



We are grateful to Nigel Savage and his team at Hazon, the Jewish Lab for Sustainability, for being our partner and contributing resources that inspired this activity.



Check out more of Hazon's nature activities.

Every culture has its own language for gratitude. In Judaism, one way we express gratitude is by saying a prayer first thing in the morning:

Modeh

מודה

Modah ani lefanekha melekh
chai vekayam shehechezarta bi
nishmahti b'chemlah

מודה / אני לפניך מלך
חי וקיים. שהחזרת בי נשמת
בְּחֵמְלָה

Translated as:

"I give thanks, before you, G'd [and sometimes, spirit of the universe] that you have graciously restored my soul to me."

Then, we recite a second blessing: "Blessed are you, G'd, source of the universe, for opening my eyes." The idea is that, as we literally open our eyes, we begin our day with gratitude.

When you open your eyes in the morning, what do you see? Sometimes it's hard to acknowledge our gratitude when we see the same thing day after day without really seeing it.

The natural world—including the little bits of nature right around us, no matter where we live— can help us reconnect with the small but present miracles that surround us every day when we wake up.

To bring a bit of nature into our hearts (and our homes) and open ourselves to these blessings, try one (or all) of the following:

1

A Short, Miraculous Walk

- 1) Find a safe place to take a little walk (around your house or neighborhood, or a park or beach if it's open). Bring a friend or family member, and bring a blindfold.
- 2) Have your friend pick a spot, and then have them blindfold you so that you can walk [safely, with assistance] a little way, in front of a tree, plant or other natural object.
- 3) Once you are facing the object (your friend should let you know!) take off your blindfold. Look at what's in front of you and experience what it's like to open your eyes and see this natural object for the first time.
- 4) If you feel inspired, you may even choose to say a blessing.
- 5) Then, pick a spot for your friend or family member, and have them do the same.

2

I Notice, I wonder, It Reminds Me Of

- 1) Find an interesting leaf, branch, rock, shell, flower, or other natural object in or around your home.
- 2) Share your observations about the object, and try to separate them from your judgment about the object (for example, "It has a scent" is a great observation while "It smells good" is a judgement).
- 3) Then, voice anything you wonder about the object. Don't feel the pressure to come up with answers to your wonder, just let your mind get curious!
- 4) Finally, express what the object reminds you of.
- 5) Spend at least two minutes sharing responses out loud to these prompts, and feel the connection between you and that object grow!

3

A Nature Mandala

Mandala is a Sanskrit word for "magic circle". Nearly every culture uses mandalas or circular images in their cultural or spiritual practices.

- 1) Start by collecting found objects like stones, acorns, pinecones, shells, sea glass, pieces of bark that have come off of a tree, and other natural objects. It may take you an entire afternoon to do this, or you can make a practice of collecting items for your nature mandala each day for a week or two.
- 2) When you've collected enough objects, find a place indoors or outdoors where you can start building your mandala. Make sure it's a place that will allow your mandala circle to grow and get larger.
- 3) Start by using your largest objects as the center of the circle, and work your way around it by adding arrangements of additional found objects. As you create concentric circles moving outward from the center, you may decide to first place a series of rocks, then a series of pinecones, and then something else. Think about the beautiful pattern that you are creating.
- 4) Adding items will keep your mandala growing and getting larger and more beautiful, and will help remind you how all of the small miracles around us add up to a much larger, grander whole.

