

Title: Post-Pesach Wild Edibles Hike

Subject/Theme: Let's follow in the footsteps of the Israelites after their escape from Egypt by taking a hike in our local urban wilderness and eating wild edible plants available in the spring.

Time to complete activities: 1.5 hours

Age range for activities: Grades 3-6

Context/Location: This program was implemented in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in Spring 2019. It can be adapted to many locations, but is designed to be done after Pesach.

JOFEE Ethics for Sustainability: Self Care (teaches participants to eat healthy wild edible plants)

Program Overview & Guiding Questions / Enduring Understanding(s)

This program brings the (end of the) Biblical story of Pesach into a modern urban nature setting (park, ravine, etc). Participants are encouraged to take on the roles of wandering Israelites recently escaped from Egypt, while also learning about the plants that are safe and good to eat from the natural setting currently surrounding them.

Guiding Questions:

- 1) What did it feel like for the Israelites to wander together and eat from the wilderness?
 - 2) What is good/safe to eat from our current location in the 'urban wilderness'?
 - 3) What are all the different ways we can prepare these wild edible plants on our journey?
 - 4) How can we keep a record of our journey and reflect on it afterwards?
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Goals/ Outcomes:

- 1) Gain a deeper understanding of the Biblical story of the Israelites wandering in the desert
 - 2) Learn which local wild plants are edible and which parts of the plant can be eaten
 - 3) Prepare and enjoy snacks using local wild edible plants
 - 4) Create a journey stick with mementos of our journey and reflect on it afterwards
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Materials needed:

- Quote cards (see attached)
 - For wild edibles: *Green Herbs, Forbidden to Enjoy*
 - For bug hunt: *Worm Friends, Bug Hunt*
- Brachot cards (see attached)
 - For wild edibles: *Fruit of the Ground, Fruit of the Tree*
 - For bug hunt: *Strange Creatures, Beautiful Creatures*
 - For whenever appropriate: *Shehechyanu, Fragrant Herbs, Fragrant Trees*
- Colourful yarn (precut into pieces 1-2m long, 1 per participant)
- Sample journey stick (see references)
- Wild edible field guides for your area (see references for a good web edition)
- Vesicles for collecting / washing / soaking / storing / serving the wild edibles collected:
 - For washing everything for kashrut: mason jars or water bottles half-filled with water
 - For white pine tea: thermos of hot water (at least 100mL per participant) and a stack of reusable cups (1 per participant) - or request each participant brings their own cup/mug
 - For soaking herbs for salad dressing: 1 mason jar half-filled with olive oil, 1 mason jar half-filled with apple cider vinegar, plus 1 empty wide-mouth jar for mixing it up later
 - For storing and serving leafy greens: tupperware container(s)

Session Plan:

Opening Circle (5 mins)

- Introduce the theme of the walk, set up the scene
 - Ask: where are we in the Torah right now? (Answer: we've just escaped Egypt, we're on a journey in the desert)
 - Explain: while we're not in a desert now, we are going to take on the role of the wandering Israelites for the course of this hike
 - Get into "character" by going around the circle and having everyone say 1 thing they remembered to bring with them when they left Egypt! (can be serious, funny, silly, etc)

Journey Sticks (10 mins)

- Introduce journey sticks
 - Ask: what is Moses known for carrying? (a staff / walking stick)
 - Explain: since we left Egypt behind us, we are on the way now for an epic journey through the wilderness! While we go on our journey, we'll probably notice lots of amazing/cool/weird/beautiful things that we don't want to forget about. One way to remember the journey is to collect some souvenirs from the forest while we walk and attach them to our walking sticks to make it a journey stick [show example journey stick].
- Send everyone to find a stick
 - Task: Find a big stick, at least as long as your arm but no taller than you, and pretty thick so you can hold it in your hand. This will be your journey stick.
- Give out the yarn, help them attach at the top
 - Get everyone to tie their yarn to the top of the stick, and wrap up the length of it for now until you need it (can hold in hand while holding stick)
 - Instruction: When you see something really special that you want to take with you to remember this journey, you can attach it (or a piece of it!) to your journey stick, with this yarn.
- Rules for picking things from nature as mementos:
 - We can never take the first one of anything we see (plants, flowers, etc), we need to make sure there is a bunch of whatever it is before we can take it!
 - We also never want to take a living creature out of its home.
 - Never pick more than 1 leaf per plant, and only pick living leaves from a plant if there are more leaves on it than you can actually count

Wild Edibles (30-45 mins)

- Connect to current setting, eating from the wilderness
 - Explain: after we left Egypt, we were wandering in the desert for a long time. Ask if anyone knows what the people ate while they were in the desert? (They couldn't grow any fruits or vegetables and they didn't have grocery stores or kitchens...)
 - Have a student read *Quote Card - Green Herbs*, and discuss how G!d provides food in the wilderness (it's so amazing that there are foods that grow in the wild... some people might think are just weeds, or just look nice, but they are actually food!)
 - Explain that we're heading out on our hike now, ask what should we eat in this place? Ask if anyone knows anything edible that we'll find on our journey?
- State rules on wild edibles
 - Explain: there are in fact plants we can eat on our journey, but be careful, not everything that we find in nature is safe to eat! The rules are that you can only eat something if you can say YES to the following statements:
 1. I have an adult or mentor with me

2. I have permission to forage in this area
 3. I am 100% sure what this plant is
 4. I know which part of this plant is safe to eat, what season to harvest and how it should be prepared
 5. I looked around to make sure this plant is not growing in a polluted area
 6. I only picked the part of the plant that I will use
 7. I only harvested what I needed and left the rest
 8. I thanked the plant and surrounding environment
- Show and describe the plants we're going to be looking for using the guide book
 - With each identified foraged plant, note 3 things that the kids can remember to help them identify the plant.
 - If looking for many things, divide the kids into groups and have them each look for a different thing
 - Have everyone find what they think is the edible plant they were assigned
 - Have them check with each other to note similarities/differences
 - Show them the correct plant, if they picked the wrong one ask them what they notice is different between what they've collected and what the correct plant is, have them try again, repeat...
 - As new foraged plants are discovered and confirmed, encourage everyone to attach some to their journey stick for future reference
 - Once we all know which plants are correct and edible, start collecting edible plants
 - When it's time to eat, explain that we have to say blessings first (*Quote Card - Forbidden to Enjoy*), and ask students which blessings are relevant (likely *Fruit of the Ground* and *Fruit of the Tree*), and use those Brachot Cards to say the blessings before eating

Food Collection / Preparation Notes

- Adapt your plan based on where you are and what you can harvest. The following was the plan in the Toronto region in late April / early May: garlic mustard, spruce tips, white pine needles, dandelions, lambsquarter, trout lily, woodsorrel, ramps
 - Put leafy greens (dandelion leaves, lambsquarter, trout lily, woodsorrel, some garlic mustard) and flowers (dandelion) into water to wash, then into tupperware for later
 - Put spruce tips and white pine needles into water to wash, and then rip up some of each into apple cider vinegar and some white pine needles into the hot water thermos to soak
 - Put garlic mustard and ramps into water to wash, then rip up into olive oil to soak
 - Near the end of the hike we made up the salad dressing by mixing olive oil and vinegar, and had students grab a leafy green bundle and dip into mixed dressing. We also distributed and drank the pine tea

Other Hike Activities to be prepared for (as they arise ~ 15-30 mins)

- On the hike, while looking for things for your journey sticks, you'll likely find fun bugs and fragrant plants
 - Use brachot and quote cards where appropriate to add Jewish connections to the worms, interesting bugs, beautiful things, fragrant plants, and any new things found

Closing Circle (15 mins)

- At the end of the hike, sit down in a circle to discuss the journey:
 - Ask: what did it feel like to go on a journey as a group and eat from the wilderness?
 - See *Quote Card - Rephidim*. The Hebrew uses plural words for the Israelites, but in the last line it describes them as one nation, "Israel". Interpretation: the Israelites' journey in the wilderness brought them together as a nation. So the goal for this question is that it brought them together as a group and they relied on each other, etc...
 - Have them recap what edible plants they found, how they identify them in the wild, and how each one was used in the meal/snack

- Refer to the field guide for your area and how you prepared your foods
 - Have everyone share 1 cool thing they collected on their journey stick
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References:

Cervenka, T. (n.d.). Wild Edible Plants of Ontario. Retrieved from https://northernbushcraft.com/guide.php?ctgy=edible_plants®ion=on

Wascak, J. (2017, September 28). Journey Sticks and the Art of Storytelling. Retrieved from <https://runwildmychild.com/journey-sticks/>

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