

NYACK

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When I think of camp, my mind instantly races to any given Friday. It is a hectic work day for everyone. For swim staff, the day begins early; classes are jumbled with free swims, and you only get five minutes to eat lunch, which you must eat in the pool house instead of in the *hadar ochel*. While the rest of camp is at the Friday afternoon *oneg*, swim staff is in a meeting, assessing the past week, making preparations for the one to come, and admittedly goofing off in the water before the pool reopens for after-camp swimming. As the end of the

camp day approaches, the lifeguards collectively cross the *gesher* to join the rest of the *hanichim* and *tzevet* to dance our hearts out.

In accordance with tradition, Friday afternoon dancing ends with Michael Edelstein lowering the flag, everyone singing “Hatikvah,” and of course, dancing to “Amen” and welcoming Shabbat.

The hours between the *hanichim* leaving the campgrounds and lighting candles are always filled with delightful high-paced activity: visiting the local old age home, decorating the *hadar ochel*, handing out Shabbat-o-grams, racing to shower while there is still hot water. I personally fill time by waiting on the *migrash* with a friend for the hustle and bustle to clear as we lie on our backs in the shade and enjoy each other’s company.

At 6:15 p.m. every Friday during the eight weeks Camp Ramah in Nyack is in session, a miracle happens. Everyone in camp is in the same place, at the same time. No one is carrying a cell phone or car keys. We are all dressed in our finest summer threads; and with that well-known approving smile of our director, Amy Skopp Cooper, the community opens their *siddurim* and begins to chant “Yedid Nefesh.”

This may sound like an exaggeration, but this is very possibly the moment I live for. It’s not just a moment I look forward to at the end of each summer week, it is an experience I cling to during the year as well, when the reality of life separates our Ramah community, and we spend our Friday nights singing “Yedid Nefesh” in different communities. No matter where I might physically be on any given Shabbat, my heart is in the *beit keneset* of Camp Ramah in Nyack.

Camp is my home. I have spent some of the most influential years of my life there and made the longest lasting friendships I probably will ever have. Ramah has given me love and nourishment for five years, and it will continue to be a part of me for the rest of my life.