Yavneh) where Hebrew is only a part of the educational program.... The second type of camp will fit the needs of children who attend afternoon religious schools for one or two years. Hebrew camping will influence hundreds of public and private camps; its spirit will pervade them all....

Nonetheless, the reservoir of campers and potential staff members for Massad was diminishing.

2. There also arose within the Massad circle anxiety over the ambivalence of a Zionism lacking the goal of immediate aliyah. The large number of Massad alumni who have settled in Israel no doubt testifies to the fact that the idea of aliyah was internalized, at least by an elite of older campers. But the duty to go on aliyah that was manifest in Zionist youth groups was not expressly present at Massad. As one of its aims, Massad sought to strengthen the Jewish community in America in the hope that this would lead to aliyah. Moshe Davis notes:

> In a strange way, the most intensive Jewish activism in this country is led by people who could certainly be classified as negators of the Diaspora. Massad is the perfect example. Among its founders were individuals who denied the possibility of Jewish survival in America. But their actions spoke louder than their words.

Despite the ambivalence regarding Zionism without the obligation of aliyah, it was possible somehow to come to terms with the ideal and to compromise. However, the fading of Zionist enthusiasm after the realization of the State of Israel was more difficult to cope with. "Zionism no longer has that spark that can inflame and excite," said Rabbi David Eliach, a Massad leader, during discussions of the future of the movement in June 1976. He added: "We must rethink our attitude to Zionism. Must we hold sacred only Herzl's Zionism? We see that secular Zionism has become bankrupt."

3. More serious than these two phenomena — the strengthening and partisanship

of the religious streams in Judaism, and the crisis in organized Zionism — was the growing religious fanaticism within the Jewish community. This extremism affected educational institutions, even those within modern Orthodox Zionism. One even witnesses a decline in the status of Hebrew in elementary yeshivot, and in a compromising, hesitant attitude to Zionism and the Jewish state. The leaders of Massad were caught in the middle of this new situation and were placed in a defensive position. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein took note of this at a meeting of the Massad Board in 1976: "I see myself as a fanatic about three things: Hebrew, Zionism, and the unity of the Jewish people. In matters of religion, I follow the golden mean, but what can one do when that path has turned radically to the right?"

Even Rabbi Eliach, principal of the Yeshivah of Flatbush High School, who had been one of Massad's enthusiastic supporters and who had more than once expressed his positive impressions of the religious aspects of the camp, changed his tune. In the same discussion, Eliach complained that "in Massad there is much religious activity but it is done as a matter of habit and without the ideal behind the mitzvah.... The educational staff should consist of people who believe in the religious ideal... Idealistic-religious youth do not come to Massad...."

In a November 1976 internal memo, director Shulsinger reacted to Eliach's criticism. He emphasized that "the atmosphere at camp is not artificial but full of faith, feeling and holiness, and implants within campers and counsellors a religious experience." He also mentioned with pride the great number of former Massad campers and staff members who are observant Jews in America and in Israel "who received the essentials of their Hebrew and religious education at Massad." As for idealistic youth, Shulsinger claimed that fewer came to Massad because of their indifference to Hebrew culture, and not because of reservations about the camp's religious life.

Nonetheless, as American Orthodox Judaism was turning to the right, Massad instituted a *mehitza* during religious services. In a report following the closing of Massad (in 1982), Shulsinger noted: "After my retirement, there was an ideological turning to the right: stricter observances, formal learning of sacred texts, strict separation of boys and girls during activities, and the hiring of strictly Orthodox counsellors." However this did not accomplish what was expected: Massad remained a Zionist camp in the eyes of those moving to the right and this made it "forbidden". On the other side, many parents were dissatisfied with the new religious ambience at the camps.

4. Two additional reasons for the crises of Massad were strictly American in nature:

a) The early maturation of American youth and their affluence, created educational and recreational opportunities for spending summer vacations in more appealing ways than at a summer camp. "Backpacking" became popular with older campers and especially with staff-age youth. Organized tours on the American continent and abroad (including summer programs in Israel), camps specializing in sports and other activities (such as horseback riding, tennis or losing weight) competed with traditional camping.

b) The economic high tide in America created new work opportunities for young people, which further reduced the reservoir of educational personnel. Neither private nor institutional camps, despite all their good will, could compete with the salaries and benefits offered by commercial enterprises.

Massad's new leadership did not turn a blind eye to the changing reality. It attempted to grapple with the ideological legacy of the founders. This led to inner tensions, and to these must be added the organizational crisis that overtook Massad in the late seventies which eventually led to the closing of the camps.

Can the Massad Model be Replicated?

Massad Gimmel was closed following the 1974 season after a drop in the overall enrollment did not justify maintaining three camps. As a result, registration in Massad Aleph and Bet in 1975 was full. Shulsinger signified his intention to retire at the end of 1977. A Search Committee failed to find a proper person to succeed him and decided to divide the executive position in two: a business manager and an educational director. This arrangement did not prove successful.

The composition of Massad's Board of Trustees also changed. Leadership passed to a younger generation, "graduates" of the camps. These new leaders believed that by improving the physical sites, the camps could be revived and the situation stabilized. Large sums of money were invested in the sites at a time of declining enrollment, and financial obligations to banks and individuals threatened the camps' existence. The drop in enrollment was attributed to two further reasons: the announcement by the new leaders that Massad was an Orthodox camp, and the abolition of scholarships. 1978 and 1979 ended with large deficits; after the 1979 season, it was decided to close Massad Bet and to concentrate all efforts in Massad Aleph. However, lacking an overall director, with ever-changing personnel, and in the absence of planned methods of recruiting campers, only 400 campers registered in 1980.

1981 was the last year of Massad's existence. Only 300 campers enrolled and the staff was unnecessarily inflated. Debts could not be met and there was not enough money to finish the season. The principals of two day-schools (Rabbi Eliach of the Yeshiva of Flatbush and Rabbi Lookstein of Ramaz) from which most of the campers were drawn, suggested that their institutions acquire the camp and supervise it as an Orthodox enterprise. The Massad Board reluctantly agreed. Rabbi Eliezer Bernstein, one of the leaders on the Board reported: "Animosity was felt among the participants.... This prevented the taking of actions which could still have saved the situation...." To this observer (who was present at the meeting), it seemed as though weariness had overcome the Board. Members felt relieved that a group, no matter what group, was willing to take the burden from their shoulders, and they were longing to be rid of it.

The arrangement with the two schools, which were supposed to form a new non-profit body to buy the camp, fell through. Their respective Boards did not consent to the agreement proposed by the principals. Those to whom money was owed threatened legal action. Without enthusiasm and the will to undertake a rescue operation (and despite the efforts of Rabbi Bernstein and Moshe Avital, the last director of the camp),