



# THE FIRST 10 YEARS

kayitz **kef**

SUMMERS  
of FUN A lifetime  
of Hebrew



# About Kayitz Kef

Camp has proven to be a fertile setting in which North American Jewish youth develop proficiency in Modern Hebrew and a love for the language. At Kayitz Kef / Hebrew At Camp, a trained, enthusiastic staff of Israeli shlichim and local fluent Hebrew speakers immerses Jewish day campers in a fun-filled setting that quickly has them playing and making friends in Hebrew.

Kayitz Kef is built on the premise that proficiency in Modern Hebrew:

- ☀ affirms individual Jewish identity and a collective sense of Jewish peoplehood;
- ☀ opens the door to Jewish life and culture, the study of Jewish texts, and appreciation for the breadth of Jewish learning; and
- ☀ deepens connections with Israel – its people, culture and history.

Kayitz Kef is guided by the *proficiency approach to second language acquisition* – endorsed as the gold standard in foreign language instruction by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) – and adapts it to the unique setting of Jewish summer camp. Each Kayitz Kef program runs as a separate unit within a successful day camp, led by a trained Program Leader and a cadre of young dynamic counselors.

**Kayitz Kef is a project of The Areivim Philanthropic Group in partnership with the Foundation for Jewish Camp.**

“What an amazing experience! Best camp she has attended.”

400<sup>+</sup> CAMPERS at 13 DAY CAMPS

Launched in Summer 2013 with a cohort of 17 campers at Ramah Day Camp in Nyack, NY, Kayitz Kef will enroll over 400 campers at 13 day camps in 2018, helping create a new generation of Hebrew speakers.

Bender JCC of Greater Washington Washington, DC  
Congregation Beth Elohim Brooklyn, NY  
JCC of Chicago (two camps) Chicago, IL  
JCC of Greater Columbus Columbus, OH  
JCC of Metropolitan Detroit Detroit, MI  
JCC of Palo Alto Palo Alto, CA  
Mandel JCC Cleveland, OH  
Marcus JCC Atlanta, GA  
Prosserman JCC Toronto, ON  
Ramah Day Camp Nyack, NY  
Ramah Day Camp Philadelphia, PA  
Ramah Day Camp Washington, DC

# Kayitz Kef Achieves Results

Independent evaluators from Rosov Consulting have documented meaningful outcomes of Kayitz Kef.

## ☀ Significant Language Gains

Campers experience growth in Hebrew language proficiency while at camp, producing meaningful change in their speaking and understanding of Hebrew, regardless of where they started.

Returning campers show that within two to three weeks they recoup their language gains from the prior summer – leaving them plenty of time to strengthen and solidify their skills. Each subsequent summer accelerates progress.

## ☀ Connection to Israel and Israelis

Campers encounter charismatic, authentic and engaging Israeli role models who foster a strong emotional connection. Parents say these Israeli counselors deepen their children's connection with Israel.

## ☀ New Perceptions of Hebrew

Parents see their children having fun while learning Hebrew. Some are even inspired to learn it themselves, reinforcing its value to their children.

## ☀ Whole-Camp Impact

Camp leaders report that Hebrew permeates the wider camp culture as a result of Kayitz Kef. They are eager to build on this collateral benefit for the future.

## ☀ High Satisfaction and Return Rates

Parents consistently praise the quality of activities and the relationships their children develop with counselors and



other campers. They note their children's increased self-confidence and pride in their accomplishments. Most plan to reenroll the following summer, consistent with the high retention rates at each camp.

#### ☀ Jewish Content Area for JCCs

Camps see Hebrew culture and a strong Israeli presence as key to building Jewish peoplehood beyond religious belief or practice. Kayitz Kef attracts families from across the spectrum of Jewish involvement, including many with no prior JCC affiliation.

#### ☀ Meaningful Staff Experiences

Program Leaders note considerable growth and a sense of fulfillment among Kayitz Kef counselors, who, in turn, indicate tremendous satisfaction in seeing how far their campers come in a summer. Returning counselors often take on leadership roles.

## Why Kayitz Kef Works

Immersion in a Hebrew-centric environment at camp enables children to develop their speaking and comprehension skills through meaningful and enjoyable interactions. The broad range of everyday life experiences afforded by the rhythms and routines of camp more effectively initiates children into the language than the typical school context.

"The essence of proficiency is to function in a language," says Professor Vardit Ringvald, Director of the School of Hebrew at Middlebury

## KAYITZ KEF BRINGS A NEW APPROACH TO SUPPORT HEBREW ACQUISITION AMONG JEWISH YOUTH

"The entire camp was influenced. You could see that campers from our General Camp program were humming or even singing our cheers in Hebrew."



College in Vermont, who has guided the Kayitz Kef pedagogy. "Camp is a natural setting for language acquisition as children have meals together, move from one place to another, react and connect."

To ensure success, Kayitz Kef has developed year-round training and mentoring for all camp team members – camp directors, marketing professionals, project leaders, and counselors – facilitated by a full-time Director of Hebrew Programming, educated at Middlebury by Professor Ringvald. Trainings are held at Areivim offices in New York, on site at each camp, remotely via video conference, and in Israel in conjunction with the Jewish Agency for Israel's annual seminar for summer shlichim.

## What the Data Say

Program evaluation informs the growth and expansion of Kayitz Kef. Each year, in partnership with Rosov Consulting, overall impact is assessed through surveys and interviews of parents, camp leadership and staff. Feedback is overwhelmingly and consistently positive.

### Why Choose Kayitz Kef?

Parents recognize the added value of Kayitz Kef.

- ☀ All parents want to maintain and further the momentum of their children's Hebrew language development.
- ☀ Most "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that Kayitz Kef strengthens Jewish identity and connection with Israel.



- ☀ The vast majority indicates that the likelihood they would recommend the program to a friend is 9 out of 10; more than half say 10 out of 10.
- ☀ Over the past three years, at least 70% have responded that they plan to re-enroll their children, consistent with the high retention rates at each camp.
- ☀ 75% or more each year “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that they are highly satisfied, particularly with their children’s activities, relationships with their counselors, and overall Hebrew language development.

## Who Enrolls at Kayitz Kef?

Learning Hebrew is important to families no matter their connection with the language, their level of observance or involvement with the Jewish Community.

- ☀ The percentage of Hebrew-speaking homes with at least one Israeli parent ranges at different camps from 87% to 30%.
- ☀ Synagogue involvement also varies greatly, ranging from 80% to 18%.
- ☀ Attendance at Jewish Day School, where Hebrew studies continue throughout the year, varies across all camps – averaging 55% overall.

## Who Works at Kayitz Kef?

The most important resource of a Kayitz Kef program is its staff, whose quality, capacity, and motivation are critical to success. Research has shown that:

- ☀ An ideal Kayitz Kef staff member has energy, enthusiasm, an ability to connect with young children, and openness to take on this challenging and rewarding experience.



“She was in a museum the other day and two Israelis walked by, and she stopped to listen. . . She doesn’t need to switch gears when transitioning to Hebrew.”

## PARENT MOTIVATION

### Why Choose Kayitz Kef?

Percentage of parents who strongly agree with the following statements:

91%

To give my child the chance to learn Hebrew in an immersive/intensive setting

89%

To maintain and further the momentum of my child’s Hebrew language development

77%

To enable my child to feel more connected to his/her Jewish identity

76%

To enable my child to feel more connected to Israel

73%

To expose my child to learning a different language

- ☀ Successful staff need not be educators or have prior experience with language instruction. The Kayitz Kef training model provides both in-depth exposure to the methodology of the proficiency approach and to hands-on activity development. Yet the real learning happens on the ground when they encounter campers and put their learning into practice.
- ☀ Counselors consistently reflect that they finish the summer feeling deeply connected to their campers and highly pleased with the experience, rating it 8 or above on a scale of 1-10.

## How is Kayitz Kef Evaluated?

Rosov Consulting and the Areivim National Office conduct pre- and post-summer assessments of the overall program and its effectiveness, seeking both formal survey data and anecdotal insights from all constituencies: camp leadership, program leadership and staff, and, perhaps most importantly, parents. Individual results are shared with each camp, and aggregate results are shared with all camps. This valuable feedback enables camps to refine their programs from year to year, and it provides the National Office with a perspective of Kayitz Kef as a whole. These insights inform the ongoing improvement of training, marketing, communications and general operation. For example:

- ☀ Initially Kayitz Kef had been open only to campers enrolling for a full summer session, noting that it usually takes a couple of weeks before they begin producing language themselves. Yet camp leadership reflected that many parents were unwilling to commit to an entire summer of Hebrew immersion. In response, Kayitz Kef adjusted its approach in 2017: while still emphasizing the

gains achieved by full-summer enrollment, campers can now participate for a shorter single session with a minimum four week commitment. In one camp that summer, several campers enrolled in the first session decided to stay on for the rest of the summer.

- ☀ In the early years of Kayitz Kef, many counselors felt inadequately prepared to handle the challenges of campers' unfamiliarity with Hebrew and hesitancy to speak. National staff therefore revamped its training protocol to provide program staff with a broader toolkit and to set realistic expectations. Counselors now report an easier transition into the summer and quicker bonding with their campers, contributing to the overall success of the program.

## About the Camps

Kayitz Kef runs in parallel to existing camp programs. Each camp therefore designs its own program to reflect its particular character. In running Kayitz Kef, a camp affirms the value of Hebrew as a living language and an important part of widespread Jewish connectedness.

An ever-increasing variety of camps participates in Kayitz Kef, as the 2018 cohort indicates:

- ☀ Three Ramah Day Camps, affiliated with the Conservative movement – including the longest-running Kayitz Kef program in Nyack, NY, entering its sixth year;

# PROGRAM SATISFACTION

"Sam is learning the language of his ancestors and has learned interesting facts about Israel that he would like to discover for himself, i.e., 'We float in the Dead Sea. You can't sink.'"

## How Do Parents Feel?

Percentage of parents highly satisfied with:

93%

The activities my child participated in

90%

The relationship my child developed with his/her counselor

85%

The relationships my child developed with fellow campers

83%

My child's emotional experience as a camper in this program

82%

My child's Hebrew language development



- ☀ Nine JCC camps across North America – including the second-longest-running program at the Prosserman JCC in Toronto, entering its fifth year; and
- ☀ The first camp at a Reform synagogue in Brooklyn – which has been running a Hebrew-immersion camp and was attracted to Kayitz Kef to up its game in promoting and fostering Hebrew-language proficiency.

Selection of staff is of key importance.

- ☀ Camps are encouraged to use a mix of local fluent Hebrew speakers and Israeli *shlichim* (post-Army youth) and *shinshinim* (between high school and the Army) as counselors.
  - ☀ Program Leaders are professionals whose summer work is dedicated to Kayitz Kef.
  - ☀ The Director of Hebrew Programming often participates in the interview process and coordinates Israel recruitment in association with the Jewish Agency for Israel.
- Camps receive ongoing support and guidance from the National Office.
- ☀ Kayitz Kef staff is trained in both North America and in Israel by the Director of Hebrew Programming to promote consistency in the pedagogy and foster a sense of a shared experience.
  - ☀ Camps participate in a specialized marketing workshop to help guide their advertising and recruitment, and expand their reach.
  - ☀ The Director of Hebrew Programming and the National Director of Kayitz Kef conduct site visits during the summer to observe and monitor program implementation, consult with staff, and assess camper learning.



## Philanthropic Support

Several funders have provided support to pilot and grow Kayitz Kef and expand its reach across North America. Arevim also partners with local funders to bring the program to camps in their communities.

Arevim is grateful to the following for their support of Kayitz Kef:

- ☀ The AVI CHAI Foundation
- ☀ Crown Family Philanthropies
- ☀ The William Davidson Foundation
- ☀ The Marcus Foundation, Inc.
- ☀ The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life
- ☀ The Wexner Foundation
- ☀ UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

## Looking to the Future

In January 2018 Kayitz Kef hired its first National Director to lead the program and chart a course for the future, including expansion to new communities and new markets in existing communities, cultivating new funding partners and honing the vision.

Kayitz Kef has potential to launch a revolution in Modern Hebrew language learning in North America – shifting expectations about what is possible at camp and raising the educational bar. With 10% of total campers enrolled at

## CAMP IS AN IDEAL SETTING FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

**Professor Vardit Ringvald**  
Director of the School of Hebrew  
Middlebury College

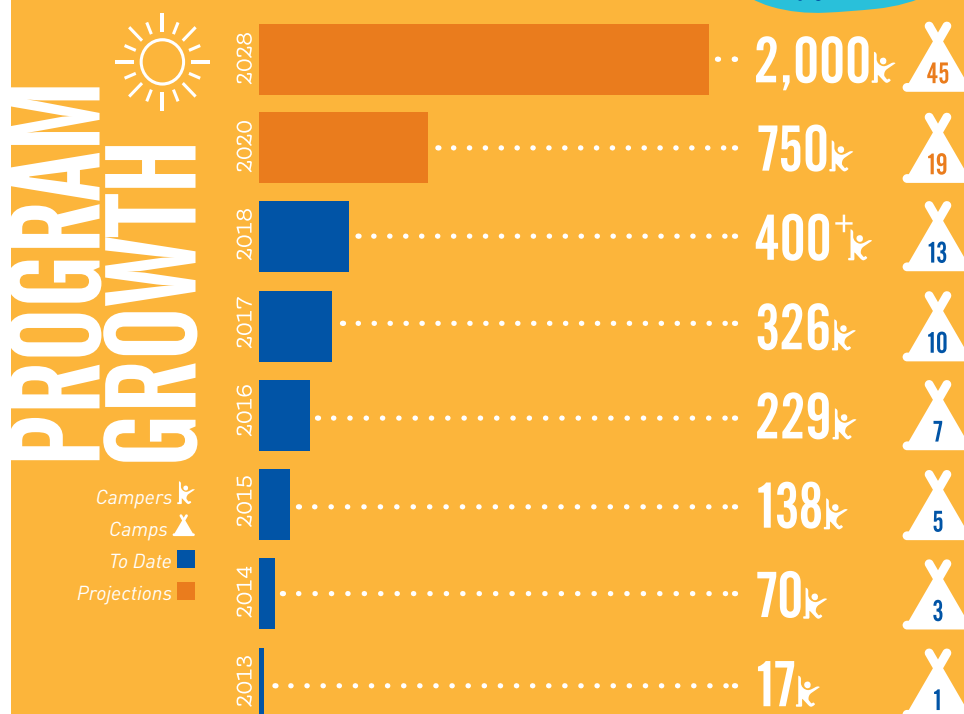
“As the season progressed, I watched the campers force themselves to speak Hebrew and even convince each other to speak in Hebrew . . . that gave me faith in this program.”

some sites, and growing numbers everywhere returning for two years or more, Kayitz Kef is also good business.

As Kayitz Kef considers its future markets, many camp leaders have been curious about the viability of an overnight camp model. When parents were surveyed in 2017, roughly two-thirds expressed interest, with responses evenly spread across camp sites and demographics. This enthusiasm bears continued exploration as camps seek new ways to attract families.

Research has clearly shown the success of Kayitz Kef and its potential for the future. Rooted in the success and appeal of Jewish day camps, Hebrew immersion based on the proficiency approach provides elementary school-age children opportunities to deepen connections with their history, culture and the fabric of life in the State of Israel.

**This is the mission of Kayitz Kef.**



Data in this report reflect 2017 survey results. A comprehensive Five-Year Report can be found at [www.KayitzKef.org](http://www.KayitzKef.org).

Data and analysis provided by

**Rosov CONSULTING** 10 YEARS OF IMPACT 2008-2018

Photos courtesy of the Foundation for Jewish Camp.

For more information about Kayitz Kef, please contact Bill Magaliff, National Director [Bill@Arevim.org](mailto:Bill@Arevim.org) (212) 792-6238

Kayitz Kef is a project of

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