Creating Natural Art

*Elective 1*

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| **Author(s):** | Josh Lake |
| **summary:** | The natural world inspires artists of every genre to create beautiful works of art. During our time together we will not only explore how nature inspires us, we also will use nature to create the art that tells our story. Introspection, creative writing, and fellow Fellows will help us generate our creative juices and artwork.- *Submitted by* *Josh Lake* |
| **Topic(s):** | NatureArt |
| **Learning Objective:** | 1. Explore natural art in Judaism
2. Explore relationships between ourselves and the natural world
3. Create a natural art masterpiece
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| **Audience:** | This program is suitable for any age. Group size: 5-20 |
| **TIMING:** | 90 minutes |
| **AppendiCes:** | Quotes for natural art |
| **Materials Needed:** | Nautilus shell (or picture of one) |
| **Set-UP DETAILS:** | Outdoors, in forest |

**Session Timeline & Outline:**

**Fibonacci Sequence (5 minutes)**

The Fibonacci Sequence is the series of numbers: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, ... The next number is found by adding up the two numbers before it. Similarly, the 3 is found by adding the two numbers before it (1+2). Show picture of nautilus with math. Patterns of nature.

How this affects us: Human nature is defined by simile – finding relationships between things. For example, it is human nature to look for other faces. A baby’s first interaction is with its other’s face. Then we naturally determine if a face is like that of a friend or foe.

* What do we observe in nature?
* What do we observe in our campers?
* What can we use nature for?
* What can we learn from nature? What can we learn from our campers?
* How do we abuse nature? How do we abuse our campers?
* How do we unlock nature's intended purpose? How do we unlock our campers?

**Natural Quotes (5 minutes)**

Read Heschel quote:

“Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement...get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.

 - Abraham Joshua Heschel (*God in Search of Man*)

Read Benyus quote:

“Learning about the natural world is one thing. Learning from the natural world is something else entirely.” - Dr. Janine Benyus, ”Biomimicry’s Surprising Lessons from Nature's Engineers.” (TED Talk)

**Natural Art in Judaism Hevruta Discussion (15 minutes)**

*Exodus 20:22: Here is G-D talking about alters and pillars erected for prayer/sacrifice.*

When you eventually build a stone alter to Me, do not build it out of cut stone: Your sword will have been lifted against it, you will have profaned it.

כא וְאִם-מִזְבַּח אֲבָנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה-לִּי, **לֹא-תִבְנֶה אֶתְהֶן גָּזִית: כִּי חַרְבְּךָ** הֵנַפְתָּ עָלֶיהָ, וַתְּחַלְלֶהָ.

*Genesis 1:26: Here is G-D speaking to someone, something…about G-D’s last Creation*

Come let us create humans in our image and likeness.

**כו** וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ

Questions to consider:

* To whom is G-D speaking? This is immediately before people where created, but after the rest of creation was Created.
* Could G-D be speaking to nature? To all the things that were already created?
* What would this mean for the creation of humans? That we were created in the image and likeness of …Trees? Birds? Water? Luminaries (sun, moon, stars)? etc.?

*Exodus 31:2-3: The text is speaking about Bezalel, the Jewish artisan par excellence!*

See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

 רְאֵה, קָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם, בְּצַלְאֵל בֶּן-אוּרִי בֶן-חוּר, לְמַטֵּה יְהוּדָה.

ג וָאֲמַלֵּא אֹתוֹ, רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים, בְּחָכְמָה וּבִתְבוּנָה וּבְדַעַת, וּבְכָל-מְלָאכָה.

**Oak Gall and Torah (5 minutes)**

This is what wasps have learned to do:

They have learned to genetically manipulate a tree to grow a house/nursery around their babies!

Jews have derived Torah from this amazing interaction! Torah is *Eitz Chayim Hi*!

Now that you know **about** the oak gall, what can we learn **from** the oak gall?

What does it mean in Jewish terms?

Learning about Torah is one thing; learning from Torah is something completely different.

Share logic from Bal Tashchit.

**Learning to See: Pokeiach Ivrim (10 minutes)**

Find a tree. How big is this tree? Here is a new way of measuring trees. Come up with consensus. Say the blessing, Baruch atah….pokeiach ivrim!

WOW! Look under the ground to see the full size of the tree!

What would it mean if we could build our own homes out of completely natural materials? We have done that for 1000s of years! Only in last 200 have our homes been made out of toxic stuff.

WOW! Look under the ground. Look into the tree. Look into your camper! And, if you still feel silly doing this, this is still ok. Think about how much fun your campers will have learning to talk to trees/plants/animals (we will do a little more talking to animals later).

**Shomer Shabbat Camera (15 minutes)**

Split the group into pairs. Ask them to find a partner they have not worked with or don’t know. Pull one person from group as an example. “Can I have a volunteer as a *doogma* (example)? Thank you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, this will be painless (I hope).”

Explain to the group, “There are many types of vision. For today’s exercise we will limit ourselves to three types of vision. 1. **Direct object vision**. 2. **Peripheral vision**. **3.** **Splatter vision**.

Here is a very brief description of each.”

1. **Direct object vision**: Some people see an object and can describe that object. They look at an animal, tree, flower etc. and can describe exactly what they see.
2. **Peripheral vision**: Some people look and see how one thing may effect or affect something else. For instance, they see a tree casting a shadow. They see the tree, but they are noticing something on the periphery of that tree, namely its shadow.
3. **Splatter vision**: Splatter vision is not seeing any direct object, or any object that affects something else. Splatter vision is a blurring of the picture in front your eyes; sort of like taking a snap shot of everything. Your eyes focus on nothing in order to easily pick up movement or changes in the scene.

All cameras have a few things in common. They have shutters, film or memory, timed exposures, etc. The person you are paired with now, your partner, is your camera. The shutter is that person’s eyes and the film is your partner’s brain/ memory. You can control the timing of the exposure with your shutter button, which is your partner’s earlobe.

* To start the game, your partner closes his/her eyes. (This is where you may employ blindfolds if you like, but it is not necessary.)
* Hold on to your partner’s arm and encourage him or her to keep his or her other arm raised in front of them (“bumpers up” in outdoor gaming terminology).
* Carefully walk your partner to something you would like to capture on film. Remind him/her that in the Torah it says that you should not put a stumbling block in front of the blind (Leviticus 19:14). Here is your blind person; you must not trick them and cause them injury.
* Position her/his eyes (lens) toward the picture you want to take. Photographers, remember the three lenses you can use to take a picture.
* To open the shutter, gently pull on your partner’s earlobe. The shutter will remain open for as long as you hold the earlobe.
* Camera, remember the three lenses you have to choose from.
* The photographer cannot tell the camera which lens s/he wants to use; it’s sort of a funny camera that way. This is where your skill as a photographer comes into play. Can you skillfully capture your desired image? Do not over expose the film or you won’t capture anything. Between 1 and 3 seconds is usually enough time.
* When you have taken the picture, release the earlobe and the shutter snaps closed (eyelids close).
* As with digital cameras, we can see the picture we took immediately.
* Ask your camera about what it saw. Is it what you wanted to capture? How does it differ? You may take 3-4 pictures.
* When you are finished, switch so that the camera now becomes the photographer and the photographer becomes the camera.

**Seeing Creation Through New Eyes** **(15 minutes)**

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772 - 1810) was a great Hassidic rabbi and great-grandson of the Baal-Shem Tov, founder of Hassidic Judaism.

Rabbi Nachman introduced the idea of *Hitbodedut*. This word comes from the Hebrew word *Lehitboded*. Which means “to cause oneself to be alone.” The idea of meditation is not only an Eastern idea. It’s very Jewish. Also Native American. Also…

Now, let’s go and observe nature. Find a quiet spot. Look around.

Use Pokeiach Ivrim to open our eyes. Use oak gall to see a new home and Torah.

Answer these questions about what you see:

* How does this Creation represent the Creator?
* How can we think about perceived purpose vs. intended purpose?
* How can you use this idea?
* What is my role in nature?

**Creating Ourselves Through Nature (15 minutes)**

Can something you create represent you?

Stand up and gather 10 (or so) items from the natural world. Use these items to create something that represents you. You can use any canvas that you want. Please do not destroy anything natural in the process of creation.

* How do these things represent you?
* What is their original purpose?

We are assuming these items were not created to represent you. But here they are, part of a creation that represents you. This is re-purposing.

Introduce Andy Goldsworthy, contemporary natural artist par excellence!

Hevruta up in groups of 3-to-4. (Explain Hevruta).

Each hevruta group goes to each hevruta member’s creation and answers the following questions:

* Why did you pick these objects (List as many as you want of your 10)?
* What is the purpose of these things in nature?
* What is the purpose of these things in your new creation?
* How does your creation represent you?
* What is the purpose of your creation?

**Bringing it Back, Making it Real! (5 minutes)**

Hevruta up. How would you take this back to your camp? What activities would /could you do? Where/when could you the activities at camp? What age group? Etc.

**Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:**