"Tunnels and Chambers: A Virtual Adventure Through the *Beit Hamikdash*" (PAGES 14–17)

LESSON PLAN BY INA MILLER LERMAN

In the article, students join a virtual tour to search for oil in the *Beit Hamikdash*, the Holy Temple. In this lesson, students will explore the concept of *kedushat makom*, sanctity of place, to understand what makes a place holy. By embarking on a *kedushah* treasure hunt in their school or synagogue, students will apply their definitions of holy space to their immediate surroundings.

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

- Students will examine how the concept of *kedushah* applies to places (*kedushat makom*).
- Students will understand that there are varying degrees of holiness.

KEY QUOTES AND QUESTIONS

"[You are] exploring a model of the *Beit Hamikdash* (the Holy Temple), the holiest site for Jews."

The article is written as if the reader were actually able to explore the *Beit Hamikdash* 2,000 years ago. At that time the *Beit Hamikdash* was the focal point of Jewish religious observance and that is why it is called "the holiest site for Jews." Many organizations give special designations to sites. UNESCO designates "World Heritage Sites" and the U.S. National Park Service designates "National Parks," for example. To receive a special designation, a place must meet specific criteria.

What criteria should exist for a place to be designated "the holiest site in the Jewish religion"? [Include ideas that reflect significant history, geography and location, and religious connections. Write the ideas on the blackboard and refer to this list after studying the Jewish sources below.]

Review the article and underline the evidence that would help qualify the *Beit Hamikdash* as "the holiest site in the Jewish religion." What other facts do you know about the *Beit Hamikdash* that help it earn this designation?

MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Before the class reads the article, ask students to respond to the following questions:

Have you ever visited a holy place? How did you know the place was holy?

How did you feel there?

What are the characteristics of a holy place?

How is a holy place different from a place that is not holy?

2. Read the article on pages 14–17 of BABAGANEWZ and discuss the key quote and questions.

3. Discuss the Jewish sources below that seek to explain the source and meaning of the holiness of the Temple.

4. Divide the students into groups of three or four for the *kedushah* treasure hunt explained below. If possible, invite parents to participate in this class session. Parents should be encouraged to bring a digital camera to photograph the treasures. If enough parents attend, divide the class according to family units. Otherwise, send three students with each parent.

MATERIALS FOR EACH GROUP

- ***Kedushah* treasure hunt worksheet (available to print at www.babaganewz.com/teachers)**
- **Pen**
- **Prize for the members of the winning group**
- **Optional: Clipboard, flashlight, timer or watch, and a digital or disposable camera**

NOTE

Because students will be roaming the halls, make certain that your principal and other faculty members are aware of when the activity will take place.

Introduce the activity:

A synagogue is a *mikdash m'aht*, a small temple, and shares many of the same qualities of *kedushah* as the *Beit Hamikdash*. Your task is to look around the synagogue/school for places of *kedushah* (holiness). We have discussed that we need a special sensitivity, such as Yaakov had, to recognize a holy place. We discussed that certain activities can give a place *kedushah*, and that history might also be a part of *kedushat makom*.

Your task is to walk around the synagogue/school and find as many holy places as you can within the time limit. [Have everyone make a note of the "stop time" on the worksheet. The time limit you choose will depend upon the size of your building, the number of groups, and how much time you have available. Suggested time: 15–30 minutes.] **As your group finds a holy place, you must answer the questions on the worksheet before continuing to the next place. For each place, you will need to:**

Identify the place.

Describe why this place has *kedushah*.

Rate the level of *kedushah* from 1 (lowest level) to 5 (the highest level possible in our synagogue building).

Option: take a photo of the members of your group acting out the specific activity that gives this place *kedushah*.

If you are able to have the groups take photographs, you should allow more time for the treasure hunt and your students can create a Holy Places Treasure Map with these photos as a follow-up activity.

Before the groups begin their hunt, share the scoring rubric below. Also, allow the groups 5-10 minutes for planning time. One member of the group should be appointed timekeeper to make certain the group returns on time. One member of the group should be the navigator, deciding where the group goes next, especially if there is a disagreement. One member of the group should be the recorder, listing and describing each holy place visited by the group.

5. Once the groups have returned, allow some time for them to prepare a quick presentation to the others. One representative from each group should identify each holy place, the activity or *berakhah*, and explain its holiness rating. Groups can then calculate their scores.

SCORING

- **One point for each place listed.**
- **Two bonus points if a group lists a place that no other group has listed.**
- **One point for each description of why a place has *kedushah*.**
- **Two bonus points if the description mentions a specific activity or *berakhah* unique to that place.**
- **One point if a group returns on time.**
- **Loss of three points if a group returns late.**

JEWISH TEXTS

Bereishit 28:16–17

Yaakov awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely God is present in this place, and I did not know it." Awestruck, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and that is the gateway to heaven."

Yaakov uses four different descriptions for this place. Identify the four descriptions and discuss what each adds to the one/s before it. [God is present; the place is awesome; it is the house of God; it is the gateway to heaven.] **How can one place become a "gateway to heaven"? What happens in such a place?**

Does it seem surprising to you that Yaakov would have difficulty recognizing a place of holiness? Explain.

Commentators explain that "this place" is the place of *akeidat Yitzchak* (the binding of Isaac). Why and how might this fact make this place more special to Yaakov, Yitzchak's son? In the next verses (*Bereishit* 18–19) we learn that Yaakov marks the spot and gives it the name of *Beit El* (house of God). Why do you think it was important for Yaakov to mark the place and give it a new name?

Shemot 25:8

And make for me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.

What is God asking for in this verse?

What seems to be grammatically incorrect about this verse? [Sanctuary or *mikdash* is singular but the verse ends with a plural pronoun.] **What ideas do you have to explain this unusual grammar?**

What is the sanctuary that God requests in this text? To what do you think the word "them" refers?

What does this verse suggest about the relationship between the *mikdash* and local prayer spaces?

Introduce the term *mikdash m'aht*—a mini-Temple—which refers to synagogues. Ask students how they understand this term based on the text from *Shemot*.

Mishnah Kelim 1:6–9

There are ten degrees of holiness: The Land of Israel is holier than any other land.... The walled cities [of the Land of Israel] are still more holy.... Inside the wall of Jerusalem is still more holy.... The Temple is still more holy for none may enter therein with hands and feet unwashed. The Holy of Holies is still more holy, for none may enter therein save only the High Priest on Yom Kippur....

What does it mean to be "more holy"? Can you give other examples of degrees of holiness? [A Torah scroll is holier than any other "book."]

If you were writing a commentary on these verses, what reasons would you give for the differing degrees of holiness? Compare your reasons to those listed in the *mishnah*. [The full text of this *mishnah* can be found on www.babaganewz.com/teachers.]

According to tradition, the Temple was built on the same spot of *akeidat Yitzchak* and where Yaakov had his dream. Do you think that a holy place has to have a "history"? Explain your ideas.

FOLLOW-UP AND ENRICHMENT

1. Look in your school or synagogue library for Neil Folberg's *And I Shall Dwell Among Them*, a stunning photographic tour of synagogues around the world. Ask students to study the photographs and explain what about the architecture or other qualities of each synagogue helps to convey a sense of holiness.

In what ways are the synagogues the same? In what ways are they different?

2. Study the text to *Mah Tovu*, traditionally recited upon entering a synagogue or prayer space. (A printable version of the prayer both in Hebrew and English is available online at www.babaganewz.com/teachers.) Instruct students to search the text of the prayer for words that mean house or home.

How many words can you identify that refer to a place to live?

Why do you think that the prayer uses so many different words that mean the same thing? What are the differences between the specific words?

Why do you think it is customary to recite this prayer right when you enter a synagogue?

What do the different "home" words in the prayer suggest about the types of places that can be prayer spaces?

RELATED WEB SITES/ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Virtual panoramic tours of the Beit Hamikdash *(note that a wealth of historical and archaeological information is included on other parts of this site)*
www.archpark.org.il/panorama.shtml

A 3-D tour of the vessels used in the Beit Hamikdash
www.yucs.org/~rweiser/mik.html

Information about an institute in Jerusalem working on reconstructing Temple vessels
www.templeinstitute.org/main.html

VOCABULARY FOR YOUR STUDENTS

בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ	The Holy Temple
מָקוֹם	place
חִפּוּשׂ מַטְמוֹן	treasure hunt