This article shares the story of one paratrooper in the IDF, Ya’akov Katz, who retells his experiences during the reunification of Jerusalem in the 1967 Six Day War, an event celebrated on the Jewish calendar every year on the 28th of Iyar, Yom Yerushalayim. Katz’s memories bring life to this historic event and capture the experience of one soldier who was there on this momentous occasion. In this lesson, students will explore the centrality of Jerusalem in Judaism and create mizraḥ wall hangings to express Jerusalem’s importance.

CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore the centrality of Jerusalem in Judaism and in Jewish life.
- Students will learn about the impact that the 1967 Six Day War had on Jerusalem.
- Through analysis of ancient and modern Jewish texts, students will discuss the historical and religious significance of Jerusalem.

KEY QUOTES AND QUESTIONS

Katz compared his experience entering Jerusalem to the Maccabees.

In what ways were the paratroopers similar to the Maccabees? In what ways were the paratroopers different from the Maccabees? Why would the imagery of the Maccabees be significant to Katz and the other paratroopers at the time? Why do you think that this was such a powerful image for them?

The secular paratroopers requested Katz’s tefillin after capturing the Old City.

Why do you think that the secular paratroopers sought a religious object at the time they recaptured the Temple Mount?

MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. At the class session before you plan to read the article and teach the lesson, instruct your students to do the following homework assignment. (Do not explain the significance of the date in the assignment to your students.) Ask a parent, grandparent, or older family friend where he or she was on June 7, 1967. Write down his or her response for use in class discussion during the next class session.

2. During the next class session, invite students to share what they learned from these conversations, using the questions below as your guide:

   - Why do you think I assigned that for homework?
   - What happened in Israel on June 7, 1967?
   - Whom did you ask?
   - What did you learn from him or her?

3. Read the article with your students and discuss the general ideas presented in the Key Quotes and Questions. This allows them the opportunity to hear the story of one person’s firsthand account of the battle for the reunification of Jerusalem.

Once you have read the article with your students, explain that Judaism has established holidays to help us commemorate and celebrate significant historic events. To mark the reunification of the old and new sections of Jerusalem, we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim on the 28th of Iyar every year. (This year the 28th of Iyar, Yom Yerushalayim, corresponds to May 19th.)

4. Study the Jewish texts with your students. The classic and modern texts will allow the students to deepen their understanding of the importance of Jerusalem. Focus the discussion on the following questions:

   - How is Jerusalem portrayed in each source?
   - According to the texts, why is Jerusalem important to the Jewish people?

5. Once your class has examined the texts, ask:

   - What is one way that Jews express their connection to Jerusalem and their recognition of its centrality in Judaism? (facing toward Jerusalem when praying)

Traditionally, mizraḥ signs designate the direction to face during prayer in many prayer spaces and homes. Given what your students have learned, ask them either to design a class banner or individual mizraḥ signs. If designing a class banner, divide the banner into three parts to depict each of the following: Jerusalem of the past (in Tanakh, rabbinic literature, and in tefillah), Jerusalem today, and Jerusalem of the future (in a time of peace). If working individually, they may choose one of the above themes or combine all three. Both the mizraḥ mural and individual signs should include the word mizraḥ on them, reference to a relevant text about Jerusalem, and appropriate graphic images to symbolize the city. A source sheet of classic and modern texts to inspire your students is available online at www.babaganewz.com/teachers. Reading the sources will help students think of graphic images and texts to include on the mizraḥ sign. Use whatever media you have available and encourage your students to be creative.

When finished, hang the banner and/or individual mizraḥ signs on the eastern wall of your school’s prayer space as a constant visual reminder of Jerusalem and its place in Judaism and the psyche of the Jewish people.
JEWISH TEXTS

Siddur, Weekday Amidah
Have mercy, God, and return to Jerusalem, Your city. May Your presence dwell there as You have promised. Build it now, in our days and for all time. Re-establish there soon the majesty of David. Praised are You, God, Who rebuilds Jerusalem.

What is asked for in this prayer?

What do you think it means for God’s presence to dwell in Jerusalem? What would that look like? What would it feel like?

Do you see the fulfillment of this prayer in our days? How? If you do see the fulfillment of this prayer, what exactly are we asking for when we say this tefillah?

Psalms 137:5
If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning.

What is the meaning of this text? Restate the text in your own words.

Why do you think the text compares forgetting Jerusalem to losing strength in one’s right hand?

Why do you think the psalmist used an image from the human body in this psalm?

What does this comparison suggest about the importance of Jerusalem?

“Jerusalem, the Golden City,” by Naomi Shemer
Jerusalem of gold, and of bronze, and of light
Behold I am a violin for all your songs....

(Above is the chorus to the song. For the complete lyrics in both Hebrew and English, visit www.babaganewz.com/teachers.)

The lyrics quoted here and on our web site for Yerushalayim Shel Zahav (“Jerusalem, the Golden City”) are used with permission. Music and original words by Naomi Shemer-Sapir ©1967 (renewed) Chappell & Co., Ltd. All rights in the U.S. and Canada administered by Chappell & Co. All rights reserved. Lyrics reprinted with the permission of Warner Bros. Publications, Miami, FL 33014.

What images are used to describe Jerusalem in this song?

What emotions is Shemer trying to convey?

What relationship is Shemer describing between herself and Jerusalem? The Jewish people and Jerusalem?

This song was written in May 1967, only three weeks before the reunification of Jerusalem. The final stanza was added after Katz and his fellow paratroopers reclaimed the Old City of Jerusalem. Provide students with the lyrics to the song. Ask them to compare the second and fourth stanzas of the song, and to consider the images that each presents.

FOLLOW-UP AND ENRICHMENT
1. Encourage students to view the virtual tour of the Kotel on www.babaganewz.com.
2. Prepare a zimriyah, or song-fest, in honor of Yom Yerushalayim. Teach your students several songs about Jerusalem and stage a concert for other classes and/or for parents in celebration of the day.
3. Travel Advertisements/Posters: Have your students make travel ads or posters for Jerusalem. Be sure they include: why Jerusalem is important, key sites, and a map of the area, in addition to any other criteria you would like to include. You may want to have half of your class make pre-1967 brochures, and the other half post-1967 brochures.
4. Have your students take virtual tours of Jerusalem’s neighborhoods on www.virtualjerusalem.com/kotelcam. (On the left-hand navigation bar, click on “Jewish Holidays”; then click on “Yom Yerushalayim”; then click on “Virtual Jerusalem.”) You may have your students search this section of the site on their own, or alternatively, have your students each research and teach the class about one of the five neighborhoods explored on the site: the Jewish Quarter, Rehavia, Yemin Moshe, Meah She’arim, and Mt. Scopus. They may teach each other by making poster boards presenting their information or by “jigsawing” having one student from each area share what he or she learned with students who studied the other areas.
5. Have your students research another section of Jerusalem in conflict during the Six Day War: Givat HaTahmoshet, Ammunition Hill, in what is now the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Eshkol. Ask them to research the battle there and to examine the memorial that now stands on the site.

RELATED WEB SITES/ADDITIONAL SOURCES
Assorted links about Yom Yerushalayim and Jerusalem
www.virtualjerusalem.com/kotelcam
www.ou.org/chagim/yomyerushalayim
www.jr.co.il/hotsites/i-jer.htm
Songs of Jerusalem (some sites with lyrics and some with audio)
www.geocities.com/josephnow3/index.htm
www.thejewishexchange.com/index.cfm?FuseAction=showProduct&prodID=144&highlight=music&xCache=
{ts+’2003-08-30+16%3A22%3A50’}
www.israelnationalnews.com/english/radio/jukebox/juke.htm
(Click on “Shirei Eretz Yisrael” for several songs about Jerusalem or on “Songs About Jerusalem” for a radio program including narration and music.)
History of the battle at Givat HaTahmoshet
www.imakenews.com/gems/e_article000003948.cfm
www.jafi.org.il/education/noar/sites/ammohill.htm

VOCABULARY FOR YOUR STUDENTS
עוגנים paratroopers
מלוחות תפוחים ממים Six Day War
קולות connection
מרח east