



Send in Your Photos!

Did you participate in the March in DC or in other Israel solidarity efforts in your town? Send in your photos! In addition, as part of our efforts to show solidarity with our Israeli families, staff and alumni, we are still collecting photos of Ramahniks holding up signs that say "Shabbat Shalom" in Hebrew or English. Please send your photos to Ann Lesley Rosen at arosen@ramahwisconsin.com so we can share them in upcoming emails and social media posts. Todah rabbah!



From Solitude to Solidarity
by Jacob Cytryn, Executive Director

One of my initial realizations in the early spring of 2020, in that foggy haze before masks when we were even afraid to go outside and still wiping down groceries with baby wipes, was how true one of the lessons of history is: living through history is, almost always and especially in times of existential dread, terrifying. In the fall of 2023 the Jewish people, *am yisrael*, scattered as we are across the world, are being reminded of that painful truth once again.

In that future date - dear God, may it come sooner than we imagine - when we have found a new equilibrium and this chapter in Jewish history is written for the first time, I believe the defining feeling of October 7th and these early months will be one of profound loneliness and vulnerability. Nothing in human existence is more filled with the most prominent negative emotions - fear and sadness - than being alone, and when we are most afraid and sad we instinctively burrow into ourselves in a vicious cycle: we feel alone so we feel despair so we withdraw from the world.

Cowering in a safe room; somehow living in captivity; being abandoned by teachers and professors, colleagues, friends. These are the prevailing images, from *otef azah*, the envelope of towns, *moshavim*, and *kibbutzim* that surround Gaza on the morning of October 7th, throughout most of Israel during the initial rocket barrage that day and in the ongoing terror since; from images on television, our computers, and cell phones of protests in schools, universities, and the public spaces of the world; and, in a scant few videos and mostly the depths of our imagination in imagining life for the 230+ hostages - including, we have recently become aware, a newborn baby born in the last few weeks - in Gaza.

And yet.

This week, with the March for Israel that brought nearly 300,000, including many Ramahniks, to Washington DC, we have seen the loudest rejoinder yet to this narrative of loneliness. In the face of solitude the Jewish people and our allies - a diverse group held together by a belief in supporting Israel, even when each person may define their support in different, sometimes conflicting terms - came together in solidarity. In doing so we have heard two messages, one more powerful than the next.



The first is the feeling, expressed to me by my wife and many others, that we are, in fact, not alone, that we need not cower in fear, that flying our flags and unabashedly expressing

who we are is the greatest antidote to the feelings of vulnerability we still carry with us. Tens of thousands in person and another quarter-million screens during the livestream - well over half a million unique people - heard official representatives of our American government, from Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, speaking on behalf of the White House, and bipartisan Congressional leaders, offer a full-throated tripartite call: for Israel's right to exist, the urgent need on moral and international legal grounds to return the hostages, and denouncing Antisemitism in all its forms.

The second message, even more powerful than the first, is the one we sent to our brothers and sisters in Israel. Echoing the impact of this March's older sister, the 1987 gathering in support of Soviet Jewry, and voiced in different ways by one of the major focal points of that earlier gathering, Natan Sharansky, the March for Israel this week was really not for American Jews and our allies but rather for the Israeli population to see that they, collectively and individually, are not alone. My friends and family in Israel - nearly all of whom Ramahniks - have repeatedly shared the power of Tuesday for them, and it is not lost on them that the masterful work of the rally organizers to bring Jews and Jewish allies across such diverse spectra of religious and political affiliation represents a resounding statement to the breadth of those who care about these issues.

In the wake of the March I have noticed more stories, even dating back to that horrific morning of October 7th, of people finding strength in community. The bravery of individuals who, gathered with others in bomb shelters or safe rooms, threw live grenades back out at the terrorists to protect others; driving rescue missions in pickup trucks, dodging bullets and worse on trip after trip. Stories of our Jewish students in high schools and colleges finding each other and the adults - Jewish communal workers, teachers and professors, staff and administrators - who are coming to their aid. Moments of togetherness at schools, synagogues, vigils, and rallies. The astonishing yet not surprising outpouring of support from all walks of Israeli society to support soldiers, internal refugees, the wounded, the hostages, and each other. We feel vulnerability and if we look hard enough, we can see the resilient sprouts of hope all around us.

As we enter this Shabbat, which will mark six full weeks since the seismic shifts in our world, we find ourselves reading yet another painful story of family dynamics. This one, in *parashat Tol'dot*, of Isaac, Rebecca, Esau, and Jacob, is different from the ones we've read each of the last five weeks. Isaac and Rebecca's family represents the first complete and intentional Jewish home; Jacob and Esau the first set of Jewish siblings who see the world, and the paths within it, in starkly different ways. And as we read that story this week, still in the shadow of our existential fear and yet bolstered by the events of the past week, let us remember the ways in which Jacob and Esau, like their father and uncle Isaac and Ishmael, found ways to stay in each other's lives despite those differences. The world is hard enough to traverse, and may we all remember and embody that walking it alone feels impossible. Solidarity over solitude.

Shabbat Shalom,

Jacob Cytryn
Executive Director





Winter Address:
 67 E. Madison St, Suite 1905
 Chicago, IL 60603
 312-606-9316

Camp Ramah in Wisconsin
 3390 Ramah Circle
 Conover, WI 54519
 715-479-4400

Ramah Day Camp
 98 W. Hintz Road
 Wheeling, IL 60089
 847-537-9700



We're contacting you because you have opted in to receive information from Camp Ramah.
 Your email address is listed as annlesley79@gmail.com.

To ensure you'll receive emails from us, please add registrar@ramahwisconsin.com to your address book.

[Having trouble viewing this email?](#)

To opt out of all of our communications, please [unsubscribe](#).

Camp Ramah 67 E Madison Street Suite 1905 Chicago, IL 60603 (312) 606-9316

