



CAMP RAMAH IN CALIFORNIA

At the Max & Pauline Zimmer Conference Center

A Journey for a Lifetime

News from Camp Ramah in California - Summer 2006

Final Parent Update

August 22, 2006 - 28 Av, 5766

Dear 2nd Session and Gesher E Parents,

We are in the midst of a wonderful end of session 2 & Gesher E in this, our 50th anniversary summer at Camp Ramah in California. Here are some of the highlights from the last few days as we head into the waning hours of 2nd session, Kayitz 2006:



END OF SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Yom Kehillah

On Sunday, August 13th, the Ramah community celebrated a wonderful "community day" here in Ojai. More than 1,000 parents, grandparents, former campers and staff members, friends and family came to our beautiful site in Ojai and enjoyed a day filled with activities including: a performance by our makehla (choir of campers and staff), tours of the bunks and tents, a information booth for our 50th anniversary celebration on December 3rd 2006, a shiur with scholar-in-residence, Dr. Joel Gereboff, a closing ceremony concert with Rick Recht and much much more!

Makehla (Choir)/CD Recording

Our *makhela* has been a very special part of camp this summer, performing a beautiful song each Shabbat as part of our Kabbalat Shabbat service and tonight will finish up with a special song as part of our Leil Hofa'ah. Finally, this past week, we recorded an album including music by our camp band and our makhela – look out for a copy of this

album including music by our camp band and our makhela – look out for a copy of this CD of beautiful new Ramah music coming this fall.

Yom Tikkun Olam

Last Tuesday was our final special programming day of 2nd session and the theme was Tikkun Olam. In addition to fun and educational programs, campers each received water bottles donated by Jewish World Watch in order to highlight the importance of preserving water and valuing it as a precious natural resource tragically scarce in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Yom Yisrael

Yom Yisrael – this past Sunday was another special Sunday at camp: Israel Day! when we welcomed back all former Ramah campers who attended an organized Israel trip this summer. Joining us were Leon Janks, chair of our Israel Committee, and Carole and Sid Meltzner who have been supporters of funds to help Ramah CA kids attend Ramah Israel Seminar. The schedule for their day included:

- meeting with this year's Machon edah
- a session on Israel Advocacy with Roz Rothstein of StandWithUS
- meeting with Rabbi Dan and Zach to de-brief their Israel experiences and talk about next steps including the Mador (counselor-in-training) and Madregot (specialist-in-training) programs available at Camp Ramah in California for entering 12th graders
- a festive "Israel" lunch (pita, hummas, falafel, Israeli salad) when the rest of camp got a chance to welcome this special group back from their Israel summer

A great time was had by all and it was one more way in which we've worked to highlight Ramah Israel Seminar as the culminating experience for Ramah CA campers. Also, I've also pasted an article written by Ramah CA Israel Seminar participant, Alexander Jefferson about his experience. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

Great Performances!!!

Camp Ramah in California has been treated to a plethora of incredibly creative performances including:

- Rick Recht Concert – popular Jewish rock artist performed a special concert dedicated to campers 3rd – 8th grade, with older campers joining the camp for the last part.
- Beyond Eden Concert – earlier last week our Tzofim (9th grade), Machon (10th grade) campers and Ezra participants were taken out of camp to enjoy the musical styling of Jewish rock band Beyond Eden at Camp Alonim along with other local Jewish camps.
- Dalia – Camp Ramah's own evening festival of Israeli singing and dancing featuring our campers as the stars of the shows.
- Giborei Yisrael Hebrew Musical – this year, for the first time in a long, long time, Giborei Yisrael (6th grade) performed a wonderful production of *The Little Mermaid*.
- Sollelim/Amitzim Performance Night – many members of the camp watched in wonder as the Sollelim/Amitzim band performed Israeli pop music with campers as the musicians and singers, and as Sollelim took the stage to bring *Appie* to life with Hebrew and music

Annie to life with Hebrew and music.

- Tzofim/Machon Performances – tonight the entire camp will gather to watch the dance moves of Etgar Hip-Hop, to listen to the music of Etgar Band and to enjoy a Hebrew rendition of *West Side Story*. In addition to learning all of the Hebrew lyrics, the campers had a great time singing, dancing, doing costume design and participating in all aspects of putting on great performances!

We are so proud of the talent, confidence and energy of each camper that was featured throughout this week.

Gesher E Overnight at the Salkin Family Tree House

During the 1st two weeks of camp, our Gesher A and B campers had their final evening, closing activity in our new tree house but last night and this Thursday night, our Gesher girls, and then boys, slept overnight under the stars. These kids had a fun adventure during the hike up to the Tree House, stopping at different points along the way to play games and answer questions. After a fun evening of snacks and songs, all of the kids got to sleep and woke up in the morning to a yummy breakfast. A great time was had by all and this Gesher group has continued the Gesher tradition this summer of being one of the most “ruach filled” edot in camp.

Nitzanim Overnight

Last week our Nitzanim campers had their overnight at Lake Casitas, including sleeping out under the stars, smores, and a yummy breakfast of Rocky Mountain Toast. In the morning, before heading back to camp, these campers enjoyed a fun-filled morning at the Lake Casitas water park that everyone raved about!

Giborei Yisrael In addition to the great play put on by this edah, they’ve also enjoyed “kef li” – a special time at the end of the day where these kids pick what parts of camp they enjoy the most and get to go and have fun doing whatever they love doing. Kef Li – Fun for Me!

Adat Shalom These campers have been enjoying great early morning hikes in the surrounding Ojai valley. In addition to the great scenery, the hikes included making breakfast on the trail, morning tefillot in nature, and games led by our experienced ropes course staff out on the trail.

Amitzim/Ezra

We had a fabulous last week at camp! Amitzim enjoyed a trip to the beach with their Machon buddies, learned how to make orange juice with oranges picked from our own orange grove and learned about Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) by making trash art. Ezra made a BBQ for their buddies, enjoyed trips to the Ojai Farmers Market, The Skirball Museum, The Zimmer children’s museum and Dodger Stadium!

Tzophim/Machon

The great Etgar program wrapped up with fabulous experiences including a trip to NBC studios for Etgar Tikshoret, a day of rock climbing in the Ojai mountains for Etgar Havaya, surfing for Etgar mayim and more!

Banquet

Tonight, we’ll finish the 2006 summer with a yummy banquet full of singing, cheering, costumes and our famous end-of-session video that puts a cap on the whole summer. Kids come in costumes and love taking pictures, singing their edah songs one last time and sharing memories of another memorable summer at Camp Ramah in California.

TRANSPORTATION REMINDERS

As we prepare for our final transportation day this Wednesday, August 23rd, I want to review with you a number of items

review with you a number of items.

1. Pick up by Car - For those of you picking up your campers by car remember that you must adhere to the 9 to 10am timeframe posted in our Parent Handbook. Please do not arrive early; your car will be held at the gate until our staff is prepared for you to pick up your kids. Please also be sure not to come late! Your kids are excited to see you and it's crucial that you be on time. Finally – please do NOT block the roads around camp. Doing so not only is a fire hazard; it also impedes the on-time departure of our buses.

2. Buses - Please arrive at our transportation sites for the following pick-up times:

- a. Bel Air Presbyterian 11am
- b. Ner Tamid in Palos Verdes & Adat Ari El: 11:15am
- c. Shomrei Torah: 10:45am
- d. B'nai Israel in Tustin: 12:30am**
- e. Beth Am in San Diego: 1:30pm**
- f. Etz Hayyim in Thousand Oaks: 10am

**A special note for our Orange County and San Diego families. Because of the extra distance traveled by these buses from the camp to these areas, we try our best to ensure bus arrival at the scheduled times. Please know that we endeavor to have these buses leave camp first and we do whatever possible to ensure an on-time arrival. Nonetheless, we appreciate your patience and flexibility if they arrive outside of the times listed above. You can feel free to call our office at 805 646-4301 to get a status update on the buses within an hour of the scheduled arrival time.

3. Taking a Plane – A Ramah staff member will be sure to take your child to his/her departure gate. Some, but not all, flights will be staffed by Ramah staff members. Please do NOT contact our office to check on flight status – contact the airlines directly. Finally, we have reviewed with our staff the new carry-on guidelines issued by the TSA to make sure that campers can move through security quickly and safely.

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM RABBI DAN

I want to take a moment to thank you again for the confidence and trust you place in me and our wonderful staff at Camp Ramah in California in letting us take care of your children for the summer. Doing so is a holy task filled with uncertainty and bumps along the way. As we finish 2nd session in this, our 50th summer, I can say that I feel truly blessed in knowing all of the amazing memories and lessons and experiences that the kids had along the way. May God bless all of us with a year of health and goodness. May God bless the State of Israel and the Jewish people with a year of peace and, thank you again for being part of another summer for a lifetime at Camp Ramah in California.

LETTER FROM RABBI DAN & ZACH ABOUT THE INTERNET

Dear Parents:

At Camp Ramah in California, our primary focus, at all times, is the safety of your children and our staff. As Jewish educators and camping professionals, we feel

children and our staff. As Jewish educators and camping professionals, we feel compelled to write you this letter about a very serious topic. As your kids return from camp, we know that one of the primary ways that they will keep in touch is through the internet. We hope that you will read this letter in the spirit that it is offered: one of caring, concern and a sense of responsibility to share information with you on important topics that affect the safety of our children.

Many of our campers have created on-line accounts at www.MySpace.com or similar websites that have recently been named as potential danger zones for luring away children or teens by sexual predators on the Internet. These social networking sites are extremely popular among teens and young adults who post profiles, photos and BLOGS often answering dozens of questions about their likes and dislikes, revealing personal details for everyone, including predators, to see. Mistakes may be as innocent as posting a pictures with their school in the background, or with people wearing a camp shirt. In some cases, we noticed teenagers who specifically listed their home address. At this point, it would be best to assume that your child may use one or more of these sites and may be revealing sensitive information, or communicating with someone who does, without realizing it. We strongly recommend that you take the assumptive approach and ask your child to show you their site and help them recognize and remove confidential information.

As you know, when we post photos on our camp website during the summer, it is a password-protected website that only parents have access to, through passwords we provide. The Internet is a wonderful tool with thousands of educational, entertainment and informational websites that can open up a new and exciting world to your children. We encourage this exploration tempered with some reasonable precautions. We look forward to seeing you all again very soon.

If you would like to speak with us about this issue, or any other, please call us at (310) 476-8571.

B'virkat Shalom,

Rabbi Daniel Greyber and Zach Lasker
Executive Director and Assistant Director
Camp Ramah in California

PS. There is a wealth of information on-line with valuable tips from experts on how to protect your children. Below are just a few of the Internet sites that are working to help keep the Internet safe for our children:

1. "Cyberangels" – <http://www.cyberangels.org>
2. FBI Internet Safety Guide - <http://www.fbi.gov/kids/k5th/safety2.htm>
3. Web Wise Kids - <http://www.wiredwithwisdom.org/>

Thoughts about Israel from Ramah CA Israel Seminar Participant, Alexander Jefferson

I have gone to Camp Ramah in California for seven summers. There was never a doubt in my mind that after the last summer as a camper I would continue on with my

doubt in my mind that after the last summer as a camper I would continue on with my friends and spend the next summer on Ramah Seminar, an eight week program in Poland and Israel. I signed up for Ramah Seminar 2006 thinking I was signing up for a touring trip around the land of Israel with my best friends. I thought that was the extent of it. I could not have been more wrong.

The summer started off with a ten day trip in Poland. We visited concentration camps such as Auschwitz - Birkenau, Majdonek, and Triblenka. However, the focus of our time in Poland was not only on the deaths and the numbers, we also spent many days touring the remnants of old Jewish cities and towns. I learned of the extent of Polish Jewry prior to the war. This made our visits to the different camps so much more meaningful. We saw how and where people had lived before their identities were stripped from them and they were killed.

In Majodnek, there is an exhibit of shoes. As I walked down the seemingly endless hallway with containers filled to the ceiling with shoes on either side of me, I began to think and then to cry. I was now seeing six million as more than a number; I was now seeing it in two distinct ways. First, six million was one unit: six million people killed, regardless of background or gender or personality. One was a Jew so one was killed. I realized this in the endless collection of shoes. They all began to blur into one mass of leather surrounding me. The type of shoe meant nothing as it was thrown in there, just like the Jews were thrown into the camps.

I then pressed my face against the glass container and saw everything from a second perspective. I could see each shoe so distinctly. Some were leather dress shoes, some were sandals. Some were black, some were brown. Some for a grown man, some for a toddler. To me, it was no longer a group of six million who were killed. I now saw the Holocaust as the murder of six million individual people. Each death in itself was an entire tragedy, causing pain and suffering to all who knew that victim. I now saw the war as six million individual holocausts.

As my trip in Poland drew to a close and we prepared to head to Israel, I felt a whole new connection to my people's history. The Holocaust was no longer just another event I learned about in my history book. These were my relatives stripped of everything: their possessions, their families, their happiness, and eventually their lives, their futures.

A couple of days later, we flew to Israel and within 24 hours, we visited the Kotel, the Western Wall. This was when I knew this trip would be something far more special than I had ever imagined. I have been fortunate enough to have visited Israel frequently with my family and have been to the Kotel many times. My bar mitzvah, for example, was at the holy wall.

But this time was different. I was hesitant as I approached the Kotel, scared as infinite thoughts flooded my mind. Every image I had seen in Poland rushed through my head like a movie. I could see all the shoes and pictures of young children confidently and unknowingly leading their little siblings to what was eventually their deaths.

And then I walked up to the Wall and touched it. I thought about how fortunate I was to be on such an amazing program and how amazing my life is. I thought about how I was not only here for myself but for every person that had perished in Europe in the

was not only here for myself but for every person that had perished in Europe in the war. I was praying at this holy wall in this holy country for every single person who had died only dreaming of such a place. I then realized I was crying, but a kind of crying I had never experienced before. I did not feel the tears leaving my eyes, I only felt them once they ran down my cheeks. I did not know if I was crying out of sadness or happiness. I just knew I belonged right there right then for so many reasons.

The next few weeks of my trip were among the most fun experiences of my life. I toured the holiest land in the world with my best friends in the world. Three hundred of us lived on one base and interacted knowing how similar we were and how we were all there for the same reasons. We did things like white water rafting in the Sea of Galilee, climbing Masada, and visiting many historical sites.

And then the war up north started. The truth is that with the exception of daily updates by our staff, I did not really feel the conflict. We were repeatedly reassured that we were safe in the middle and south of the country and that our program would never put us in any danger. One Israeli staff member even told us to be more afraid of our bus crashing than being injured from the war. So we all felt safe. We were taught to be saddened by what was going on but not to be scared.

The head of my bus was an Israeli named Adam Winter. He is a man in his mid-twenties and newly married. He always reassured us not be the slightest bit afraid but that this was the life of an Israeli. As the conflict started he said to us, "You will know this is a war when I am called up. Half of the program's staff will be gone."

A few weeks later, I spent a week on an army base. I learned what it was like to be a soldier in the Israeli army as I slept, ate, took classes, and learned out in the field, similar to a week of basic training. In one of our classes, the head sergeant on the base told us why he planned on staying in the army beyond his required two years - for an additional four years. He told us how he feels as if every inch of the land is holy and it is his responsibility to keep it safe. He told us of his younger sister and how he wants her to be able to walk to the malls with her friends without fear. He taught us that it was our responsibility to keep visiting and to continue helping the country in any way we can for it is our duty as Jews to keep Israel thriving.

As our summer progressed, the conditions up north worsened and more reserves were being called up. One day, we were on our way back to Jerusalem from a week long stay in the South when we made an unexpected stop at a park. The head of our bus, Adam, gathered my group and told us he had to say goodbye. My friends and I all looked at one another in shock. He told us that his unit had been trying to reach him all night and he was one of the only ones not back in uniform. He explained to us that he was headed north to help fight for Israel.

His phone then rang and he went to answer it, quickly returning and telling us that he had to go right there and then. We each took a moment to hug Adam and thank him for making the summer so amazing and meaningful. As he walked away toward the bus stop, only with what he had on his back, all of our eyes began to fill with tears, he had not have a chance to hug his new wife goodbye. As he faded out of sight we sang "Acheinu," a prayer recited for soldiers. The singing was barely audible.

It took our counselors a long time to quiet us down. They explained to us that this was what it was like to be an Israeli. Everyday someone you know or someone a friend knows is called up to the army. We now had a deep connection with the war up north.

This connection deepened even further when in the ensuing week, four of the program's staff members were called up. Also, Michael Levin, a former Ramah camper who had made Aliyah at age 18, was killed in combat on August 1. Many participants from my program attended his funeral. As the final days of our six weeks in Israel approached we now felt a more personal connection to the land then we had ever imagined.

The last Friday afternoon of Seminar, we spoke to Adam through a quick conference call. He told us that he had been training since he left us and that he was to start a secret mission in the the next couple days. He had shot 1,200 bullets that day; we could hear gunshots in the background.

The last days of the trip we dedicated songs, services, and the talent show to Adam, the other staff members, and all the soldiers fighting up north. We now all felt a personal connection to the country and all that was going on.

As our summer ebbed away, we said our final goodbyes not only to each other but to the country as well. We left the summer feeling an obligation and a connection to the country, to help with her survival and for her to continue thriving.

The first week of the trip, we visited a kibbutz on the Lebanese bordered headed by a right wing activist. He told us that Israel was an amazing country but one in an endless battle for her independence. He told us that we can never and will never stop fighting. He ended his speech telling us to do all that we can. He then said something to us that rings in my ear to this day. He said, "They can kill me. They can kill my family. But they can never kill my country. The Jewish State of Israel is here to stay. We just have to wait for everyone else to accept that!"

After having spent ten days in Poland and six weeks in Israel, having experienced all that I did, I now see and understand what this kibbutz leader meant. Being in Israel during the war has made me more aware of what is going on and made me recognize that there are soldiers fighting for me to visit the country and have fun there with my friends. The name of my bus group was "Amichai" and none of us could have ever imagined the relevance of its meaning. "My Nation's Alive!"

Teen Newsweek Wants Stories about Camp from your Kids

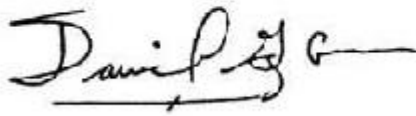
Teen Newsweek is interested in hearing from your teen campers about what it was like to to be in camp during the recent crisis in Israel. Each personal essay should be about 450 words long and should include a photograph of the author.

This is an opportunity to reach more than 200,000 teenager across North America. The stories by your teens about their experiences this summer could inspire new

meeting Americans, both groups learning about how strongly connected the people of Israel are despite the physical distance.

There is a tight deadline. Please forward this email to your teen campers and if there is any interest, please email Rina Goldberg, Director of Communications for the Foundation for Jewish Camping at rina@jewishcamping.org by the end of this week. There is no guarantee that your camper's essay will be published but the author of a published piece will receive a 25\$ amazon.com gift certificate.

B'virvat Shalom and see you next summer,



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