



2025 IMPACT REPORT



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

ה' עז לעמו יתן,
“May God grant strength to God’s people;
may God bless God’s people with peace.”
ה' יברך את-עמו בשלום
(תהילים 29:11)

קיץ תשפ"ה / Kayitz 2025



To our dear Camp Yavneh
mishpacha,

As I reflect on Kayitz 2025, the verse above from *Tehillim* really resonates. At camp, singing these words together after every meal as part of the *Birkat Hamazon* reminds us of God’s promise to bring peace and strength to *Am Yisrael*. This *pasuk* takes on expanded meaning when paired with this past summer’s educational theme, “בקש שלום ורדפוהו” / **Seek Shalom and Pursue It**,” which emphasizes that the responsibility for peacebuilding lies in our hands.

At Camp Yavneh, we see this principle in action every day: in the care *chanichim* bring to their relationships with one another; in the guidance and encouragement our *tzevet* provides as campers navigate life away from their homes and families; and in the joy our campers and staff bring to everyday life at camp.

While our campers and staff members love camp and one another (and they REALLY love camp and one another!), peace does not happen passively. It is something our campers and staff actively pursue, through kindness, shared responsibility, and intentional connections. **This active pursuit of Shalom, present in every interaction and every choice at camp, is made possible because of your support**, enabling us to create a *kehillah kedosha*, a holy space where our campers and staff find strength, safety, and belonging.

After nearly two years of war in Israel and the painful rise of antisemitism across our country and the world, Yavneh campers and staff deeply need this space. Our vibrant community, which has educated and nurtured children and young adults since 1944, once again

became a sanctuary of *Oz and Shalom*. **More than 500 campers from over 300 families** filled our *machane* with learning, laughter, and growth, guided by **220 dedicated staff members**, nearly half of whom grew up at Yavneh themselves. Our campers and staff represented **10 countries and 20 U.S. states**, including 37 campers and 49 staff from Israel, whose presence brought important perspective and fostered a deep bond between our American campers and staff and their Israeli counterparts, realizing Yavneh’s core value of *Klal Yisrael and Ahavat Yisrael*.

This past summer tested our collective resilience and adaptability. When war broke out between Israel and Iran, we were forced to cancel *Na’aleh* and quickly created a meaningful alternative program for those teens. Later, we were thankfully able to send them to Israel for an abridged yet transformative three-week trip.

Bringing our Israeli campers and staff to New Hampshire also required persistence, care, and flexibility. Yet through it all, our *kehillah*, powered by your commitment to Yavneh, remained steadfast. The result was a summer filled with friendship, fun, *masoret*, and renewal, proving that *Shalom* can truly be achieved when we are together.

Access to a safe Jewish space is more important now, than ever before. We are grateful that your generosity enabled us to offer tuition assistance to **33% of our families**. Our ability to ensure that camp remains a place where every child who wishes to experience the Yavneh magic can have their place, is a core tenet in our promise to our community.

This summer, our pursuit of peace took many forms: in moments of quiet reflection in morning minyan; in the passionate singing at *Zimriyah*; in acts of thoughtfulness between bunk buddies; and in our “homegrown” *matzlim* teaching another generation the life-saving skill of swimming. Your partnership and investment gave our *chanichim* and *tzevet* the space to grow, to heal, and to leave the summer carrying the joy of Jewish life and community home with them.

On and on, *dor l’dor*...

With great appreciation, בברכה ורוב תודות,
Jane-Rachel (JR) Schonbrun

ראש מחנה Rosh Machane

BOARD CHAIR MESSAGE

Dear Yavneh Kehillah,



As we conclude another remarkable year and reflect on the close of our fiscal year, I’m honored to share this 2025 Impact Report with all of you, our cherished community of families, alumni, staff, and supporters. Now in our 81st year,

Camp Yavneh continues to be a powerful force in shaping Jewish identity, building lifelong friendships, and passing down our cherished *masoret m’dor l’dor*.

This summer was especially meaningful for my family. I had the joy of spending *Zimriyah* and *Shabbat* at camp with my husband, Shimon. From the energy in the *chadar ochel*, to the soulful *tefillot*, to the ruach-filled *oneg* and *Havdalah*, we were reminded, again, that Yavneh is more than a camp. It is a living expression of *Klal Yisrael*, vibrant and alive. Watching our daughter Avital thrive in *Arayot* and our son Ari grow in *Maalot* was a beautiful reminder of the impact this place has on every generation.

In this report, we’re proud to highlight stories from alumni across eight decades who continue to carry Yavneh with them. We celebrate Estelle Gomolka, whose 50 summers at camp, and 40 as Rosh Agam, are nothing short of extraordinary. We also look back at our second annual Alumni Retreat, where 140 alumni returned home to Northwood to reconnect, sing, and reflect on the legacy we’re all a part of. To our parents, staff, and donors: thank you. Your support ensures Yavneh remains a sacred, vital, and joyful space for generations to come.

With deep appreciation,

Ruby Gelman
Chair, Board of Directors
Camp Yavneh



Women’s Rosh Chodesh Minyan at the Agam during 1st session of Kayitz 2025



Honoring campers and staff who have been at Yavneh for 10 summers

THE AGAM: ESTELLE'S

HOME AWAY FROM HOME



Estelle training lifeguards, June 2025



Estelle and lifeguards, Kayitz 2024



Estelle with her son, Jonathan, and husband, Guy, July 2025



Joe Gann (K'21), Ilan Amkraut (K'19), Leah Gann (K'18), Estelle Gomolka, Sharon Vered (K'20), Josh Walensky (K'20), Micah Gann (K'26), and Itamar Assulin (K'24) at the Estellebration, August 2025

First, there's Estelle Gomolka's (K'79) primary family: her husband Guy, her daughter Sarah, and her son Jonathan. Then there's what she calls her Yavneh *mishpacha*: the thousands of campers, families, and staff members whose lives she has touched and vice versa—over the past 50 years.

"I am connected to all these amazing people, I get chills just thinking about it," says Estelle, whose half century at Yavneh was marked in August with an "Estellebration" attended by many of the fans she has accumulated over the years. "My Yavneh *mishpacha* has gotten me through the different stages of my life: growing up, getting married, having children, losing my parents, losing my brothers. Yavneh has embraced me through good and bad. Through all the generations, *l'dor v'dor*, I've always felt supported."

Estelle is so closely connected with the *agam*—her dominion for 43 years—that some people forget she started out as a camper. Bruce Micley, a unit head when she was in *Maalot*, remembers young Estelle vividly. "She loved camp from the get-go," says Bruce. "I have memories of her always beaming and just communicating the feeling that this was her home."

Estelle had always been an excellent swimmer, but it was swim instructor David Frim who sparked her love for the sport, she says. "That summer we must have done the most laps we had ever done and he encouraged me to keep it up," says Estelle. "The following summer I took advanced lifesaving. Since then, I have never stopped being a lifeguard, lifeguard instructor, and a swim instructor and my love for all has persisted through the years."



Arnee (K'67) and Walt Winshall at the Estellebration, August 2025



Estelle and Stella Gordon (K'22) at Kayitz 2024 Banquet



Josh Haskin (K'97), Marcy Leiman (K'92), Debbie Hager (K'92), Sara Haskin (K'92), Estelle Gomolka (K'79), and Ed Shems (K'85) at the Estellebration, August 2025



Estelle and Davida Amkraut, August 2018

Estelle has built the waterfront program into a standout feature of camp. Lucas Pond may be small, but it boasts swimming classes, lifeguard instruction, excellent fishing, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and sailing. As Waterfront Director, Estelle teaches lifeguarding, CPR, and first aid, supervises the staff, and oversees recertifications. Estelle estimates that she has certified over 780 lifeguards during her career at Yavneh.

Estelle's lasting gift to camp is the swim program she has built over the decades by training older campers and counselors to take on roles as lifeguards, swim aids, and water safety instructors. Thanks to Estelle, Yavneh is unique among New England camps: its waterfront staff is completely "homegrown."

She is especially proud of the strong community she has built among the *Agam* staff. "She really made the *agam* staff into a family. We knew that we could ask her for anything we needed," says Jossie Forman, who started working with Estelle

in 2009 as a lifeguard and later became *Sgam Agam* (assistant waterfront director). "She's an incredibly warm person. Every Shabbat she would host us for *kiddush* after services."

Estelle models leadership in ways that have reverberated through the lives of many of her staffers. "She was a great manager and leader. She knew how to build a team and keep people accountable," says Jeff Finkelstein, CEO of Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, who worked on the *agam* in the early 1990s. "She created a friendly culture and she was also a good shoulder to cry on—a very empathic person. I still reflect on her example to this day."

After more than four decades, Estelle is thinking about retiring from the waterfront, but not leaving camp behind. "I would love to teach a swim class, swim across the lake, and then play a game of volleyball with a group of kids," she says. "I'd like to see what else goes on in camp. I haven't done that in 25 years."

1940s
1950s

A Reluctant Camper Embraces All Things Yavneh



Jack Kinstlinger, Bernard Och, David Clayman, and Michael Och all met at Yavneh and stayed friends throughout their lifetime.



Jack with his wife, Marilyn, and two of their grandchildren, Sam and Gabe



Archery, Kayitz 1961

The year was 1945 and 14-year-old Jack Kinstlinger (K'46) was at New York's Grand Central Station, about to embark on his first-ever summer at Camp Yavneh. He spotted a group of teenagers with yarmulkes, also Yavneh-bound.

Jack's parents were Zionists; a photo of Theodor Herzl graced a wall in their New York City apartment. And they were not observant. Jack was apprehensive about going to a camp where people wore yarmulkes, so his father told him to try it for two weeks. If he didn't like it, he could come home. "I ended up going for five years and my younger brother Robert—for 10 years," says Jack, 94, a retired civil engineer. "I loved every minute of it. My parents were German and they were very Germanic, very strict. At Yavneh, I found a warm, accepting, loving environment that I had never had before."

And much to Jack's surprise, he embraced all things Jewish that summer: *Shabbat* services under the trees, morning *davening*, Hebrew classes and conversations, and singing *shirim*. "It was my first deep, profound experience with Judaism," says Jack. "Judaism is terribly important to me, and the foundation was formed at Yavneh."

At camp, Jack also found a group of pals who shared his sense of mischief. There was the time they smuggled firecrackers into camp, setting them off on the fourth of July and the night they carried a bunkmate—famous for being a very sound sleeper—in his bed down to the *agam*. They transported the still-snoozing camper to a rowboat and then to a floating dock. "The next morning, he woke up in his bed—and there he was in the middle of the lake on the raft," recalls Jack.

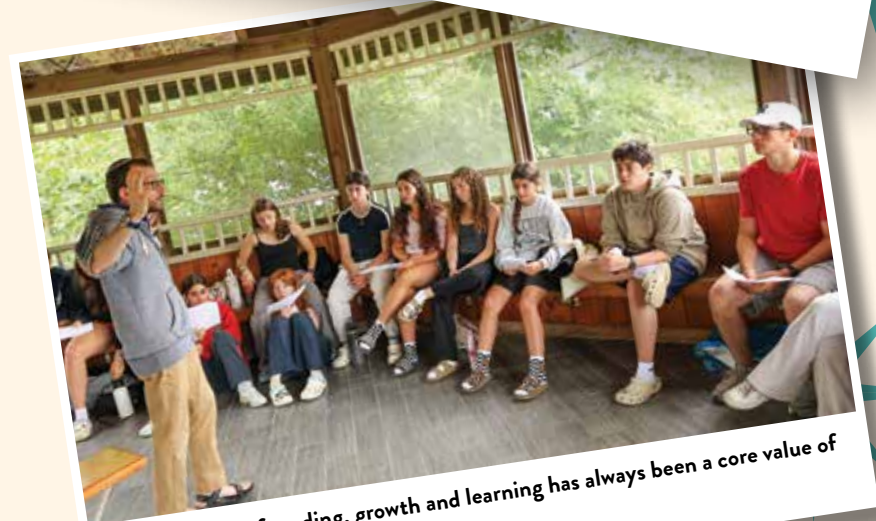
Thanks to Yavneh, he also met the love of his life, his wife of 53 years, Marilyn. Although she didn't go to Yavneh, he met her through the mother of one of his best friends from camp, David Clayman. The Kinstlingers

raised a family, went to shul every *Shabbat*, and kept a kosher home. Sadly, Marilyn died in 2020. "She was spectacular in so many ways," says Jack.

Jack's daughter and her children ended up attending Yavneh as did Robert's children and grandchildren. Over the years, Jack has stayed in touch with a half dozen of his Yavneh friends—the closest he ever made. "My heart is still at camp," says Jack. "I wouldn't be the person I am today if it weren't for Yavneh."



The fun of July 4 remains a highlight every summer.



Since Yavneh's founding, growth and learning has always been a core value of the camp.

1960s
1970s

Learning to Embrace Differences

When Bruce Micley (K'71), first arrived at Camp Yavneh in the mid-1960s, he was continuing a family tradition. His father served as Yavneh's educational director and his mother had been a *Kerem* leader when the camp opened in 1944. Over the decades, the roster of Micley alumni would grow to include Bruce's wife Lisa, his siblings, brother-in-law, three sons, daughter-in-law, and two nieces.

Bruce came to camp with a strong Jewish educational foundation—thanks to his family and the Jewish day schools he attended. Yavneh offered something different: a summer community where Jewish youth from every background came together. “That mix, known as *Klal Yisrael*, shaped my understanding of Jewish unity,” says Bruce.

He dove into camp life wholeheartedly. Over the years, he served as counselor, *Rosh Ayda*, *Rosh Tefillah*, *Rosh Agam*, and eventually, a devoted board member. The impact of those roles was lasting. Former campers often reminisce with him about their personal Yavneh stories and moments that sparked their lifelong Jewish connection in their homes and communities.

Hebrew wasn't just encouraged at Yavneh in those years—it was a priority. Classes were mandatory, menus and daily announcements appeared only in Hebrew, and sports activities and swimming instruction were conducted in Hebrew. The most Hebrew-speaking cabins even scored coveted trips to an ice cream parlor. “The emphasis on Hebrew tied into the Hebraist movement of the '50s and '60s,” Bruce explains. “The movement saw Hebrew as central to Jewish identity. Reviving the language could transform the Jewish people and strengthen the State of Israel.”

Yavneh's deep connection with Hebrew College, its founding institution, reinforced the mission of Hebrew fluency. Students from Prozdor, the college's supplementary high school, could reduce their academic load during the year by getting credit for the Judaic studies offered at camp.

For Bruce, Yavneh was never simply a summer escape. “It was a place where friendships deepened around engaging camp activities, where Jewish identity was lived every day, and where leadership was nurtured not just in classrooms but in the everyday rhythms of camp life,” he says. Those summers didn't just shape his memories—they shaped his values, his leadership, and his enduring commitment to the Jewish community.



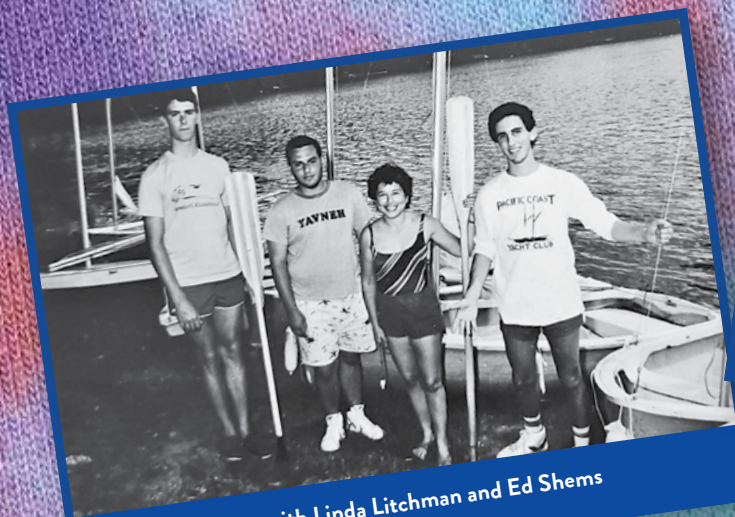
Bruce's parents, Dena Micley (bottom row—3rd from right), Kerem Staff 1944 and longtime Yavneh teacher, wife of Yavneh Director of Education, Jacques K Miklitzanski z"l (2nd from right)



From left to right: David Micley (K'04) with family, Lisa and Bruce Micley, Beverly Isaacman, Joshua and family, Jeremy Micley (K'01) and family

1970s
1980s

From Camper to Community Leader: A Journey Begun at Yavneh



Jeff on the Agam with Linda Litchman and Ed Shems



Jeff and Jenn at the camp banquet in 1990



Shelet presentations at Maccabiah, Kayitz 2025



Jeff and Estelle Gomolka in 2009

More than two decades ago, when he was interviewed for the CEO job at Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, Jeff Finkelstein (K'85) was asked about his vision for the organization. He talked about Camp Yavneh, a place where Jews of every tradition found community together and where campers learned to live a little more Jewishly every day. He got the job.

Yavneh shaped Jeff and his future in many ways, including one which began with an auspicious encounter in the front office with an 18-year-old counselor named Jennifer. He was 20 and working as a unit head. They hit it off, began dating, and celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary this June. "That summer was the last time I had a more senior position than Jenn," quips Jeff. "Now I report to her." Camp Yavneh was a Finkelstein family tradition: his parents worked there, and his siblings, aunt, cousins, and children were campers.

From Rabbi Mel David, a spiritual leader in the '70s and '80s, Jeff learned a brand of Judaism at Yavneh suffused with joy and soulful expression. "I remember him standing on a table in the dining hall—the chadar ochel—one Friday night," says Jeff. "He was getting the whole camp singing. It was that kind of spirit that turned me on Jewishly, for sure."

Jeff was a shy, well-behaved camper, but would transform into one of the masterminds behind a prank people still talk about. Campers were on their way back from a day trip to Canobie Lake Park. Jeff and another counselor had pre-arranged for a police officer to stop the bus under the pretense that a camper (Amichai Zipporot) had stolen something from the amusement park. Everyone was ordered off the bus, at which point Jeff and the

other counselor tossed into the air pieces of paper containing each camper's name and team, shouting "Maccabiah!" Maccabiah had begun!

Maccabiah "breakouts", as they're called, are still known for their creativity. One summer, a pair of counselors who were dating faked a proposal, complete with fireworks, in front of the entire camp. The young woman's refusal led to a breakout. Another year, amid growing concern about West Nile virus, workers in hazmat suits arrived at camp, supposedly to spray the camp to eliminate mosquitos. Before the extermination began, the games were kicked off.

Nowadays, Jeff's ruse would surely be seen as crossing the line. "There would be lawsuits against the camp if we did such a thing now," he says.

"Yavneh is where I learned more of the traditions, the Hebrew language, the love of Israel, all of those things and it brought them all to a whole new level," says Jeff, who spent more than a decade of summers as a camper and later a staff member. "I don't think I'd be sitting in this seat if I didn't have the Camp Yavneh experience."



Jeff and Jenn Finkelstein at a recent event



Maccabiah meirutz competition, Kayitz 2025

DEBBIE SUSSMAN'S UNEXPECTED CAREER



Debbie at the Torah dedication in 2016

Hebrew College was facing severe financial difficulties in 1990 and Yavneh, then a program of the college, was on the verge of closing. Debbie Sussman (K'68) was a successful physical therapist and mother of three young children, who had loved Yavneh as a camper. Despite the camp's uncertain future, she was encouraged by an old camp friend to apply for the suddenly open position of Director.

There were so many reasons to throw her hat in: she loved Judaism, Israel, the concept of *K'lal Yisrael*, and the outdoors. And she had strong family ties to the camp. What Debbie lacked in financial knowledge, her husband Joel, who has an MBA, could fill in. Rabbi Samuel Schafner (z"l), then president of Hebrew College, called to tell her she had gotten the job. "He told me I wasn't the right person for the position, but no one else had applied, so I was hired," says Debbie. "He was absolutely right about my qualifications, but it worked out beyond both of our expectations."

Debbie went on to be the longest-serving director in Yavneh's history—26 years, from 1991-2016. She turned the camp's finances from red to black. The camper population grew from fewer than 200 to over 500. Her tenure was also marked by extensive building and renovation and the creation of programs including *Na'aleh* (the popular Israel summer trip), Family Camp, a robust retreat business, and *Yedidut* for campers with certain special needs. One of her greatest achievements was recruiting and developing a great senior staff—many of whom stayed with the camp for decades.

In the early 2000s, Debbie oversaw the camp's transformational infrastructure project, affectionately called "The Big Dig" after Boston's decades-long highway tunnel project. The septic fields were replaced and many upgrades made, including new fields and a basketball court,

restructured roads, the Tzipori Amphitheater, and the new *Sukkat Bogrim* (alumni gazebo), a popular meeting place. "The best part were the trees," she says. "We planted lots of beautiful small trees, which are now mature, providing lots of shade, recreational area, and overall beautification of the camp."

And then there was Joel, who was as musical as Debbie was visionary. While she transformed the camp's physical plant, he filled it with music. He wrote the camp song, arranged *Relish* and *Havdallah*, and played in the band every week for 26 years. He and his band, *Safam*, donated state-of-the-art music equipment. He also created a summer hardcover siddur for Camp Yavneh that is still used today.

Since retiring from Yavneh, Debbie has put much of her energy into volunteering and family. She works at her local food pantry, serves on a committee that reviews foster children's placements, and runs a program through her synagogue that brings adults with special needs together for Jewish-themed fun. Best of all, she regularly babysits her eight local grandchildren, two of whom are Yavneh campers.

If you ask Debbie what makes Yavneh so special, and why so many lifelong friendships have begun in the woods of southeastern New Hampshire, she'll recall her first day of Yavneh as a 14-year-old camper from Newton, Massachusetts.

"I had gone to another Jewish overnight camp and I didn't have a particularly good time there," she says, "so I was starting Yavneh late. I walked into my bunk. I literally didn't know a soul. The girls all gathered around me and said, 'What's your name? Where are you from? We want to give you a tour of camp.' And they walked me around camp. I'll never forget it, because I felt at home, literally from day one. Yavneh is a safe place, a place people feel loved."



Debbie and Joel Sussman with their children and grandchildren

2000s Shaped by Yavneh



Jossie Forman and Grace Milstein as campers in Kerem 2010



Jossie Forman with her family at the 2025 Shabbat Bogrim

Grace Milstein (K'10) remembers arriving at Yavneh in 2002 as a seven-year-old, primed to have a blast. Then came a surprise. "The first night everyone meets their bunk, and the second night, the educational theme for the summer is introduced," says Grace, a Deloitte consultant and mother of two. She remembers thinking to herself: "What are they talking about? I'm not here to learn. I came to camp to have fun."

She soon learned that she was there to do both—and do both she did. "Yavneh is not just about having fun and playing sports and dancing and whatever, but it's also about learning and giving back to the community," says Grace. "It's also about instilling a Jewish identity through many different activities."

Every time she looks at the group chat with her Yavneh friends, she's reminded not only of her camp days, but also of the diversity of Jewish identities Yavneh attracts. "These are the friends I've known the longest. They represent the full spectrum of Jewish observance—from Reform Jews to those who share my Orthodox practices, and everything in between," says Grace. While her life now revolves largely around the Orthodox community in her Philadelphia suburb, she'd like to eventually broaden her young children's horizons. "I don't want my kids growing up thinking this is the only way to do Judaism. I just don't have those avenues to expose them to now."

At work, Grace has lots of opportunities to connect with Jews of all backgrounds. She and a colleague run Deloitte's Jewish Employee Resource Group. ERGs are employee-led networks of people with shared identities that foster a diverse and inclusive workplace and provide opportunities to network, access professional development, and feel a sense of belonging.



Members of K'10 at the 2025 Shabbat Bogrim

Jocelyn "Jossie" Forman (K'10), a contemporary of Grace's and a friend, comes from a long line of Yavneh campers. Her brother Sam attended as did her mother and three uncles. Between being a camper and a staff member, she spent 13 summers of her life at Yavneh, three of them as a counselor.

For Jossie, a math teacher at a New York City public school, one of the main things that distinguishes Yavneh from her friends' camps is that a large percentage of counselors were once campers. "At Yavneh it always felt like 80-90% of the counselors had been coming to Yavneh for a really long time," she said. "Because of that, there's a really strong sense of tradition. There's an energy that people bring when they have experienced something themselves and then share it with others."

KAYITZ 2025



Another epic day on the Aquakef at the Agam!



Cassie DelVecchio, Millie Tornow, and Betty Lewin (Maalot '25) celebrating Yom Yisrael



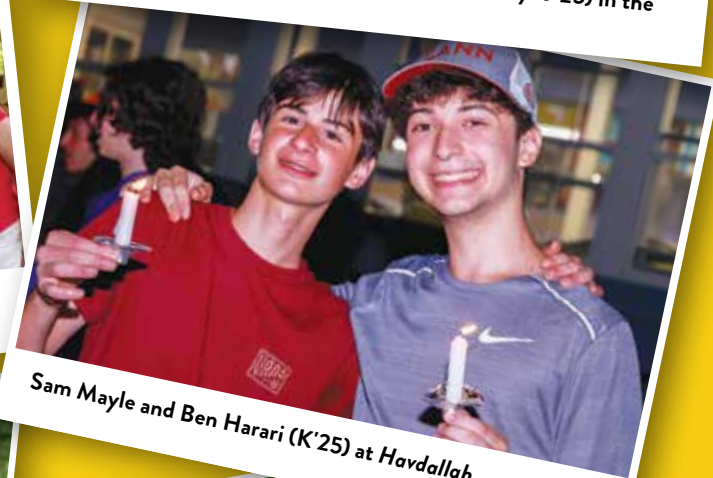
Ezra Schwartz z"l Malchei Zimriyah



Millie Licht (Maalot '25) and Avital Shkury (Arayot '25) in the Frozen production



Gurim Banot ready to celebrate the 4th of July



Sam Mayle and Ben Harari (K'25) at Havdallah



Leviim chanichim playing soccer



Ari (K'24) and Rachel (Leviim '25) Eisenstadt

Erev Shabbat at Yavneh

Deb Shafran, Director of Staff Experience

As a staff member, serving the square pizza for *nishnush* on Friday afternoon marks a turning point in the week at Yavneh. It's a small but beloved tradition—everyone crowding around to grab a slice before returning to their bunks to prepare for Shabbat. There's something almost symbolic in that transition—from the noise and laughter of *nishnush* to the quiet anticipation of Shabbat. Campers begin showering, changing into nicer clothes, and setting their bunks in order. The energy softens, and a sense of calm begins to spread across camp.

For staff, this time is its own kind of preparation. We finish printing materials, close the office doors, and take a breath—turning inward to also welcome Shabbat with our *kehillah*. Soon, *chanichim* and *madrachim* emerge from their bunks and

make their way to the flagpole, dressed in Shabbat clothing, as the Kerem girls' sing: "*Shabbos Kodesh*." In that moment, camp itself seems to exhale. Together, we make a collective choice to slow down, to shift from doing to being, and to welcome Shabbat as one.

Then, just as quickly, the stillness gives way to celebration. The drums, the keyboard, the voices—all join in joyful harmony. The familiar playlist fills the air, and the camp transforms into a sea of singing and dancing. Circles of campers and counselors sway and jump together—arms around one another with smiles wide. The sound is full of joy, gratitude, and connection.

Even though camp ended two months ago, those melodies still echo within me. They are a reminder that the spirit of Shabbat—the balance between stillness and joy, between reflection and community—is something we can carry with us wherever we go.



Jeremy Polinsky, Nadav Engelhart, Zev Gross, and Ethan Ravid (K'25)



Campers from Leviim 2025



Kerem 2025



Jesse, Noah (K'22), and Sally (Kfirim '25) Ives-Kurtzer



Kayitz 2025 Mishlachta (Israeli Staff members)

When the *mishlachta* arrived: The unplanned magic of Jewish peoplehood By Dr. Benji Davis

At Camp Yavneh, we think deeply about how to inculcate Jewish peoplehood and what it means to be part of *Klal Yisrael*. We plan and then we plan some more. We craft programs and strategize about moments that will connect our campers to their Jewish identity, to Israel and to Jews worldwide.

But sometimes, the most profound expressions of Jewish peoplehood happen when we're not planning at all.

At the beginning of Kayitz 2025, we weren't sure our *mishlachta*, the camp's annual contingent of young Israeli emissaries, would make it to camp. But when word came that they were finally on their way, we told our Kerem Counselors: "Let's welcome our *mishlachta* to Yavneh. Make some signs."

What happened next, we could never have planned.

The *mishlachta* arrived in the middle of dinner. Our *cheder ochel* (dining hall) buzzed with hundreds of campers eating and talking. But as the *shlichim* (emissaries) approached the doors of the dining hall, tired from their journey yet radiating joy, something electric happened. The entire dining hall transformed into a spontaneous celebration that could never have been scripted.

It began with singing. Then dancing. Within moments, hundreds of campers were embracing twenty-eight complete strangers as if they were long-lost *Mishpacha*. These Israeli young adults found themselves swept up in a whirlwind of welcome that transcended any boundary between strangers. We all knew each other even as no one knew anyone's name yet.

Our *mishlachta* entered to the singing of "Od Yoter Tov" ("Even Better") by Uri Davidi. As we watched Americans and Israelis dancing with arms linked, voices raised in this contemporary anthem, I could not help but wonder: How could it get any better than this?

In that unplanned moment, every camper experienced what it means to be part of something bigger than themselves—part of *Klal Yisrael*. To belong to a people whose bonds transcend borders, time, culture and language. The exhaustion of travel melted away. The uncertainties of war felt distant. What remained was the powerful truth that we are one people—and that when we come together, something extraordinary happens.

Our campers didn't need to be taught about Jewish peoplehood that night. They lived it. They felt it as they embraced young Israelis who had crossed a physical and metaphorical ocean to be with them.

The beauty lay not just in its spontaneity, but in its authenticity. These weren't forced interactions or staged programming. This was organic Jewish joy erupting from the recognition that, despite being strangers, we belonged to each other. The *mishlachta* members, weary from their odyssey through wartime complications, suddenly found themselves home for the summer—not because they had reached their destination, but because they had found their people.

What struck me most was watching our *Kerem Chanichim* instinctively understand their role. Without instruction beyond "Let's welcome them," they created an atmosphere of celebration that spoke to something deeper than hospitality. They were claiming these young Israelis as family, declaring through song and dance that Jewish peoplehood isn't an abstract concept but a lived reality.

This is why Jewish camping matters. Not just for planned programs like *Zimriya*, *Maccabiah* and *Yom Yisrael*—all highlights at Camp Yavneh—but for spontaneous bursts of Jewish joy that will be etched into the collective Jewish memory of all our *chanichim* (campers).

As our exhausted but exhilarated *mishlachta* finally settled into their bunks, I reflected on what we had witnessed—a masterclass in Jewish peoplehood from American Jewish teens and Israeli young adults. It was unscripted, authentic and more powerful than anything we could have designed.

That's the magic we're privileged to witness at Camp Yavneh. That's the power of Jewish peoplehood in action.



Welcoming the Mishlachta to camp

Dr. Benji Davis is a scholar of Israel education and Camp Yavneh's Head of Israel education, a position funded by the Teaching Israel at Camp Initiative of the Foundation for Jewish Camp.



**Watch how the
Mishlachta were
welcomed into Camp**
SCAN THIS CODE FOR
THE VIDEO

ALUMNI WEEKEND

SHABBAT BOGRIM

Reflections by Toby Kuperwaser (K'04)

There's something about turning onto the familiar Lucas Pond Road that brings it all rushing back. This summer, over 140 alumni from Kerem 2000 through Kerem 2010 returned to Yavneh for the annual *Shabbat Bogrim*, a weekend to reconnect with old friends, relive favorite memories, and share camp with the people in our lives today.

From the moment we arrived on *Erev Shabbat*, it was clear how special the weekend would be. Alumni and their children jumped into camp life, crafting in *Omanut*, running around the sports fields, and cooling off at the *agam*. As *Relish* began (led by Jake Smith and Jonathan Gomolka (K'13)), with percussion by Aaron Lyon (K'04)), the *ruach* felt just like it used to: joyful, familiar, and full of energy. *Kabbalat Shabbat*, led by Jossie Forman (K'10), brought that feeling home, as we sang together under the evening sky.

Ariele Sherman (K'02) captured the highlights of the weekend well: *"Being in one of my favorite places with family, friends I still stay in touch with, and friends I haven't seen since my camp years. All while celebrating Shabbat the camp way!"*

Shabbat day brought the full Yavneh experience, starting with classic Yavneh *tefilot*, including our beloved, musical *Mussaf*, followed by a thoughtful *shiur* with R' Dov Lerea, whose presence at *Shabbat Bogrim* was so meaningful to those of us who attended camp during his tenure. *"Having Rabbi Dov there really made the weekend for me,"* Jossie shared.

The day continued with "Shabbos Ball", time to relax by the *agam*, and plenty of opportunities to catch up with

old friends and meet new ones. After Shabbat, we gathered for *Havdallah* and *rikudei am*, led by Sharona Kahn (K'04) and Gaby Zur (K'06), and of course, joined in for a stirring round of "On and On." The evening wrapped up with a lively *peulat erev* (led by Eli Aroesty (K2K) and Jake Eisenhard (K'07)), s'mores around the bonfire, and easy conversation late into the night.

Looking back, one theme came up again and again: connection. *"Reconnecting with old friends—like no time had passed,"* Sharona shared. Mickie Gusman (K'10) reflected on how much she loved *"showing my spouse the camp, disconnecting from technology, and being with community."*

For me personally, it was meaningful to experience *Shabbat Bogrim* with my family. As I held my two-month-old daughter, Ellie, at *Relish*, I told her about the *agam* and *Kabbalat Shabbat* and all the good things she's going to enjoy at camp. As she and I swayed during *Havdallah* the following evening, I imagined the day she'd come to know this place not just through my stories, but through her own. After this weekend, I think it's safe to say Ellie's ready to apply early decision.

Shabbat Bogrim wasn't just a return, it was a reminder of who we were and are. Of the friendships that still hold strong. Of the spirit that makes Yavneh more than just a summer camp.

We're already looking forward to next year. *Shabbat Bogrim* 2026 will take place August 14–16. We hope to see you there, to keep building on the memories, the friendships, and the feeling of being back at camp.

Save the Date for *Shabbat Bogrim* 2026! August 14-16, 2026



Nick Morelli, Camille Brenner, Helen Day, Jake Gusman, Jess Levenson, Jossie Forman, Mitchell Gronowitz, Lenni Swartz-Brownstein, Mickie Gusman, Esti Lodge, and Chera Garlick (K'10 and partners)



K'07 alumni at the 2025 *Shabbat Bogrim*



Eve Miller, Mindi Harris, and Sharon Kahn (all K'04 alumni)



Ariele (K'02) & Joey Sherman with their children



Ari Rosenblum (K'03) and Arriel Eder with their children



Laurel Marcus (K'04), Toby Kuperwaser (K'04), and Zvi Zobin (Director of Advancement & Engagement)

KAYITZ 2025 BY



503
INDIVIDUAL CAMPERS

108
NEW CAMPERS

220
STAFF

310
FAMILIES

37
CAMPERS &
49 STAFF
FROM ISRAEL

20
CAMPERS AND STAFF FROM
STATES AND 10
COUNTRIES





700
CHALLAHS BAKED

49,000
TOMATOES CRUSHED FOR
FRESH SAUCE

THE NUMBERS

21
ZIM SONGS
CREATED AND
DANCED

17
NEW
LIFEGUARDS
CERTIFIED

49
KEREM '25
CAMPERS



27,000
NISHNUSH SNACKS SERVED

33%
RECEIVED FINANCIAL AID
thanks to your generous donations



751
GENEROUS
GIFTS

481
UNIQUE
DONORS

66
\$1,000+
DONORS



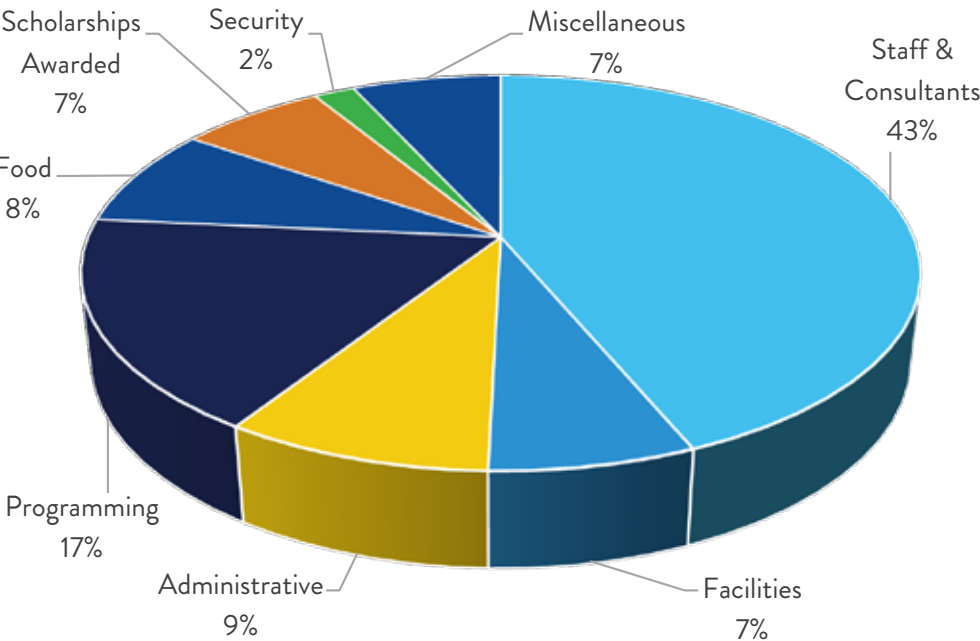
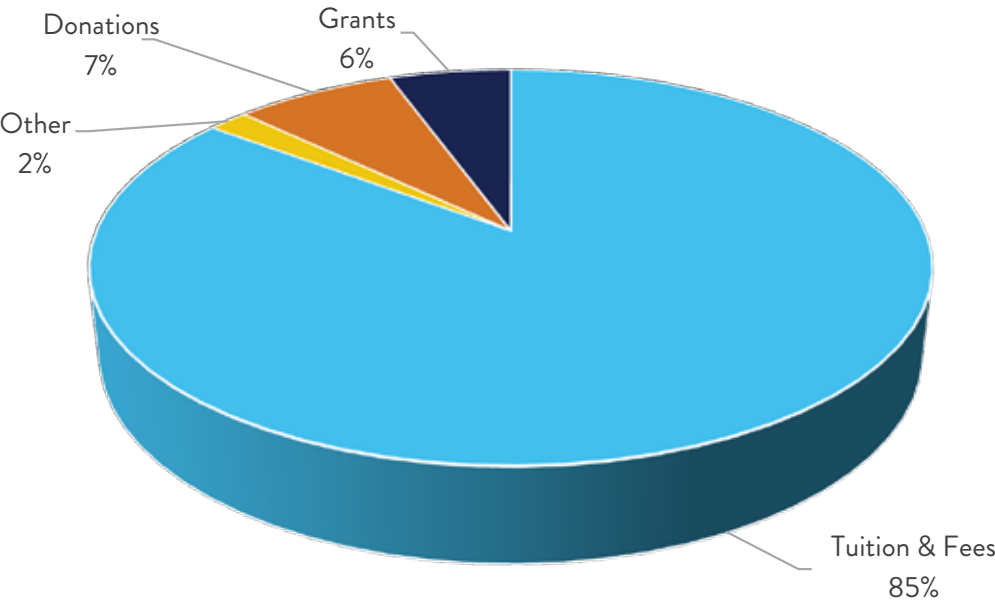
FINANCIAL REPORT

(October 1, 2024 — September 30, 2025)

2025 BOARD / STAFF / VOLUNTEERS

REVENUE

Tuition & Fees:	\$4,719,463
Other:	\$ 101,706
Donations:	\$ 408,666
Grants:	\$ 308,198
Total:	\$5,538,033



EXPENSES

Staff & Consultants:	\$2,429,705
Facilities:	\$ 374,788
Administrative:	\$ 486,390
Programming:	\$ 965,535
Food:	\$ 449,849
Scholarships Awarded:	\$ 373,276
Security:	\$ 104,471
Other:	\$ 380,261
Total:	\$5,564,275

Board of Directors

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Julie Altman
Brian Amkraut
Daniel Eisenstadt (K'85)
Matthew Hills
Scott Gladstone (K'84)
Robert Kaitz (K'02)
Debbie Katz
Suzanne Kling Langman (K'85)
Laurel Marcus (K'04)
Marion Menzin
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Harold Simansky
Debbie Sussman (K'68),
Former Director

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Fran Amkraut
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Eli Aroesty (K2K)
Sam Forman (K'08)
Jonathan Gomolka (K'13)
Hannah Levy (K'02)
Jodi Vaxer
Mera (Sussman) Weber (K'02)
David Wolf (K'71)

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Laurel Marcus (K'04)

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Shimon Shkury
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Inclusion Coordinator
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Shore Goldberg (K'18),
Camp Registrar and Office
Administrator
Ethan Naviasky (K'15),
Operations Manager
Bentie Rabinovitch,
Director of Camper Experience
Deb Shafran,
Director of Staff Experience
Netanel Spiegel,
COO/CFO
Zvi Zobin,
Director of Development and
Engagement

Kayitz 2025 Hanhallah (Head Staff)

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Head of Israel Education
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Rosh Shorashim
Estelle Gomolka (K'79),
Rosh Agam
Rabba Amy Newman,
Rosh Chinuch
Adina Smith (K'18),
Rosh Tzeirim
Alanna Wolf (K'08),
Rosh Noar



CAMP YAVNEH
CELEBRATING 80 YEARS

Camp Yavneh, 18 Lucas Pond Road, Northwood, NH 03261
Winter Mailing Address: Camp Yavneh, 321 Walnut St. #460, Newton, MA 02460



Kayitz 2026 Dates

Session One:

June 24 - July 19

Visiting Day:

July 19

Session Two:

July 21 - August 11

Full Summer:

June 24 - August 11

Kaytana:

July 21 - August 2

Kerem:

June 22 - August 11

Na'aleh:

June 19 - July 26

Shabbat Bogrim:

August 14 - 16



**Invest in Jewish joy.
Support Camp Yavneh**