



An Update on *Kayitz* (Summer) 2020

To our beloved *kehillah kedosha*, our holy Ramah Berkshires community,
We hope that you are well, and that your families and loved ones are healthy.

We had hoped and prayed not to have to write this message. We have imagined scenarios, played out contingencies, and planned for dozens of different ways to operate Camp this summer given the pandemic that we're living through. We have engaged multiple task forces and committees and have considered an array of perspectives and guidelines from the medical community, camping community, and government officials.

Unfortunately, the guidelines provided by medical professionals, industry experts, and government officials all indicate that any camps opening this summer must plan to experience some level of infection. The Ramah Berkshires Medical Committee and the Medical Committee of the National Ramah Commission have concluded, and our Board of Trustees has agreed, that we cannot operate this summer expecting to manage a COVID infection in Camp. As our medical professionals have repeatedly told us, there are simply too many uncertainties right now about the illness, about its effects on children and adults, and about our ability to contain an outbreak. We have therefore come to the painful conclusion that it is not possible for us to open Camp in a way that will also fulfill our number one priority, protecting the health and safety of our campers and staff.

As such, with tears in our eyes and broken hearts, **we announce the cancellation of all scheduled sessions of the 2020 summer camp season.**

Resources for Sharing this News with Your Children

This is such hard news for us to share, and we understand it is just as hard to hear. We know that many of you, like us, will experience this as a real and profound loss, a loss amidst many other things that we have lost these past few months. In particular, we recognize the disappointment for the campers of *Gesher 2020*, many of whom have been dreaming of this summer since *Cochavim*. We also understand how difficult it may be for parents to share this news with your children.

We encourage you to take a moment with your children to confront this loss, and to remember with gratitude for the blessings of Camp, which will sustain us into the future. On our [Summer 2020 Cancellation Resource Page](#) you will find a video message that Ethan made for campers, as well as resources to help parents navigate this disappointment with, and provide support to, your children.

Community Gatherings

In the coming days, we will host a series of online Town Hall gatherings to connect with all of you face-to-face and to discuss this difficult decision. Camp parents and guardians are invited to join us for our first meetings on Sunday, May 24th at 10 AM and 4 PM (*these meetings will be identical, no need to attend both*). The full schedule (including meetings for different *edot* and staff) and all Zoom links can be found on our [Summer 2020 Cancellation Resource Page](#). We hope you will join us.

Next Steps

Within the next two weeks, every Camp family will receive a phone call from a member of our staff or board, both to check in on you and your family, and to discuss the options for redirecting your 2020 tuition payments into a donation, refund, or payment towards Summer 2021.

On our Cancellation Resource Page, you will also find a FAQ section aiming to address many of the questions we expect you are asking. Please read through the information carefully, and be in touch if you have additional questions.

Staying Connected

This summer, Ramah Berkshires will have to be a community in the absence of an in-person camp experience. As soon as we are able to safely bring people together at Ramah Berkshires, we will. For now, we pledge to continue to work to keep our Camp community connected and to communicate frequently. Stay tuned for chances to get together, to experience some programming from and with Camp, and to celebrate and revel in the community that makes Ramah Berkshires special, wherever we are.

For now, we hope you will join us this **Friday, May 22nd, at 6 PM ET**, for a special **Ramah Berkshires-style Kabbalat Shabbat** service. To join, click [here](#).

Looking Ahead

We want to assure you of one thing: **there will be other summers**. This is not the end of Camp Ramah in the Berkshires. With your support, with your love, with your commitment, we will be back for *Kayitz* 2021. And, of course, as you have hopefully experienced these last couple of months, Camp never really goes away. Camp is more than the summer, and always has been.

We had dreamed of something different than this, imagined it, and, as it became harder to imagine, prayed for it. But, in this instance at least, the end was not what we had hoped. Thank you for your kind words of support over the last few months, thank you for your patience as we tried to work things out, and thank you for being a part of this amazing Ramah Berkshires community. We will miss being together this summer in Wingdale, but we know, as the Psalmist promises, that though we may cry at night, “joy comes in the morning.” Dawn will not break soon enough for Ramah Berkshires this summer, but the morning will eventually come. And with it, joy.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Ethan Linden, Director
Richie Friedman, President