



# CAMP RAMAH IN CALIFORNIA

At the Max & Pauline Zimmer Conference Center

*A Journey for a Lifetime*

## News from Camp Ramah in California - Summer 2006

June 27, 2006 - 2 Tammuz, 5766

### Dear Parents of Camp Ramah in California,

The date has finally arrived! Tomorrow we will welcome your children to another summer for a lifetime at Camp Ramah in California! We are so excited to begin this magical process with you and can't wait for the kids to get here. This past week, our staff has been busily preparing for the 2006 summer, brainstorming fun program ideas, exploring ways to make tefillot (prayer) & Shabbat fun and engaging, making signs and decorations, and reviewing our safety procedures to ensure everyone has a safe and exciting summer.

### Homesickness - Are You Worried?

For some of you, your kids may be feeling nervous about coming to camp - whether it's their first time at camp or if they've been coming for years. Remember that this is normal - going away from home can be an anxious experience for parents and kids alike. There are a lot of resources out there, but here's one good tip on the night before camp: Make sure your kids are part of the packing process. Kids feel more "disoriented" at camp when they don't know what things they brought with them! Part of getting settled and being able to live away from home for a little while is organizing yourself and getting unpacked. When your kids are involved in the packing process, deciding which clothing to bring, reviewing the packing list, and making sure everything is in its place in their bags, they feel less anxious about going away because they better understand how they are going to take care of themselves.

### Last Minute Reminders

**Things NOT to bring:** Please remember to pack with your children not just so they feel less homesick but to be sure that what they are bringing is appropriate for camp. Be sure that they are bringing clothing that is LABELED and that is appropriate and in concert with Jewish values. Designs on at-shirts and jackets may not promote alcohol, drugs, suicide, sex, profanity, nudity, or ethnic hatred and all clothing should be appropriately modest. Be sure that children are not bringing cell phones, food, or any illegal substances with them to camp. Camp will confiscate these items when kids are unpacking. Packing with your child is an essential way for us to be sure that your children are starting out the summer in a safe way and on the right foot.

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**Driving to Camp** - Please remember that our gate will begin to let parents into camp at 11am. All cars that arrive earlier will be held at the gate so that our staff can continue its last minute preparations for the kids' arrival.

**Taking the Bus** - Please arrive at our transportation sites at least a ? hour before the scheduled departure time.

- Bel Air: please be there by 9:30am to enable a 10:00 am departure
- Adat Ariel Synagogue: please be there by 9:15 to enable a 9:45am departure
- Shomrei Torah Synagogue: please be there by 9:45am to enable a 10:15am departure
- Ner Tamid: please be there by 9:00am to enable a 9:30am departure
- B'nai Israel in Tustin: please be there by 8:30am to enable a 9:00 am departure
- Beth Am in San Diego: please be there by 7:15am to enable a 7:45 am departure
- Etz Hayyim in Thousand Oaks: please be there by 10:15am to enable a 10:45 am departure

In recent years, our buses have gotten over-filled by campers bringing either too many bags or too much "furniture" (lawn chairs, fans etc. . .) Please refer to the Parent Handbook, page 5: 'Please limit your child's luggage to one large bag or two medium sized bags. Please do not send lawn chairs with your children.' We know that leaving for camp is an anxiety filled moment for many families and we do our best to ensure that it works as smoothly as possible. Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation at our bus sites.

**Taking a Plane** - Be sure to arrive in plenty of time to check your bags in and go through security. If you are on a flight from Tucson, Phoenix, Oakland or San Jose, look for the Ramah flight chaperone 1 1/2 hours before at curbside of the airline of your child's flight. If your child is flying in from another part of the country, we recommend registering them as an unaccompanied minor on the flight; this will enable us to have a Ramah staff member meet them at your child's arrival gate. If you do not register them as an unaccompanied minor, Ramah staff members wearing our staff t- shirts will meet your child at baggage claim for his/her flight.

### **Yom Iyun - A Day of Study**

Finally, as we conclude our staff week, I want to share with you just one example of the intense training our staff of young adults have been engaged in over the past week. Yesterday, a truly remarkable program took place in camp with our staff: a yom ivyun, or day of study, focusing on creating healthy

each person, and God.

As we enter our 50th summer, I am proud to write you from Ojai and bless you for trusting us with the holy task of caring for your children. May God bless us, and them, with a summer of fun, friendship and love of God, Torah and the Jewish people. It all begins tomorrow - see you soon!

### **Why Is It Necessary?**

**Rabbi Daniel Greyber**

**June 26, 2006 - 1 Tammuz, 5766**

*An introduction to the play, "Make it Stop: A play looking at bullying, harassment, and the need for understanding and action." Written by Cathy Plourde and performed at Camp Ramah in California, staff week 2006.*

"In my distress I called out to God. He answered me by setting me free. The Lord is with me; I'm not going to be afraid. What can people do to me? With the Lord at my side, best help of all, I will yet see the fall of my foes. Better to depend on God than to trust in human beings! Better to depend on God than to trust in those who have power! Though all nations surrounded me with God's name I cut them down! Though they surrounded me and encircled me, in God's name, I cut them down! They surrounded me like bees; they were snuffed out like burning thorns! In God's name I over came them. I was pressed and pushed, but God helped me." Psalm 118:1-7

This is not a new problem. We said those words this morning. We sang them as part of Hallel: "Min HaMetzar Karati Yah." We even sang them to a beautiful melody, but when you read them like this, you see that this was written by someone in pain and with that pain, he lashed out in anger. And in violence.

Every morning we say in the psalms "*Al Tivtihu B'nedivim, b'vein adam sh'ein lo tshua*" - don't trust in people who have power, in mortals, because they can't offer you salvation." There is something beautiful in that message because it says to us that there is something that can never be taken away by another human being. Faith can be a lifeline. I fear God - I have *yirat shamayim* - so I don't fear what everybody thinks of me, what everybody tells me must be true about myself. My identity comes from somewhere else, and it can never be taken away. That is a beautiful answer and an important answer, and as a Rabbi, I want that answer to be true. But the questions that were asked on this stage still stand. Those questions are:

Why is it necessary? Why? Why should kids have to feel afraid? Why should we have to feel afraid of each other?

We are here to hold each other up. I want to know why it is that we have to read a psalm where it says 'don't trust in people'? I want to know why it is that the Conservative movement has to have a declaration that gays and lesbians are to be treated equally because they are created *bitzalem elokim*. I want to

can you approach God and say please forgive me. Because God is found in the face of other people and you don't get to smear other people and approach God and say now please forgive me.

I believe in a forgiving God but I don't want that to be an excuse, and I like the fact that our tradition holds people responsible. Before we approached God at Shavouut, and we became Judaism as a religion, we were a people first, when we came out of Egypt. That tells us that we need to be a people before we can be a religion. The Rabbis said *Derech Eretz kadma l'Torah*. You want Torah? Beautiful, learn how to be a mench first.

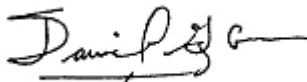
Human beings are not bad, but we are not good either. We have a yetzer hatov and a yetzer harah. We have a good inclination and an evil inclination and part of what this morning is about is to teach us that if we leave those choices to the wind then children will suffer. And people will suffer. So we have to decide: will we make it stop?

I was reading a book this morning and it talks about where sin comes from. We all think in our minds that the first time there was sin in the Torah was the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. And there was this tree and it was a sin that we ate from that tree. Do you know the word "sin" does not appear in that story? It doesn't. The first place it appears is in the story of Cain and Abel. "Sin crouches at your door." And this teacher said that this teaches something about where sin comes from. Because the story of Cain and Abel is the story of two brothers who bring offerings and one is liked more than the other. You know what happens? He gets angry. And he lashes out and kills him, and the teaching in that is there is one more solution that is not just God; it is creating a world where each person is loved. Where there is not more or less, there are no favorites, but where each person is loved for who they are. You want to feel loved? Do you like that? Nobody here can tell me they have not felt the sting of what it means to be passed over. We have it in our hands right now to give a gift of love. Love.

What can make it stop? Maybe God. Faith in God. But that not an excuse. Don't use God as an excuse for doing what we should. Love. Love.

**Rabbi Daniel Greyber is the Executive Director of Camp Ramah in California and the Zimmer Conference Center of the University of Judaism. In 2006, Camp Ramah in California is celebrating its 50th summer as the summer camp for the Conservative movement in the Western Region of the United States.**

B'virvat Shalom,



Rabbi Dan  
Camp Ramah in California

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email: [daniel@ramah.org](mailto:daniel@ramah.org)  
phone: (310) 476-8571  
web: <http://www.ramah.org>

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