

Dear 2025 Summer Staff,

Over the next month, we'll be welcoming nearly 200 of you to Camp Coleman from all over the world. Each of you brings your own hopes, dreams, perspectives, and experiences—and that diversity is one of the most meaningful and beautiful parts of our community. We celebrate both what we share and what makes each of us unique.

Before you arrive, it's important that all staff understand the [core values](#), expectations, and boundaries that guide our Camp Coleman community. Much of this will be learned during our pre-camp virtual orientation sessions that you will have access to beginning tomorrow. However, I want to take a moment now to share our position on Israel and what we expect from our staff in upholding our values.

Today happens to be Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day—a day of celebration for many in our community, especially those who call Israel home. At a time when the complexities and challenges facing Israel are so present, Yom Ha'atzmaut reminds us of the resilience, hope, and dreams that have shaped the modern state of Israel. It's a meaningful opportunity to reflect on both the significance of Israel's existence and the values we hold as a Jewish community committed to justice, peace, and inclusion.

Camp Coleman is owned and operated by the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the largest Jewish denomination in North America. Families choose to send their children to us because they trust in the values of the URJ—and they expect our staff to reflect those values.

[The URJ's statement on Israel](#), in short: **Our commitment to a strong, vibrant, Jewish, and democratic state of Israel—secure within its borders—is unyielding. Since October 7th, we have repeatedly called for measures that ensure Israel remains strong and secure, that hostages are released immediately, that humanitarian aid reaches Palestinians in Gaza, and for a future in which Israeli and Palestinian states exist side by side in peace.**

Today also marks 18 months since Hamas invaded Israel, took hostages and the Israel-Hamas war began. These are complex times, and that complexity won't disappear once we're at camp. We understand that among our staff there are a wide range of perspectives and understandings about the conflict. During staff week, you'll have opportunities to ask questions and learn more if you choose to.

It's essential to recognize that more than 30 members of our community this summer call

Israel home. Each has been personally affected by the conflict in their own way. Their identities, perspectives, and experiences are valid and valued—and it's our responsibility to ensure they feel respected and safe.

**In alignment with the URJ's values, we will not tolerate conversations, comments, or discussions that question the legitimacy of Israel as a nation. This is a clear boundary, and it is rooted in our responsibility to foster a respectful and supportive environment for everyone in our camp community.**

While the topic of war and conflict will not be a major focus of our campers' experience, and most of you will not be directly involved in related educational programming, we will provide guidance on how to support those campers and staff who may wish to learn or talk about Israel in appropriate and respectful ways.

For now, I ask that you come into this summer with an open heart, a curious mind, and a shared excitement for the season ahead. This is a time for unity, growth, and purpose—and I can't wait to see what we'll create together.

If you have any questions or concerns about our policy on Israel or feel that you may not be able to uphold our community's values, please reach out to me or the Assistant Director who hired you.

Thank you for reading—and thank you for being a part of what makes Camp Coleman so special.

Warmly,

*Amy*

Amy Smyler McFarland  
Camp Director