

A REPORT

ON CAMP BETAR 1954-5

CAMP WAS BEST AT KINGLAKE-WEST!

There is no doubt that last Betar Camp was one which will be remembered for a very long time by the 162 young Jewish boys and girls who came from three States in Australia to participate in a holiday, combining varied and enjoyable activities with a truly Jewish atmosphere.

On the 10th of January, 1955, the Israeli banner was lowered for the last time at Camp Betar. It marked the conclusion of a wonderful holiday.

The Camp was held at Kinglake West, at the Forestry Commission Campsite, 26 miles from Melbourne.

The winding road which leads high up into the mountains gave the participants not only the feeling that they had left city life far behind them, but also that they were entering completely different surroundings and an entirely different atmosphere, quite unlike anything experienced during the rest of the year.

Anyone familiar with the Israeli countryside would surely have been struck by the strong resemblance of the approach to the campsite to the appearance of the Israeli settlement, with the water-tower dominating the scene.

FIRST DAY AT CAMP

It took only a few hours until all campers had settled down in their new surroundings, and very soon after small groups could be seen commencing spontaneously with their own activities. Some of the older chaverim formed a little group debating problems in such an eager manner that it gave the impression that they were solving a problem on which humanity's very existence depended. Another group could be seen practicing for the evening program. Some of the smaller campers played a game of volley-ball or cricket, and yet another group could be heard singing in the background.



Physical exercise combined with fun.



Israeli Dances and Songs — an important and prominent part of camp life.

It would have been unbelievable to an outsider to imagine that on this very first day at camp everyone had already found their place, and everyone was already busy and fully settled, enjoying to the full the privilege of being a citizen of this newly erected youth town — Camp Betar.

PROGRAM AND SET-UP — IN PRACTICE

There is no doubt that the Betar Camp Executive wasted neither time nor effort in the preparation of this camp. A program, which to many seemed far too ambitious and impossible to follow, worked out exactly according to plan. This was because of the fact that the distribution of duties, as well as all the time-tables were worked out to the minutest detail (based on the experience of many previous camps).

The camp site proved to be excellent; the facilities and accommodation (the younger ones being housed in huts and the older age groups in tents) as well as kitchen, washing and shower arrangements, all contributed towards the overall success of this camp.

CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The Educational Program was based on the overall topic "Know Your Land And People". The lectures and activities were divided into 16 individual themes, one for each day — "The Day of Return to Zion," "The Day of the Homeland," "The Day of Hebrew," "The Day of Jerusalem," "The Day of History," "The Day of Movement," "The Day of Ze'ev Jabotinsky," "The Day of the Revolt," "The Day of Betar Settlements," "The Day of the Heroes."

The study of Hebrew had a prominent place in the Cultural Program; it was presented in such an enjoyable manner that it was no strenuous work, but fun and



Rope Climbing and Swinging, one of the tougher physical exercises practiced at the Kinglake West Camp. One faulty move — and the result is a bath in full clothes.

pleasure; not only the book language needed for cultural work was taught, but above all the application of the language in everyday life and activities. Hebrew songs and dances, games, and many everyday terms were introduced and used at camp.

EVENING PROGRAMS

A happy medium between cultural and recreational activities was found during the evening programs, when the various age groups gathered to participate in something they had been looking forward to throughout the entire day. The large variety of activities — plays, sketches, games, talent quests, debates, songs, dances, lectures, quiz evenings — contributed to achieving this. It was remarkable how much talent was discovered, especially amongst the younger chaverim. The atmosphere prevalent eliminated all shyness on the part of the more reserved participants, and everybody contributed freely in his own special field.

SPORTING PROGRAM

There is hardly any sport which was not represented in the camp's program. These activities did not only take

place in free periods, but featured prominently on the organized program. To give the best possible coaching these activities were conducted according to age groups. Many competitions took place at camp which helped to foster keenness and team spirit.

One of the most enjoyable features of the camp was "Practical Sports," or, as it is called in Hebrew, "Sports shimushi." This included Rope Swinging and Rope Climbing, Crossing of rivers, etc. The onlooker during these activities, did not only enjoy himself by watching the skill of others, but very often was amused by the minor or major mishaps which occurred during the crossing of the river, when a split second decided between a successful operation and a bath in full clothes.

WELL-PREPARED SPECIAL FEATURES

There were a number of special features at this camp. It is doubtful whether they have been used at any other camp.

"Camp Currency"

Special "Camp Currency" (vouchers) were used throughout the duration of the camp, in place of the participants' pocket money

(which was held in safe-keeping till the end of the camp). All purchases at the canteen and all financial transactions at camp were carried out in camp "Prutot" (the currency in Israel). This feature helped in yet another way to establish the feeling that this was a small part of Israel in a far-off place.

Broadcasting Station

A loudspeaking system was installed which could be heard all over the camp. This system was used for various announcements which were vital in the organization of such a large camp. Every night, half an hour was devoted to a special broadcast, when again a happy medium between Education and Entertainment was found, by presenting items of a very varied nature.

Film on Camp Life

A full-length Camp Film was made, showing the various aspects of camp life. In addition to the technicolor film, a black and white film was also made, showing unsuccessful attempts of a city youngster to adjust himself to "camp-life"; on completion, after camp, this film was shown under the title — "Nafuk," the Shmendrik camper named after Aaron Nfedeck, the main actor in this film.

PROMINENT VISITORS AT CAMP BETAR

According to our custom, a well-organized Visitors' Day took place during the camp, which was attended by many prominent personalities of the Melbourne Jewish Community. All of them highly commended the Executive on their excellent organization and work for Jewish Youth Education in this country.

With heavy hearts the campers came farewell to the place which had been their home for the last two weeks, thinking — "See you all again at the next Betar Camp."

The slogan "The Camp is best at Kinglake West" was not just a slogan anymore — it had become a symbol, recalling two weeks of enjoyment, happy incidents, friendship and education.



With the bugle call a happy day begins at Camp Betar.

"CAMP BETAR" THE IDEAL HOLIDAY FOR JEWISH YOUTH

Betar Camps are growing bigger and better from year to year.

At this stage it has become unnecessary to explain what Camp Betar is. As the entire community recognizes Betar Camps as the best educational holiday, providing everything a young Jewish boy or girl could wish for, and a Jewish parent should desire for his child.

Not only the Australian Betar, but Betar the World over, is famous for its camping tradition, and the leadership of the local Betar does not only draw on the experience of many years in this country, but also on that of the World Movement.

In consequence, Betar Camps are known for their efficient organization, excellent choice of camp sites and

well-balanced program.

The overall aim of the Betar Camp is to provide a healthy outdoor life, combining enjoyment and fun with the culture and tradition of our people.

In other words, Camp Betar endeavours to serve as a step towards making our younger generation ready for their future tasks, both morally and physically.

Photos very often give a clearer picture of activities than long descriptions. The illustrations printed on this page will convey very vividly the various aspects of camp life and the prevailing atmosphere.

But no matter how vivid the photos are — the only way was really to appreciate what Camp Betar offers and means, is to participate in it.



The Camp Fire — unforgettable evenings and nights around the glowing fire.