



## “על הדבש ועל העוקץ” The honey and the sting...

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These are the words from Naomi Shemer's famous song. For me, growing up in Israel, this was often the way we expressed what it was like to live in Israel and especially the powerful juxtaposition of *Yom Hazikaron* (Israel's remembrance day) and *Yom Haatzmaut* (Israel's independence day/birthday). It was the honey and the sting of the Israeli reality. As we marked these two days this week and the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of Israel, I wanted to share with you some of how we try at camp to bring the honey and the sting of Israel, to Camp Ramah.

This year, Ramah California was selected as one of ten Camps in North America to participate in the [iCENTER for Israel Education's](#) pilot of taking a closer look at Israel education at camp. This has always been something on our mind. We bring 30 shlichim (young adults from Israel) to our camp, we teach, we breathe, we experience Israel, we speak Hebrew and so much more. But we also knew there is always room for growth and room to think educationally and experientially how an 8, 12, 15 and 25 year old should learn about Israel and experience Israel at camp.



The day the fires broke out in Ojai in December, we brought together a focus group built of staff, alumni, professionals and more to spend a full day talking about this. You can imagine how powerful it was having this conversation, while hearing reports of us maybe losing our camp home. One of the first exercises our consultant facilitated was asking the group “where does Israel live in Camp?”- some of the places people shared were- the chadar, the laundry room, the signage, the flagpole, the *T'fillah* spaces, the Whizin field, the *Edah* songs, *Birkat hamazon*, *Dalia* and more.

We were then asked to share “where does Israel NOT live in camp?”- This got us thinking. People said in the canteen, at meals, on the *givah*, on the *tiyulim* (overnights), in the music, in listening to each other and more. This was the beginning of a few months of conversations in which we engaged many of our staff, alumni, board, campers and stake holders in thinking about

how we teach, feel, smell and see Israel at camp. How do we instill an unconditional love and educate our participants about Israel and at the same time, teach about the sting, the difficult parts? How does this look differently for kids of different ages, Israel education backgrounds, various family views and more?

This all needs to be done in a thoughtful and age appropriate way, with our staff recognizing that they have a big impact on how these future Jews view Israel and Judaism.

How could we perhaps use these two days as a model of being able to go from the hard things to the happy things, from the disappointment to the pride and still do that all with love, respect, good listening and love of Am Israel and all those around?

“על כל אלה” *all of these* – are part of the place we call our Jewish home...

We look forward to sharing more with you as we continue through this process, but in the meantime, [here is one beautiful example of social innovation in Israel](#), happening through music. Kuloolam singing “על הדבש ועל העוקץ”

***Chag sameach!***

**Ariella**