

Tammuz and Av

Longing for Jerusalem

For the months of Tammuz and Av, in which we mourn the destruction of the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem, the activities will focus on the splendor of Jerusalem, the longing for Jerusalem, and the place of the city in the heart of the Jewish people.

Goals

- > The students will be familiar with Jerusalem as the beating heart of the Jewish people throughout Jewish history.
- > The students will learn about how Jews have longed for Jerusalem throughout the generations, and their hopes and prayers to return there.
- > The students will learn about present-day Jerusalem.

Sources

- > Psalm 137
- > "Jerusalem, Light of the World" (*Beresheit Rabbah* 59)
- > "Zion, My Love" (Menachem Mendel Dolitzky)
- > "Beautiful View" (Rabbi Yehudah HaLevy)
- > Hatikvah

Ages



Grades 4–6



Grades 7 and up

Background for the Teacher

The 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av (Tisha b'Av) are two of the four fasts related to the destruction of the Temple. The most important of these fasts is the 9th of Av, the day on which, according to tradition, both Temples were destroyed. The First Temple, which was built by King Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E., at which time most of the Jews of the city were exiled to Babylonia. Seventy years later, Nehemiah led the building of the Second Temple, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. During the following centuries, most of the Jews who lived in the Land of Israel were killed in rebellions or exiled. The period between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av is known as the "Three Weeks." During the Three Weeks, mourning customs are observed. During this period, we focus on the destruction itself: the destruction of the Temple, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the subsequent exile of the Jews. We also focus on the factors that, according to the Sages, led to this destruction: internal wars and division within the Jewish people and corruption among the leadership.

In **Psalm 137**, Jews who had been exiled to Babylonia tell about how difficult they found it to be far from Jerusalem and how much they missed the holy city. They sat by the rivers of Babylonia and cried when they remembered Zion and the Temple that had been lost. They felt that they could not sing happy songs in a foreign land, because their hearts longed for Jerusalem. They swore that they would never forget Jerusalem, even when they were far away.

Over the centuries, the longing for Jerusalem has been expressed in a variety of Jewish customs and traditions. Today, Jerusalem has a prominent position once again as the capital of the Jewish state, the State of Israel. Jerusalem is an important, large, developed, beautiful, and special city, which attracts many Jewish and non-Jewish visitors from around the world. The connection to the Temple is often expressed through the connection to the Western Wall, a supporting wall from the Second Temple Mount that is the only remaining piece of that building.

The activities in this unit refer to the destruction of both Temples and Jerusalem. But, if you are teaching young children, you do not necessarily need to distinguish between the two destructions, especially since the 9th of Av marks both of them.

Activities

Opening Activity

Here is a list of incomplete sentences. Ask the students to complete each sentence based on their own feelings.

- > Jerusalem reminds me ...
- > The most important thing in Jerusalem is ...
- > I want Jerusalem to ...
- > For me, Jerusalem is ...
- > I learned that Jerusalem is ...
- > Jerusalem causes me to ...
- > One song that reminds me of Jerusalem is ...
- > One food that reminds me of Jerusalem is ...

Main Activity

Part 1: Longing for Jerusalem

Read the following quote from the Talmud:

A person who never saw Jerusalem in its splendor has never seen a beautiful city. "מי שלא ראה ירושלים בתפארתה - לא ראה ברה נחמד מעולם."

A person who never saw the Temple in its constructed state has never seen a magnificent building. "מי שלא ראה בית המקדש בבנינו - לא ראה בנין מפואר מעולם."

(Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sukkah 51b)

(תלמוד בבלי, מסכת סוכה דף נ"א עמוד ב)

Explain that in ancient times, from the time of King David, Jerusalem was the impressive and important capital city of the Land of Israel. The Temple in Jerusalem was the religious center to which Jews from around the world would travel on the three pilgrimage holidays (*shalosh regalim*)- Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Show this video, which presents a [model](#) of Jerusalem during the Second Temple era, which is located at the Israel Museum.

After the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile, the yearning of the exiles for Jerusalem was great.

Show a [presentation](#) with the following verses from Psalm 137, which was written following the destruction of the First Temple:

By the rivers of Babylon, where we sat and cried when we remembered Zion ...

”עַל נְהַרוֹת בְּבֶל שָׁם יִשְׁבְּנוּ גַם בְּכִינּוּ בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אֶת צִיּוֹן...“

How can we sing a song to G-d on foreign soil?

אֵיךְ נִשְׁיֵר אֶת שִׁיר ה' עַל אֲדָמַת נָכַר.

If I forget you Jerusalem, may I forget my right hand ...

אִם אֲשַׁכַּחךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי...“

(Psalm 137, verses 1, 4–5)

Explain the content of the psalm. Tell the students that “Zion” is another name for Jerusalem, which later became another name for the Land of Israel. The word “Zionism” comes from this name, designating someone who supports the idea that Israel is the national homeland of the Jews.

 Ask:

- > Why were the Jews who had been exiled crying?
- > Why didn't they want to sing?
- > The last sentence is an oath. What oath did the exiled Jews swear?

You can add that the Temple was rebuilt after 70 years, but that several hundred years later, the Second Temple was destroyed, too, together with the city of Jerusalem and almost all of the Jews were exiled from the city. The Sages wanted the Jewish people to remember Jerusalem, so they developed different customs related to the city.

Distribute to the students the activity sheet (Supplement 1) that presents different Jewish customs that remind us of Jerusalem or teach us about its importance. Invite the students to work on the activity sheet in pairs.

Bring the class back together and ask the students to share:

- > Which of the customs that remind us of Jerusalem were they familiar with?
- > Were there any customs that were new to them, but caused them to feel a certain way or that they particularly liked?



As a class, discuss the customs related to Jerusalem that the students have learned about.

 Ask:

- > Do you think that the mourning customs are relevant today, when Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel and a large, important city?
- > Is there a change that you would like to see in Jerusalem?

Explain that longing for Jerusalem has been an important part of Jewish and Israeli identity for generations. We encounter this longing for Jerusalem in the Israeli national anthem, “[Hatikvah](#)”, and in Jewish poetry written over the years in different parts of the world.

Divide the students into pairs and give each pair a copy of the study sheet (Supplement 2). Explain to the students what a “*hevruta*” is. The term comes from the word for friendship and refers to working together. It is the practice of two people reading a text together and discussing it. This is a form of Torah study in which each partner

contributes to the understanding of the studied text. Have the students study the source sheet in pairs (as a havruta).

Bring the class back together and ask the students to share their answers to the questions on the study sheet.

Part 2: The Light of Jerusalem

Project the presentation "[Jerusalem, Light of the World](#)" on the board. (*Beresheit Rabbah* 59)

Explain that the sentence was said by the Sages in the midrash.

 Ask:

- > What is the meaning of the word "light"? Does it refer to a lot of flashlights?
- > What do you think the Sages were referring to?

We will now see some possibilities for the "light" of Jerusalem. Some of them will certainly match the students' answers.

Show the rest of the presentation which suggests the different types of light that Jerusalem brings.



Hand out postcards to the students (thick paper, 15 × 10 cm) on which they can draw one of the types of light of Jerusalem, as shown in the presentation. On the other side of the card, they can write a note to an imaginary child living in Jerusalem, in the past or today, in which they can ask that child questions and share about their own life outside of Israel.

Display the postcards. You can hang them on a wall of the classroom that you have dedicated to the theme of Jerusalem.



Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by saying that today, many Jews live in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, and many come to visit the city and enjoy its renewed beauty. Thanks to the customs that remind us of Jerusalem, the connection with the city and warm feelings for it were preserved for generations. One custom mentioned in the lesson is the custom of facing Jerusalem when we pray. Invite the students to figure out which wall of the classroom faces Jerusalem and to put a sign on that wall with an arrow pointing toward Jerusalem. On the sign itself write "Jerusalem". Around it, students can add relevant things: personal prayers for Jerusalem, words connected to Jerusalem, or simply their names.



Digital Game

Discovering Jerusalem



Invite the students to explore the map of Jerusalem. Important places in the city are marked on the map and, for each place, there is a quiz, game, or video. You can work with individual computers or project the map on a screen and work together.

The tasks are tailored for different ages. Difficult tasks are marked with the Level 2 icon.

Supplement 1

"If I forget you Jerusalem..."

By the rivers of Babylon, where we sat and cried when ... we remembered Zion ...

How can we sing a song to G-d on foreign soil?

איך נשיר את שיר ה' על אדמת נכר.

If I forget you Jerusalem, may I forget my right hand...

אם אשכחך ירושלים תשכח ימיני...

(Psalm 137, verses 1, 4-5)



Here is a list of customs that remind us of Jerusalem.

- > Make a check mark next to each custom with which you are familiar.
 - > Mark the customs that are meant to remind us of the destruction of Jerusalem with the color red.
 - > Mark the customs that testify to the importance of Jerusalem with the color blue.
- We bless Jerusalem in the blessings that we say after a meal: "ובנה ירושלים עיר הקדוש" "במהרה ביימינו" [And build Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily and in our days].
 - Before concluding a wedding, we break a glass and recite the verse "If I forget you Jerusalem, may I forget my right hand... (Some have the custom to place ashes on the groom's forehead)
 - We leave a small part of a wall of our homes without plaster or paint, as a reminder of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
 - We fast on the 9th of Av and mourn the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
 - We visit Jerusalem on the three pilgrimage holidays—Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot—just like Jews did in Temple times.
 - In our homes, we hang a picture that includes the word "mizrach [east]" on a wall facing the direction of Jerusalem.
 - We pray in the direction of Jerusalem.
 - At the end of the prayer service on Yom Kippur and at the end of the Passover seder we say: "לשנה הבאה בירושלים" [Next year in Jerusalem].

Supplement 2

Jerusalem – Havruta Sheet

Read the sources together and discuss them with the help of the questions.

Beautiful View

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevy, 11th century

**Beautiful View, Joy of the World,
Headquarters of a Great King***

**My soul longs for you from the far reaches
of the West ...**

*affectionate names for Jerusalem

יפה נוף

רבי יהודה הלוי

יפה נוף, משוש תבל, קריה למלך רב
לך נכספה נפשי מפאתי מערב...

Hatikvah

Naftali Herz Imber, 19th century, Israeli national anthem

**As long as in the heart, within,
A Jewish soul still yearns
And to the ends of the East, onward,
An eye still gazes toward Zion
Our hope is not yet lost
The hope of 2000 years
To be a free people in our land
To be a free people in our land**

"התקנה"

נפתלי הרץ אימבר

כל עוד בלבב פנימה
נפש יהודי הומיה
ולפאתי מזרח קדימה
עין לציון צופיה
עוד לא אבדה תקותנו
התקנה בת שנות אלפים
להיות עם חפשי בארצנו
ארץ ציון וירושלים

Zion, My Love

Menachem Mendel Dolitzky, 19th century

**Zion my love, Zion my darling
My soul yearns for you from afar
May my right hand forget its skill, if I
forget you, my beautiful one...**

ציון תפתי

מנחם מנדל דולצקי

ציון תפתי, ציון חמדתי
לך נפשי מרחוק הומיה
תשכח ימיני אם אשכחה, יפתי...



- > What do all of these songs/poems have in common?
- > Which words do the authors use to express their deep feelings about Jerusalem (Zion)?
- > Unlike the authors of “Hatikvah” and the psalm that we studied, Menachem Mendel Dolitzky and Rabbi Yehudah HaLevy express a longing for a place that they never even saw a picture of. How do you think it’s possible to develop such strong feelings about a place that you do not live in everyday?
- > How do the descriptions in these songs/poems help Jews who live outside of Israel to “build” Jerusalem in their hearts?
- > Why does the Israeli national anthem talk about yearning for Zion, even though many who sing it actually live in the country?
- > Is there another song or poem that you know that expresses the bond between the Jewish people and Jerusalem?

