

Peulat Shabbat for Parashat Re'eh 15 Aug

The theme of this last Shabbat is tradition. We'll be discussing camp traditions, family traditions, and Jewish traditions, their impacts on our lives and their origins. We'll focus on how we are able to bring the traditions, energy, and joy of camp back home. We also want to show that it doesn't really matter why we do a particular thing as long as the thing has meaning for us. The Hachanah L'shabbat will introduce the theme with the story about the song, fire, prayer, and place that saved the city. Rabbi Rosenbaum will deliver a D'var Torah on parashat Re'eh (the connection can be through holidays or through Israel or something else altogether). The peulat shabbat will be on Camp Traditions, a chance to pause and reflect about the whole summer.

Story for Hachanah L'shabbat

This story begins with the great Baal Shem Tov, who founded Hasidism a few hundred years ago in Eastern Europe. Once, the Baal Shem Tov heard of an awful disaster that threatened his people. He went to a certain place deep in the forest, where he used to meditate. There he lit a fire, and offered a special prayer, and the disaster was averted.

A generation later, the Baal Shem Tov's disciple, the Maggid of Mazrich, heard that a terrible misfortune again threatened the people. He too went deep into the forest. He said, "Master of the Universe, listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to come this place, and to say the special prayer." So he prayed as the Baal Shem Tov had, and again disaster was prevented.

The years passed. It came time for Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sasov to perform the same task. He went deep into the forest, and called out, "I can no longer light the fire, nor do I know the secret meditations belonging to the prayer. But I do know the place in the woods. This must be sufficient!" And it was sufficient, for the terrible misfortune did not take place.

Another generation; it was Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn's turn to protect his people. He gathered them around him and told the story of how once their great ancestor, the Baal Shem Tov, offered a special prayer and disaster was averted. Rabbi Israel didn't mention the forest or the fire, for he didn't know the details, nor did he know the words of the prayer. But, he said, "We can tell the story of what once was done, and that must be sufficient." And it was.

Peulat Shabbat

5pm Introduction (all together): Story about the synagogue where everybody bows down at a particular place.

5:10 Activity (in groups): Create skits to explain the "origins" of camp traditions. (Oh my Lord, Uf Gozal, Yom Foam, oatmeal sundays at etgar, shabbat brownies) Be creative! Include Jewish content/be funny.

5:25 Presentation (all together): Each group should show how their tradition was started and explain to the whole group why we continue to do this to this day.

5:35 Discussion (in groups): Process the story and the activity. Discuss personal traditions, and share family traditions. Talk about how we can bring camp traditions home. Reflect on the session and the summer. Talk about the Pirkei Avot text.

Discussion questions:

Who wants to share a family tradition?

What makes these traditions special?

Do you know why you have these traditions?

Will you pass them on to your children?

What's your favorite camp tradition?

What was one camp tradition you experienced this month that was new to you?

What made these traditions special to you and special to camp?

What camp tradition would you want to take home to share with your family?

How do you think you'll be able to take home these pieces of camp?

Why do you think camp and family are places where a lot of traditions are created and passed down?

Why are traditions important to us as Jews?

Read the text from Pirkei Avot:

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Members of the Great Assembly. (Ethics of the Sages 1:1)

Does anyone know who the Great Assembly was? (the Anshe Knesset HaGedolah, or the Members of the Great Assembly, convened in Jerusalem during the Second Temple period, to consider and enforce Jewish law, finalize the canonization of the Bible, and institute basic blessings and prayers--- In other words, they are the precursors to the Rabbis and Rabbinic Authority)

Does the transmission stop there? (No-- the whole book for Pirkei Avot shows the progression from the Knesset HaGedolah through to the Rabbis in successive generations.) By reading this text, we ourselves join in the conversation the participate in the transmission of tradition.

5:50 Seudat Shlishit singing (all together)