



March 19, 2020

Dear Ramah Berkshires Parents and Guardians,

First and foremost, we hope you are well. We hope that you and your family and your loved ones are healthy and cared for. We know that every one of our lives has been upended to some extent. We, along with all of you, are dealing with practical challenges -- from working and schooling at home, to managing stir-crazy children (and adults), dealing with quarantines, and, in some cases, managing illness. In addition to the myriad practical challenges, we are all also dealing with emotional and spiritual challenges caused by the uncertainty and anxiety of the unknown. This experience is new to all of us, and something we are all muddling through, trying to make the best choices and plans, and trying to care for our families and ourselves.

We are reaching out to you today for both practical and emotional/spiritual reasons.

First, for the practical. We know many people are starting to worry about the summer, and how the current COVID-19 pandemic will impact Camp and your child's summer plans. **At this point, we are planning to open Camp, and we are optimistic that we will be able to do so.** We continue our planning work in preparation for the summer, and will keep you posted on everything related, including forms and payment deadlines and various other pre-camp announcements. Everyone -- from our year-round team, to our *Rashei Edah* (division heads) and *Rashei Anaf* (program area directors), to our facilities team at Camp -- is working to make *Kayitz* 2020 our best summer yet.

That said, we acknowledge there is still so much uncertainty. We are grateful that, in moments like these, we can always return to our Ramah Berkshires mission and values. One of our core values is the trust you have in us each summer as you send us that which is most precious to you. We have always held that trust sacred, and no matter what the future holds, we will continue to do so. For this reason, we want to be upfront with you about our plans in case we do have to make changes for the summer.

**Our Board of Trustees has decided that, in the event that Camp cannot open this summer, we will be offering a full refund of both tuition and fees.** We make this offer knowing that it will be extremely difficult for our institution from a financial perspective, but also knowing that it is the right thing for us to do.

The financial implications of closing Camp will be serious, as we have incurred - and will continue to incur - many costs, regardless of what happens this summer. This will have a lasting impact on our budget, our programming, and

our institution for years to come.

Should Camp be unable to open, you will have three options:

(1) **You can choose to convert all or a portion of your paid tuition into a donation to Camp.** If Camp cannot open, we will need your generosity. Though Camp has operated in a prudent and fiscally responsible manner for many years, tuition and fees make up over eighty-five percent of our revenue.

*Please note: if you choose this option, as a thank you we can offer you the opportunity to enroll in Kayitz 2021 at the Kayitz 2020 rates.*

(2) **You can roll over your paid tuition with us and your camper or campers will be automatically enrolled in our 2021 summer at the 2020 tuition rates.**

(3) **You can accept the offer of a full refund of your paid tuition.** If and when this becomes necessary, we will work quickly to determine a schedule for the timely disbursement of the funds.

One additional note: if you are interested in joining a conversation about how we, as a Ramah Berkshires community, can start planning to address the long-term impact of this potential situation, please let us know.

Finally, for the emotional/spiritual side of things: we want you to know we are thinking about all of you and your children. We are planning regular online opportunities for our campers, staff members, and wider community to gather virtually, to offer each other some smiles and some *chizuk* (strength). While we hope you are engaged with your own local community, offering and seeking support, we also encourage you and your campers to reach out to members of our Ramah Berkshires community.

Some ideas: why not plan a virtual "play date" or "bunk reunion"? What about starting a "yom do'ar" (mail day) routine with your kids once a week, encouraging them to write old fashioned camp-style letters to camp friends (last summer's camper directory with addresses can be found on your CampMinder dashboard)? Or even just plan a spontaneous family "rikudiyah" (dance party), asking your kids to teach you some of the dance routines from last summer, or just blowing off some energy with free-form dancing? (Our *Kayitz* 2019 playlist is on Spotify!)

We will continue to be in regular contact in the coming days, weeks, and months, and we will keep you posted if and when there are any changes or decisions made. For now, **please encourage your campers to join the "Pre-Shabbat Virtual Edah Reunions" this Friday** (individual *edah* times and zoom links were sent out yesterday), and we hope you will all join us on Saturday night, March 28th for our next Ramah Berkshires community-wide Havdalah (zoom details will be sent out next week).

As always, feel free to reach out to us if you have questions or concerns.

Thank you,  
Richie Friedman, President  
Rabbi Ethan Linden, Director

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