

Discovering Night: A Dusk/Night Hike *Evening Experience*

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SUMMARY:	Night is a time when our energies are often subdued due to the closing of the visual world. But with the right activities, we can turn night into a fun, rewarding and magical venue to explore the world. - <i>Submitted by Josh Lake</i>
TOPIC(S):	Nature
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Learn how to make your night hike more Jewish. How to expose your campers to the dark so they can enjoy the experience and feel more comfortable.
AUDIENCE:	From age 7 on, 10 or more participants
TIMING:	75 minutes
APPENDICES:	N/A
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<i>Hashkiveinu</i> song sheets/flip chart
SET-UP DETAILS:	Outdoors! In the event of rain/lightening: A large room with a fireplace and access to outdoors is best.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Part 1 (10 minutes)

Introduction:

- Night is a time when our energies are often subdued due to the closing off of the visual world. But with the right activities, we can turn night into a fun, rewarding and magical venue to explore the world.
- Discuss importance of developing night vision and not using a flashlight - what does this do for us? Share that our bodies were designed to see at night. In fact, the amount of time it takes the sun to set is the amount of time it takes for our eyes to develop night vision.
- Ask how it is different to walk at night than during the day. Ask if people have specific things they want help with - from God or from each other. Take a minute to notice the ground and envision how it feels to walk in peace at night. Affirm people's prayers/requests/desires for a safe journey. Sing prayer "Guide My Steps/Ufros Aleynu"

Part 2 (15 minutes)

- Hike (10 minutes)
- Shema Ears activity (5 minutes)
 - **Goals:** Participants will be able to gain a deeper appreciation for the *Shema*. Participants will be able to employ a tool in order to listen more carefully. Participants will be able to recite the *Shema* with more *Kavannah* (intention) than before the activity.
 - Gather people in front of you, preferable directly in front, not in a circle.
 - **Lead in statement: Today we are going to focus on the Shema.**
 - **Facilitator question:** Have you ever experienced the *Shema*? How? Where? Discussion.
 - **Facilitator comment/diatribes:** The *Shema* is asking for much more than is at first apparent. What does *Shema* literally mean? (Facilitator asks audience for answer.) *Shema*= to hear, or to listen. The natural world, this place (point to the surrounding area) is a metaphor. I believe that everything is a metaphor. Hearing, listening, *Shema*ing is a metaphor for awareness. What does Israel mean? (Facilitator asks audience for answer.) *Yisrael* means us, our community, we are Israel. *Yisrael* is Jacob after he struggled with the angel. *Yisrael* is Israel. *Yisrael* is many things, to many different people. But *Yisrael* is also a conjunctive (explain what this word means to younger folks). The first part of *Yisrael* is *Yashar*. What does *Yashar* mean?
 - *Yashar*=Straight. The second part of *Yisrael* is *El*. What does *El* mean? *El*=God. So if *Shema* is Awareness, *Yishar* is straight, and *El* is God and we put those words together we get: "Awareness straight God", or: "Awareness leads to God."
 - **Facilitator question:** Would you like to literally experience *Shema*?
 - **Facilitator comment/demonstration:** Please cup your hands in front of you like this, like your drinking water from a faucet, but you have no cup. Now take your hands and put them behind your ears like this. What you are literally doing is placing two giant satellite dishes on your ears and funneling more sound waves into your ear drum. But what you are metaphorically doing is *Shema*ing: You are able to hear more of what is going on around you, behind you, all around you. You are becoming more aware of your surroundings.
 - **Facilitator comment:** Now I would like to say the *shema* with you. I'd like us to say the *shema* with *Kavannah*. What does *kavannah* mean? *Kavannah*=intention. (Give examples of what intention is/is not.)
 - **Facilitator question:** Does anyone have a specific tradition, or way, in which you say the *Shema*? Closed eyes? Why do you think that is? Anything else? Discussion. Recitation of the *Shema*: One breath=one word for a longer *shema*. Using *Shema* ears while reciting. Etc. Come up with your own.
 - **Closing:** This tool, *Shema* ears, is something you can use anywhere. You can use it in Synagogue when you are reciting the *shema*, it can be used in nature to increase your awareness what is happening around you. You can even use this tool to eavesdrop on your parents, teachers and brothers/sisters.
 - One of the most central prayers in Judaism begs us to become more aware of our surroundings. Perhaps when we increase our awareness we can also increase our knowledge of God and of creation. Imagine, if we just learned all this about the first two words of the *shema*, imagine what we can learn from the other 4, and then think that this is just one sentence of the *shema* which is actually three paragraphs from the Torah containing hundreds of words! Night sky, Mazel Tov, stars map to guide our way...

Part 3 (15 minutes)

- Short Hike (5 minutes)
- **Alpha Wolf activity:** (10 minutes)
- **Quote:** “Be strong enough to stand alone, be yourself enough to stand apart, but be wise enough to stand together when the time comes.” -Wisdom quote, source unknown.
- **Objectives:**
 - To expose participants to beauty and mystery of night
 - To have participants “experience” wolf activities
 - To teach the participants new ways of listening and experiencing at night
 - To have fun.
- **Use these questions to generate interest in this activity:**
 - Have you heard a wolf howl?
 - How do you think wolves can see at night?
 - Have you howled at the moon?
- **Activity:**
 - Lead your participants on a walk away from the campfire/light source for 3-5 minutes.
 - Have your participants sit in a circle. Ask your participants how animals communicate and navigate at night.
 - Explain, “we are going to play a game called “Alpha Wolf.”
 - Explain what an Alpha wolf is (see vocabulary).
 - Tell your participants that wolves are social creatures. They hunt together, scout their terrain together and have complex social structures in their packs (like humans).
 - Tell them that this is an opportunity for them to experience what it might be like to be part of a pack of wolves out at night.
 - Often one (or a few) of the wolves stay back at the den to watch/guard the wolf pups and to offer a beacon to the wolves who are out hunting/scouting.
 - Tell your participants:
 - “When I say go, you will stand up, turn 180 degrees (facing out of the circle) and walk out about 100-200 feet.
 - Find a comfortable place to sit, stand or even lay on the ground.
 - Please do not go with a friend or speak to anyone when you are out. Wolves (as with all predators) need to use silence to find, stalk and catch their prey.
 - Try to use all your senses to experience the night. What do you smell? What do you hear? What do you see (what don’t you see), what do you feel (wind, leaves,
 - **This is very important!** If you are afraid to go out, you are welcome to stay back here with me in the circle, I’ll stay right here. But, even if you stay back with me you **MUST** be quiet.
 - After a few minutes I’ll call you back with two little wolf howls. “Aaaaawhoooo” (say this softly in an undertone).
 - When you hear these 2 small wolf howls, you should respond with another quiet wolf howl (“Aaaaawhoooo”)
 - After your wolf howl, come back and sit quietly in the circle.
 - IF you get scared or frightened, you can come back in at any time.
 - Tell your participants:
 - The goal of this activity is that your participants can feel what it is like to be out alone at night. Even though there are many of their friends/campmates very close, when they are sitting quietly in the dark, they can feel very alone.
 - This idea of being alone is quickly overcome when you hear your community howling from multiple points.

- **Discussion:**
 - Ask your participants the following questions to engage them in conversations:
 1. How did it feel to be alone in the dark in nature?
 2. What did you hear?
 3. What did you feel? (i.e. alone, tired, afraid, the wind)
 4. What did you smell (i.e. flowers, jasmine, water, etc.)
 5. How do you think it feels to be alone in the dark regularly at night?
 6. How do you think it feels to be part of a pack?
 7. Are you part of a pack? What is your pack?
 8. How does your pack support/protect you?

Hints for success:

- Carry a flashlight (or headlamp) in case you need it.
- Know your audience! This activity might not be appropriate if you have hearing impaired participants or participants who are at risk for running.
- Be sensitive to participants who may be afraid of being alone. They should by no means go out together, but they can be quietly sit with you. Make sure you extend this invitation!
- Make sure to use the discussion questions afterwards. The conversations will transform this experience from something fun to something extraordinary. You may be surprised by some of the things your participants observe and feel!
- Make sure your wintergreen Life Savers are fresh - and TEST THEM ahead of time to make sure they actually spark!

Vocabulary:

Alpha Wolf= The lead wolf in the pack, the ruler of the pack. Usually a stronger, older (experienced) male, but can be a female too!

Part 4 (15 minutes)

Hike (5 minutes)

Sparks- visualizing bringing sparks into our bodies. (10 minutes)

- Guided visualization about how we each hold a spark of the divine which can illuminate our outer experiences from the power inside of each of us.
- Share the concept of *TzimTzum* and what it means to provide sparks/opportunities/experiences for others and then pull back and allow for that experience to expand for the participants.
- Hand out wintergreen Lifesavers and have participants chew them. Then look at the sparks! (note: they must be fresh, to get the sparks!)

Conclude with singing *Hashiveinu* or another song that you end the evening with at camp.