

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### RAMAH CAMPING MOVEMENT ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF ALUMNI SURVEY

Study confirms that Ramah alumni are much more highly engaged  
in Jewish life than other Jews of similar backgrounds

NEW YORK, NY (February 9, 2017) - The Ramah Camping Movement announces the results of “The Alumni of Ramah Camps: A Portrait of Jewish Engagement.” This survey of more than 5,000 camper alumni was conducted by Professor Steven M. Cohen of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Berman Jewish Policy Archive at Stanford University.

The study found that the alumni of Ramah camps are highly engaged in Jewish life, years and decades after having attended a Ramah camp in North America. The study compares Ramah camper alumni to children of inmarried Conservative parents who responded to the 2013 Pew study of Jewish Americans (“the Pew comparison group”).

Professor Cohen states that “...Camp Ramah has been critical to building a committed and connected core of Conservative and other Jews in North America and Israel...At a time when North American Jews are contending with challenges to their numbers and commitment of the engaged ‘Jewish middle,’ Ramah is critical to sustaining those numbers and fortifying that commitment.”

Among other key findings, Ramah alumni:

- **Place a great emphasis on their Jewish identity.** Just over 8 in 10 Ramah alumni say that being Jewish is very important in their lives, compared to just over 5 in 10 of the Pew comparison group.
- **Are very connected to Israel.** Ramah alumni are twice as likely as the Pew comparison group to say that they are “very attached” to Israel. Overall, 94% of Ramah alumni express a positive attachment to Israel. Other indicators of strong attachment to Israel are that 96% of Ramah alumni have visited Israel, 76% have close friends or immediate family living in Israel, and 18% have seriously considered living in Israel.
- **Are strongly affiliated with synagogue communities.** Whereas 80% of Ramah alumni belong to a synagogue, minyan, or havurah, only 49% of Jews in the Pew comparison group are affiliated with a congregation. Half of Ramah alumni have served as board members or officers of a congregation or Jewish organization.
- **Have high rates of ritual observance.** Almost 7-in-10 Ramah alumni use separate dishes for meat and dairy, compared to fewer than 2-in-10 of the Pew comparison group. They are more than three times as likely to light Shabbat candles and to attend religious services once a week or more often.
- **Are very likely to affiliate with Conservative Judaism.** Of those belonging to a congregation, approximately 70% of Ramah alumni belong to a Conservative, Masorti, or Traditional Egalitarian congregation.
- **Have extremely low rates of intermarriage.** Of those married, only 7% are intermarried. This rate is far lower than the 35% for the Pew comparison group. It is much closer to the 2% rate of intermarriage for Orthodox Jews in North America.

Also noteworthy is that approximately 75% of the camper alumni in the survey returned to camp to serve as staff. Serving as a Ramah staff member is key to long-term differences in Jewish engagement. Among campers who went on to work as staff, Jewish engagement levels today are noticeably higher than among the campers who never became staff members.

Rabbi Mitchell Cohen, Director of the National Ramah Commission, said, “The study confirms previous research that demonstrates a close link between the Ramah experience and the lifelong passion for Jewish living and learning that we see in our campers and staff members. This is manifested in many ways, including much stronger positive feelings toward Israel than found in the general North American Jewish population.”

The survey was fielded May 30 – July 28, 2016. Survey invitations were sent to 45,000 alumni and others associated with Ramah (parents, donors, etc.). The results reported here are for the 5,260 respondents who were Ramah campers. The total number of respondents was 9,553, suggesting an overall response rate of 21%.

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#### **About the Ramah Camping Movement**

Ramah ([www.campramah.org](http://www.campramah.org)) is the camping arm of Conservative Judaism. Together, our programs provide Ramah experiences for more than 11,000 children, teens, and young adults annually. The National Ramah Commission of The Jewish Theological Seminary provides oversight, educational planning, and coordination on behalf of the network of Ramah camps throughout North America and Ramah Programs in Israel.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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