



NEW  
MONTHLY  
COLUMN!

# Oh Boy!

## Busy or Bust

# BACHURIM IN CAMP

**I**t was 2:00 a.m., deep into Friday night, and the singing in the kitchen was still going strong. Just about then, the men and boys exploded in a jubilant dance. Would the bungalow, precariously balanced on cinder blocks, withstand the exuberance?

It was hard to believe that the men and boys in the diverse crowd had never met before.

In fact, it all began with a camp game.

Down the road from Florida Bungalows, where the incredible *kumzitz* was under way, lies the Yeshiva of Mountindale, founded by the beloved Rabbi Yerachmiel Shlomo Rothenberg, *zt”l*, and now run by *ybl”c* the equally inimitable Rabbi Shrage Meir Rosenbloom. During the summer months, the yeshivah is officially closed, and some boys opt to attend various camps. Those who choose to remain are treated to a homegrown camp experience courtesy of Rabbi Aryeh Rosenbloom, brother of the *Rosh Yeshivah*.

And some camp it is!

Last summer, one of the activities was called, in typical understated fashion, a scavenger hunt. In reality it was a

list of challenges and missions for the boys to accomplish. Because some of the boys drive, the game was able to span an area a few miles wide around the camp. The boys split into groups, each group set out in a car, and the race to complete the list was on!

Shimmy\* recalls some of the items on the list:

Play guitar in a random place, with a hat out for coins.

Find a family of deer.

Put *tefillin* on a Jew who has never done so before.

Break out in a *rikud* on the side of the road.

Speak to someone who has a British accent.

Have a *kumzitz* with Jews you’ve never met before.

“The other group set up their guitar in the parking lot of Center One (the *heimishe* strip mall in Woodridge), and one boy pretended he could play. He made a whole *matzav*, and he actually made quite a bit of money!” says Shimmy.

Finding someone to put *tefillin* on was more challenging. Shimmy’s group tried a neighbor of the yeshivah, but he wasn’t interested. They continued around the area, approaching a few other residents of Mountindale who they knew were Jewish, and still no luck.

Amazingly, they refused to be discouraged. Finally one man agreed. He donned the *tefillin*, and the boys said

*Shema* with him and *davened* with him a little bit, and it was extremely moving. In a way, that was the highlight of the day.

But it wasn't the end.

By afternoon, they still hadn't had their *kumzitz*. Riding through Center One, they approached a minivan that was decorated with "Cheder Florida Bungalows" and smiley faces. Anyone with a car like that should be a sport, they figured. They motioned to the driver, who rolled down his window.

"Are you in a bungalow colony around here?" They asked him. "Can we come have a *kumzitz* in your place?"

They had chosen well. In the course of the ensuing conversation, the boys discovered they had not only an invitation for a *kumzitz*, but also for a Friday night meal. Not just for them, either, but for all the boys in the camp. "Just tell me how many of you there are. We're a big bungalow colony. We'll host the lot of you."

And now, here they were. For the meal, the boys had split into groups of four or five to a family. But afterward, they and their hosts and many of their hosts' friends, bedecked in *shtrimeils* and *spodiks*, all joined in one kitchen (no summer homes, these; the kitchen's where the action is) and sang and danced until the wee hours of the morning.

In the end, that Shabbos was so uplifting and inspiring that we did it again this summer, and enjoyed it even more now that we're old friends.

When a game combines fun with *neshamah*, there's no telling where it will lead.

### What other innovative activities are our bachurim engaged in during the summer?

One learning camp, which by design does not include much in the way of recreation, still wanted to infuse the summer with excitement and a feeling of accomplishment. Toward this end, boys were able to join specialty groups with specific responsibilities. Some of the groups were as follows:

**Sheimos committee.** Any way you look at it, a camp is an active breeding ground for *sheimos*. From old *siddurim* to weekly *dvar Torah* sheets, the quantities of paper and *sefarim* that cannot be trashed add up. This group was guided through the *halachos* of burying *sheimos*, and then given the responsibility to respectfully lay to rest all the camp's accumulated *sheimos*.

**Brachos committee.** A learning camp might have a different program style from other camps, but there's no difference in the other big part of camp: food. Boys who joined this group were responsible to learn *hilchos brachos*, and then to establish the correct *brachah* for all foods

WHEN SOME OF THE BACHURIM, IN AN UNRELATED ACTIVITY, BUILT A BRAND-NEW, WOODEN, ROOFED GAZEBO, IT WAS THIS GROUP THAT ASKED THE RAV IF IT REQUIRED A MEZUZAH (IT DID!), AND THEN ARRANGED TO HAVE IT INSTALLED.

served in camp. Every morning, they would check in with the cook for the menu, review each food and the relevant *halachos*, and call a Rav if there was any doubt about a specific dish. Then they posted a list on the wall with each food and the proper blessing.

**Mezuzos committee.** In a large camp, it can be challenging to keep the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah* properly in all situations. Dozens of buildings, scores of rooms in each one. Here a *mezuzah* is removed for painting, there a porch was added to a bunkhouse, and in the main house walls were rebuilt to turn three smaller rooms into two larger ones. Who makes sure each new doorway has a kosher *mezuzah*? Who takes care of checking the inspection dates for all the *mezuzos*, sending in the

ones that need to be checked (and putting in the temporary replacements until they come back)? These boys do!

When some of the *bachurim*, in an unrelated activity, built a brand-new, wooden, roofed gazebo, it was this group that asked the Rav if it required a *mezuzah* (it did!), and then arranged to have it installed.

**Eruv maintenance.** This group of boys was trained in *hilchos eruv* before being entrusted with the job of checking the *eruv* every Erev Shabbos. This job is carried out with utmost care and responsibility. The camp *eruv* encompasses the entire grounds, including game fields, staff housing and more, and there is always work to be done in one place or another.

**Netilas yadayim.** How many sinks are there in a camp? Guess again! Besides the dining room, there are multiple sinks in each bunkhouse, as well as a sink outside each bathroom. This group of boys makes sure there is always a washing cup at each sink. Of course they attempt to attach them permanently with chains, but when a cup somehow disappears they will be there shortly to replace it.

These groups enable the camp to function optimally from a halachic point of view, and the sense of commitment and responsibility continues to accompany the boys throughout the year. ■

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