

October 14, 2016

Shabbat Shalom. My name is Noah Gornstein and I will be talking to you about not one but two Jewish overnight camps I was privileged to go to this summer.

The first one I attended is Camp Avoda, which I have been going to for four years. I remember the first time I toured the camp, I immediately thought about how great it was and how the community was bonded so strongly. Needless to say when I got there I was not disappointed. Unlike its Hebrew translation, which means work, this camp is all about fun and games.

I have two very fond memories of this camp. One is color war, which happens once a summer and lasts for a week. During this event the camp is split into two teams that compete against each other in different activities. There is something that suits everyone from soccer to football, and flag rush (which is kind of like capture the flag) to volleyball for those who prefer sports; declamation, spelling bee and art for the more education focused. There truly is nothing like it. This

nourishes my very competitive side but at the end the whole camp is bonded again. The brotherhood I have felt at camp is unlike anything I have experienced in my life and I know that some of the people I have met I will be friends with for life.

Another amazing aspect about camp Avoda is Shabbat. Every Friday night we take a longer than usual shower and put on our Sabbath best. We then go down to an outdoor, chapel, proceed to join in an extremely close-knit and interactive service, unlike any that I have ever participated in. To say the least, Camp Avoda is an amazing camp like no other and I am ecstatic about returning next year for my fifth summer.

This past summer I was fortunate enough to fly all the way out to Colorado to attend another camp in the heart of the Rockies to feed my love for hiking and to expand my Judaic experiences. Ramah in the Rockies offered me a new variety of outdoor activities such as horseback riding, climbing, survival and mountain biking.

The Jewish bond at this camp is so strong and so passionate. Every Shabbat was a magical one with singing and dancing. It was truly a joyous occasion.

Probably my favorite part about camp was for four days and nights a group of good friends and I, along with two awesome trip leaders took off on a *Masa* (excursion) in the heart of the Rockies. Hiking in the Rockies was something I always fantasized doing and I can say with certainty that it was more than anything I could have imagined. Sleeping under a tarp, cooking our own food, purifying our water from streams and the majestic views all served as a recipe for awesomeness. That experience was something I will never forget. I am glad beyond words that I did it.

One really special part of about Camp Ramah is that no matter one's Judaic background or beliefs, everyone is always included. Next year I am planning to return for four weeks in order to participate in more activities such as a rafting or climbing *Masa*.

But the extra bonus was after it ended I got to spend a day out in Denver with Rabbi Lerner and family!

I am so glad that I was fortunate enough to be given these experiences and I will hold on to them for the rest of my life. If you are thinking about attending a Jewish overnight camp, I highly encourage you to do so. It might just be a life, changing event, like what happened to me.

Shalom!