

Shalom Tzevet 2017!

We are extremely excited about the staff we have assembled and we are thrilled that you will be joining us in Palmer, MA for an amazing *kayitz* 2017!

[Here is the link to our 2017 Staff Handbook.](#)

It is critical that you read the Staff Handbook and understand our policies and procedures. In this e-mail we would like to emphasize some important points:

- **As always, we are trying to build an incredible and supportive community at Camp Ramah.** Here is what I wrote recently to our camp families about this: *We pride ourselves on being a warm and welcoming community at Camp Ramah. We are fortunate to have people who have many different identities and experiences who attend our camp. We have always taught these values both formally (through staff and camper training programs) and informally at camp and continue to do so. We want to make a clear statement that we are a safe, welcoming and embracing home for members of the LGBTQ community. Our staff and board of directors have been emphasizing LGBTQ inclusiveness as we are privileged to have or expect to have a broad representation from within the LGBTQ community in our Ramah family in the coming years.*
- **Cell-phone use at camp** – for safety’s sake we allow staff to carry their cell phones during the day at camp. Making calls or texting are only to be done in the case of emergencies or for extremely time-sensitive camp business. We have been hearing some concerning feedback from our camp parents recently that their kids’ counselors are always on their cell-phones texting especially in the *tzrif* (bunk) during *nikayon*, *menucha* and bed time. We know it is hard, but we all must need to do better about this. **A cell-phone should never be used (for calls or texts) in sight of *hanichim* (campers) unless in an emergency situation. We need to be present and give 100% attention to our *hanichim*. Cell phones must be turned off and put away during Shabbat.**
- **Security** – We have undergone a thorough security review this off-season and we will be sending out a security update to our camper families in the next few weeks. We will copy you on this letter and review changes in our procedures during *Shavuah Hachanah* (staff week). The safety and security of our camp community is critical to us.
- **Shmira for non-tzrif staff**-This *kayitz* we will be assigning non-*tzrif* (bunk) staff to shifts as *Rosh Shmira*, *shmira* on *Shabbat*, and a shift on 24-hour *shmira* during the last ten days of camp. We appreciate everyone’s help in creating a safe community.
- **Meah Milim (100 Words)** – We are excited to continue and expand upon the *Ivrit* initiative we began last summer! These are the 100 words that we are committing to only saying in *Ivrit* this summer. There will be prizes each week for *tzevet* (staff) who rock this goal! [Click here for more information.](#)
- **Sick Call!** – Our nurses are awesome and work hard. It is critical that we observe regular MARP hours and only go to the MARP outside of sick call times for true emergencies. Do not call the MARP in the middle of the night unless there is a true emergency situation.
- **Aruchot (Meals)** – We are so excited to be opening up our new, state-of-the-art *Hadar Ochel*. A new *Hadar Ochel* presents us with an opportunity to make some important changes. First, since our new *Hadar Ochel* is in a different location and has ample bathrooms, *hanichim* may not leave the *Hadar Ochel* to go to their *tzrifim* during meals. Second, as a *kehilah*, we need to do a better job of cleaning our *shulchanot* (tables) and the floors under and around them. During *Shavuah Hachanah* (Staff Week), we will be introducing new procedures at the start and end of meals to ensure safety,

cleanliness, and quality control. Finally, let's remember that we have a huge community, and our kitchen staff work very hard to provide us with tasty food. Our chef, Sean, is not running a restaurant. Working at camp means dining in the *Hadar Ochel* (Dining Hall) during regular meal times. Please do not request pack outs and special meals for you or your children. Please observe meal times and make sure to clean up after yourself and your kids.

- **Israel and Camp Ramah** – Establishing a strong connection between *our hanichim* (and our *hevrei tzevet*) and the State of Israel is central to the Ramah mission. We also recognize that we have *hanichim* and *hevrei tzevet* with a variety of viewpoints about Israel and Israeli politics. We want staff to feel comfortable talking about Israel and expressing their opinions to one another. Staff must also recognize that the types of conversations we have amongst staff are not the same as those we have with our *hanichim*, and that we can embrace Israel in all of its wonderful complexity and reality while also being age-appropriate in our programming and discussions with *our hanichim*.
- **Our shlichim** – As part of our mission to build this connection with Israel, we bring *shlichim* from Israel. They are wonderful people who are central in helping us to connect our *hanichim* with Israel. We can't wait for all of our American staff to meet them all! A reminder to our American staff that we rely on all of all of you to do your best to help our *shlichim* fit in; to welcome them with open arms; to be aware that it is hard to come to a new place where the dominant language is English; to invite them to hang out with you, go on nights out with you, and to bring them home with you on days off; and to make sure that you include them in all your communications over the *kayitz* (they might not have texting capability).
- **Kippot at camp** – We want to remind all male staff-members that they must cover their heads at all meal-times and times of study (such as a *hinuch perek* or a staff-learning session) and during *t'fillot*. Please be sure to pack lots of *kippot* to bring to camp! Many staff-members choose to wear a *kippah* at all times during the summer, and we encourage that.
- **Tallit & t'fillin** – Male staff-members are required to bring a *tallit & t'fillin* to camp, so please make sure you have a *tallit & t'fillin* to bring! Female staff-members are also encouraged to bring and wear *tallit & t'fillin* at camp! Camp is a great opportunity to try this new experience. Last year we made great strides in this area and we want to build on this for this year. [Click here to review my letter regarding our tzevet \(staff\) and religious life at camp.](#)
- **Lice treatments** – Staff-members MUST get checked for lice and be lice-free before arriving at camp. Any staff found to have lice at camp will be charged for the cost to camp of their lice treatment.
- **Staff kids** – All staff parents, please make certain that you have registered your kids for Gan. Additionally, if any of your children (Gan kids or camper-aged kids) will be in camp with you for any of staff week (or, for second-session staff, for any of intersession), please be certain you have e-mailed our registrar Marggi at marggi@campramahne.org to let her know.
- **We are an inclusive community** -- Inclusivity means many things. It means including people with various disabilities, from different countries, different backgrounds, different skill-sets and making sure there is a place for everyone to belong and thrive. Let's keep that in mind with everything that we do at camp. Every staff member who works at Ramah must be willing to work with any type of camper or staff member. Inclusion is not a choice, it is the Ramah way of life.

We look forward to seeing you all in Palmer very soon, and to working together to create an amazing summer experience for the over 930 campers enrolled so far who will be passing through our gates this summer.

L'hitraot b'Palmer!

Rabbi Ed Gelb, *Director*
Josh Edelglass, *Assistant Director*