## "A Royal Showdown at Ein Gedi" (PAGES 14-17)

LESSON PLAN BY JEFFREY SPITZER

### CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn to distinguish between secrets that can be kept and secrets that should be revealed.
- Students will recognize that friendship does not always mean keeping secrets.
- Students will learn more of the ancient history of Ein Gedi.

### MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

**1.** Study the Jewish texts that address the relationship between keeping secrets and friendship. The texts illustrate different scenarios in which keeping a secret is appropriate. With the information provided in the sources, students will then be challenged through the following activity to consider when it is advisable to reveal a secret.

**2.** Puzzle Activity

Students work in cooperative groups to try and solve a logic puzzle.

Some clues will be provided to the class as a whole, while "secret" clues will be distributed to individual groups. Ultimately, the students will realize that they must share their secret clues to solve the puzzle. By design, not all of the groups will solve the puzzle. This activity provides the context for a discussion on when secrets should be revealed.

The article refers to David's hiding in the caves of Ein Gedi. The logic puzzle asks students to figure out where David is hiding.

**A.** Divide the class into four cooperative groups.

**B.** Write the following clues on the board:

There are four caves, which you can refer to as A, B, C, and D.

Two caves have water, and David is in a cave with water.

Three caves in a row have spiders.

Cave A has water and spiders.

**C.** Give three of the groups index cards that say:

### Lesson at a Glance

**David's safety in the cave at Ein Gedi was, according to the *midrash*, preserved by a spider who hid him. Through text study, a logic puzzle, and class discussion, students will wrestle with questions of how secrets affect groups and friends.**

## Note

*This puzzle, incidentally, is similar to the puzzle provided by Professor Snape to protect the Sorcerer's Stone (see* Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, *p. 285).*

## Teaching Tip

*Here are clues for a more challenging puzzle appropriate for seventh graders or as an extension after the class. There are also some additional puzzles available at www.babaganewz.com:*

There are six caves.

Four of the caves, including the two on the ends, have water.

E, F, and one other cave have spiders.

Three caves in a row have water.

David's cave is *not next to* a cave with spiders.

Groups 1-3: Caves with water surround the other cave with spiders in it.

Group 4: David has water in his cave.

*This is your secret clue. Do not trade your secret clue with another group unless you all agree that you absolutely must in order to solve the puzzle. Check to see if you can solve the puzzle before you make another trade.*

***Cave D has water.***

**D.** Give the fourth group an index card that says:

*This is your secret clue. Do not trade your secret clue with another group unless you all agree that you absolutely must in order to solve the puzzle. Check to see if you can solve the puzzle before you make another trade.*

***David is in a cave with both water and spiders.***

**EXPLANATION OF THE PUZZLE:**

This kind of puzzle is best done with a graphic organizer: The students record the possibilities on a piece of notebook paper with four columns.

Based on the public clues, the students should be able to narrow the options down to these (capitals indicate definite information):

| | A | B | C | D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| i | WS | Sw | S | |
| ii | WS | S | Sw | |
| iii | WS | S | S | w |

The three groups that know that cave D has water can narrow it down to option iii, but they don't know whether David is in A or D. The fourth group knows that David is in a cave with both water and spiders, which excludes cave D. Only when the fourth group trades information with one of the other groups will those two groups be able to solve the puzzle. Since the groups are told to check the puzzles before trading again, only those two groups will solve the puzzle.

**E.** In order to solve the puzzle, a group needs all of the clues. The fourth group, and whomever the fourth group swaps secrets with, will solve the puzzle, but the other two groups will not. In order to let the two "losing" groups feel the frustration of not being let in on the crucial secret, wait a minute or two after the first two groups have figured it out, then call time. Then you can share the fourth group's clue with the other two groups so they can see how the problem was solved.

**3.** In a concluding discussion, invite students to reflect on what it feels like to be excluded and to evaluate when secrets should not be kept.

The goal of the puzzle activity is to get students to feel what it is like to be excluded from a secret or to exclude someone from a secret. The goal of this discussion is to focus on the challenges of keeping a secret. Here are some guiding questions for that discussion:

How does it feel when someone shares a secret with you?

How does it feel when someone shares a secret with you that you probably shouldn't know?

How does it feel when you know someone is withholding a secret from you?

The only thing that kept you from telling everyone your secret clue was the warning on the card. But what if a friend told you something in confidence; under what circumstances would you reveal that secret?

The spider kept a secret because revealing it would have endangered David. What if keeping a secret would endanger someone?

The people of Ein Gedi didn't reveal a secret because it would have caused them to lose their business. What if keeping a secret would cause someone to lose money?

Do secrets help or hurt friendships? What kinds of secrets help friendships, and what kinds of secrets hurt friendships?

## JEWISH TEXTS:

***Alphabet of Ben Sira, Otzar Midrashim, 47b***
*A midrash based on the story of David hiding from King Saul in the cave at Ein Gedi (1 Samuel 24).*

*"[When David] was hiding from King Saul in the cave, the Holy Blessed One sent a spider who wove [her web] over the mouth of the cave and closed it up. Saul came and saw the woven [spider web]. He said, "Certainly no one has gone inside here, for if he had entered, he would have torn the web to shreds; and he went and did not go in. When David came out and saw the spider, he kissed it and said, 'Praised is your Creator, and praised are you.'"*

The spider helped keep David's secret location hidden from Saul. Certainly, friendship requires that one should not reveal a secret when revealing the secret could endanger someone else. According to this story, it is also permitted to allow someone to come to an incorrect conclusion in order to keep someone's secret (at least when personal danger is involved).

**A mosaic inscription from an ancient synagogue at Ein Gedi, which includes the following exhortation:**
*"Anyone who causes a conflict between a person and his friend, or slanders his friend before the nations [non-Jews], or steals his friend's property, or reveals the secret of the city to the nations [non-Jews], the One whose eyes range over all the earth and see secret things will place His face against that person and his descendants and uproot him from under the heavens, and all the people said, 'Amen, Amen, Selah.'"*

The town of Ein Gedi produced a very special perfumed cream called balsam, and scholars have guessed that the "secret of the city" has to do with the carefully guarded recipe for balsam. One scholar even said that the warnings are connected: Someone who reveals the secret recipe would cause a conflict in the town and would, in effect, be stealing intellectual property. In this case, telling a secret would not endanger one's friends in the city, but it might cause them to lose money and a valuable business. The teacher might share an experience when a personal secret was revealed.

## FOLLOW-UP AND ENRICHMENT

**1.** Read the story of Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 20).

What secrets did they keep, and from whom? Note especially verses 5 and 9.

**2.** Extend your discussion about secrets to the following topics:

What kinds of secrets do governments keep?

Should allies (like the U.S. and Israel) keep secrets from each other?

What kinds of secrets do businesses keep?

## RELATED WEB SITES/ADDITIONAL SOURCES

*Geography and history of Ein Gedi:*
www.jajz-ed.org.il/noar/sites/eingedi.htm

*Synagogue and bathhouse at Ein Gedi:*
www.jajz-ed.org.il/noar/sites/eingsyn.htm

*The synagogue inscription:*
www.imaging.dundee.ac.uk/people/syuill/texts/ein_gedi.jpg

www.peshitta.org/images/Ein_Gedi_Synagogue.bmp

*Balsam perfume produced at Ein Gedi:*
www.jewishheritage.com/topics/spices/balsam.html

### Teaching Tip

*For the background to this midrash, review the story of David and Saul in 1 Samuel 24.*

### Note

*The Aramaic text for the inscription appears on the source sheet without vowels because the original Aramaic spelling is not standard. Ask students to try to decipher words based on familiar vocabulary.*

### Vocabulary for Your Students

סוֹד
***secret***

רֶמֶז
***clue***

*A complete list of Hebrew words related to Ein Gedi is available to print at www.babaganewz.com.*