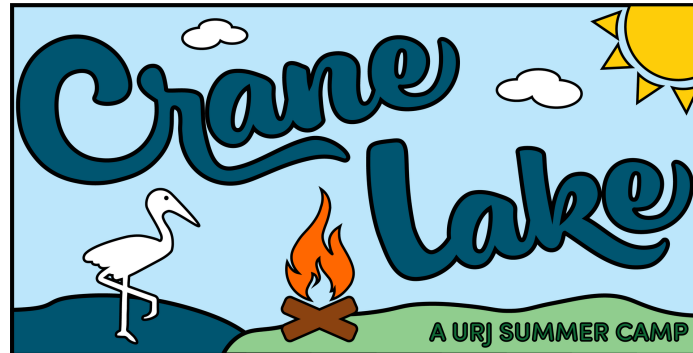


**Subject:** Our Approach to Israel at Camp

**Date:** Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 11:57:06 AM Eastern Daylight Time

**From:** URJ Crane Lake Camp

**To:** Stein, Sarah



Dear Summer 2024 Families,

With just 45 days until we open our gates to campers, our excitement is continuing to build with each passing day! Whether this summer is your 1st, 5th, or 15th year at camp, we know that CLC would not be the amazing place that it is without the unique thoughts, feelings, and perspective that each of you brings.

We love that our Crane Lake community comes from all over the world – 18 different countries to be exact! Camp thrives on connecting people from different cultures, backgrounds, and lived experiences. We also know that it's been a uniquely challenging year for our community, both here in the US and around the world.

Since October 7th, our team has worked to develop a thoughtful, nuanced approach to Israel that aligns with our values and leans into the human connections that are core to our camp experience. We have always been a community focused on curiosity, acceptance, diversity, and building positive relationships. We are still a community that emphasizes these core values and will continue to navigate this summer with a focus on respectful dialogue, compassion, and sensitivity.

While we know our summer ahead will be filled with all the usual camp fun and adventures, we also know there may be challenging conversations as well. **Please be sure to read through this email in its entirety, as we want to be sure you are aware of and aligned with our approach.**

## Our Approach to Israel at Camp

We support the state of Israel, and its right to exist, and we will celebrate and create positive connections to Israel during campers' time with us. **Our staff, campers, and others who join our community should be aware of and prepared for a Zionist approach to be part of the camp experience. We also aim to provide nuance in this effort, and to show compassion for the real human cost of the conflict in Israel and Gaza, in age-appropriate ways.**

Just as we do not regulate the belief in G-d of our community members, we also do not regulate the political perspectives of our families, campers, and staff. While members of our camp community may not agree with our position on Israel, they are welcome to be part of our community, but may not undermine our mission or the activities related to Israel engagement and education. Our goal is to create a Culture of Kindness for all, where difficult conversations among those who may disagree are supported, and where growth and learning can occur, but where hate speech and harmful words are

not allowed.

## The URJ's Position on Israel

As you may know, Crane Lake Camp is owned and operated by the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ). The URJ is the largest Jewish movement in North America, and our approach to Israel has been guided by the work of the URJ:

***The URJ's Statement on Israel (in short – read full version [here](#)):***

*Our commitment to a strong, vibrant, Jewish and democratic state of Israel, secure within its borders, is unyielding. Since October 7th we have repeatedly called for measures that ensure that Israel remains strong and secure, that the hostages are released immediately, that humanitarian aid reaches Palestinians in Gaza, and for a future in which an Israeli and a Palestinian state exist side by side in peace.*

## Our Considerations for Summer 2024

- 1. The topic of Israel is highly charged.** Our community will likely come to camp with various degrees of feelings, and with varying levels of intensity and sensitivity to discussions.
- 2. We celebrate differences.** We anticipate campers and staff having diverse and passionate feelings and perspectives about Israel. It is our responsibility to support all of our campers and staff, and to create safe conditions for them to be at camp.
- 3. Our focus is on the process of having conversations, not the content.** We will emphasize teaching the skills of how to engage in complex, polarizing conversations with trust, support, kindness, and curiosity.
- 4. There are varying appetites for dialogue.** We anticipate some members of our community coming into the summer craving and needing to engage in discussion, and others seeking an opportunity to take a breath after a year of intense dialogue about both Israel and anti-Semitism. We strive to strike a balance that supports everyone.
- 5. We've always encouraged our staff to help our campers find their own voice.** It is the job of our staff to help campers process their feelings and beliefs, but not to project their opinions unto others.

## What Our Approach Will Look Like

Our goal is for campers and staff to explore their own answer to the question:  
"Why is Israel important to them?"

**For Nitzanim and Bonim,** our approach includes:

- Setting age-appropriate expectations around thoughtfully navigating difficult conversations
- An age-appropriate lesson focused on Israel during *Limud* (Jewish Learning Period). The discussions and activities will be guided by each age group's needs and curiosities, and will be led by our Faculty (Rabbis, Cantors, and Jewish Educators) with our *Shlichim* (Israeli staff).

**For Chaverim and Olim,** our approach includes:

- Setting age-appropriate expectations around thoughtfully navigating difficult conversations
- Offering a Keshet (Jewish learning elective) course each week for those who are interested to engage in dialogue and lean into discussions about Israel. These courses will provide an

opportunity for those seeking an avenue to process, explore, and engage in more discussion around Israel, and will be led by our Faculty (Rabbis, Cantors, and Jewish Educators) with our *Shlichim* (Israeli staff).

**For Staff**, our approach includes:

- Comprehensive training in conflict resolution and thoughtfully navigating difficult conversations
- Setting expectations for what is age-appropriate to discuss with campers, as well as how to support campers without projecting personal opinions
- Opportunities during Staff Training and throughout the summer to engage in dialogue and lean into discussions about Israel for those who are interested

These are complicated times in our world, and we know that won't end just because we are in "The Bubble" at camp. **Our #1 priority this summer is making sure each member of our community has the summer that they need to have – whether that's focused on fun, or healing, or growth, or adventure, or most likely a combination of all these and so much more.** Ultimately, talking about war and conflict will not be a major part of our campers' experience this summer.

If you have any questions or thoughts about our Israel approach, or if you feel you cannot uphold our values this summer, we need to know. Please reach out to Efraim at [eyudewitz@urj.org](mailto:eyudewitz@urj.org).

**In addition, our next Parent Drop In is tomorrow, May 17th, and is all about Jewish Life at Camp.** The call will be about Jewish Life in general, but is a great opportunity to come and ask questions about our Israel approach as well. You can find the Zoom link [here](#).

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and for helping us create a warm and welcoming community. This is an opportunity for us to really practice what it means to live in a Culture of Kindness – and not just surface kindness, but a deep kindness. We look forward to seeing you in person in just a few weeks!

Choose Kindness,  
The Crane Lake Pro Team  
[Efraim](#), [Debby](#), [Ali](#), [Alyson](#), [Barnett](#),  
[Emily \(Waldo\)](#), [Rachel](#), and [Sarah](#)

