

Sports and Soul

Eat. Pray. Invest.

AUTHOR(S):	Mara Berde
SUMMARY:	Wake up your body and warm up your soul in this active, sports-oriented tefillah activity. Come prepared to move and be moved! (Please wear your athletic shoes and comfortable clothes.) - Submitted by Mara Berde
TOPIC(S):	Tefillah; sports/exercise
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will: (1) have more energy, (2) feel good about the day ahead, (3) gain program ideas for sports-based cabin/unit/all-camp morning rituals
AUDIENCE:	Applicable to any age; most activities presented can be for a very small group (3 people) up to about 30 people, though modifiable for larger groups
TIMING:	45 minutes
APPENDICES:	<i>Modeh Ani</i> text; 3 blessings from <i>Birkot Hashachar</i> (morning blessings)
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Copies of blessings (optional)
SET-UP DETAILS:	No set up needed. Preferred space is outdoor basketball court adjacent to field or area for running. This program can be done pretty much anywhere – sport court or grass area large enough for running; if rain or bad weather, can use gym or large room.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

0:00 – 0:05

Welcome / Intro

- What can/do you gain from physical activity?
- What can/do you gain from prayer?
- Can they serve the same purpose? Can they be woven together to be even more impactful?

0:05 – 0:15

PART 1: *Kavanah* כיוון

Ask the group if they have heard of the concept of *kavanah*. (Many will say yes.) More than an “intention”, *kavanah* also provides us with a “direction.” [Kavanah comes from the Hebrew כיוון “*kivun*” meaning direction.]

Setting an intention or a direction at the start of the day or start of an activity is a great way to deepen the experience. [E.g. Our coaches have a theme or an idea for each day, sometimes it’s a skill like “passing” but can also be connected to the bigger picture of WHY do we pass the ball, which can lead to “teamwork.” A *kavanah* can be used to frame an entire activity; it can be very basic, surface level, or get deep. It’s up to you.]

In pairs, share your name, camp, favorite sport or activity, and together come up with 3 *kavanot* (intentions / directions) that you can use with your cabin or a group at camp.

Depending on size of group, have people share what they came up with. Mention that the *kavanah* does not have to come from the staff. Some of the most thoughtful and meaningful *kavanah* discussions that I’ve had have been with 7th graders.

Don’t forget the *kavanah* that you came up with in pairs. We’ll come back to them again at the end.

0:15 – 0:20

Part 2: *Modeh Ani* אני מודה

Modeh Ani is the first prayer that we say in the morning after we wake up. It’s about gratitude, about taking the time to breathe, appreciating the little things, expressing thankfulness.

Take a minute to focus on your breath. Count while you’re breathing in, count while you’re breathing out. Close your eyes if you want, or look around you and find other things to be grateful for.

One of the coolest things about Judaism is its structure. When I was younger I used to get annoyed that Judaism basically says “do this, do that, and then it’ll become meaningful later.” I never believed it. But I have actually come to appreciate its thoughtfulness and design and attention to detail. If I were to wake up every day and say *Modeh Ani* and think about gratitude, that would become part of my routine and would increase gratitude throughout the rest of my day and life.

Breathing together. Inhale for 5 seconds. Exhale for 5 seconds.

0:20 – 0:35

Part 3: *Birkot Hashachar* ברכות השחר

Now that we’ve focused on breathing and spiritual awakening, it’s time to wake up our bodies. *Birkot Hashachar* is a series of blessings that are said during the morning (*Shacharit*) service. We’re going to focus on 3 that have particular relevance to our bodies.

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|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Pokeach Ivrim</i> | פוקח עוברים | opening eyes |
| 2. <i>Zokef kefufim</i> | זוקף כפופים | lifts up the fallen (stretching) |
| 3. <i>Hanotein layaef koach</i> | הנותן ליעף כח | gives strength to the weary |

These 3 prayers are from a long list of blessings that are preparing us for the day. Just like we warm up our bodies before a game, we also warm up our bodies for the day. Here we're going to combine them and do an action while also having a particular mental focus.

- Active warm up: while walking forward, straight leg kick-ups (10); pull knees to chest (10) – **focus on stretching** (*zokef kefufim*)
- Jogging warm up: 1-4 laps depending on size of court or field) – **focus on breath** (*modeh ani*)
- Plyometrics: high knees, but kickers, skip for height, skip for distance, side shuffle (both directions) – **focus on keeping eyes open, stretching** (*pokeach ivrim, zokef kefufim*)
- HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training): Sample of exercises that push you physically and mentally – **focus on being strong** (*hanotein layaef koach*)

0:35 – 0:45

Part 4: Sportsmanship Stretch

In stretching circle, share concept of Sports Report from JCC Maccabi Sports Camp. Have a few volunteers each share 1 thing we did and 1 thing they learned. Then give people an opportunity to give “shout outs” to people who were exemplifying our values or our intention for the day? Start by giving shout outs to a few people and then take a few volunteers.

0:40 – 0:45

Part 5: Reflection & Bringing it Back to Camp

Debrief each part of the activity and ask questions about how it was for them and how they can use it at camp.

Ask if anyone remembers the *kavanah* that we set at the beginning? Have people share if they were able to connect to it, did they think about it at all? If not, what would have made it better, what would have made it stick?

What did you get from breathing? How can this help you as a counselor? How can you use this with campers?

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

This session is meant to provide Fellows with a few ideas for morning activities that incorporate waking up the body & mind. Variations on these activities can be done with their cabin, unit, or the entire camp.

Modeh Ani Text

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ,	Modeh ani l'fânechá,
מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיָּם,	Melech chai v'kayám,
שֶׁהַחַזְרַת בִּי נִשְׁמַתִּי בְּחֶמְלָה	she'heh'chezartá bi nishmâti b'chemlá
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ.	Rabá emuná'techá.

I gratefully thank You, living and everlasting Ruler,
For restoring my soul to me, with compassion.
Abundant is your faithfulness.

Selected blessings from Birkot Hashachar

<i>Pokeach Ivrim</i>	פּוֹקֵחַ עוֹבְרִים	opening eyes
<i>Zokef kefufim</i>	זוֹקֵף כְּפוּפִים	lifts up the fallen (stretching)
<i>Hanotein layaef koach</i>	הַנּוֹתֵן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ	gives strength to the weary