



A Special Message for Our Ramah Berkshires *Kehillah*



[Click Here for A Video Message from Rabbi Ethan Linden](#)

Visit our COVID-19 Webpage for Updates and Resources

To our dear Ramah Berkshires community,

We are thinking about all of you, and praying for your health and well-being, and the health and well-being of your loved ones.

These unprecedented times have tested and stretched and challenged all of us, and have at the same time brought out unique experiences of strength, resilience, and -- yes, even in this time of social distancing -- togetherness.

As a Ramah Berkshires community, we are both proud of the ways our community members and leadership have rallied in the face of this crisis, and grateful for the powerful ways our community has been a source of comfort and joy.

We are writing today to share with you, our community:

- (1) An update on the status of Camp this summer;
- (2) Some information on how our community has been connecting during this trying time; and
- (3) A preview of what is ahead, as well as an invitation to join us.

(1) An update on the status of Camp:

- **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 everyone -- from our year-round team, to our *Rashei Edah* (division heads) and *Rashei Anaf* (program area directors), to our facilities team at Camp -- has been working (albeit remotely) to make *Kayitz 2020* our best summer yet.

- **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.

Should Camp be unable to open, in addition to the option for a full refund, we will also offer our families the options of converting all or a portion of the tuition into a donation to Camp, or rolling over the paid tuition to 2021. 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. If Camp cannot open, we will need the generosity of our community.

For our full email to parents with more details, click [here](#).

(2) While we're continuing our "regularly scheduled" planning, we have also been actively creating moments of connection for our camper and staff community:

- We started by sending out a [special video](#) for all of our campers who were, in the earliest days of the crisis hitting the New York area, kept home from school.
- Once the majority of our camper community experienced school closings and stay-at-home orders, we began to launch more frequent communication and opportunities to connect:
 - We hosted a "**Virtual Havdalah**" on Saturday night, March 14th led by our recent *Rosh Shira*, Deb Sacks-Mintz, and was attended by more than 500 campers, staff members, parents, and alumni. One camp alumna reflected on Facebook, "*It was a wonderful way to bring us all together during these stressful times.*"
 - We convened nine **Zoom pre-Shabbat Edah Gatherings** on Friday, March 20th, and had more than 450 campers participate.
 - We invited our campers to [join in a Virtual Rikudiyah](#) (dance party); check out their compiled (and pretty adorable!) dances [here](#).
 - We've shared activities and resources, offering campers and their families support from afar, as well as opportunities to join various national Ramah gatherings and activities.



Virtual Havdalah

We've got more in store for the coming weeks:

- We're hosting our second **"Virtual Havdalah" this Saturday night**, featuring our new *Rosh Shira*, Eitan Kantor, and our *Rosh Rikkud*, Maddi Mehlman. (Click [HERE](#) at 8 PM ET on Saturday to join!)
- We're convening a Zoom meeting this Sunday for all of our incoming *Kayitz 2020 tzevet* (staff).
- We're planning some pre-*Pesach* learning and fun, plus daily activities during *Hol Hamoed Pesach*.
- We're organizing a number of online camp activities and opportunities - including a camp chess club, a Dungeons and Dragons club, and some demonstrations of fun *Al Ha Gova* activities that kids can try at home!

And beyond what we're organizing, we've been blown away by the grassroots gatherings of campers, alumni, former staff, plus expressions of camp love across the internet. A few of the MANY examples:

- Twenty members of Gesher 1977 (including their Ramah Israel Seminars counselors) had a zoom reunion, and are planning to reunite every two weeks.
- A group of nine friends spanning five *Gesher edot* ('85, '86, '89, '90, '93) got together on Zoom to celebrate one of their birthdays.
- An A-side girls bunk from last summer is meeting nightly by zoom, along with their *madrichot* (counselors) and some special "guest visitors" (including Ethan and their *Rosh Edah!*).
- MANY funny, sweet, touching, and crazy Ramah Berkshires-themed TikTok videos created by our campers.
- And so much more...



**Laila Goldstein-Rosenfeld
(Solelim 2020)
on her nightly bunk call**

As one parent wrote on our Facebook page: **"One of the best things that keeps my kids hopeful during this time is the plan to go to Ramah this summer."**

We have always said that Ramah Berkshires is more than a camp, more than a place or a program or an institution. Ramah Berkshires is a *kehillah kedosha*, a holy community, and a *mishpacha*, a family. In times

like these, the power and strength of this *kehillah* and *mishpacha*, and the importance of our mission, is more evident than ever. Making sure our community stays strong and supported is a central priority at this time.

We know we are not yet out of the woods. In addition to our concerns for the physical and mental health of our community members, we are also concerned about the long-term financial implications of this crisis, both for our camp and for our community. We have extended this year's financial aid deadline, and we expect requests for camp scholarships will go up between now and the summer. If you are able to do so, please consider [making a donation](#) to ensure we can meet the needs of all camp families and keep our organization strong and financially healthy.

Our prayers go out to the members of our community who are suffering from illness, or whose loved ones are suffering. Our gratitude goes out to the many medical professionals across our community who are on the front-lines of fighting this pandemic. And our love goes out to each and every one of you, our beloved Ramah Berkshires *mishpacha*.

We will continue to keep you posted if and when there are updates. Follow our social media ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) for fun camp events and resources, and keep an eye on our website's special [COVID-19 page](#), for informational updates and for other relevant resources. And please keep us informed if you or another member of our Ramah Berkshires community are going through a difficult time (and of course please share good news too!).

Thank you for being a part of our *mishpacha*. We hope to see you tomorrow night at our next "Virtual Havdalah" (click [HERE](#) at 8 PM ET on Saturday to join).

Shabbat Shalom,

The Ramah Berkshires Year-Round Team