



**JWB Jewish  
Chaplains Council**  
Serving Jews Who Serve®  
a signature program of  JCC Association  
of North America

***TAG-tivities***  
TAG: Daily Living Through a Jewish Lens

## **TAG**ativity: **The Blessings of Liberty**



**TAG: Issues of Daily Living Through a Jewish Lens** is a resource library of interactive and thought-provoking activities originally developed for JCC day and overnight camps and after-school programs. TAG activities—which address all aspects of life from hospitality, kindness, and sportsmanship to body image, diversity, friendship, community, and more—trigger conversation and reflection about Jewish meaning in today’s world. They incorporate drama, discussion, games, art, music, storytelling, and Jewish text study, enabling participants to access the relevancy of Jewish wisdom through various channels.

Initiated in 2004 by the Mandel Center for Jewish Education (MCJE), TAG resources provide flexible, engaging Jewish learning materials that reflect the JCC Movement’s pluralistic and inclusive philosophy. Designed to be used by camp counselors without specialized background or training in Jewish content or educational methods, TAG lets them adapt the materials to meet their needs and incorporate informal learning and Jewish wisdom into their campers’ experiences.

These **Fourth of July TAGivities** are the newest addition to the TAG library, designed to help JCC campers and staff explore American ideals through a Jewish lens. JCC Association is happy to make them available to all Jewish camps and community organizations looking for meaningful ways to celebrate America’s birthday.

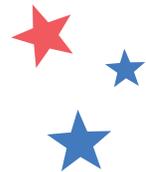
### **ACTIVITY SUMMARY:**

**Format:** Target Audience: All Ages

**Setting:** Any Location

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** A set of flashcards with the individual words/parts of a Jewish blessing written on them. Use 8 1/2 X 11 paper or poster board to make sure they are big enough for everybody to see, masking tape to post the cards, butcher paper or chart paper for recording responses, and a marker.



### **OVERVIEW:**

The Jewish system of bracha, or blessing, requires people to pause and acknowledge their good fortune in that particular moment. This can be in response to a material benefit (food, new clothing), spiritual benefit (putting on a tallit, or prayer shawl, or lighting Shabbat candles), or aesthetic benefit (seeing a rainbow, smelling a flower). The trigger for the bracha is visible, usually. Some blessings, though, are less apparent. They are still worthy of pause and gratitude. This activity applies the formula of the Jewish blessing to the liberty we celebrate on the 4th of July.

## PREPARATION FOR THE ACTIVITY:

Have the blessing flash cards, masking tape, and butcher paper/chart paper ready. Ask three staff members to be the judges' panel for the b'racha contest.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

### PART 1

1. Gather the participants in one spot.
2. Ask the participants if they can list any of the b'rachot, or Jewish blessings, recited in camp or at the JCC. List them.
3. Ask if they know any other b'rachot? What are those b'rachot for? Add them to the list.
4. Ask if they can explain what the purpose is in reciting those b'rachot.
5. Summarize for them: b'rachot are a way to stop and acknowledge our good fortune in that particular moment.
6. Explain (using the b'racha "flashcards": there are lots of different opportunities to recite a b'racha. The formula for a Jewish b'racha is always the same:
  - a. It includes the word baruch
  - b. It includes God's name
  - c. It references God sovereignty.
  - d. Some b'rachot include the words asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu (who set us apart with the mitzvot and commanded us).
  - e. Other b'rachot simply end by identifying the object of the blessing, usually including some verb form indicating God's action in creating that thing (use the motzi, the blessing for bread as an example: hamotzi lechem min haaretz, who takes bread out of the earth.)
7. Practice reciting the b'racha formula to make sure everyone can say the words.

### PART 2

1. Explain: the Jewish system of b'rachot is a formula for expressing gratitude. Today is the 4th of July, a very important American holiday. It's a day for expressing gratitude for many things. It is appropriate, therefore, for American Jews to recite a b'racha on the 4th of July. Unfortunately, there is no "official" b'racha addressing the things you've listed. So we're going to have a contest to create our own 4th of July b'racha.
2. Divide the group into smaller groups and explain:
  - a. Start by making a list of the different things we celebrate on the 4th of July.
  - b. Choose the most important thing. It might be a single item, or you might decide to create a category summarizing a number of the items on your group's list.
  - c. Now apply the b'racha formula and choose the verb to link the beginning of the formula to your 4th of July concept.
  - d. When you're done, each group will present its work and a panel of judges (staff members) will determine the winner.

3. When the groups appear to be finished, reconvene.
4. Ask each group to report and share their work. The judges can score the b'rachot as they are presented, or wait until all are presented and huddle (quickly) to make a decision.
5. Once the judges make their determination, close the activity by asking everybody to practice the b'racha once, and then to stand and recite it "officially."
6. As an extension, representatives from the group can teach the b'racha to the entire camp to be recited at an appropriate moment. It is appropriate to also add the Shehecheyanu b'racha if the camp knows it already.

## B'RACHA FORMULA:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם (אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ)...

*Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam (asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav)...*

Blessed are you Adonai our God, ruler of the universe (who set us apart with the mitzvot and commanded us)...