



January 3, 2021

Tevet 19, 5781

Dear TRY students and Families,

I hope everyone's weekend is going well and that this new calendar year will be a great one!

As always, please make sure you read the important reminders at the bottom of the email. Please make sure you promptly complete all of your [registration](#) forms, fill out the [medication form](#), notify us you got a [flu shot](#), or schedule your pre-travel [COVID-19](#) tests. We are relying on up-to-date information from you in order to prepare the necessary paperwork and authorizations needed to get the logistical framework, such as visas and medical insurance, completed on time.

Before introducing Miriam Tekuzener, our incredible Director of Israel Studies, I want to talk a bit about the Poland *Masa* (Journey). As you may have already guessed, we've made the decision that this year we will not be traveling to Poland together as part of the TRY program. Even if we are technically allowed to travel by the Polish and Israeli government, the quarantine requirements and other limitations make it logistically impossible, let alone the medical reasons for not travelling to Poland at this time. While we cannot replicate the experience of actually visiting the sites themselves in person, we have planned an excellent alternative *Shoah* (Holocaust) Seminar that we're sure will provide a meaningful and unique look at this important topic. Miriam will explain a more below in her introduction letter. As such, **we will be refunding each student \$500 off the cost of TRY as a result of this change in the program.**

If things look better next year, we may decide to offer an alumni trip for former TRY students who did NOT get a chance to travel to Poland. Additionally, [Ramah Israel Institute \(RII\)](#), the short term trips department here at Ramah Israel, runs an annual [Poland Journey for Adults](#) guided by our very own ICC teacher Betsalel Steinhart (who's mild-mannered alter-ego is Director of RII).

Finally, please keep your eyes open for a COVID update from me tomorrow. In the meantime, enjoy reading a bit about our Israel Core Course (ICC) from an incredible educator, Miriam Tekuzener.

With warm regards from Jerusalem,

Jonathan Madoff, MSW
Director
Tichon Ramah Yerushalayim
jonathan@ramah.co.il

Shalom,

My name is Miriam Tekuzener, and I am the Director of Israel Studies and an Israel Core Course Educator (ICC). I am a licensed tour guide, an experiential educator and I have worked in this field for over 15 years. I live in Jerusalem and am a proud 'Yerushalmit' (Jerusalemite), from the Friday



afternoon hummus and kubbeh soup to never missing a Hapoel Yerushalayim basketball game.

ICC is the central element of TRY's Jewish educational program. I am extremely excited to be your teacher and guide as we undertake this journey together!

ICC is intense, challenging, yet extremely rewarding, and it consists of 18 hours a week in both the classroom and in the field, on *tiyulim* - field trips. Using the land of Israel as our classroom, we explore chronologically - from Abraham until

today - Jewish history, heritage and modern Israeli challenges, learn about the events in our past where they happened - facing the same dilemmas our ancestors faced - and connect in a personal manner to the 4,000 years of Jewish history. At the same time, we want you, our students, to understand that there are many complex topics in our Jewish lives, both from the past and in the present, and that Jewish and Israeli society is not perfect. We want to express love for Judaism and for Israel while not necessarily agreeing with everything it does. And while we may not remember everything we learn, the feelings and emotions we will undergo will stay with us forever.

Please make sure you pack at least one notebook for notes, one notebook for a journal, a pen or pencil, a pocket sized JPS Tanach, and the book 'Night' by Elie Wiesel (you do not need to bring the book 'Dawn').

Shoah Seminar

As Jonathan explained, instead of traveling to Poland this year as part of ICC we will instead undertake a multi-day *Shoah* Seminar here in Israel, integrating a variety of resources from some of the many Holocaust memorial sites across the country (Depending on the COVID-19 situation at that point in the semester). In this seminar we will of course discuss the timeline and facts of this monumental event in world history, but we will also delve into the rich Jewish life that existed in Poland and Eastern Europe before the catastrophes of the Holocaust and how the survivors rose from the ashes of destruction, rebuilt Jewish life and even created a Jewish State. We will learn about various communities and research them more in-depth, and we will meet with survivors and document their stories.

Throughout this experiential learning process we will focus on the subject of memory, creating profound memories of our own and understanding the importance of memories to our identity, both as individuals and as a community. I would therefore like you to think carefully about who you know who lived through these events, and gather any information about relatives or family friends - alive or no longer with us - who were involved in the Shoah in some way (as victims, survivors, refugees or liberators). Whether it is a story accompanied by a picture, a letter to read out, a testimony from a survivor in your synagogue, or any information you might have, it would be welcome. It can also be about a village or city that your ancestors lived in, or even that they were connected to. The addition of these elements enhances the seminar exponentially, and now is the time to do that research.

Now I'd like to introduce to you my two colleagues who will be teaching ICC this semester, Betsalel Steinhart and Rabbi Jeffrey Schragar:

Jeff is a native of Rochester, NY, he attended Yeshivat Hamivtar in Israel and Yeshiva University before moving to Dallas, TX. In Dallas, he taught at the Akiba Academy of Dallas, eventually becoming Middle School Judaic Studies Coordinator. In addition to teaching, he is the founder of JewishgeNext, promoting the use of Jewish Genealogy in Jewish education. He and his family fulfilled their dream of Aliyah in 2015. Since moving to Israel, Jeff has become a licensed Tour Guide and has taught at a variety of educational programs for Jewish youth from North America, including as an ICC teacher on TRY last year and we're so pleased to have him back again for another year. Jeff lives with his wife and four children in Efrat.

Betsalel was born in London, England, and made Aliyah with his family as a teen. After his army service he attended Bar Ilan University and is currently finishing an MA in Jewish History and Jewish Education at the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. A licensed Tour Guide, Betsalel guides groups from all over the world, and over the years taught at a number of Israeli institutions involved in educating Diaspora Jews. He joined Ramah in 2000 as an educator, and from 2007 was head of Education for [Ramah Israel Seminar](#) alongside his teaching the Israel Core Course (ICC) for TRY. For a number of years, he served as Director of Education for all of Ramah Israel and Director of Israel Studies on TRY, before becoming Director of [Ramah Israel Institute](#), and we're thrilled to have the opportunity to bring him back to our classroom this year to share his knowledge and infectious enthusiasm with our students. Betsalel lives with his wife and five sons in Beit Shemesh.

Thank you.

Looking forward to embracing this journey together,

Miriam Tekuzener
Director of Israel Studies
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Important Reminders:

SAVE THE DATE for the [TRY Webinar](#)

Get updated info, Q&A with the staff, and more!
Sunday, January 10th at 2:30pm EST

Get your TRY merch here!

Check out our [online store](#) for all your needs on TRY - clothing and apparel with the TRY logo, bedding, toiletries, and more. Order now and have some of it shipped directly to Israel!

Did you arrange phone service in Israel?

If not, go check out the packages [Talk'nSave](#) is offering.

Complete your registration!

Please make sure all your registration forms are completed and you've submitted all the necessary documents and/or files (passport, medical form, etc.) For questions please contact [Elinor](#).

Have you gotten a flu shot yet?

If so, please fill out the [flu vaccination confirmation form](#) to let us know when. If not, go get vaccinated!

Don't forget to schedule your two COVID-19 tests for the week before TRY!

The first test should be one week prior to departure, and the second 72-48 hours before the flight. After receiving each test please fill out the [COVID-19 tests confirmation form](#) to let us know the results.



www.try.ramah.org.il

Useful links



Tichon Ramah Yerushalayim is a program of [Ramah Israel](#), a division of the [National Ramah Commission](#), which operates under the educational and religious supervision of [The Jewish Theological Seminary](#). Since 1962, Ramah Israel has provided substantive experiential education and meaningful Conservative Jewish living for North Americans in Israel in the spirit of the Ramah Camping Movement.

Think Israel. Think Ramah.

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