

# The Sacred Table: A Tasting Menu for Nourishing Camp Community

## *Setting the Table*

[Specialty Track 1]

<b>AUTHOR(S):</b>	Adam Allenberg
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	<p>Through the lens of the tripartite command in Deuteronomy/<i>Devarim</i> 8:10—</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>When you have <b>eaten,</b> <b>been satisfied,</b> <b>and given thanks</b> to YHVH, your God, for the good land which They have given you.</p> </div> <div style="font-family: serif; text-align: center;"> <p>וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ:</p> </div> </div> <p>--we will establish a three-pillared approach to making food, meal times and the dining hall the second sacred place at camp. <i>Submitted by Adam Allenberg</i></p>
<b>TOPIC(S):</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is a Jewish meal?</li> <li>2. What is Jewish food?</li> <li>3. What is Jewish eating?</li> </ol>
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVE:</b>	<p>At the end of the session, participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe what makes a Jewish meal different from a secular meal.</li> <li>• Name three parts of their camp's menu, mealtime and/or dining hall culture that concerns them and identify under which of the three pillars of Jewish eating it may be addressed.</li> </ul>
<b>AUDIENCE:</b>	<p>Can be adapted for any age group in an overnight setting and can be broken into three individual programs. Best designed for cabin groups no larger than 20.</p>
<b>TIMING:</b>	90 minutes (individual units can be broken down into 25-45 minute individual programs)

<p><b>APPENDICES:</b></p>	<p>Three Pillars of Jewish Eating.pdf Blessings and Songs for Food.pdf</p>
<p><b>MATERIALS NEEDED:</b></p>	<p>25 Copies of “Three Pillars of Jewish Eating” 25 Copies of “Blessings and Songs for Food” Small cutting board Sharp kitchen knife (paring knife is fine) Toothpicks (100) 40 spoons Small plates (24) Sample table tents (5) Paper (1pp) Pens (1pp) Foods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Challah</li> <li>• 1 cup – prepared pearly barley</li> <li>• 1 container dried figs</li> <li>• 1 container pomegranate seeds</li> <li>• 1 carton fresh grapes</li> <li>• <a href="#">1 jar of silan</a></li> <li>• 1 jar pitted olives (preferably green)</li> </ul>
<p><b>SET-UP DETAILS:</b></p>	<p>Ideally these programs should take place in the dining hall.</p> <p>If not, we should have a room where we can sit around a two-3 rectangular tables (pushed together to form one large, but not long, table) so that we can see one another and simulate dining together.</p>

### SESSION TIMELINE:

0:00-0:25 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS  
0:25-0:30 MINUTES -- PREPARATORY WRITTEN REFLECTION  
0:30-0:50 BLINDFOLDED TASTE TEST  
1:00-1:10 ELEVATED MEALS – HOW TO ACHIEVE JEWISH LEARNING DURING  
1:15-1:25 GRACE AFTER MEALS  
1:25-1:30 CLOSING WRITTEN REFLECTION

### SESSION OUTLINE:

#### 0:00-0:25 MINUTES -- WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome to the Sacred Table. My name is Adam, I use he/him pronouns, and I...

In our time together in this track we will try to name, unpack, and respond to the worst and best of our dining halls, kitchen tables, and personal eating habits to rediscover the power of the Sacred Table.

- **What makes the table where we share food a sacred place?**
  - TAKE ANSWERS – COLLECT ON WHITE BOARD
- Introduce the Three Pillars of Jewish Eating (text handout from appendix)
  - Eating – Being Sated – Blessing/Expressing Gratitude
  - Consider Pirkei Avot 3:3 (3:4 in some collections) and/or Chagigah 27a both available in the Appendix: *Three Pillars of Jewish Eating*
- **How is the table at camp a sacred place?**

### 0:25-0:30 MINUTES -- PREPARATORY WRITTEN REFLECTION – 5 MINUTES

We will begin and end our time together each day with a quiet five minutes of writing reflection. At the beginning, we will set the tone for our discussion today in some way. At the end, you will be asked to reflect on how what we've explored together could be taken back to your camp or is/is not applicable in your own life. To start, please reflect on:

- What is your favorite meal to share with others?
- What makes that setting special?
- What makes the shared menu special?
- Can this be recreated in other places?
- For other fellow diners?
- Why or why not?

### 0:30-0:50 BLINDFOLDED TASTE TEST

For this activity, you will be blindfolded and asked to taste seven different foods. Everything that will be served to you is a food and meant to be eaten. There is a theme to the foods that you will be tasting. Your job is to figure out what each food is and what theme ties all the foods together.

First, **are there any food allergies here?**

Each participant is given a blindfold/bandana and asked to, when instructed, reach out to take the toothpick or spoon on their plate to eat the thing they are being served. They should take time smell it, and get a sense of the way it feels in their mouth before simply chewing and swallowing.

After everyone has eaten, we will ask the group to agree on what they've just eaten. Once all seven foods have been eaten, individuals will guess the theme of this meal. The foods should be served from easiest to most difficult to identify.

*This is an activity that can be adapted for different settings and with different educational goals. As a learning module, consider it a way to get your campers to be adventurous with their palates, to consider the senses of smell and touch (through food texture) in addition to taste. How do these contribute to our ability to assess what we are eating? How do our senses work together to help us enjoy a meal?*

*How else could you use this modality?*

Possible Categories of Foods to Choose:

- Seven Biblical Species: wheat, barley, fig, pomegranate, grapes, dates and olives
- Courses in a traditional/classic/favorite holiday or Shabbat meal
- The foods of a specific holiday: Chanukah, Rosh Hashanah, etc.
- The foods of a specific community: Ashkenazi, Iraqi, etc.
- Is it Israeli? Foods that are and are not common on the Israeli table
- Favorite foods at camp? (Part of new camper/new staff orientation)

### 1:00-1:10 ELEVATED MEALS – HOW TO ACHIEVE JEWISH LEARNING DURING ORGANIZED CHAOS *Pirkei Avot*

(3:4) reports that Rabbi Shimon taught, "...[I]f three have eaten at one table and have spoken over it words of Torah, it is as if they had eaten from the table of the Divine...." In the context of our camps, let us understand "Torah" as "conversations of meaning."

How can we elevate the tables we eat upon to invite serious conversations alongside silly ones? How can we use it as a chance to teach more than the daily schedule, but also where our people come from and what we value? Could it be a place to create a program of meaning that can't be accomplished during evening program or cabin time?

Here are a few ideas that can spice up the routine of camp meals while also introducing ways to do creative education at camp. What if you had...

- a. CONVERSATION TABLE TENTS – THE SIMPLEST WAY TO ENGAGE YOUR TABLE AND HELP YOUR CABINS IN GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER. ASK THEM QUESTIONS? GIVE THEM PUZZLES TO SOLVE AT THE TABLE. QUIZ EACH OTHER ON WHAT THEY KNOW ABOUT ONE ANOTHER? ABOUT CAMP?
- b. DINNER THEATER – AS SIMPLE AS A PERFORMANCE DURING A SPECIAL MEAL AND AS ELABORATE AS GIVING CAMPERS AND STAFF ROLES IN THE SHOW.
- c. SOLVE THE MYSTERY! – CLUES ARE GIVEN OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF A MEAL FOR CABINS/UNITS TO SOLVE BY THE END OF THE MEAL. ADDITIONAL CLUES COULD BE HIDDEN IN THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FOOD SERVED AT DINNER.
- d. MENU OF JEWISH HISTORY – SURE YOU’VE SERVED FALAFEL FOR YOM YISRAEL, BUT WHAT ABOUT A LESSON IN ASHKENAZI-AMERICAN HISTORY WHEN YOU SERVE DELI?
- e. EATING OUT OF JEWISH TIME – WHO SAYS YOU HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL CHANUKAH TO EAT LATKES AND JELLY DONUTS? SERVE CHAROSET AND MATZAH PIZZA ANY NIGHT OF THE WEEK WITH JEWISH HOLIDAY MENUS.

### 1:15-1:25 GRACE AFTER MEALS

We will spend a lot of time together thinking and talking about gratitude. As our three pillars of Jewish eating teach us, the final step in establishing a meal as Jewish is to express gratitude. This is not unique to Jews, but is something that distinguishes Jewish eating from secular eating.

Let’s look at some examples from our Blessings (and songs) for Food.

- a. REVIEW—
  - i. (AN OLD) BLESSING FOR FOOD (YIDDISH→HEBREW)
  - ii. PRAYERS FROM INTERFAITH WORKER JUSTICE (v. 1 & 2)
  - iii. V’ACHALTA SONG
- b. TIME PERMITTING: WRITE YOUR OWN!

### 1:25-1:30 CLOSING WRITTEN REFLECTION – 5 MINUTES

Feel free to write on one or all of the following questions, or simply write what you’re thinking about and taking away from today’s learning:

- What thoughts about eating and mealtime have been stirred up by today’s conversation?
- What are the ways that you personally express gratitude for your food?
- In what ways does your camp honor what is sacred about mealtime? In what ways does your camp make mealtime profane (opposite of sacred)?