



# CAMP RAMAH IN CALIFORNIA

At the Max & Pauline Zimmer Conference Center

*A Journey for a Lifetime*

## News from Camp Ramah in California - Summer 2006

Session 1

July 14, 2006 - 18 Tammuz, 5766

### Dear Parents of Camp Ramah in California,

Many wonderful things have happened at camp this week, including Maccabiah, overnights, the opening of the Ezra store, the arrival of Gesher C and our 4-week campers beginning new hugim activities. But although one of the special things about being at camp is being away from the outside world, one part of Ramah about which I am most proud is our commitment to educate kids here to care about the world out there. Earlier this summer we held an important day learning about the genocide in Darfur – see the article in the Ventura County Star at:

[http://www1.venturacountystar.com/vcs/community/article/0,1375,VCS\\_1796\\_4841046,00.html](http://www1.venturacountystar.com/vcs/community/article/0,1375,VCS_1796_4841046,00.html)

In light of the unfolding events in Israel, the past few days have been ones where we have learned to carry Israel and what happens to her in our hearts. Thursday at lunch, we recited a psalm and then the prayer for the State of Israel together as a camp. Several Ramah campers either are from Israel or have family in areas affected by the fighting - for them we are trying to make arrangements through our staff of parent liasons for those kids to either call home or to receive an email from family to set their minds at ease. Thursday night at dinner was "yom doar" or "mail day" on which campers are required to turn in to their counselors before entering the dining room for dinner a letter to their parents. At lunch, I asked all campers to write an additional letter for yom doar to Israeli children who are being affected by the fighting in Israel. Those letters will be sent to the LA Federation and in turn given to City Councilman Jack Weiss who is going to Israel next week and will personally deliver them to Israeli children who at this moment are spending nights in bomb shelters in fear. Finally, J.J. Jonah - who is both the USY shaliach for LA and also our Rosh Hinuch at camp - gave a class after lunch for the staff updating them on the current situation in Israel.

Camp is a great place, removed from the hustle and bustle of the outside world. It is a kids' place where they can be carefree. But it is also a place where they learn to take with them what matters to us most – a commitment to the world around them, a commitment to the Jewish people in need. As the Middle East teeters on the brink of war, I hope you feel a sense of pride in knowing that your children are in a place where they not only can be shielded from the world outside, but also learn to carry with them a commitment to love and heal a world much in need.

Finally, instead of a Dvar Torah this week, I am including a piece that I wrote a few years ago when Israel once before was challenged by violence. I pray that in the coming weeks, months and years that our community's commitment to Israel does not waver because of the *matzav* ("situation") but rather that it is in these moments that our resolve is most firm and our love and passion for Israel grows its deepest roots.



### ***With an Everlasting Love?***

Rabbi Daniel Greyber  
Jewish Journal of Los Angeles (May 9, 2003)

Enjoying my last few hours in Jerusalem a few weeks ago, I sat in Zion Square "*dafka*" just to spite those terrorists who have tried to drive people like me away from the center of Jerusalem. Though as each bus passes on Jaffe Street behind me I think about how it could blow up, I want to fulfill the mitzvah of *yishuv ha-aretz* settling or sitting on the land of Israel, if only for a few puny minutes before my plane departs tomorrow morning, destination Diaspora.

I am not a hero daring to sit on the streets of Jerusalem for a few measly hours. I am in love. What does it mean to love a country? I purposefully waited to buy new deodorant before leaving the States though the Speed Stick ran low in my medicine bag. I want toiletries with Hebrew writing. I treasure an intimate souvenir like medicines and gum, a few *sheckels* in my pocket a keepsake to hold onto, to caress and fiddle with when you get nervous or bored. A tangible reminder under my arms. I have felt like a kid in a candy shop these past 10 days. I love the mundane. I love shopping in the Herzilya mall for cds with Hebrew rap music (this is not your parent's Israel). I love traffic jams as impatient cars lurch forward inches apart. I feel blessed to be honked at.

But sitting in Kikar Tzion, I wonder and doubt and am quietly ashamed and afraid: Does American Jewry love Israel? What kind of love remains? Is it the fiery yet fleeting love of teenagers or the tested committed love of marriage, of building a life together? Or is there no love at all? Approximately 80% of American Jews have never been to Israel. Jews have lacked a nation of their own for 2,500 years, yet most American Jews have not even bought a plane ticket. In moments of frustration I despair about how we do not go to Israel while we have money for vacations at Disneyworld and the beach, for skiing and cruises. Yet how can one bemoan the 80% who have never come when even the 20% who have been before **are not coming now**. How empty are her streets! A shopkeeper at a once very popular jewelry store on Yoel Solomon said I was his first customer in two months from outside Israel. Is this love? Our friend, our lover, our spouse, our family suffers and we decide to stay away until it is safe? I could forgive an acquaintance for not visiting me in the hospital but not my brother, my best friend, my lover, my spouse. Israelis feel alone. They are too proud, too strong to tell us but we have abandoned them. One could understand that international tourists have been scared away. I could understand if Christians too decided to wait for a safer day to visit Israel (though they still come while we do not). *Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot*. three pilgrimage festivals when Jews flocked to Jerusalem to celebrate and worship together. But American Jewish pilgrims have been scared away.

In the end I believe, I must believe, Israel will survive. Her economy teeters, creaking under the weight of a military still too necessary, suffering from isolation from Europe, from Arab neighbors and now us. But Israel is strong stronger militarily and economically than of her neighbors put together, even in tough times. As I write this what worries me is not Israel's military or economic advantage but the fate of her soul and ours. Will our relationship survive the intifada? Can Israel forgive us for failing to be there in a moment of need? Can we rebuild her trust in us? Will American Jewry's professions of love for Israel ever be taken seriously again or will, when good times return (God willing soon), Israelis hear our words of commitment for what they now seem to be – fleeting?

Shabbat Shalom,

*Daniel*

*Zachary Lasker*

---

Rabbi Dan, Zach and the entire Ramah staff  
Camp Ramah in California

---

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

[Forward email](#)

 **SafeUnsubscribe™**

This email was sent to carol@ramah.org, by [summernews@ramah.org](mailto:summernews@ramah.org)  
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Powered by



Camp Ramah in California | 15600 Mulholland Drive | Los Angeles | CA | 90077