

The ECO Passover connection

Jewish theme: Passover, Tzaar Ba'alei Chaim (kindness towards animals), Matzah

Nature theme: Humans connection to animals/food webs/food

Hebrew words: Nega (plague/being “struck”) Ba’alei chaim (animal/owner of life), Chai (life)

Program length 1 hour 45 minutes

For ages 10-14

- **Program Overview**

This program connects children to the modern day issues of environmental plagues through an in depth look at text describing the plagues in the passover story, while also getting to appreciate the wonder of animals in a healthy eco-system through observation and touch. We will also touch on the subject of Matzah by discussing the significance of eating a bread that does not rise while making our own pita.

- **Enduring Understanding**

The Plagues in the biblical story of passover are still relevant to today’s issues environmentally and socially specifically in our interactions with animals. Even though most Americans are not interacting with farm animals on a daily basis we are consuming animals or animal products on a daily basis.

- **Outcome**

Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of how the first 6 plagues affected the Ancient Hebrews, the Egyptians and their animals. They will feel a sense of love and responsibility towards animals and the food web we rely on to feed us.

Materials needed:

Animal visit and plagues discussion:

Printouts of text of the first 6 plagues, Personal resource for plagues discussion (*see below*)
Animal charade cards, Ball of yarn for food web game, Farm animals!

Pita making:

Dough, Veggie oil, Honey, Olive oil, Zaatar, Flour
Big Plates, Plastic cups for rolling dough, Plastic cutting boards, Rags, Napkins
Tongs and/or Metal spatula, Griddle, 1-2 tables, Table cloths, FIRE!

Session Plan

Implemented at The Pearlstone Center

INVITATION

Intro game: animal charades -15 minutes

- Have students pair up and give both students an animal charade card with an animal and a need, example: Chicken that needs a warm shelter
- After the first student has gotten the other to guess his/her animal and need have them switch.
- Debrief by asking “was it hard/ was it easy to understand your animals needs , Why?”

EXPLORATION

Deer ears, observation and pasture visit - 30 minutes

Guiding questions for pasture visit:

- *In biblical times Jews were very connected to farm animals what are some ways animals are important to us today?*
- *Animals in Hebrew are called Ba’alei chaim which means owner of life why do you think they are called that? What does it mean to be an owner of life?*
- To make deer ears cup your hands behind your ears like spoons, fun fact it really helps you hear better! Try it backwards too!
- Show the students how to make deer ears outside of the animal pasture to focus on hearing the animals sounds.
- Invite students to make as many observations about the animals in your pasture as they can in 10-30 seconds, have them share their observations.
- Ask if they wonder about any of the observations they made.
- Before going in the pasture go over any safety rules, remind them they are visiting the animal’s home and they should act respectfully when entering anyone’s home.
- Pet animals! answer questions, take pictures!

CONCEPT INVENTION

Story and discussion of the first 6 plagues, Food web game - 20 minutes

- See personal resource below for how the first 6 plagues are connected ecologically
- Text and guiding questions for discussion are also below
- Have the group read the first 6 plagues text together then break up into pairs or small groups to read and discuss the guiding questions
- Come back together and have a group discussion on a few questions and thoughts

Play the Food web game:

- each child is one the first 6 plagues or an animal or plant affected by them, It may help if the moderator (you) is the first plague of blood in the water or polluted water.

- With a ball of yarn begin by holding the end of the yarn ball and tossing it to one plague/animal/plant you are connected to somehow.
Example: "I am the plague of blood in the Nile, I am connected to the fish who swim in my waters and can't survive now."
- Toss the ball to the person who is the fish, have them hook the yarn on their finger, the person who is the fish will toss it to another plague/animal/plant they are connected to.
- Encourage the kids to be creative, at some point they will begin to notice that they are creating a web, and take a second to focus on it saying "We have created a food web, we are all connected to every creature on this planet."

APPLICATION

Pita making at fire - 25 minutes

- Q: "Now that we've been talking about food, what is one food that the Israelites took with them when they left Egypt. A: "Matzah!"
- "Now we will explore the main ingredient in Matzah, Wheat! A sacred ingredient in our own food web by making our own pita."
- Have the fire all ready to go (unlit) in a fire pit before your program, if working with another person have them start the fire while you lead the food web game.
- Make sure you have two cinder blocks or rocks set up to hold your griddle for the pita
- NEVER leave a fire unattended.
- Have one person tend the fire while a 2nd person hands out dough and shows the kids how to roll the dough out flat to make a good pita, the flatter the better. We premade dough but if you have more time you can make it as well!
- Ask how the dough feels, (soft) and how they think it will feel after it has been through the fire (hard, strong) What is one way the Israelites had to go through a fire? Have you ever had to go through a fire, struggled to gain strength?
- Roll the dough out with hard plastic cups on thin cutting boards to make them nice and flat, if it sticks to the cutting board use flour. You can do it by hand, but it cooks a slower.
- Once the fire is hot enough put the griddle on top of your cinder blocks/rocks.
- Cook up the dough into beautiful pitas, optional to have olive oil, zaatar and honey to dip.

REFLECTION

Snack, gratitude, and closing debrief - 15 minutes

- How is the holiday of Passover similar to a matzah?
 - Matzah is simple and lacks a fullness, or joy of ordinary bread, like the Israelites lacked the fullness of Hashem when they were slaves.
 - Passover is when we cut back on luxury, as opposed to shavuot where we splendor in the abundance of our torah and fill/puff up.
 - Bread is made with all four elements, the grain from the earth, the water mixed with flour, the air it fills with, and the fire it is cooked in. Matzah a bread with no air, is oppressed, and choked.

- What makes wheat different from vegetables that grow from the ground?
 - Wheat in Matzah or bread is a food that requires an equal part effort of Hashem giving us grain and us as humans putting the work into processing it.
 - What is something you learned today about the plagues or Matzah that you would like to discuss at your own seder?
 - What was a highlight of the day for you, what are you grateful for?
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References:

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 Published and copyrighted by [Kehot Publication Society](#) Retrieved from
http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/1638/jewish/The-Ten-Plagues.htm

Prof. Ziony Zevit, "Three Ways to Look at the Ten Plagues," *Bible Review*, June 1990.
 The Ten plagues and Egyptian ecology, could the story have its basis in natural phenomena.
 Retrieved from <http://thetorah.com/ten-plagues-and-egyptian-ecology/>

Animal charades adapted from Amir Sourcebook 2016, How we care (pets, farms, and beyond)

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Personal resource for plagues discussion

Plagues 1-6

The naturalistic account is connected initially with the violent rainstorms that occur in the mountains of Ethiopia, to the south of Egypt.

1. The first plague, referred to as *dam*, blood, was caused when red clay swept down into the Nile from the Ethiopian highlands coloring the river and rendering its water undrinkable.
2. The mud affected the aeration of the water that lead to the death of fish. Bodies of dead fish clogged the swamps inhabited by *frogs*. The rotting fish crowded the frogs out from the swamps. They left the Nile and sought cool areas in people's houses: the second plague. But, the movement of frogs occurred only after they had become infected by some communicable disease.
- 3-4. Since the frogs were already infected with the disease, they died in their new habitats. As a consequence, *lice*, the third plague, and *flies*, the fourth plague, began to multiply, feeding off the dead frogs.
5. This gave rise to a *pestilence* that attacked animals, the fifth plague, because the cattle were feeding on grass that by then had also become infected.

6. In people, the symptom of the same disease was *boils*, the sixth plague.

The first 6 plagues

When Pharaoh continued to refuse to liberate the children of Israel, Moses and Aaron warned him that G-d would punish both him and his people.

First, the waters of the land of Egypt were turned into blood. Moses walked down with Aaron to the river. There Aaron raised his staff, smote the waters, and converted them into streams of blood.

All the people of Egypt and the king himself beheld this miracle; they watched the fish die as the blood flowed over the land; and they turned with disgust from the offensive smell of the sacred river. It was impossible for them to drink of the water of the Nile far-famed for its delicious taste; and they were forced to dig deep into the ground for water.

Unfortunately for the Egyptians, not only the floods of the Nile but all the waters of Egypt, wherever they were, turned to blood. The fish died in the rivers and lakes, and for a whole week man and beast suffered horrible thirst. Yet Pharaoh did not give in.

After due warning, the second plague came to Egypt. Aaron stretched his hand out over the waters of Egypt, and frogs swarmed forth. They covered every inch of land, and entered the houses and bedrooms!

Wherever an Egyptian turned, whatever he touched, he found there the slimy bodies of frogs, the croaking of which filled the air.

Now Pharaoh became frightened, and he asked Moses and Aaron to pray to G-d to remove the nuisance, promising that he would liberate the Jewish people at once.

But as soon as the frogs had disappeared, he broke his promise and refused to let the children of Israel go.

Then G-d ordered Aaron to smite the dust of the earth with his staff, and no sooner did he do so than all over Egypt bugs crawled forth from the dust to cover the land and the frogs whose bodies remained in the Egyptians houses.

Man and beast suffered untold misery from this terrible plague. Although his counselors pointed out that this surely was Divine punishment, Pharaoh steeled his heart and remained relentless in his determination to keep the children of Israel in bondage.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you do not let my people go,

I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies; even the ground will be covered with them.

But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will occur tomorrow. And the Lord did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh's palace and into the houses of his officials; throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies.

Again Pharaoh promised faithfully to let the Jews go out into the desert on the condition that they would not go too far. Moses prayed to G-d, and the flies disappeared. But as soon as they had gone, Pharaoh withdrew his promise and refused Moses' demand.

Then G-d sent a fatal pestilence that killed most of the domestic animals of the Egyptians. The Egyptians grieved when they saw their stately horses, the pride of Egypt, perish; when all the cattle of the fields were stricken at the word of Moses and when the donkeys, camels, sheep and goats died smitten by the plague! Even more the Egyptians had the pain of seeing the beasts of the Israelites entirely unhurt. Yet Pharaoh still hardened his heart, and would not let the Israelites go.

Then followed the sixth plague, which was so loathsome that it struck the people of Egypt with horror and agony. G-d commanded Moses to take soot from the furnace, and to sprinkle it towards heaven; and as Moses did so, boils burst forth upon man and beast throughout the land of Egypt.

Guiding Questions for plagues discussion:

- How many different animals are in this story?
- Who is being affected by the plagues besides the Egyptians?
- What connection can you draw between these 6 plagues?
- Is there anything new you noticed while reading this text?
- Why does the story make a point to show that the animals suffered along with the humans? Why were the animals punished?
- What plagues in our modern society can have a trickle down effect?
- What is one way we can help build healthy ecosystems for all life?
- What questions are coming up for you from this discussion?

