

In the Beginning: A Jewish Journey in Nature (Part 1) *Specialty Track*

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SUMMARY:	In this first session of the nature specialty track, we journey into nature to create and observe our own journeys. From group activities to solo meditation time, we will sojourn with nature and begin our earth learning. - <i>Submitted by Josh Lake</i>
TOPIC(S):	Nature, outdoor games
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	To define the concept of journey and to embark on the process of Jewish journey while exploring what journeys our campers might be on.
AUDIENCE:	5-30 participants, any age.
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Jewish Journeys
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Bandanas.
SET-UP DETAILS:	Facilitate this program outside in nature!

Session Timeline & Outline:

Introduction

5 minutes walking

Welcome! Let's take a small walk/journey. Let's go into the woods. Let's walk with purpose (i.e. not dawdle!) *Yalla!*

7 minutes Introduction.

Chi Gong, Tapping. Tap on your energy points to wake up dead energy. Shaking. Shake off the negative energy. Tapping on your friends. Be respectful. Tapping on head, shoulders, neck, back and legs.

7 minutes

L'Da'ati, The Torah is a story about a journey. We will spend the next 3 days discussing the journey. Let's start with you!

- Sharing your journey: Open up to group discussion:
- What are some different kinds of journeys? (Open questions for the group)
- What kind of journey have you been on?
- Why journey?
- Purpose of journey?

Taking a Journey: Walk to outdoor space with *Kavannah*.

What are the aspects of a journey? Let's begin building a journey rubric:

- Physical
- Spiritual
- Challenging
- Psychological

This is my argument: Journeys build neural pathways! I tutor B'nai Mitzvah students, and I am convinced that the B'nai Mitzvah is also a journey. What kind of a journey? Does it fit into the rubric we have already identified?

Journeys are mysterious (we don't know where journeys will take us).

Challenging (A trip to McDonalds is not challenging and is rarely what we would call a journey.)

Anyone ever see Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure? Now that is a journey that starts at a Circle K.

This is the exception, however!

40 minutes:

Taking a journey. Let's take a few journeys both together and solo. How do these fit into our journey rubric?

The best way to begin a journey is through play. Think of a wolf pup or bear cub leaving their den and rolling and tumbling, basically playing, in their new normal.

Meet a tree

- Have campers/staff split into pairs. Each pair gets a blindfold. One person in pair is blindfolded. The sighted person leads them to a tree. The "blind" person gets one minute to experience their tree with senses other than sight. The sighted camper/staff leads them away from a tree, using funny maneuvers, and then remove the blindfold. The person that experienced their tree then goes to find their tree. Connect the dots, using your sight to connect to when you experienced your tree with your other senses.
- Debrief

Making Art ala Andy Goldsworthy, Rivers and Tides:

- *Batzelel* (in the shadow of G-d): The Jewish artisan par excellent!
- *Exodus 31:3*:
2 'See, I have called by name Betzalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah;
3 and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship'
 - יהודה למטה, חור-בן אורי-בן בצלאל, בשם קראתי, ראה
 - טלאכה-ובקל, וקדעת וקבונה בקמה, אלהים רוח, אתו ואמלא ג
- Each individual will go to create a piece of art in nature.
- Share art pieces

Shomer Shabbat Camera

Activity/Play:

- Lead participants on a walk to an interesting space (preferably outdoors, but it can be indoors too).
- The space should have many objects that a camera can focus on, such as: Trees, flowers, grass, lakes, views, etc.
- Have your participants stand in a circle.
- Explain the activity by using these instructions: (Suggested wording below.)
 - We are going to take pictures today.
 - We call this activity Shomer Shabbat Camera because we will use a camera you can use even on Shabbat!
- 'Where/what are the cameras?' you might ask.
- 'The cameras are right here.' Point to your head and to the participants heads).
- Ask, 'What are the different parts of a camera?'
 - Lens
 - Memory
 - Shutter (the part of the camera that opens and closes to allow the image to burn into the memory).
- What can we use on our bodies that can be used for the parts of the camera? What can we use for the lens? Memory? Shutter?
 - Lens=Eyes
 - Memory=Brain
 - Shutter=Eyelids
- Read the quotes to your participants:
 - Worse than being blind is having sight but no vision. –Helen Keller

Here is how to play **Natural Camera**. (Suggested wording below.)

- Pair up with someone else in the group who you do not know well.
- One person in each pair starts as the photographer (Tza-Lem: תצלם).
- The other person in your pair is the camera (MA-tzL-EmaH: מצלמה).
- The cameras should close their eyes and photographers should cover cameras' eyes with a blindfold (can be bandana, scarf, hat, etc.).
- Photographers should lead their partners (cameras) carefully to a specific scene that the photographers find interesting.
- **Make sure the sighted participant takes care of their sight-impaired partner. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.**
- **"Do not place a stumbling block before the blind." Leviticus 19:14**
- The photographer positions the camera by moving their head **VERY GENTLY**, in the direction of the interesting scene. **(PHOTOGRAPHERS SHOULD HANDLE THE CAMERAS WITH CARE.)**
- Photographers and cameras should consult and decide on an action that opens the cameras shutter (eyes). This could be shoulder/arm/hand/earlobe/etc.
- The photographer can lightly squeeze the camera's shutter to open the lens (eyes).
- The lens stays open for as long as the photographer holds the shutter open).
- When the photographer stops squeezing the camera's shutter (shoulder/arm/hand/earlobe/etc.). the eyes (lens) of the camera close.
- The photographer should move to a new position and take another photograph. The photographer can take a total of 3 photos from 3 different positions. If you have more time, you can take more pictures.
- Consider light, shadow and interesting objects when taking pictures.
- The camera must remember each photo they take.
- After the photographer has taken all 3 (or more) pictures the photographer and camera switch.

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- *The photographer becomes the camera, and the camera becomes the photographer.*
- *The new photographer takes 3 (or more) pictures from various positions with the new camera.*
- *After both participants have taken their photographs, gather everyone together and use the discussion questions below to start a discussion.*

Hitbodedut (solo sit):

- Campers/staff go into the woods and sit quietly by themselves. Share Rav Nachman of Brestlev's quote on *Hitbodedut*.
- Debrief!

10 Minutes

The art of a debrief:

Why debrief? We debrief in order to build neural pathways! Ask these questions after the above activities. You don't need to ask them all, but it might build a neural pathway!

- From a physical journey to a spiritual journey only takes a few minutes and a few questions.
- How was that?
- What did you learn?
- How can you apply what you learned into your everyday life?
- Is it important that you have this knowledge? Why?
- Can you share this knowledge?
- From experiential to reflective.
- **KEY! Moving the camper along the spectrum of understanding:**
 - **Doing what we did to thinking about what we did.**

10 minutes

What is a Jewish Journey: Hevruta Study.

Break into groups of 2-3. Define journey and parts of a journey. We will use this for the next few sessions to build our Jewish Journey rubric.

Look at journey texts.

- Abraham
- Moses
- Superman
- Buddha?!
- The Hero's Journey, Joseph Cambell
-

A journey requires Kavannah (intention)

Can we/should we make camp into a hero's journey for our campers?

15 minutes

Let's talk about your camper's journey

Solo time

Break into groups of 2-3.

Answer these questions:

- Who is your camper?
- Literally, who is he/she? How old, where are they from? What is their background? Can you relate to them?
- How long are they in camp?
- Now let's go to the meta:
- Have they ever spent time in nature?
- Do they like nature?
- Do they like being Jewish?
- Do they know how to be Jewish?

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- Do they know there are connections to being Jewish and being in nature?
- What activities do they like?
- Have they ever slept outside before?
- Have they peed outside before?
- Why will spending time with you, doing these activities, be good for them?

Now let's think about their journey:

- How did they get where they are now?
 - A chauffeured limousine?
 - Walking from their bunk to you?
 - From years and years at camp?
 - Is this their 1st year at camp?
- Are they generally happy? Sad? Nonchalant? Too cool for school?

Now, after having read the stories of a few people's journeys (our ancestors), can you write a short story of your camper's journey, from where they came and how they came to be, to how and why they are with you?

Beginning, leads to journey, leads to current situation leads to future outcome.

10 minutes

Divide group into Hevruta partners, 2-3. (Teach the Hebrew word *haver*-friend. *Hevruta* comes from the root *haver*).

Questions to ask the group: (30 seconds-45 seconds per question)

- What was the goal of this program?
- Is this a goal that could be useful for a program at your camp?
- Which activities/parts of the program did you like the best?
- Can you see using any of these activities in your camp? Where? With whom?
- When would you do the activity?
- Which programs would you not use in your camp? Why?
- What could you do in place of this/those activities?

Reconvene and share any epiphanies.