

GUCI Green:

An Examination of T'fillah and Ritual at Goldman Union Camp Institute (GUCI), 1962-1979

by David Reinhart

You hear the shofar sound in the distance and you feel the anticipation build. It's Friday, late afternoon, at the Goldman Union Camp Institute and you're waiting surrounded by your friends and counselors in the Boys/Girls Area, waiting for the Shabbat walk to arrive. Soon you hear the joyous singing and, as it comes through the area, you listen once again to the shofar blow before linking hands and joining in the walk to the Beit T'fillah. You take a prayer book, sit on the hard, painted brown, wooden bench, feel the rocks under your feet, and listen to the song leaders as they begin to sing. "Yai la la la lai l'cha dodi, yai la lai la lai likrat kallah ...", and you know that Shabbat has arrived. You feel a sense of calm, of simple being, and, as you look up into the leafy canopy of the trees, the sunlight streaming through, you recognize the color that exists only in this place, in this setting – GUCI Green.¹

Although American Jewish camping began as early as the late nineteenth century, explicitly Jewish educational camps grew in influence and popularity in the interwar period, from the 1920s into the early 40s.² These Jewish educational camps each espoused certain ideologies, with focuses on Yiddish, Hebrew, Zionism, Socialism, etc., but they all had the same intention of creating an experience where these Jewishly inspired ideologies could be learned and lived within a distinctly Jewish environment.³ As a result, these early camps not only imparted Jewish knowledge, they normalized Judaism for young American-Jews and instilled in them strong Jewish identities, in whichever form each camp's ideology encouraged.⁴ In the

¹ An original composition by David Reinhart

² Gary P Zola. "Jewish Camping and It's Relationship to the Organized Camping Movement in America". *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*. ed. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009) 11-16.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.* 17

middle of the twentieth century, the organized Jewish religious movements began opening affiliated, institution sponsored Jewish educational camps with similar intentions, teaching and living their respective ideologies in order to promote the continuation of the Jewish people and their own movements.⁵ Thus, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC; now the Union for Reform Judaism, URJ), the Reform Movement's umbrella organization, founded their first camp, Union Institute (now Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute, OSRUI), in Oconomowoc, WI in 1952.⁶ By the end of the decade, four more UAHC camps had opened across the country, from Camp Saratoga (eventually Swig) in California to Eisner Camp in Massachusetts.⁷ Likewise, Goldman Union Camp Institute (GUCI), originally Union Camp Institute (UCI), was founded in Zionsville, Indiana in 1958.

Even at their earliest stages, Jewish camps in the United States, reflecting broader American camping trends, incorporated prayer into the camp environment, specifically with prayers surrounding meals and Sabbath services.⁸ This trend continued and intensified with the movement affiliated Ramah and UAHC camps (Conservative and Reform respectively) during the middle of the century, presumably due to the religious character of their movements' ideologies. Furthermore, Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna suggests that the camps associated with the Reform Movement and the UAHC, such as Union Institute in Oconomowoc and UCI in Zionsville, placed an even greater focus on spirituality than those of the other religious movements.⁹ He links this to the large role which Rabbis played in creating and shaping the

⁵ *ibid.* 17-18

⁶ Jonathan D. Sarna. "The Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping". *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*. ed. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009) 41-43.

⁷ *ibid.* 44

⁸ Zola 14

⁹ Sarna 44

culture of these early Reform camping experiences.¹⁰ This emphasis on spirituality is exemplified by the regularity of prayer and worship experiences in these camps. Not only are there the typical Friday night and Saturday morning Shabbat services to which the majority of the Reform Movement is accustomed, but, in the camps, and at OSRUI and GUCI to this day, there are daily worship services, recitation of prayers before and after each meal, and prayers said in the cabin prior to bedtime.¹¹ Thus, campers recite prayers, on average, at least five times a day, every day, from wake up to lights out. Sarna points out that, due to differing factors including the aforementioned regularity and the different quality of the services, this emphasis on religious activity and spirituality was seen as perhaps the most successful aspect of the early Reform Jewish summer camps.¹²

I agree with Sarna's characterization of the role worship, ritual, and prayer played in the success of the UAHC camping system's mission to foster a positive Jewish identity amongst Reform Jewish youth. In fact, this type of impact that worship, ritual, and prayer creates is only possible in a camp setting. As exemplified by the opening passage – a reflection on my own experience from twenty years as a camper, counselor, and Unit Head at GUCI – the community, the setting, the environment, and the style all come together to create a unique, explicitly Jewish, intensely spiritual experience that shapes one's camp experience and sense of identity. By examining several aspects of t'fillah and ritual at UCI (with some comparison to Oconomowoc), we can understand how the integration of informal rituals and prayers into a camper's daily life as well as the encouraged ownership and relatability of formal services for campers promotes a living Judaism in the camp, with the hope of extending beyond the summer experience.

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

Schedule and Camper Involvement

First, we must look at the schedule. In absence of being able to actually visit and experience a day at UCI, the schedule helps us to understand how and when prayer actually took place throughout the day at camp. This gives us insight into the time commitment designated to formal worship as well as time set aside for possible informal prayer and ritual experiences. Furthermore, by tracing changes to the schedule from year to year, we can see the value placed on t'fillah and the overall trends of ritual expression at UCI.

Having been the first UAHC camp founded in 1952, Union Institute in Oconomowoc set the early standard for the other Reform Movement camps, including UCI. When Oconomowoc started, the decision was made to have **twice** daily worship services, usually in a chapel setting, with the morning services led by the Rabbis on faculty and the evening services led by campers and staff.¹³ While the earliest schedule found from UCI has no mention of an explicit morning service, ten minutes are devoted to “Flag Raising” and, upon deeper searching in the Counselor’s Handbook, this “Flag Raising” falls under the responsibility of the “Religion Committee.”¹⁴ As such, I would presume that this ten minutes was devoted to both raising the flag and to a short worship service of some sort. In fact, in the following year, we see this “Flag Raising” replaced by fifteen minutes of “Shacharit Services.”¹⁵ Then, in 1965, the daily schedule has a twenty minute “Shacharis in the chapel” and a ten minute “Shacharis at flag pole” on alternating days.¹⁶

¹³ Donald M. Splansky. “Creating a Prayer Experience in Reform Movement Camps and Beyond”. *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*. ed. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009) 151.

¹⁴ Program for UCI - Counselor’s Handbook by Harvey Fields, Summer 1962, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

¹⁵ Program for UCI - Counselor’s Handbook by Robert Frazin, Summer 1963, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

¹⁶ UCI Junior Camp Session I Schedule, Summer 1965, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

Thus, we see a tension developing between a formalized, chapel worship service and a more informal ritual expression that includes prayer at the morning flag raising. Ultimately, the less formal ritual won out, for by 1969 a ten minute “Flag Raising” has completely replaced any mention of Shacharit/morning services,¹⁷ and by 1976 this too was replaced by fifteen minutes of something called “Shticklach Boker.”¹⁸ Currently, GUCI still has a morning ritual called “Roll Call,” in which three prayers – including *modeh ani* and the *shema* – are sung and some type of shtick is performed. As such, I would suggest that Shticklach Boker, like the modern day roll call, also involved an aspect of prayer. However, this progression – from a formal worship service, to a less formal flag raising ceremony, to an informal ritual of song, prayer, and shtick – exemplifies the emphasis and importance of informal prayer experiences as they pertained to creating a living Judaism in the camp setting.

Evening services, on the other hand, seem to follow the opposite trend. In examining the schedule itself, daily, evening worship services tend to be more consistent and to become more controlled and formal as time progressed. In 1962, twenty minutes, from 7:10-7:30 pm, were devoted to “Twilight Services” and for the next few years, 1963-65, thirty minutes were given for “[Evening] Services.”¹⁹ Despite a few exceptions, e.g. only fifteen minutes for services in 1969 and 1972, twenty-five to thirty minutes became the standard for evening services through to 1979 and to modern day GUCI.²⁰

¹⁷ Revised Daily Schedule, Summer 1965, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 14, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

¹⁸ Daily Schedule, Summer 1976, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 7/folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

¹⁹ Daily Schedules, Summer 1962-5, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

²⁰ Daily Schedules, Summer 1969/72/79, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/3/14, 5/2, and 9/13, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

As previously mentioned, at Oconomowoc, campers were involved in the creation and leading of these evening worship services. This was also true for UCI and is true for GUCI to this day, when each cabin is given a service, chooses a topic, and each camper writes a creative service part on their cabin's theme. In 1962, under the responsibilities of the Religion Committee, we read, "the Twilight Service is to be based upon the Union Prayerbook (Evening Service), campers use this as basis for their creative prayers. Our goal is a familiarity and ability to read and understand our service."²¹ Thus, this camper participation is evidenced from the earliest period of UCI, and, in examining the services themselves, each cabin seems to have been given a weekday evening service or Shabbat service to lead.²² However, this type of camper participation is different from modern day GUCI. While, currently, camper participation is restricted to the writing of their own creative part from scratch, in this earliest period of UCI, prior to 1970, campers could write their own part from scratch, rewrite an existing prayer, lead and read an existing prayer as is, find and read a quote from an outside source, or participate in some other creative manner, e.g. song, dramatization, or dance.²³ In this way, campers were encouraged to take ownership of their prayer experience, by participating in whichever way felt most comfortable and authentic to them.

Even so, for a three-year period from 1971 to 1973, cabin participation was limited, with only a few cabins handling only a few services each session. In place of the cabin service was a new creation for UCI, an optional group that met daily to plan the services for the majority of the session: the Worship Chug/T'fillah Group. According to one of the camper produced

²¹ Program for UCI - Counselor's Handbook by Harvey Fields, Summer 1962, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

²² Services, Summer 1968, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

²³ *ibid.*

“publications,” Mogen David, eighteen to twenty percent of the UCI campers participated in this activity.²⁴ As a result these campers would have been even more intimately connected to the worship services, but the other 80%, unless their cabin was responsible for a service (approximately three per session²⁵), were removed from this responsibility. Nevertheless, this trend was short lived, and, by 1974, the camp had returned to the previous method of camper engagement, with each cabin receiving a weekday evening service for which they were responsible.²⁶ However, even with the return to the cabin system, Worship/T’fillah Chug remained an option and this group was responsible for the planning and leading of each week’s Shabbat services.²⁷

In addition to these formal worship experiences, several other more informal prayer and ritual expressions are evident in the schedules. As already mentioned in the introduction, the *Motzi* before meals, the *Birkat HaMazon* after meals, and the *Shema/Hashkiveinu* before bed were regular, normalized aspects of a camper’s daily life and, as such, carried and taught deep, authentically Jewish spirituality.²⁸ Furthermore, associated with and usually following the meals was a song session, and, while not all song sessions could qualify as prayerful experiences, those which used Hebrew prayers and joyous melodies could have more of a prayerful feel than services themselves. Perhaps the best example of a regularly scheduled informal prayer experience is the nightly “Friendship Circle”. In these moments before the unit disperses, a counselor would lead a few slow songs, the Unit Head might do a reading or say a quick prayer,

²⁴ Mogen David “A Talk with the Head of the T’filla Group,” Summer 1973, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 5/folder 10, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

²⁵ Worship Schedule Second Session, Summer 1972, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 5/folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

²⁶ Worship Chug Information, Summer 1974, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 6/folder 11, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Splansky 158-60

and the entire group would wish each other a “*lilah tov*” (“good night”).²⁹ Some might not recognize these few moments as true prayer, but as Dr. Splansky explains this moment of calm, peace and togetherness certainly has a spiritual feel.³⁰ Moreover, if you need more evidence of the prayerful character of this ritual, in 1962, these “Friendship Circles” were clearly placed under the responsibility of the Religion Committee.³¹ Due to the regularity and seemingly natural character of these experiences, I believe that these less formal expressions of spirituality and prayer have had an enormous and lasting effect on the campers and their Jewish identities, possibly beyond that of the formal worship services. Nevertheless, we do not have the documentary evidence necessary to investigate these informal experiences and must, instead, focus on the formal, evening worship services.

Environment, Style, and Theme

One unique and essential aspect of prayer at camp is the regularity mentioned in the preceding section. The frequency of practice allows the ritual to have its intended effect, producing a spiritually satisfying, naturally integrated, living Jewish experience. However, this impact is at the very least amplified if not directly produced by the environment and the style of prayer which is possible in a camp setting, especially for the more formal evening worship services.

The effect of the camp environment on these services is from both the physical space itself and the sense of community amongst the campers, counselors, and staff. With regard to the physical space, the most obvious difference between the camp setting and the home setting is

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Program for UCI - Counselor's Handbook by Harvey Fields, Summer 1962, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

that at camp the chapel is outdoors, in nature. In addition to the simple novelty of having services in a space without a roof, walls, or floor, Donald Splansky explains, “The lofty trees, nearby pond or lake, or lovely views of a camp’s grounds add to the worshipper’s sense of awe and of praise. ... One who prays in an outdoor setting cannot help but feel inspired by God’s miracle of creation; one becomes filled with awe at the grandeur, orderliness, lawfulness, and goodness of the world God has made.”³² Moreover, he suggests that the constant movement and music of nature, gives the campers numerous outlets through which to connect with and meditate on the divine.³³ Although Dr. Splansky is referring to Oconomowoc (OSRUI), all of this holds true for the UCI of the past and the GUCI of today, just without the lake.

Moreover, the physical space of a camp (and the age and mindset of the practitioners) provides numerous alternative locations and settings in which to conduct the evening worship services. Dr. Splansky recalls a service at OSRUI that was on a hill overlooking the lake.³⁴ While this picturesque scene is not replicable at GUCI, there are several locations that might have been utilized for alternative services, e.g. the pool, the *medurah* (campfire), the sports field, not to mention the different buildings. Each of these different locations changes the feel of the service, and choosing a specific location might amplify the theme or topic of a service and add to the meaning of the prayer experience. Between the outdoor setting and the use of these alternative spaces, camp services tend to be more memorable just from the physical space and, thus, have a greater potential impact on one’s Jewish identity.

Beyond the physical environment, the communal setting of services at camp, praying with the people you live with 24 hours a day for multiple weeks, immediately alters the feel of

³² Splansky 156

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ *ibid.*

the experience. In most non-camp settings, community is something that might be encouraged during a worship service through praying together; in the camp setting, as Dr. Splansky points out, “the sense of community precedes the praying.”³⁵ When you sit down in the *Beit T’fillah*, you know why everyone else is in that communal space – because they are a member of the camp community – and you immediately have something in common with each and every one of them. Moreover, most of the services are led by the campers, which means those in the congregation are watching the result their peers’ hard work. This not only removes the perceived hierarchy of leader to worshipper, but reminds the campers of the role they all have in creating their communal worship space. Additionally, camp is one of the only places where the community in which you live your daily life is the same community in which you pray and live Judaism. There is no distinction and, therefore, no mental code switching needs to be done, allowing each camper to be their authentic selves. Resultantly, this ease of community in worship and communal responsibility creates a more enjoyable and comfortable experience for the campers.

Similarly, due to the nature of the community and the relaxed camp setting, the style of worship can directly target the worshippers, the campers, and create a more relatable and interesting prayer experience. The traditional prayer rubric, found in most Reform synagogues forms the foundation of nearly every evening worship service, several aspects of the service are altered and create a different feel for the campers, e.g. the music, the prayers, the readings, and even the “activities.” While camp music may be the most impactful and longest lasting, the prayers and the readings are the most prevalent example of stylistic shift. In addition to the aforementioned prayer rubric (typically including, as indicated by the UCI prayer guidelines, the

³⁵ *ibid.*

barechu, the *shema* and *v'ahavta*, the *avot*, the adoration and the *kaddish*³⁶), the campers who design the service can and do add their own prayers, their own original compositions, passages from the Tanakh or Rabbinic literature, as well as readings and quotes from non-Jewish sources, e.g. T.S. Eliot or Emily Dickinson³⁷. Moreover, in choosing and writing these additional yet essential parts, the campers are free and usually comfortable enough to be themselves. One such camper was brave enough to write,

“One [sic] I was very young, You had a long white beard, and sat on a throne in heaven. As I grew older you became invisible. I still talked to you though – but I never heard an answer – at least not an answer like I got from the people around me. Still later, I began to think that you didn’t answer men at all. I thought of you as a force in the universe, the creator of the world. You have been many things to me over the years. But I still believe [sic] in you. So even though I’m not sure what I believe [sic], I am sure that I believe.”³⁸

Furthermore, in addition to added readings of one sort or another, in the early years of UCI, campers were encouraged to make use of their talents to add to the camp’s worship experience, engaging in different types of “activities”. They sang, played instruments, danced, acted, mimed, and shared art work. The best example involved “creative” interpretations of a Chasidic story, including art, music, dance, and mime-drama,³⁹ while another service involved a “Dramatic Interpretation” of Tzedakah.⁴⁰ However, this type of contribution through different “activities” seems to disappear after 1974, when the creative engagement returned to writing

³⁶ UCI Prayer Guidelines “Worship: 4,000 Years of Vitality”, Summer 1974, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 6/folder 11, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

³⁷ Evening Service on “Silence”, Summer 1969, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

³⁸ Evening Service “A Question of God”, 26 June 1974, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 6/folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

³⁹ Evening Service “Chasidic Stories”, 21 June 1972, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁴⁰ Evening Service, 27 July 1973, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 5/folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

original compositions or borrowing existing readings. Nevertheless, this creative effort by the campers and the openness for them to share their true selves helped to make each and every service unique, interesting, meaningful, and authentic.

Music also represented a significant stylistic shift from home to camp. As Dr. Splansky states clearly, at camp, “the normal service included a lot of singing”⁴¹ and a lot of music in general. Being in a camp setting, guitar was nearly ubiquitous and banjo, keyboard, accordion, percussion, string and wind instruments all would make appearances.⁴² Dr. Splansky correctly explains that at camp, worshippers would “sing through the service,” including learning and even creating new melodies for the Hebrew prayers.⁴³ However, this is a limited view of type of music for evening services. While the typical daily liturgy was sung, other Hebrew prayers and songs were also included as opening and closing songs such as *Lo yisa goi* and *Eli, eli*, which was by far the most sung opening or closing song from 1976-79 (at either UCI or Oconomowoc). Moreover, secular songs were regularly incorporated into the prayer experience, even singing certain prayers according to a secular song’s tune, e.g. “Thou Shalt Love” to “Scarborough Fair.”⁴⁴ Everything from the Beatles to Peter Paul and Mary to African American spirituals were included as opening and closing songs, “Circle Game” and “You’ve Got a Friend” being the most popular.

One final aspect that makes worship at camp distinctive from the rest of the Reform movement is the use of topics or themes. Unlike the majority of Reform services, where the theme of the service is the liturgy itself, camp services are each given and attempt to develop a

⁴¹ Splansky 156

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Evening Service “He Is Our God – There Is None Else”, Summer 1974, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 6/folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

theme chosen by the cabin or group leading the experience. Sometimes they make perfect sense for a worship service, e.g. Prayer, God, or Shabbat, or for a camp setting, Friendship, Nature, and Community. Even these relatively simple and obvious topics, all of which have foundations in the liturgy, change the focus of the prayer experience. Instead of just reading or singing the prayers, campers are encouraged to think deeply about a specific topic and allow the spiritual atmosphere of the service to foster meaning and identity. In preparing their service theme, campers would draw from different sources or write their own creative piece on the topic. For example, the above part about a camper's relationship with God comes from an evening service entitled "A Question of God" and, in sharing their own experience, they invite their fellow campers to struggle with their own questions of God.⁴⁵

In addition to these obvious topics, there are numerous other options available and evidenced in the UCI service records. In fact, to help the cabins pick a topic, a staff member compiled a list of seventy-eight different themes – ranging from Redemption, Revelation, and the Ten Commandments to America, Freedom, and Humanity, from Happiness, Imagination, and Hope to War, Peace, and Justice.⁴⁶ Most of the time, these themes were approached about in a generalized, abstract sense, focusing on the concept and value of Freedom or Justice rather than its application. However, there are a few services of note which specifically address the state of the world at the time and important issues and events, e.g. taking the general theme of War and extending it to a protest against the war in Vietnam.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Evening Service "A Question of God", 26 June 1974, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 6/folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁴⁶ Service Guide "Possible Worship Themes", Summer 1979, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 9/folder 14, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁴⁷ Evening Service Protest Against Vietnam, Summer 1968, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

Three such services deserve recognition in this spirit. In 1968, just months after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, Cabin E-2 created a service, crafting the music, prayers and readings, in support of the Civil Rights Movement.⁴⁸ They began with the African American spiritual “Oh, Freedom”, included readings addressing racism and injustice, used the trope and song “We Shall Overcome,” and concluded with Pete Seeger’s song “One Man’s Hand”; their message: “We are all Americans. Somehow, someday we must learn to live together. Black and White. It may take a while, but it can be done. If everyone tries, it can be done. It CAN be done!”⁴⁹ A few years later, the T’fillah Group presented a service surrounding the plight of Soviet Jewry. They used readings from Soviet Jews expressing their struggle to be Jewish, their oppression by the government, and their desire to leave Russia, and, as a result, the service encouraged the campers,

“Let us on this Sabbath eve, stand by our brothers [in Russia]. Let us affirm our determination and sustain them in their faith. We turn to the prayers of our people. But let us look at them in a new light, not through our eyes, but through theirs, through their hunger and their need. Let us pray as we have never prayed before.”⁵⁰

Finally, on July 2, 1973, an evening service, the topic of which was Peace, focused on the struggle for peace in the Middle East and the tensions between Jews and Arabs. The campers themselves explained their purpose and process,

“This is a Service of peace. The word shalom means peace in Hebrew, the word salaam means peace in Arabic. While we usually think of those things which divide Arab and Jew, let us during this worship experience turn our thoughts to a common theme which can unite us Shalom-Salaam.

⁴⁸ Evening Service Civil Rights, 25 July 1968, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Evening Service Russian Jewry, 14 July 1972, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 5/folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

This Service draws from both Jewish and Islamic, Hebraic and Arabic sources, and unites them as one.”⁵¹

All three of these services illustrate how the campers took a major issue from their experience of the world and integrated it into a meaningful camp worship experience. Thus, at camp not only are services more spiritual and enjoyable due to the environment and style which the camp setting encourages, but the themed services redirect a generic prayer experience to a focused, interesting, and relevant topic that can have real impact on these campers’ lives, at camp and beyond.

Shabbat

More so than any other Jewish ritual, Shabbat defines and structures Jewish life at home and especially at camp. Living in the Jewish environment of a Reform summer camp, Shabbat not only helps to define one’s Jewishness, it demarcates time. When six days of the week have the exact same schedule, Shabbat’s different schedule, from a late wake up to increased free time, allows campers to feel the Sabbath in an authentically Jewish manner foreign to their life at home. Since Shabbat is already the most, perhaps the only, Jewish ritual experience for many campers, this shift at camp is doubly effective.

This holds true for the Shabbat worship experience as well as the overall day. As Dr. Splansky explains, “When Shabbat arrived [the campers] could truly compare and contrast the camp service with their experiences at home. They preferred camp services. The sense of community, creativity, music, outdoor setting, age-appropriate and ‘inclusive’ liturgy, and large numbers of peers combined to move their hearts.”⁵² Essentially, this emphasizes that all the

⁵¹ Evening Service Arab Jewish Relations, 2 July 1973, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 5/folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁵² Splansky 158

environmental and stylistic expressions and impacts of daily camp worship were also present on Shabbat. In fact, I would suggest that these were heightened due to the special treatment of the Sabbath. First, more time is devoted to formal worship on Shabbat. Friday evening services, i.e. *Kabbalat Shabbat*, tended to be 30-45 minutes long as opposed to the 15-30 minute week day services.⁵³ Furthermore, while UCI eliminated a standard morning service on weekdays, a Shabbat morning service, usually with Torah and a Sermon, was a constant on Saturday morning. Also, Shabbat always concluded with a Havdalah service on Saturday evening in place of a standard evening service. In addition, the celebration of Shabbat at UCI began with a “Shabbat Walk,” in which the camp would walk through to each living area before walking together to the Beit T’fillah, singing songs welcoming Shabbat.⁵⁴ Finally, on Friday night, the campers would, and still do, dress up in their best Sabbath clothes. In the earliest years this meant wearing white shirts/blouses with either white (or blue, depending on the year) bottoms.⁵⁵ All these ritualized activities and dress added to the unique and intensely Jewish experience of Shabbat at camp.

As for the Shabbat services themselves, Dr. Splansky suggests that they tended to be more “traditional” than other days, yet he recognizes that, like all services, and perhaps more so than other services, Shabbat services were “always [filled] with singable songs, high energy, and camp spirit.”⁵⁶ The heightened joy, energy, and spirituality of the Shabbat service, most likely due to the added rituals, is accurate. However, at UCI, several of the most creative, non-

⁵³ Daily Schedules, Summer 1962-1965, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁵⁴ Schedule for Shabbat, 25-26 June 1971, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 4/folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁵⁵ Daily Schedules, Summer 1962-1965, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 3/folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁵⁶ Splansky 157

traditional services were either Friday night or Saturday morning services. The service for the Soviet Jewry mentioned in the above section, which explicitly states that it is not a traditional service and was performed without a prayer book, was a Shabbat service.⁵⁷ Likewise, in 1974, the camp publication Union Press, mentions a creatively done Friday evening service through a partnership between the Music, Dance, and T'fillot Chuggim.⁵⁸ Even so, as Dr. Splansky indicates, Shabbat services were taken more seriously and tended to be more traditional in liturgy and theme, usually sticking to an understanding of Shabbat and Rest. This is perhaps why, in 1974, when cabins returned to leading services, Shabbat services were reserved for the T'fillah Group, which could devote more time to the planning process.⁵⁹ All of this extra effort, ritual, symbolism, and time helped make Shabbats at camp the most impactful worship experiences of the summer for the campers. After all, as Dr. Splansky explains, these services caused campers to return home with high expectations for worship. These expectations were rarely met by the Reform synagogues because camp's community, environment, and style are not replicable outside of the intensive summer experience.⁶⁰

Conclusion

T'fillah and ritual on Shabbat represent the pinnacle of religious expression at Reform Jewish summer camps. However, the daily services, ritualized, prayerful moments, and informal spiritual experiences throughout the entire camp program create an environment flush with living Judaism. These experiences become so normal for campers that, upon returning home, there is a

⁵⁷ Evening Service Russian Jewry, 14 July 1972, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 5/folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁵⁸ Union Press "Friday Night Services", 10 August 1974, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 6/folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁵⁹ Worship Chug Information, Summer 1974, Myron S. Goldman Union Camp Institute (Zionsville, Ind.) Records, 1961-1979, MS 670/box 6/folder 11, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

⁶⁰ Splansky 158

loss of meaning from camp to the rest of the year. Nevertheless, the memories of these experiences and the identity that was built by the ritual remain with campers throughout their lives. Moreover, over time, the love and fondness for the religious expression at camp has changed the typical religious expression of the Reform Movement, both through the influx of youth returning to the synagogue and the future Rabbis that are products of the Reform Camping Movement.⁶¹ Thus, while GUCI Green may only be found in the unique environment of camp worship, the residual glow helps to brighten one's world and color it Jewish throughout a camp person's life.

⁶¹ Splansky 164-67