



CAMP RAMAH IN CALIFORNIA

At the Max & Pauline Zimmer Conference Center

A Journey for a Lifetime

Important Information for Session 2 & Gesher D & E Families

July 25, 2006

Dear Parents of Camp Ramah in California,

The date has finally arrived! In just a few days, 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.

Emergency Israel Tzedakah Project

In addition to the Darfur Tzedakah project you learned about in our parent mailing many weeks ago, we are asking you, if possible, to participate in an additional, emergency tzedakah project for Israeli soldiers. As many of you know, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have had to call up several thousand reservists into active duty to defend the State of Israel on two fronts: Gaza and Lebanon. Working through the Danny Siegel Ziv Tzedakah Fund, and through the lay leadership efforts of Sheila Baran Spiwak and Gloria Baran, Camp Ramah in California will send items that are expensive to buy in Israel and are critical to Israeli soldiers who have been called up for service. To do so, we are asking you to send with your child a large "zip-lock" plastic bag with as many of the below items as possible. Items should be average, NOT JUMBO size.

- 1) deodorant (no spray on)
- 2) toothbrush
- 3) toothpaste
- 4) bubblegum
- 5) hard candies (nothing that will melt!)
- 6) baby wipes and/or moist towelettes.

In addition to these items, we encourage you to sit down with your child and write a personal note to the Israeli soldier that will receive your package and enclose the note in the plastic bag.

All packages will be picked up from camp and transported directly to Israel for distribution. Thank you in advance for your participation in this important project!

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 t-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.

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 ½ hour before the scheduled departure time.

* 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 Tuscon, Phoenix, Oakland or San Jose, look for the Ramah flight chaperone 1½ 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, 4 weeks ago, as we concluded our staff week training, I want to share with you just one example of the intense training our staff of young adults have been engaged in. A truly remarkable program took place in camp with our staff: a yom iyun, or day of study, focusing on creating healthy interpersonal relationships. In addition to Jewish text study on mitzvot "bein adam l'havero" – "between man and his fellow" - and round robin workshops led by mental health professionals on topics such as, "From Boy to Manhood," "E-Relationships," and "Frienemies: How Girls Bully," some members of our senior staff also put on a performance of "Make It Stop" : A play looking at bullying, harassment, and the need for understanding and action," written by Cathy Plourde. Though Ramah is a great environment quite removed from the outside world, we are constantly striving to be pro-active in educating our staff and sensitizing them to the key problems effecting Jewish kids today. Following the performance, I shared the remarks below with our staff in an impassioned plea to create a Jewish community embodying the values of respect, love for each person, and God.

"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!

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 b'tzelem elokim. I want to know why we have to have something that tells us that! I want to know why we have to have sessions like this morning!

We need to create a different world here at Ramah. I am a Rabbi. I love God. And I love the fact that our tradition tells us that on Yom Kippur you don't get to be forgiven by God unless you do work with other people for sins bein adam l'havero (between man and his fellow). Only when you have done that work 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?

will we make it stop?

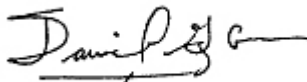
I was reading a book this morning and it talks about where sin comes from. We all think in our minds that the first time there was sin in the Torah was the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden. And there was this tree and it was a sin that we ate from that tree. Do you know the word "sin" does 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.

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 Thursday – see you soon!

B'virvat Shalom,



Rabbi Dan
Camp Ramah in California

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

[Forward email](#)

 **Safe Unsubscribe™**

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

Powered by

