

BERKSHIRES · CANADA · CONNECTICUT  
NEW ENGLAND · NYACK · POCONOS**SAUL P. WACHS, PH.D.**

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I started my twenty-five years at Ramah in the summer of 1951 as a junior counselor at Ramah in the Poconos. My senior counselor was Yochanan Muffs, ז"ל. On the other side of the bunk, the senior counselor was Samuel Schaffer, ז"ל, later to become president of Hebrew College. His junior counselor was Joel Kraemer, currently a professor at the University of Chicago. The division heads were people of the quality of Chaim Potok, ז"ל, and Moshe Greenberg. We spoke Hebrew. The model was Camp Massad. Solomon Feffer, ז"ל, was the director.

The internal politics of The Jewish Theological Seminary at that time reflected some ambivalence about Israel and so, along with the American flag, we flew a blue and white flag with the two tablets of stone in place of the Magen David. This so enraged the folks at Massad that some of its staff rented a plane and flew over our camp, dropping leaflets that attacked us as traitors to the Jewish people.

Personally, I was overwhelmed by the combination of traditional observance, commitment to Hebrew language, Jewish study (we studied with Professor Hillel Bavli, ז"ל), and intellectual stimulation. When I returned home, my level of observance was affected.

As the years passed, and I progressed to senior counselor and then *rosh edah*, educational director, and music director, the influence of Louis Newman, ז"ל, became very important in the camp. Character education became a major focus of the program. We were pressed to justify everything that we were doing for and with the campers in educational terms. Sadly, the use of the Hebrew language was weakened beginning in 1964 when the Melton Research Center approach to Bible was introduced at Poconos, and some classes were conducted in English.

Over the years, I also spent summers at Ramah camps in Connecticut, Nyack, Canada, Berkshires, and New England. My late wife Barbara Eidelman Wachs, ז"ל, and my wife Diane Cover also spent several summers at Ramah.

I can honestly say that Ramah changed my life and had a profound influence on my view of education. The models I observed showed me that Jewish education can be a very serious enterprise designed to help people engage in independent thinking about ultimate questions of meaning. Ramah

might well be the most successful single contribution of the Conservative Movement to Jewish education.