

WELCOME TO CAMP!

Welcoming our Israeli Staff and Campers

This summer, we look forward to welcoming 300 Israeli staff and 120 Israeli campers across our network of 14 URJ camps in North America. We want to be especially attuned to how each member of our *mishlachah* (Israeli delegation) arrives to camp this summer, given the unprecedented circumstances in Israel since October 7.

On a movement-wide Zoom call comprised of summer faculty, members of our *mishlachah*, sacred camp partners, and URJ staff, we recently heard from Ori Rosental, who will return for her third summer as a *shilchah* at Camp Harlam this summer. Ori counseled that our Israeli delegation is coming to camp in one of three ways:

- Proactive *shlichim*, are seeking conversation and opportunities to share their perspective, and might even feel misunderstood by a community foreign to them.
- Active *shlichim*, are willing to share, and aren't actively looking for conversation.
- Passive *shlichim*, are looking for an escape and want to avoid possibly difficult conversations.

"Despite the difference in mindset", Ori shares, "all three groups chose to come to camp this summer and are looking for a safe community." And that's exactly what we will provide this summer.

TEN WAYS TO SAY WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE

Here are some ways to welcome (and continue to nurture) your Israeli delegation this summer:

- **Make it a Memorable Airport Welcome** – make some signs, send some staff and snap some pictures, which you can use later on social media or send to your local CVS or Walgreens to have prints made for your *shlichim* before the end of the summer.
- **Everyone Loves a Welcome Bag** – our friends at Greene Family Camp created an Amazon Wish List of supplies for welcome bags and shared it out to their alumni. Bags will include Texas essentials, like portable fans, bug spray, sunscreen, and regional treats.
- **Regular Check-ins** – we want to be intentional and consistent about regular check-ins, and they should start at the end of the first day. Asking about their day, if they have any questions, and if they need anything, will make sure everything is *b'seder* (in order) and staff can walk away from the first day feeling seen and cared for.
- **Provide an Enter-view** – rather than a potential employee sharing why they would be a good fit for this role, this is when camp leadership share with staff how excited they are to welcome them into the role and why they're so excited to have them on the team. Be descriptive, put it in writing, and share often!

- **Implement a Buddy System** – consider an *Olim/Vatikim* system during staff week where every *Oleh* (new) staff member is paired with a *Vatik* (veteran) staff member. This is a great way to help everyone navigate being new to camp and new to staff.
- **Host a Photo Scavenger Hunt** – being new to camp can feel incredibly foreign. A Photo Scavenger Hunt is a great way for everyone to become more familiar with the layout of camp, work together as part of a team, take some great photos along the way, and then use them in your staff slideshow at the end of the summer.
- **Complete the [Comfort Toolkit for Camp Staff](#)** – this resource, developed by Raya Seidman (Yallah! Israel) and Lauren Grundland (Camp George) is a real gem and is something camps should consider for all their staff.
- **Make Time Off Easy** – consider group plans for days and nights off for staff who come to camp without transportation. Camp Coleman reached out to Atlanta-area alumni with specific dates for staff time-off out-of-camp and asked them to offer home-hospitality. Any opportunity to coordinate plans and offer low-cost or no-cost options for time away from camp will make the planning process less stressful and the time away more enjoyable.
- **Create Access to Quiet Space** – do you have a designated quiet space where staff can make or take a private phone call? Does your health center or camper care space have a place people can go if they need some time to disengage? Let's be sure we're creating these extra spaces this summer.
- **Load them up with Swag** – because everyone enjoys good swag!