

Moon Magic

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SUMMARY: In this session we will explore how Jewish life, festivals, rituals, and conceptions of divinity are deeply connected to the earth, the stars, the sun, and the moon by spending time by the water, making ritual items out of nature, and experiencing the constellations above.

GOALS:

- Provide participants with a space that offers a way of dwelling in Jewish tradition that is more introspective in tempo and energy, and feels moon and earth-centered; giving participants back a piece of our heritage as a restorative practice given the history of male-dominated leadership that's based in cis-het-patriarchal Judaism, which is put forth as the norm; offering a piece of our ancestral history that is not that, and is both expansive and reparative.
- Allow participants to feel a deeper connection between their Jewish identity and the natural world.
- Provide participants with at least one tangible activity and/or technique that expands and further fills their self-care and resilience basket.

AUDIENCE: Any group size, any age range, any gender identity.

TIMING: 75 Minutes

MATERIALS:

- Ritual object:
 - About 30 popsicle sticks
 - 1 ball of string
 - 2 scissors
 - 2 rolls of tape
 - Construction paper
- Writing utensils
- Natural materials (without causing harm) from the outside area where the session takes place

SET-UP: We recommend a location that is outdoors, especially near a body of water, and/or if it's indoors, one that offers tranquility, quiet, and space to spread out, feel comfortable, and reflect.

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 – *Gathering Behind Nesiya*
- 00:05-00:10 – *Framing for travel to water*
- 00:10-00:15 – *Opening Needs*
- 00:15-00:25 – *Travel to water*
- 00:25-00:30 – *Land acknowledgement*
- 00:30-00:45 – *Education about Jewish connection to land – calendar and practices*
- 00:45-00:55 – *Create a blessing*
- 00:55-00:70 – *Ritual object creation and reflection*
- 00:70-00:75 – *Closing*

SESSION OUTLINE:

00:00-00:05 – Gathering Behind Nesiya

The group leader(s) will welcome everyone to the initial meeting area. This spot should be a well-known place, preferably outdoors, with proximity to water, so that the group may walk together to the waterfront during the duration of the program.

As participants arrive, the leaders either play music with instruments, sing a welcoming song, or play music from a music playing device.

00:05-00:10 – Framing for travel to water

This is the opportunity for the session leader to set an overall intention/frame for the program, explaining the overall goals and in particular the idea of leaning into Jewish ritual connections to land and the physical elements of our camp environments.

To that end, we're going to spend most of the session down by the water in the woods, immersing ourselves (not literally) in the scents, sounds, sights, and textures that are so specific to this place. For accessibility, suggestion to have a golf cart accessible and ready to drive anyone who can't navigate the stairs or other varied terrain.

00:10-00:15 – Opening Needs

Just as we aimed to account for access needs in envisioning our travel to the water, we want to take a moment to make space to find out if there are any other needs we can endeavor to meet in this session.

Ask participants to take a moment to consider if they have any needs for how they can get the most out of our time together. Split the large group to huddle into small groups (one faculty member per group) to share any of those needs.

00:15-00:25 – Travel to water

Before we walk down to the water, ask folks to call out some of the sights, sounds, and scents they're looking forward to taking in on the walk. Then, encourage participants to make this a silent walk so that they can savor those sensations.

00:25-00:30 – Land acknowledgement

Once the group arrives and gathers at the water, we will begin by acknowledging the history of the land we're on (and the often-erased relationship of indigenous folks to that land). We'll be using the [Mitsui Collective's Land Acknowledgement](#) both to honor the land and to briefly discuss some of the criteria for truly respectful and meaningful land acknowledgment (and some of the common pitfalls to avoid as well).

00:30-00:45 – Education about Jewish connection to land – calendar and practices

In Judaism, many of our rituals and traditions are about our relationship to both time and place and where we are in both time and place/space. We're going to explore both of those kinds of pathways towards ritual:

- Place (Land/constellation/calendar): (7.5 minutes)
 - Background re: how the Hebrew calendar follows the lunar cycles, aka the cycles of the moon (luna = Latin for "moon"); note how the calendar is not only in conversation with the cycles of the moon, but those cycles impact what's happening seasonally and with the land, because of how the amount of light and dark in a season (and location on the planet) impacts harvest cycles. (1 minute)
 - Invite people to break into pairs/*chevruta* and share examples of Jewish rituals, holidays, and festivals that practice this tradition of connection to land and constellations and seasons (5 minutes)
 - Invite people back to share thoughts with the larger group. (2 min)
- Time (Jewish practices around acknowledgement) (7.5 minutes):
 - Building from the conversation around land acknowledgements, we have so many blessings, rituals, prayers, and traditions that center around acknowledgement in general. We do this to mark time, moments, and other milestones. (1 minute)
 - Invite people to break into *chevruta* and share examples of Jewish rituals, blessings, prayers, and traditions that practice this tradition of acknowledgement (5 minutes)
 - Invite people back to share thoughts with the larger group. (2 min)

00:45-00:55 – Create a blessing

Framing the blessing: Thinking about our senses, what did you experience on your way down? See, hear, smell, touch, taste, feel? In Judaism we have pre-existing blessings for feeling wonder at the natural world.

Pass out blessing cards.

- What do you notice about these blessings? Themes, language, etc.
- How might you use these blessings?
- Is there a blessing for what you experienced or are experiencing now, that might fit with one of these blessings?
 - Take a moment of quiet reflection.
 - Facilitator (Chana) sings part of a blessing song she wrote called "Mother of Creation."

What kind of blessing might you create for this moment, or to wonder and appreciate what you experienced on the way here? (Focus point on gender in language)

- Connect to the theme of "Mah Rabu" wonder, awe, amazement. We have the ability to create our own prayers and blessing using our choice of language and focus, and we can also use blessings that came before us.
- Participants get time to create blessings, choosing to be solo or in pairs/*chevruta*. The blessing can be written (if they have writing utensils), movement, music, or another appropriate modality. Encourage participants to create a blessing in their first language, if it's not English, or if they're comfortable creating a blessing in Hebrew, to think about what language choices they want to make.
- Participants can share blessings with the group if they want and if there's time.

00:55-00:70 – Ritual object creation and reflection

Prompt the group with the questions: What is a ritual? Popcorn answers, anything that marks space and time (2 min)

- We use ritual objects in Judaism all the time, they come in all types (1 min)
 - Ritual objects we know they are (Shabbat candles)
 - historical significance that aren't common now (altar)

- things we don't identify as such but are (calendar)
- A ritual that doesn't exist that you want to invite into your life

Using the land around you, create a ritual object for your daily life. We have a few materials, but we encourage you to utilize the space around you. Try taking photos, gathering certain objects, etc. Pull inspiration from the space, the songs playing, try recreating an existing object, or thinking about how to ritualize part of your day.

Give participants 10 minutes and then the group will come together for a closing and reflection afterwards.

00:70-00:75 – Closing

We'll close in small groups, each person getting a chance to share their ritual object and/or blessing.

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

This would be a great series of activities to learn about different Jewish practices. You can also adapt and expand each part for a deeper connection, perfect for a bonding activity with older campers.