

End of Shabbat Plan: *Sichot* & *Se'udat Shlishit*

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Action Plan:

This modification to the camp *limud* tradition is two – fold. The first change involves removing *edat hamachon* and *tzofim* from the educational track followed by the rest of the camp during the end of *shabbat* and introducing the campers to a new and more meaningful program called *sichot* (conversations). This program revolves around *madrich* – led discussions about different Jewish themes and is fueled by *chanich* interest in considering and discussing these issues. Topics include the existence of God, defining morality/the role of *mitzvot* in the modern world, intermarriage, the value of *Shabbat* and understanding the Jewish community.

The second aspect of this program will lead the *chanichim* from the discussions into a *se'udah shlishit* experience. This “experience” will include traditional singing, introspection, *divrei torah* by both *madrachim* and/or the *rosh edah* as well as by *chanichim*. The program will then transition directly into *havdallah*.

Despite the modification to the typical *limud* content, a large change which this program requires is the time with which *tzofim* and *machon* eat dinner in the *chadar*. In order for the *sichot* to be effective and successfully transition into the *se'udat shlishit* singing/introspective end of *shabbat* experience, *chanichim* must eat quickly after *sichot* and get out their post – *mincha* energy. After eating they will be more calm and receptive to the program and will take the singing seriously.

Goals:

- * Create an atmosphere in which *chanichim* take *sichot* seriously and actively participate in discussion
- * Utilize the end of *Shabbat* mood to catalyze introspection, reflection and growth
- * Teach *se'udat shlishit* songs
- * Create more time for *chanichim* to give *divrei torah*
- * Minimize the craziness in the *chadar* during spaghetti dinner
- * Make a smooth transition directly into *havdallah*

Program Outline:

Sipur

After the *sipur* by the buddy trees, a *madrich/a* will use the remaining time to teach a *se'udat shlishit* song which will then be sung for the rest of the session.

Mincha

Chanichim finish davening and head directly to *sichot* on the Whizing field

Sichot

4-6 minute *madrich* intro to *sichot*

A *madrich* will briefly introduce the week's topic by telling a personal story (ie. Being hurt by someone's gossip, encountering God, etc.), quoting a text, or giving an overview

Break out *sichot* groups (30-40 minutes)

Chanichim will break up by *ohel* with their *madrachim* and find different locations to sit and discuss

The *madrachim* will have source sheets with questions and prompts, used only to spark discussion if conversation slows.

Aruchat Erev and benching

The meal will be eaten with the rest of camp but these *chanichim* will start a bit later (~7:40)
Machon and *Tzofim* eat quickly and leave the *chadar* without benching
Machon sits on the southern side of the BKR (on the hill)
Tzofim sits on the steps of the Whizin

Singing

Chanichim enter building singing *Shalom Rav* and are told prior to appreciate the new space they are entering

Once everyone is seated (with the song leaders in the middle) the entire group sings *Shalom Rav* one more time together, and then several rounds of *Hinei Matov*

Madrich introduces *rosh edah* for story, reflection, advice, realization, etc.

Continuous singing

Direct transition from end of *drash* (clapping and applauding ought to be hushed to maintain the somber mood) into singing:

Tov L'Hodot, Ana B'Koach, HaMalach HaGoel, Im Eshkachech, Acheinu, V'ha'er Eineinu

Words from *chanich/a* about *Shabbat*, personal story or experience, reflection, etc.

Each week a different *chanich* will present a prepared reflection to the *edah*. It is important for a *madrich/a* to inform the speaker ahead of time to maintain a somber, slow tone and not to use the stage as a time to build *ruach*.

Final Singing

Direct transition into *Mizmor L'David, Yainais*, and finally *Y'did Nefesh*

Haydallah

Week #1 - What is God?

*Tzofim Machon Sichot
Kayitz 2010*

Discussion shall begin by going around, starting with a counselor, and having each kid give his insight on God. Does God exist? What is God? When have you felt God's presence or absence?

If group discussion slows or *chanichim* "run out of answers" or things to say, please use the following questions and sources not to "teach," but to give jumping off points to further discussion:

Question 1: Our understanding of God is often limited by our definition.

"The greatest impediment to the human spirit, or reaching maturity, results from the fact that the conception of Hashem is crystallized among people in a particular form, going back to childish habit and imagination." –Rav Kook

How do our perceptions of God differ from those we learned as a child?

Question 2: Sometimes, such as in the source below, God is described as having human attributes.

"And the woman [Eve] saw that the tree was good for eating and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable for comprehension, and she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked; and they sewed together a fig leaf and made themselves aprons. **They heard the sound of *HASHEM* God walking in the garden** toward the direction of the sun; and the man and his wife hid from *HASHEM* God among the trees of the garden." – *Breishit* 3:6-9

How are we to understand personifications of God such as this one?

Question 3: How is *Hashem* different from other gods?

Question 4: Is it possible to have Judaism without belief in God? Is it possible to have God without acceptance of Judaism?

Question 5: If you don't believe in God, why does the concept exist?

Week #2 - Where Do We Find Our Morals?

*Tzofim Machon Sichot
Kayitz 2010*

Discussion shall begin by going around, starting with a counselor, and having each kid give insight on the following prompt.

How much of your value system comes from Judaism verses what you feel is right? Where do they overlap? Where do they conflict?

If group discussion slows or *chanichim* “run out of answers” or things to say, please use questions 1 and 2 as sources not to “teach,” but to give jumping off points to further discussion.

Note: After 35 minutes or if topic becomes exhausted, please be sure to transition smoothly to question 3.

Question 1: Many modern thinkers have tried to establish morality without using a religious foundation. However, they are unable to prove their moral code as the best option for others:

“The central weakness of modern western thought...is its inability to provide a compelling basis for moral action...Kant [a philosopher] sought to build an approach to morality based purely on rational statements. He was forced to concede, however, that while such a method may describe ethical action in theory, it cannot explain why anyone should decide to act on the basis of this theory.” – David Hazony, God, Man and History

How can there be objective (definite) right and wrong if not determined by religion? Is morality simply subjective (determined by the individual)?

Question 2: Judaism gives us definitions of what is right and wrong. Examples are ‘Don’t eat pig’ and ‘Respect your parents’. Yet, in the quote below, we are commanded to *choose* what is good and right:

“He has told you, Oh man, what is good! What does *HASHEM* require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” –*Micha* 5:8

Is it okay to do things against Judaism if we think they are right? How are we to determine right from wrong if not for Jewish law?

Question 3: How would you handle a situation where you’ve fallen in love with a non-Jew? Judaism clearly forbids such a marriage yet your heart is in favor. Is it right to marry them?

Week #3 - What is *Shabbat* to You?

Tzofim Machon Sichot
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Discussion shall begin by going around, starting with a counselor, and having each *chanich* give insight on the following prompt.

What does *Shabbat* mean to you, and how do you celebrate it? How do you feel about the specific laws in Judaism pertaining to the day (i.e. no electricity, no driving, no writing, increased singing and food)?

If group discussion slows or *chanichim* “run out of answers” or things to say, please use the questions below as sources not to “teach,” but to give jumping off points to further discussion.

Question 1: The Torah prohibits us from doing “work” on *Shabbat*, which has been expanded to a vast number of restrictions:

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord, your G-d; **you shall not do any work.**” (Exodus 20:8)

Why would the *Torah* tell us not to do so many various activities? Why would this enhance the *Shabbat* experience?

Question 2: *Shabbat* is a day different than all other days of the week. On this day, we are to focus on concepts perhaps not present amidst our busy weekly lives:

“The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. **Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time.** It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation, from the world of creation to the creation of the world.” – *The Sabbath* by Abraham Joshua Heschel

What is the difference between sanctifying time and objects? What does it mean to create during the week and then abstain on *Shabbat* while focusing on the creation of the world? How and why should our mindset change on this day?

Question 3: Why do we eat so much on *Shabbat* (at least 3 meals)? How does food enhance the *Shabbat* experience?

Week #4 - The Jewish *Kehilah*

Tzofim Machon Sichot
Kayitz 2010

Discussion shall begin by going around, starting with a *madrich*, and having each *chanich* give insight on the following prompt.

What is the importance of being part of a Jewish community – having Jewish friends, living in a Jewish neighborhood, doing Jewish activities, etc.? How would your life be different if there were no practicing Jews in your area?

If group discussion slows or *chanichim* “run out of answers” or things to say, please use the questions below as sources not to “teach,” but to give jumping off points to further discussion.

Note: Please be sure to touch on question 3 before *Sichot* end. Do so when you feel you have adequately discussed the importance of a Jewish community.

Question 1: There is a commonly referenced law in the *mishna*:

“Hillel said, ‘Do not separate from the community.’” (*Pirkei Avot* 2:4)

Why do you think Judaism emphasizes and codifies staying within an established Jewish community as part of Jewish law?

Question 2: Do you feel a different connection with your Jewish friends (such as those at camp) versus your non-Jewish ones? If so, how is the connection different, and why do you think this is the case? If not, what makes your Jewish friends different from your non-Jewish friends?

Question 3: The land of Israel is meant to serve as a national community embodying the values which we hold so dear in our Jewish communities in America:

“Here, in the land of Israel, we returned and built a nation. Here, in the land of Israel, we established a state. The land of the prophets, which **bequeathed to the world the values of morality, law and justice**, was, after two thousand years, restored.” –Yitzchak Rabin

Why do you think Israel can be considered the epitome of a Jewish community? What is our role as American Jews to experience or become a part of that community?

Program Reflection

Without any doubt, the *sichot* and *se'udat shlishit* program has been a widespread success, accomplishing virtually all of the set goals and establishing a strong precedent for years to come.

Across the board, *madrichim* and *chanichim* found *sichot* both substantial and engaging, relevant while provocative. Having *madrichim* lead discussions proved to be a useful tool for engaging *chanichim* in honest discussion and created an environment in which all felt comfortable sharing personal thoughts. Because of the removed location, groups were not distracted by the dinner – time rush to the dining hall and were consistently cut off in discussion only because of lack of time and not interest. During the first week of *sichot*, groups were dismissed for dinner and only 2 groups moved got up; everyone else finished the conversation. Discussions persisted for a long time and one girls' tent came ten minutes late embracing each other with tears in their eyes. Even *madrichim* without general interest in Jewish topics found *sichot* to be an important platform for honest conversation and found it a much more meaningful time than the typical *limud* on the hill.

Although *tzofim* and *machon* varied in their *se'udat shlishit* programs, both *edot* used the time to sing, reflect and say goodbye to *Shabbat* in a meaningful way. Without elaborating, it is enough to say that the program successfully created a significant experience for many *madrichim* and *chanichim* alike, preparing them for future *Shabbat* experiences.

Tzofim had a different experience than *machon*, with greater hesitation and distraction from singing. It took this *edah* a few trials to narrow down the ideal manner to have the program (learned through error not to sing for too long, which physical location was most effective, how to behave as counselors) and ultimately created a successful experience. Some of the *tzofim madrichim* remarked that it is not always easy for everyone to engage in the somber mood and find it meaningful and that this forced atmosphere was at times uninteresting. Other *madrichim* voiced frustration over the length of the singing, claiming that it just dragged on too long. Despite these complications, the *tzevet* acknowledges that the *se'udat shlishit* program is a serious improvement over years past (chaos in the dining hall waiting for *Shabbat* to end) and that concluding four sessions have been quite powerful.

Machon created an environment where *chanichim* felt at ease to sing, link arms, sway and reflect. The *Rosh Edah*, gave an address after everyone was seated, stimulating the audiences introspective thoughts and emotions. After much singing (certain songs taught earlier after *sipur*), a *chanichi/a* stood in the middle and addressed the group with a personal reflection, story, or wish for the *edah*. The *machon tzevet* learned that quick and well-timed transitions are key to preserving the somber mood. Also, *Birkhat HaMazon* began as a part of the singing (at the tail end) and yet because of the upbeat *Shabbat* melodies, it became logistically counter-productive to the somber goal. Now, *adat HaMachon* benches before entering the room where the singing happens.

As stated above, both *edot* have come across with successful and meaningful end of *shabbat* traditions which ought to be passed on. These *edot* have established a precedent for how *Shabbat* ought to end and will continue on to future years (whether camper or on seminar).

When approached with the question, “what do you think about the *Se'udat Shlishit* program” one girl answered, ‘It’s my favorite time of *Shabbat* and I look forward to it every week.’”

