Prayers & Blessings: Food

Easy at-home Jewish learning from the ISJL

THE BIG IDEA: *Bir'kat haMazon* (Blessing of Food/Grace After Meals)
One of the ways in which culture is enacted is through food and meal practices. Judaism is no different, and part of that food practice has to do with praising God both before and after meals. Michael Balinsky explains in a Bimbam video what exactly is contained in *bir'kat hamazon* (blessing of food/grace after meals). You can learn more at the following link:
https://www.bimbam.com/hamazon/

PRAYER: Read and Recite
Read through and practice the various prayers Jews say before eating food at the following link:
https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blessings-for-food-drink

After reading the article, discuss these questions with someone else:

- Based on your breakfast, what prayer(s) should you have said before eating?
- How does reciting a prayer before eating affect how you feel when you are eating?

Try to use as many prayers as you can throughout the coming day as you snack and munch on delicious items.

ACTIVITY: Mediterranean Feast
Mediterranean food—food from around the Mediterranean Sea—consists of many fresh dishes and assorted fruits and vegetables grown in the region. Make and gather a few Mediterranean foods and practice saying the appropriate prayers before and after sampling your snacks. Examples of what to prepare and eat include: vegetables like cucumbers and bell peppers, pita bread, hummus, and rice.

Using the article from the previous activity, look up which prayers to say over which foods. For example, before eating pita, say the prayer over bread, but before eating rice, say the prayer over "varieties of nourishment."

Finally, after cleaning up, participants will practice reciting the *bir'kat hamazon*, the prayer after eating. This prayer can be found at the following link: https://reformjudaism.org/practice/prayers-blessings/daily-blessings-birkat-hamazon-grace-after-meals-short-version

ACTIVITY: Food Meditation

As we think about the prayers that relate to food, we should also consider the intention we can bring to food and how it comes to our plates. Choose one of your favorite foods to use in a food meditation.

Ask someone to read this food meditation to you as you prepare for and eat your snack: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1J4xhbaCqGtEKKvSYJEIQDQ7SueN_30FLQ-n8EBySvwg/edit?usp=sharing

Readers should read each line aloud slowly.

After the meditation, discuss these questions:

- What does it feel like when you're hungry?
- What Jewish foods are important to you?