

Jewish Life at Camp

Building Community:

At BB Camp our core Jewish mission is to build community among our campers, staff, and greater Camp Community of parents, clients, and stakeholders. One of our key areas for community building is through our inclusive Jewish programming. Through this programming we strive to create a variety of opportunities for campers and staff to explore their Jewish identities and develop a strong and confident sense of their Jewish selves. A crucial part of this programming is to offer something for everybody, no matter their religious affiliations and beliefs, and help our campers and staff learn that there is not one way to be Jewish or belong in our community. We categorize our Jewish programming into five areas, religion, connection to Israel, traditions, spirituality, and values based.

Our Programming:

Religion

In our religious programming we offer opportunities for campers and staff to participate in daily morning services, a Kabbalat Shabbat service (Welcoming the Sabbath), a Shacharit Shabbat service (Morning Sabbath Service), a Havdallah service (End of Sabbath Service/Singalong), as well as brachot (blessings) before all meals and the Birkat Hamazon (after meal blessing) after meals. With inclusion in mind, we offer participation opportunities for all our religious programming in both Hebrew and English, as well as with Hebrew text and transliterated text in English for those campers who do not know how to read Hebrew.

Israel

Our main focus in Israel-based programming is to provide interactive opportunities for our campers and staff to develop a connection to Israel. We create connections to Israel by hiring Israeli staff to teach our campers about daily life in Israel. Each summer we run an Israel Day program for both of our summer sessions where campers can learn about Israeli culture, food, and geography. In addition to this day-long program, we entwine Israel-based education with day-to-day camp life, including a “Hebrew word of the day” at morning services and by using basic Israel education pieces including using Hebrew names for our camp buildings, flying the Israeli flag, and singing Hatikvah (Israel’s national anthem) as a camp each day when we lower the flags for the evening.

Traditions

The epitome of summer camps are traditions, and every camp you go to will have traditions of their own. Something magical about camps and their traditions is that they transcend camper, staffing, and leadership generations. One longstanding Jewish tradition at BB Camp is our Shabbat procession, where the leadership staff walk from cabin to cabin on Shabbat singing Shabbat songs, welcoming in each group of campers and staff to the Shabbat train, eventually leading everyone to our amphitheater in a sea of blue and white, singing Salaam together as a camp before we transition into our Kabbalat Shabbat service and Shabbat dinner. Another longstanding Jewish tradition of the camp is Kashrut, if anyone has

attended Camp they will be transported back to Chadar (Dining Hall) when they hear the phrase “here at BB Camp we run what’s called a Kosher kitchen”. This speech goes on to explain to campers and staff that we separate our milk meals from our meat meals, and teaches everyone, the basics of Kashrut and how they can help us observe Kashrut at camp. Once campers transition into staff they are finally able to lead the Kosher kitchen speech for the camp that they have heard so many times as campers. One tradition we have recently brought to camp is baking homemade challah (braided bread) every Friday, so everyone can enjoy a fresh, warm loaf of challah for Shabbat dinner. Some weeks we make dough and the campers are able to make their own individual challot, while other weeks we make a fresh loaf for each cabin. This, and teaching the campers how to braid their challot has become a favourite Friday activity for many campers and staff at camp.

Spirituality

Spiritual based programming and the classic camp experience go hand in hand. Our campers are able to explore their spirituality by connecting with nature, participating in camp bonfire singalongs, as well as connect to other Jewish youth, building lifelong relationships forever connecting them to their Jewish peers. Running camp on an island allows us to effortlessly build a connection between our campers and the environment, and a common trope from alumni is they never felt more connected to Judaism as they did when on a canoe trip. Our canoe trip program teaches campers a wide range of skills, both physical survival skills, as well as what we call soft skills. These soft skills are what builds community at camp, they teach campers to take care of each other, to work as a team, to be stewards of the earth, and how to come together to achieve a common goal. Although it may seem like the common goal of a canoe trip is to make it to their campsite each day, what is really important is they are building connections with their peers, creating lifelong memories, and building the bonds that will transcend the distance of where life may take them, tying them to our community for life.

Values

Values based programming is how we tie together all the programming we do at Camp and we specifically focus on developing the five core values that define the community we are creating. The five values we focus on are Kehillah (community), tikkun olam (repairing the world), shomrei adama (protecting the earth), gemilut chasadim (bestowing kindness), and hachnasat orchim (welcoming guests). Through these five values we are able to build an inclusive community where campers learn the importance of taking care of the family they have created at camp, taking care of the physical space at camp and the environment in general, as well as welcome any new campers and staff with open arms to become members of our Camp community.