

Ascending to Awake

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SUMMARY: In this session, we will go on a walk/hike and learn how to pay better attention to our bodies, our surroundings, and our souls through creative materials and Jewish wisdom.

GOALS:

- Participants will be able to pause and see things they don't normally pay attention to.
- Participants will turn inward and feel their bodies and how the process of awakening feels.
- Participants will create small booklets (zines) of colors, sights, and thoughts they have while walking through nature.

AUDIENCE: Any age!

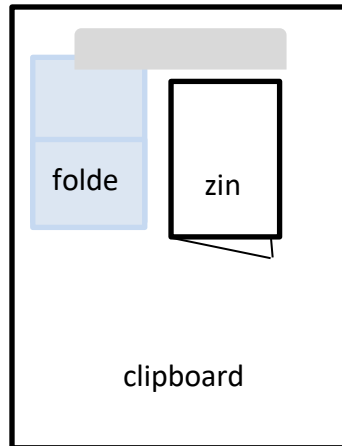
TIMING: 45 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Colored pencils and/or watercolor pencils (include [watercolor brush pens](#) too)
- Markers
- Pencils with erasers
- Clipboards
- Construction paper
- Stapler to make "folders"
- [Copies of blessings of wonder \(fold into "zine"\)](#)
- [Glue Dots](#) for sticking leaves, grass, flowers or anything else they find they want to keep (emphasize not picking but rather gathering from the ground)
- Scissors
- Recycled/Scrap paper (full 8.5x11 sheets)- can be construction paper or magazine pages too to make "folders"

SET-UP:

- Location: A good space to walk outside in nature- A hill or a place with a peak or overlook is ideal.
- [Fold enough](#) "zines" for each pp
- Put supplies in bins and provide each pp with a folder (a 4.25x5.5in piece of paper folded to create a pocket and stapled) to place on their clipboard with the supplies they choose:



SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:10 – Introduction, supply gather and body scan
- 00:10-00:25 – Slow Walk/hike without speaking
- 00:25-00:30 – Shema at the highest point, body scan
- 00:30-00:40 – Walk back to starting location
- 00:40-00:45 – Closing

SESSION OUTLINE

00:00-00:10 – Introduction, supply gather and body scan

- Facilitators introduce yourself/ves
- Introduce the plan for this prayerful moment:

“This morning, we will pay extra close attention to everything around us so that we can begin to slowly awaken our senses. In a more typical Jewish prayer experience that uses a siddur (prayerbook) there is a moment at the beginning where we warm up, the middle is where we find the harder work and energy and then we close with a cool-down.

Another way to understand Jewish prayer is that it’s like climbing a mountain. We warm up and push upwards to reach our peak experiences. While up at the top we experience some of the most important and spiritual moments. Then, we come back down to earth slowly, carefully, cooling down along the way.

Today, we will mimic this flow. We ask you to consider what is the relationship between your physical self- each of your senses- and your mental self. If you close your eyes, do you hear or smell better? Notice more internally? We will do several check-ins or body scans throughout to see how awakening feels physically and mentally inside your body.

Everything we offer this morning is a choice. We have created small booklets for you that contain blessings of wonder from our tradition, that you can choose to say or not. We have colored pencils and markers for you to sketch or not.

One way to pay attention to something you may have overlooked is to use color. Pick something off the ground (not off a living plant) and try to match or recreate the color using the materials. How many shades of green can you find? Brown? What colors do you mix or overlap to make those shades and values? We have glue dots for you to stick the small leaves, grass, flowers you find into your booklets as well.

If you prefer to write rather than draw, go for it. If you prefer to just listen, smell and walk, go for it. How many sounds can you hear? How does it sound when you step on the leaves? The grass?

Any questions before we begin? Please gather some supplies and put them in the folders provided on your clipboards.”

- **Body Scan**

“Now that we have our supplies, place them on the ground at your feet. If you are comfortable, close your eyes for just a moment as I talk you through a body scan. How do you feel inside right now?

Take three deep gentle breaths. Pay attention to how that feels. Does your belly rise? Your chest? If you like, place a hand on your belly or chest.

Let's start with our feet. Are they warm? Cold? Wet? Dry? Stressed? Relaxed? If you can, relax into your feet. How does it feel? Where is the weight?

How do your lower legs feel? Heavy? Light? Warm? Cold? Somethign else? Let go of frustration and trying to do antying, just give yourself a moment to rest and notice. Move your attention to your knees and relax them. Feel the front, the back, the sides.

After a few breaths, move up your legs, noticing. Do you feel restless? Wiggly?

Move to your belly. Is it rising and falling with your breath? Are you full? Hungry? How do your clothes feel?

How do your hands feel? Relax all your fingers, wiggle them a bit. Move to your arms—can they hang without you controlling them?

How about your back? Does standing feel good? Are you erect or are you slumped? Can you feel your spine? Your shoulder blades? Can you still feel the sleep in your body?

How do your shoulders feel? Roll them out. Squeeze them up to your ears and slowly release them. What do you notice—are you tight? Does anything feel sore or extra loose?

Now your face and head. What expression do you have on your face? What would it feel like to smile? What else do you notice about your face, your head or your mind?

Finally, spend a few moments paying attention to your whole body. If it's easier, pay attention to your breath. Open your eyes and decide when you are ready to move again.”

“Ashrei yoshvei veitecha od yehalelucha selah.’ We’re warming up, about to climb our spiritual mountain. And we can say these words of Ashrei, which come at both the beginning and end of Jewish prayer. One (non-literal but close) translation: ‘We are joyful and grateful for dwelling in Your home, Your world, forever in awe.’ We are going to see what brings us joy and awe as we move through this beautiful place.

00:10-00:25 – Slow Walk/hike without speaking

- Model by coloring, drawing, writing, listening, breathing.

00:25-00:30 – Shema at the highest point, body scan

“As we arrive at our highest point of our walk this morning, the peak of the mountain, let’s awaken our senses even more. The Shema is about hearing, listening, and paying attention. This word Shema means not only to let the sound into your ears, but it drives us also to action—to hear what it is that we are to do.

Let us say this word, enunciating each part- Sh--- Mmmmm- ahhhh with one deep breath (show example by taking a deep breath and saying Shhhhhhhmmmmaah with one big breath).”

- Ask everyone to take a deep breath and repeat saying it 3x.
- Repeat an abbreviated body scan:
*“The exertion of walking, but also the noticing and the breathing is awakening our physical and mental selves. How are you feeling now? What has changed? Close your eyes if you are comfortable:
Imagine a blue light tracing each part of your body—scanning it for changes. Notice the light moving up your body--
How do you feel on your feet?
Legs?
Knees?
Thighs?
Belly?
Lungs?
Hands?
Arms?
Back?
Shoulders?
Face? Head?
Thoughts?”*

Feel free to note anything in the booklet of changes you noticed in your body and self. Have you awakened? Are you ready for your day yet? Is sleep still lingering?

We will repeat our walk back to our starting location.

00:30-00:40- Walk back to starting location

- You can decide if this is silent or if you want to allow quiet talking and unpacking as you walk.
- Consider having them walk with a partner and **discuss things they noticed on their walk, and what changed in their bodies and minds.**

00:40-00:45 – Closing

- Wrap Up
“Please return all the supplies to the boxes and keep your booklet. Circle up.

“Ashrei yoshvei veitecha od yehalelucha selah.” We’re cooling off, coming to the bottom of our spiritual mountain. And we can again say these words of Ashrei, which come at both the beginning and end of Jewish prayer. One (non-literal but close) translation: “We are joyful and grateful for dwelling in Your home, Your world, forever in awe.” Do these words feel different now than before? How have you changed? As we encountered the natural world outside alongside our inner selves, we can carry these feelings into the rest of the day.

Just as we do when we pray, we warmed up with some noticing, we had some deeper thoughtful moments along our walk and a bit of rigor to wake us up as we moved physically, we had a peak moment at the top with our Shema, and our cool-down on the way back.

Prayer or prayerful moments awaken all our senses and help us prepare for our day. We hope you feel a bit more ready than you were when you arrived!

The word “Amen” is Hebrew for “firm, straight or true”. It comes from the verb “aman” which means to “support, confirm or approve.” So, when we say amen, we confirm or support the truth of whatever we are responding to. So, if you feel you have been awakened this morning in any way, I invite you to share in a loud and energetic Amen together.

Deep Breath in..... and AMEN!!!! (shouted!)

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

This can be done anywhere in some natural environments. Consider doing it in a large field, woods with a trail or around a lake. It’s best if you have a hill to climb to the top of but can work if there is something other space for which to have your peak “Shema” moment.

Supplies can be just colored pencils and paper—copies of the blessings are necessary but add a nice option for those looking for more of the “prayer” part of the “prayerful moment”.

You may need to adapt the language for a younger audience, but overall, this works for every age/stage.