



AKIVA

**THE JEWISH CAMP
LEARNING INSTITUTE**

DATES

March 2027 - October 2028

APPLICATION PERIOD

September 22, 2026 - October 23, 2026

QUESTIONS

Contact amy.meltzer@jewishcamp.org

OVERVIEW

Jewish camp offers a powerful setting for joyful Jewish living and learning, especially amid a changing Jewish landscape. At camp, relationships, rituals, programs, and everyday moments have the power to shape Jewish identity, belonging, and lifelong connection.

The Jewish life of a camp is shaped in countless ways by the vision and leadership of its director. Yet many camp directors have had little opportunity for sustained Jewish learning or educational leadership development.

Akiva: The Jewish Camp Learning Institute is a 20-month cohort program for senior overnight camp professionals that deepens their Jewish learning and equips them to strengthen Jewish life at the camps they lead.

"The single best professional development that I did as a camping professional, and I don't think it's particularly close. It was the switch that finally went off in my head, where I was able to say, I am a Jewish educator."

- AARON CANTOR
DIRECTOR, EMMA KAUFMANN CAMP



Through five immersive seminars - including four four-day seminars in North America and a seven-day seminar in Israel - participants learn with outstanding Jewish educators, artists-in-residence, faculty advisors, and one another. A combination of text study, creative expression, reflection, joyful relationship-building, and practical skill development all support Fellows in their growth as Jewish learners and leaders. The program is not intended to fill every gap or provide an exhaustive survey of Jewish learning. Instead, it offers directors a meaningful foundation for continued growth as Jewish educational leaders, inspiring a lifetime of Jewish learning, leadership, and living.

Akiva Institute is named for Rabbi Akiva, one of the greatest sages of the Jewish people, who began his own study of Torah as a 40-year-old shepherd. It builds on the strong foundation of Lekhu Lakhem, a beloved program created by the Jewish Community Center Association that brought together four cohorts of camp directors in the early 2000s and 2010s. The Akiva Institute continues Lekhu Lakhem's legacy while adapting to opportunities and challenges facing Jewish camps today.

PROGRAM GOALS

Through their participation in Akiva Institute, participants will:

- Engage in meaningful, accessible, and enriching Jewish learning that sparks curiosity, confidence, and passion.
- Develop stronger identities as Jewish leaders and educators.
- Explore core principles of Jewish education and vision as they relate to camp leadership.
- Articulate a Jewish educational vision for their camps, and develop the confidence, skills, and practical strategies to bring that vision to life.
- Build relationships with a cohort of camp leaders who share a commitment to the Jewish educational potential of camp.
- Cultivate a desire and direction for continued Jewish learning, reflection, and educational leadership beyond the seminar experience.

"Akiva (formerly Lekhu Lakhem) empowered me through immersive study and collaborative learning to weave these values into the very heartbeat of our program. ... Akiva is not a typical one-and-done program; our faculty and fellow cohort members became my teachers, thought-partners, and friends for life."

- TOM ROSENBERG

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The Akiva Institute uses four primary structures to support learning, reflection, and application:



GROUP SEMINARS

The program includes five seminars: four four-day seminars in North America and one seven-day seminar in Israel. These immersive experiences help participants develop a rich collegial network rooted in Jewish learning, deepen their connection to Israel, and strengthen their sense of shared commitment. All seminars will be led by the Project Director and Faculty Advisors, along with guest educators and artists-in-residence.

INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL-GROUP LEARNING

Faculty Advisors will facilitate biweekly hour-long text study sessions on Zoom with groups of five participants. These sessions provide continuity and additional meaningful learning between seminars and allow for more individualized exploration and reflection.

SUMMER SITE VISITS

In the summers of 2027 and 2028, Faculty Advisors will visit participants at their camps. These visits will give each participant and Faculty Advisor the opportunity to observe camp life in action and consider how learning from the Akiva Institute can be applied in that camp's unique setting.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Each participant will develop and implement a project for their camp rooted in their emerging Jewish educational vision. FJC will provide up to \$1,500 in matching funds for each Fellow's capstone project.

AKIVA INSTITUTE FACULTY



AMY MELTZER

Project Director, Akiva Institute | Director, Training and Talent Development, FJC



RABBI AVI ORLOW

Akiva Institute Faculty | Scholar-in-Residence, FJC



AKIKO "AKI" YONEKAWA

Akiva Institute Faculty | Educator, Song Carrier, and Ritualist



RABBI BILL KAPLAN

Akiva Institute Faculty | Chief Executive Officer Emeritus, Shalom Institute



RABBI DEBORAH NEWBRUN

Akiva Institute Faculty | Jewish Educator and Former Director, Camp Tawonga

[SEE THE FULL FACULTY LIST, READ COMPLETE BIOGRAPHIES, AND LEARN MORE ABOUT AKIVA](#)

COMMITMENTS

PROGRAM COMMITMENT

Participants are expected to attend and participate in all required activities, including:

- Four four-day North American based in-person seminars.
- One seven-day Israel based seminar.
- Biweekly, hour-long small-group text study sessions on Zoom in between seminars (excluding May-August).
- Hosting a Faculty Advisor for summer site visits in 2027 and 2028.
- Ongoing work with a Faculty Advisor.
- A capstone project implemented at their camp.

REQUIRED DATES

Locations subject to change.

ORIENTATION

January 6, 2027 (1-2 PM ET) - Orientation (virtual)

SEMINAR 1

March 1-4, 2027 - Camp Ramah in California

SUMMER SITE VISITS

Summer 2027

SEMINAR 2

September 13-16, 2027 - Berkshire Hills Eisenberg Camp

SEMINAR 3, ISRAEL SEMINAR

December 7-16, 2027 - Israel

SEMINAR 4

February 28-March 2, 2028 - CYJ Texas

SUMMER SITE VISITS

Summer 2028

SEMINAR 5 AND FINAL GATHERING

October 16-19, 2028 - Location to be announced

CAMPS MUST

- Sponsor each Fellow's participation in Akiva: The Jewish Camp Learning Institute with a **\$3,000 program fee**.
- Cover any costs that exceed **\$2,000** of the Fellow's round-trip airfare and incidentals for the Israel seminar. Foundation for Jewish Camp will cover the first \$2,000 of airfare and all other seminar costs, including ground travel, room, and board.
- Purchase and administer the **Camper Satisfaction Insight (CSI) and Staff Satisfaction Insight (SSI) survey** at camp in summers 2027 and 2028.
- FJC does not want cost to be a barrier to participation. Camps for whom the program fee may present a significant challenge are still encouraged to apply and should be in touch with FJC to discuss their circumstances.

ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES

At FJC, we value diversity and equal opportunity. We are committed to building a cohort representative of a variety of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and skills. We know that the more inclusive we are, the stronger our work - and our field - will be. That said, we are looking for applicants who meet the following criteria:

- Are full-time, year-round professionals including Executive Directors, Camp Directors, Associate Directors, Assistant Directors, and other year-round leaders who help shape Jewish life and learning at overnight camps in the FJC network.
- Have at least three years of camp leadership experience.
- Have **not** had extensive formal training in Jewish studies or Jewish education.
- Are open to personal Jewish learning and reflection.
- Are comfortable learning in a pluralistic Jewish environment.
- Are eager to strengthen the Jewish educational vision at their camp.
- Have the support of camp leadership to participate fully and apply their learning.

We are unlikely to accept more than one Fellow per camp. However, multiple staff members from the same camp who meet the eligibility criteria are encouraged to apply.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The inaugural Akiva cohort will include up to 20 Fellows selected through a process that includes written applications and interviews with final candidates. All applications must be completed by October 23, 2026 to be considered.

IMPORTANT DATES

APPLICATIONS OPEN

September 22, 2026

OPTIONAL VIRTUAL INFO SESSIONSeptember 16, 2026, 3 PM ET | [Register here](#)**OPTIONAL VIRTUAL INFO SESSION**October 1, 2026, 1 PM ET | [Register here](#)**APPLICATIONS CLOSE**

October 23, 2026

INTERVIEWS

October 26-November 6

APPLICANTS NOTIFIED

November 13

QUESTIONS

Questions about Akiva: The Jewish Camp Learning Institute?
Email amy.meltzer@jewishcamp.org.