

Reflections from Rabbi . . .

We are in the middle of those hot summer days. The hot days of summer feel different than any other time of the year. . .there is a much more laid back feeling. I love the summer and frequently long for the summers of my youth.

In my childhood, I counted down until summer began, not because I wanted school to end but because I was so excited to go to camp. The highlight of every year was the time that I was in the woods surrounded with great friends and living as part of an exciting Jewish community.

Camp was an important social opportunity to be sure; but more than that, it was the foundation for my love of Judaism. Jewish summer camp is one of the most important educational opportunities we as Jews can invest in for our children. Camp provides our children the opportunity to live in a completely Jewish community and experience the joy that comes with living a Jewish life. Kids celebrate Shabbat and the rhythms of a Jewish week without struggle. Instead of arguing about coming to synagogue on Shabbat, campers look forward to the special way that their camp welcomes Shabbat every Friday evening. Hebrew is used throughout camp in many subtle ways and it is amazing to witness how much Hebrew campers pick up over the course of the summer.

One of the true highlights for campers is the Israeli counselors who come to America for two months. The counselors have the opportunity to spend special time in America while connecting our children to life in Israel. They share stories about life in Israel and America; they become friends; and they help bridge the geographic distance that exists. These counselors infuse a lasting love and understanding for Israel in our campers.

I miss my days at summer camp each and every year, and I hope as many children as possible can benefit from this incredible educational experience. Summer camp reinforces everything we teach our children in school with more creation and excitement. Jewish summer camp teaches more in two months than you would think possible--the camper will return home with a thirst to remain connected to Jewish life, and before long they will be counting down their days for camp to begin next summer.

If your family is considering Jewish summer camp, I would be happy to meet with you and help your family decide on the best option. Do not let another summer go by without offering your child this most worthwhile summer experience.

Have a nice summer everyone!!

Rabbi Michael Kushnick