

Shabbat Shalom Machane Ramah

For those of you who don't know, my name is Sasha and I'm a proud member of Nivonim 2024. I've been coming to camp Ramah since 2018 and loved every second of it. I'll talk more about my camp experience later, but right now I'd like to introduce this week's parsha: Vaetchanan.

In this parsha, Moshe speaks out to the Israelites about the importance of keeping the ten commandments in the homeland. In the speech he gives, he explains how throughout their journey, those who remained loyal to God are still alive, and those who did not may not have had as much success. I found this relatable in the sense that no matter how hard times might've been, I would always do anything to make sure I could come back to this machane. I always clear my schedule to make time for camp when I need to, and I'd miss important events at home if it meant seeing my camp friends. In 2022, I got sent home with COVID and was home for six days being bored out of my mind. I've never jumped out of bed faster than the morning my parents woke me up and told me the camp called saying I could come back that day. Even if it meant I had to wear a mask until I tested negative, all I wanted to do was go back and see my friends. I'm glad to say that even through the hardships, we made it to this point where we're all together in this special place. Being here on the 300th day of the Israel-Hamas war is a memory I will forever be grateful for. I felt safer and more supported than ever and it's because of this incredible community.

As Moshe talks about obeying the commandments, he also talks about Shabbat. Shabbat at camp is always my favorite time of the summer. I wait for ten months to be here, then once I get here, another three more days until the best part of the week. I love having a long day of rest while also spending time with friends, along with camp-wide Kabbalat Shabbat and morning services, then closing with

havdallah. It's not an experience I'd ever be able to get anywhere else. This is my 36th camp shabbat. I don't remember all of them, but I can tell you that there are some people here that have been with me during every single one. One of my first shabbats in Illanot, I remember walking over to B-side to visit one of my friend's sisters and thinking about how much I couldn't wait to be a B-sider, but also how far away that was. Now, as we enter our last shabbat of the summer, and my edah's last Shabbat as campers, I'm realizing how much I will always need to hold these memories close to my heart.

I am a third generation Ramah New England chanicha. My great uncle went here before we were even in Palmer, and my parents were lucky enough to meet here in 1995, meaning I quite literally would not be here if it weren't for this camp. In Moshe's words from this parsha, "make your experiences known to your children and your children's children." This quote sums up my connection to Ramah perfectly. One of my favorite things to do is hear stories from my parents as campers and compare those stories to my own. I hope to be able to do the same with my own children someday. Although I may not remember all the little details from my days as a camper, or every funny conversation I had with my friends and my counselors, I'll be able to share the best memories that are worth remembering. Like in Solelim when me and a few friends got trapped in another bunk during a thunderstorm, or in Magshimim when I'd always play roofball after Roo practice, and even in Shoafim when the entire summer was on zoom. These are the experiences I'll make known to my children.

This place and these people have given me unforgettable memories and everlasting relationships. In Moshe's final moments before his death, he was able to pass on the ten commandments to the people, and let them know how important they are to hold on to. In my final moments as a camper, I'd like to let you all know how important it is to hold onto the memories you create here. I

wouldn't trade these summers for anything else, and time goes by faster and faster each year. It's hard to believe that we've already reached this point, and although my camper journey is coming to an end, Ramah will *a/ways* hold a special place in my heart. My advice to all of you is to cherish every moment, and every experience, and most importantly every friendship. Shabbat Shalom.