

BERKSHIRES - NYACK - POCONOS

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Camp Ramah, the summer camp of the Conservative Movement, had such profound significance for me. Raised in a marginal Jewish family, indifferent to the content of my Hebrew school experience, it was at Ramah that I was introduced to the rhythm of the Jewish week and the beauty and glory of Shabbat, participatory prayer, and serious Jewish study. For the first time, I participated in a vibrant Jewish community. An initial list of the qualities of Ramah in the mid-1960s that were decisive include:

- A clear vision informed by ideology, that is, a commitment to a halachic lifestyle, the Hebrew language, and Jewish study made accessible and joyful in the camp environment
- A strong educational philosophy that energized staff; staff believed that they were on the cutting edge of informal Jewish and religious education, which communicated a sense of a "greater mission" to campers

- Standards adhered to by all; everyone studied—campers, counselors, administration, and kitchen staff
- An articulated expectation of modeling interpersonal relations by fully respecting the uniqueness of “the other” (we read a great deal of Buber in those days), which raised consciousness and sensitivity to an art form
- Judaism lived fully, naturally, and authentically, without pretense.