

Count Your Blessings – Israel
Spring Sub-Regional Conventions
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Objective: To have USYers discuss the different blessings that Jews in the Diaspora can be saying for the nation and the people of Israel during war and peace time. Each group will create a synergized, meaningful blessing for different aspects of Israel and then present it to the other groups. It will then become important for everyone to understand that we all view Israel in a very personal way and that all of these blessings are appropriate and correct, just not always the same.

Materials:

7 stations

Your hopes and prayers

Procedure:

1. Break off large group into smaller groups
2. The leader of the group will introduce the objective of this project
3. Each station will have a specific prayer to discuss and do an activity with

Station 1: Prayer for the IDF

- Have one member of the group recite the prayer for the Israel Defense Forces, speak briefly about it
- Gadna activities: challenge to see who can do the most push – ups, sit – ups, in one minute etc. The leader should be firm and embody the character of a drill sergeant. Demand group to make Het formation in between activities

He Who blessed our forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob -- may He bless the fighters of the Israel Defense Forces, who stand guard over our land and the cities of our God, from the border of the Lebanon to the desert of Egypt, and from the Great Sea unto the approach of the Aravah, on the land, in the air, and on the sea.

May the Almighty cause the enemies who rise up against us to be struck down before them. May the Holy One, Blessed is He, preserve and rescue our fighters from every trouble and distress and from every plague and illness, and may He send blessing and success in their every endeavor.

May He lead our enemies under our soldiers' sway and may He grant them salvation and crown them with victory. And may there be fulfilled for them the verse: For it is the Lord your God, Who goes with you to battle your enemies for you to save you.

Now let us respond: Amen.

Station 2. Prayer for captured and missing soldiers

- Have someone recite the prayer for the rescue of missing soldiers and those others held captive
- Have leader explain rules of Red Rover, Red Rover (The immediate goal for the person called is to run to the other line and break the chain (formed by the linking of hands). If the person called fails to break the chain, this player joins the team which called "Red rover." However, if the player successfully breaks the chain, this player may take his/her pick of either of the two "links" broken by his/her successful jaunt. This unfortunate broken link then joins the team that had been called out. The other team then enjoys the opportunity and challenge of calling out "Red rover" for a player on the first team, and so on.)
- Cops and Robbers can also be played (Cops and Robbers, sometimes called "team tag", "Manhunt" and "Chase", has players split into two teams: cops (the "it" team; the team in pursuit) and robbers (the team being chased). The cops arrest the robbers by tagging, and put them in "jail". One of the robbers can stage a jailbreak by tagging one of the prisoners without getting tagged himself. Unlike ordinary tag, there is a possible conclusion when all the robbers are in jail.)

May it be your will, Hashem, our God and God of our ancestors, that these Psalms that we have read,
will find favor before You, as if King David, your servant, had recited them himself.
For the sake of Your Holy Name, may our prayer and request be accepted with mercy and favor,
and
may our supplication come before You, to show mercy and loving kindness for our captives and missing soldiers:

Mercifully save them, together with all the captives and prisoners of your people Israel. He who redeems prisoners shall save them from captivity and take them out of slavery to freedom, and from oppression to redemption, and from darkness to light, and He shall heal them fully in soul and body, and grant them strength, happiness and joy, so they shall be strong, healthy and content.

May the merit and cries of prayer of the many, who beseech You on their behalf, from all corners of the earth, serve as a mighty shield and annul any evil decree, and may their merits and deeds for the sake of our people and homeland, be presented before You.

May the following verse be realized for them:

And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Station 3. Prayer for Israel's government, leaders and advisors

- Have someone recite the prayer for Israel's government
- Play Mother May I (One player plays the "mother" or "father" – in this case the government). The other players are the "children" – in this case the people of Israel). To begin the game, the mother or father stands at one end of a room, while all the children line up at the other end. The children take turns asking "Mother/Father, may I ____?" and makes a movement suggestion. For example, one might ask, "Mother, may I take five steps forward?" The mother/father either replies "Yes, you may" or "No, you may not do that, but you may _____ instead" and inserts his/her own suggestion. The players usually move closer to the mother/father but are sometimes led farther away. Even if the mother/father makes an unfavorable suggestion, the child must still perform it. The first of the children to reach the location of the mother/father wins the game. That child then becomes the mother/father himself, the original mother/father becomes a child, and a new round begins.
- Red Light Green Light can also be played (The "it" person stands at one end of the playing field, with the rest of the players at the other end. "It" turns their back to the others and calls out "Green light!" The players then run as fast as they can towards "it". At any time, "it" can face the players, calling out "Red light", and the others must freeze in place. If anyone fails to stop, they are out or must return to the starting line. Other variations include calling out "Yellow light" as a diversion, or where they must walk instead of run to "it". Calling Yellow Light has no consequence. The first player to reach the person who is "it" wins and becomes "it" for the next round.)

He Who grants salvation to kings and dominion to rulers, Whose kingdom is a kingdom spanning all eternities; Who releases David, His servant, from the evil sword; Who places a road in the sea and a path in the mighty waters - may He bless the President, the Vice President, and all the constituted officers of government of this land.

The King Who reigns over kings, in His mercy may He sustain them and protect them; from every trouble, woe and injury, may He rescue them; and put into their heart and into the heart of all their counselors compassion to do good with us and with all Israel, our brethren. In their days and in ours, may Judah be saved and may Israel dwell securely, and may the Redeemer come to Zion. So may it be His will.

Station 4. Shema

- Have group members recite the Shema and talk about what it means for the people of Israel, there and abroad
- Have group play telephone using lines like “I love falafel” or “The Dead Sea is really salty” etc

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד 

Sh'ma Yis'ra'eil Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad.
Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.

In an undertone:

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Barukh sheim k'vod malkhuto l'olam va'ed.
Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever.

Station 5. Prayer for the sick and injured

- Have a group member recite the prayer for those who are sick and injured
- Have group perform meditations exercises

Steps of Energy Healing Meditation



1. Sit reasonably straight and close your eyes.
2. Breathe slowly, as silently as possible. (Holding your breath after inhaling or exhaling is not recommended.)
3. As you inhale, feel yourself breathing the healing Life Force in through your solar plexus. Picture this Life Force as a very refined, light energy.

4. As you exhale, gently direct this light energy to the afflicted area. If there is not a specific ailing area, disperse this light energy throughout your body as you exhale.

5. Continue until you feel the area has received enough Life Force.

Steps of Mindfulness Meditation

1. Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
2. Direct your attention to your breathing.
3. When thoughts, emotions, physical feelings or external sounds occur, simply accept them, giving them the space to come and go without judging or getting involved with them.
4. When you notice that your attention has drifted off and become engaged in thoughts or feelings, simply bring it back to your breathing and continue.



* Remember... it's ok and natural for thoughts to arise, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.

Benefits of this meditation:

- Maintaining your calm inner awareness, balance & clarity in the midst of any situation.
- A gradual shift to a higher level of consciousness... centered in the peace, joy & freedom of your Spirit.
- Increased insight & clarity... seeing things truly, as they are.
- Stress reduction

May the One who blessed our ancestors --
Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
Matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah --
bless and heal the one who is ill:
May the Holy Blessed One
overflow with compassion upon him/her,
to restore him/her,
to heal him/her,
to strengthen him/her,
to enliven him/her.

The One will send him/her, speedily,
a complete healing --
healing of the soul and healing of the body --
along with all the ill,
among the people of Israel and all humankind,
soon,
speedily,
without delay,
and let us all say: Amen!

Station 6. Prayer for the State of Israel

- Have one group member recite the prayer for the state of Israel in Hebrew and another to recite it in English
- Play Etz Pri Perach. (The group leader walks around the inside of the circle and points to one of the players and says either “Etz, Pri, Perach... Pri”; “Etz, Pri, Perach... Perach”; or “Etz, Pri, Perach... Etz.” The leader then begins to count to five. The player must name either a fruit, a flower or a tree, depending on what the last word was, either pri, perach or etz respectively. If s/he manages this, s/he becomes the game leader. (Only flowers, fruits or trees found in Israel are allowed.)
- Play What I Took to Israel The leader asks all the participants to sit in a circle. The first person (or the leader) says: (**When I went to Israel, I took with me...**) and supplies the name of an object in Hebrew. The next person in the circle repeats the sentence, saying what the first person took and adding an object of his/her own.

Our Father in Heaven, Rock and Redeemer of the people Israel; Bless the State of Israel,
with its promise of redemption. Shield it with Your love; spread over it the shelter of Your
peace. Guide its leaders and advisors with Your light and Your truth. Help them with Your
good counsel. Strengthen the hands of those who defend our Holy Land. Deliver them; crown
their efforts with triumph. Bless the land with peace, and its inhabitants with lasting joy. And let us say: Amen

Station 7: Prayer for total peace

- Have a group member recite the prayer for peace in English
- Discuss what we can do to foster peace in Israel and abroad as a global society
- Distribute red string, the group divide into pairs and ask the members of the pair to think of their own prayer for the state of Israel as their partner ties the bracelet for them. Make sure everyone has a partner to do so with and create a serious mood as well.

**May we see the day when war and bloodshed cease
when a great peace will embrace the whole world**

**Then nation shall not threaten nation
and humankind will not again know war.**

**For all who live on earth shall realize
we have not come into being to hate or destroy**

**We have come into being
to praise, to labour and to love.**

**Compassionate God, bless all the leaders of all nations
with the power of compassion.**

Fulfill the promise conveyed in Scripture:

**"I will bring peace to the land,
and you shall lie down and no one shall terrify you.
I will rid the land of vicious beasts
and it shall not be ravaged by war."**

Let love and justice flow like a mighty stream.

Let peace fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.

And let us say: Amen