



Camp Ramah
in Wisconsin

...where the best of Jewish life meets the joy of camping

מתנה רמה בוויסקונסין

Shalom Ramah Families,

Standing in the lobby of the Bet Am on Thursday afternoon, I caught the final rehearsal for Solelim's amazing performance of Peter Pan. In the next room over, guest musicians Eli Palnik and Jeremy Shanas were sharing their music with Nivonim campers. Opposite the entrance a bit down the lawn in front of the woodshop some campers and staff were working on building a catamaran that they hope will be Lake Buckatabon worthy in a few weeks.

No bells no loudspeakers no tumult. Hundreds of kids move from activity to activity.

On Monday, our photographer in residence David Sherman organized a campwide digital photo shoot - a documentation of one minute of camp life. At exactly 6:18 p.m. (or 18:18 in Israel - 2 times "chai") campers and staff took a photo wherever they were in camp. [Click here](#) to access this great collection of camp images.

I want to share a thought to consider as you visit camp. What does it mean that Camp Ramah in Wisconsin is co-ed? By the numbers it is about half and half. This summer we actually have several more guys than girls. Does this mean that every activity is always mixed? Not really. Each age group experiences this in their own way. The campers eat by cabin and often have cabin based special activities once a day. Frequently all the girls cabins or all the boys cabins in an edah do an activity together. Night time is a time for each cabin to hang out after the evening activity, including inviting special guests to join them for a late night schmooze.

Boys and girls participate together in the daily classes and activities. Each week the edot plan at least one major all boys or all girls activity. This week in the oldest division, Nivonim, the girls hiked in the Porcupine Mountains and canoed the Wisconsin River. The guys had "Nivo Hill" all to themselves. They will reverse these roles after Visitors' Day.

It is fun for the guys to have their own time and the girls to have their own time. They bond together as a group. It gives them a special appreciation of the edah once they get back together. During the July 4th campwide talent show the Nivonim boys and Nivonim girls each prepared a dance performance. They worked hours perfecting their dances and the camp loved their amazing performances.

In the Solelim performance of Peter Pan, the Pirate dance was done by the guys and the Indian dance by the girls. It did not have to be that way - actually Peter was played by one female and two males and Captain Hook was played by one girl and one guy - but it was another opportunity to explore separate gender programming and build strong groups of guys and groups of girls. At the end of the show the Pirates and the Indians were all hugging each other and were equally proud of what the other produced.

Ramah is a neighborhood. The kids become very comfortable hanging out together. They know each other very well. They grow ever more aware of how each other thinks and sees the world. They bond as girls and as guys. They also learn how to build a community of guys and girls being together .

Camp provides role models of strong and talented men and women. In the arts, sports, swimming, Hebrew and Judaica learning, outdoor education, drama, and music we have talented men and women leading departments.

The poet Hayim Nahman Bialik wrote in his poem Shabbat HaMalka (the reference below is taken from the new Yedid Nefesh bencher compiled and edited by Rabbi Joshua Cahan).

Shabbat Hamalka שבת המלכה

החמה מראש האילנות נסתלקה, באו ונצא לקראת שבת המלכה.	Hahama meirosh ha'ilanot nistalka, bo'u v'neitsei likrat shabbat hamalka.
הנה היא יורדת, הקדושה הברוכה, ועמה מלאכים, צבא שלום ומנוחה.	Hinei hi yoredet hak'dosha hab'rukha, v'imah mal'akhim ts'va shalom um'nuha.
באי באי המלכה! באי באי הכלה! שלום עליכם, מלאכי השלום!	Bo'i bo'i hamalka! Bo'i bo'i hakala! Shalom aleikhem mal'akhei hashalom!

The sun on the treetops no longer is seen. Come, let us welcome Shabbat, the True Queen. Behold her descending, the holy, the blessed, and with her God's angels of peace and of rest. ■ Come now, dear Queen, with us abide, come now, come now, Shabbat, our Bride. Shalom Aleikhem, angels of peace.

— Hayim Nahman Bialik

43 SEDER LEIL SHABBAT

Many people sing these beautiful words as they light the Shabbat candles. Shabbat is described as Queen, as our Bride.

In the Shabbat Ma'ariv Amida the pronoun referring to Shabbat is in the feminine singular (bah). On Shabbat morning, the pronoun referring to Shabbat is masculine singular (bo) and during Shabbat minchah the pronoun referring to Shabbat is in the plural (bam).

Camp is all about creating a healthy community that understands, appreciates, and values the feminine and masculine. Like Shabbat itself, we find room to celebrate our differences and strive to shape a unified community.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi David Soloff, Director

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