

7 easy steps to a **Camp Shabbat** at your synagogue

The goals of a Camp Shabbat are to:

- ✓ promote camp attendance from your congregation
- ✓ recognize those campers and staff who have attended camp
- ✓ strengthen the camp community within your Temple community
- ✓ raise the “camp awareness” level in your congregation

Step 1

Decide on an appropriate service for your Camp Shabbat. Choose a Friday night or Saturday morning when your synagogue has a service attended by families with school-age children. Family services? Children’s services?

Step 2

Include the date of your Camp Shabbat service in your synagogue’s bulletin, bi-monthly mailing, email calendar, or whatever your synagogue sends out to let the congregation know what’s happening.

Step 3 (or Step 1)

Meet with your rabbi/cantor/educator to plan what your camp service will include. Who will speak? Rabbi? Cantor? Educator? Ambassador? Campers? Parents? Camp Director? Some combination of the above? The rabbi or cantor might talk a bit about the importance of camp from a Jewish identity perspective. A parent might speak about the positive impact camp has had on his child. A camper might speak about why she loves camp and why she thinks other children should join her next summer. The camp ambassador might introduce himself so that families will know that they can go to him with questions about camp. The educator might speak about the seamlessness between the URJ Religious School and our URJ camps. The Director will speak about the magic of Eisner/Crane Lake/Sci-Tech. (Don’t plan for too many speakers!)

Perhaps the campers can sing a camp song or chant a prayer using a camp tune. It’s a great idea to show your congregation how much our campers learn while at camp instead of just telling them. Let your campers show off a bit!

Be in touch with the camp office and see if one of the Directors can attend as well. The Directors often attend these services and can either speak from the *Bimah*, or simply be available at the dinner and/or Oneg to visit with campers and answer any questions prospective parents and campers might have.

Step 4

Send an invitation letter to every camper and staff member who attended camp last summer. This can come from the rabbi, cantor, educator, or ambassador. If you would like to invite a camper and/or parent to speak, this invitation is the time to invite them to do so. Ask them to wear their camp T-shirt to the service. The camp office can provide you with a list of campers from your congregation.

Step 5

Make name tags for each camper so others can easily identify them (campers don't always have a camp T-shirt to wear). Include the camper's name, camp, and for how many years he/she attended. You can make them for camp parents as well!

Step 6

Enjoy the service! Watch for the smiling faces of your congregation as they experience a bit of camp magic as they listen and watch the participants on the *Bimah*.

Step 7

At the Oneg Shabbat or Kiddush following services, have the camp video playing on a large screen. Ask campers to stick around to answer any questions perspective camp families may have. Distribute brochures and camp swag. Serve s'mores at the Oneg!

(It's also a nice idea to arrange a pot-luck Shabbat dinner for all your camp families at the Temple prior to or following the Camp Shabbat service.)

SAMPLE CAMPER AND STAFF LETTER

Dear Eisner, Crane Lake and Sci-Tech Campers,

Our regular Family Shabbat service on December 5th at 6:30 pm will be our first-ever Eisner, Crane Lake and Sci-Tech Camp Shabbat. We'll invite all our campers onto the *Bimah* to sing a camp song or two. A few campers will speak briefly about their time at camp and at the Oneg Shabbat we'll be able to talk to families about our own experiences at camp. Please be sure to wear your camp T-shirt!

I hope you can be present on December 5th. We want to make sure that all our campers and staff stand proudly together on the *Bimah*. Let's share some camp magic and *Ruach* with the members of Temple Shalom!

Please let me know if you can attend. You can email me at myname@gmail.com. In your email, please tell me the number of summers you've been at camp. I will be making us all name tags and would like to include this information on the tag.

I hope you're registered for the summer of 2018. It's going to be another camptastic summer!

L'shalom,

Rabbi or Camp Ambassador