



Brick by Brick:

Building Conversations on Jerusalem

Topic: Jerusalem

Background for Teachers

On December 6, 2017, President Trump announced that the United States will officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Students may want to understand this statement and its political and historical implications. There are many resources already in circulation and being written every hour that address this need.

This resource is meant to allow students to explore the emotional connection which many in the Jewish community feel toward Jerusalem. הַכֶּתֶל הַמַּעֲרָבִי, The Western Wall or Kotel, is one of its most recognizable symbols internationally, with special significance to the Jewish community.

This replica of the Western Wall can be built by the teacher in advance of a class session, or by students during class. Detailed instructions are below:

Materials needed

- Download and print the large packet of Western Wall images (11-11"x17" photographs)
- Project display board
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Copies of Yehuda Amichai's poetry (separate download)
- Additional supplies may be needed depending on your chosen project

Description of Activities

To create the Kotel/Western Wall Replica

- Download and print the Western Wall images. Arrange the images on top of the display board in any pattern. Once pleased with the design, secure to the board using a glue stick. Trim away any excess paper from the sides of the board.

Additions and Options:

- Have the students create the Wall with you, choosing where the various pictures are placed to create the collage.
- Wrap the decorated board with chicken wire. Encourage students to place their prayers in between the wires.



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- Wrap clear plastic (can be found in fabric store) on top of the display board so students may write prayers directly on top of the board.
- Use the replica as just one of many re-creations of the Wall. Have students build others out of different materials. Suggestions include: sugar cubes, Lego bricks, building blocks, shoe or cereal boxes.
- Create many display board replicas and have students create various scenes in front of them, diorama style. Suggestions include: A visit from a US president or other foreign dignitary, swearing in Israeli soldiers, a Shabbat evening or pilgrimage holiday, thoughts and feelings from people of different cultures, backgrounds and ethnicities (both in Israel and visitors from around the world.)

Quick Tips - How to Use the Western Wall Replica:

Create a Mood:

- Hang it on an eastern wall as a *mizrach*. Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav said, "Wherever I go, I'm going to Jerusalem." Talk with students about what this means in the context of Jewish education. Use the wall as a focal point or object to re-focus the class when necessary.
- Ask students to close their eyes and envision themselves in front of the Western Wall. Ask how it feels to be in a place filled with holiness and memory. Ask that they enter their studies with the feelings and actions the Wall inspires.

Prayer:

- Write prayers and put them into the replica structure (in pre-cut slits) just as one would if they were visiting the Wall. You might choose to direct the students as to the subject, perhaps personal prayers, prayers for peace, or prayers for Israel.
- Use it as a focal point for studying the Prayer for the State of Israel. The differing movements in Judaism have adapted this prayer to fit their individual worldview and theology. You might study the prayer of your movement or study a selection. Some versions contain the references to Jerusalem while others do not.

Acting and Interacting:

- Ask students to act out a first trip to the Western Wall.



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- Ask students to pose the Wall questions to which they'd like to know the answers. Optional: Research the questions together as a class.
- Jews often make requests at the Western Wall. Have the students play the part of the Wall. What would the Wall say to us? What do they envision the Wall's prayers for us would be?
- Create many display board replicas and have students create various scenes in front of them, diorama style. (Students may also use dolls or cardboard silhouettes as the actors.) Suggestions include: A visit from a US president or other foreign dignitary, swearing in Israeli soldiers, a Shabbat evening or pilgrimage holiday, thoughts and feelings from people of different cultures, backgrounds and ethnicities (both in Israel and visitors from around the world.)

A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words:

- Take a picture of each student in front of the Wall. Print them out and paste on a piece of cardstock. Have students write a caption as if the picture is part of a travelogue. Alternatively, you can do the same thing using an online picture-sharing site.
- Show students historical pictures of people at the Western Wall, including among them photos from the turn of the 20th century, 1948, 1967, and some modern photos. Ask them to caption each photo using one word. What one word comes to minds looking at the replica you've created?
- **Poetry:**
 - Read the poems of Yehuda Amichai on Jerusalem. He has written many, two of which are included at the end of this document. Analyze the poems with the Western Wall in mind.
 - Using the replica as a focal point, ask students to write poetry about the Wall. They might write about the Wall, about Jerusalem, or Israel.
 - Ask students to compose a particular type of poem about the Wall such as a haiku or an acrostic.

Symbols:

- Explain that the Western Wall is one of the main symbols by which people recognize Jerusalem. Ask: What is one of the main ways people recognize where you live? What would it be like to have that enlarged in front of your classroom.



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- Ask students to create a slogan for Jerusalem. Have them use words evoked by their viewing of the Western Wall
- With older students you might discuss: Is it possible to recreate feelings with representations? Can a replica of the Western Wall (or the Statue of Liberty, for example) conjure the same feelings as being present in the real place?

Poetry of Yehuda Amichai

Yehuda Amichai, (May, 19 - September 2000), is considered among Israel's greatest modern poets. He wrote extensively on Jerusalem. Here are two of his poems. Both poems are from *Poems of Jerusalem* by Yehuda Amichai. Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing, 1987. These poems are also available as a separate download to print and read with your students.

Jerusalem

On a roof in the Old City

Laundry hanging in the late afternoon sunlight:

The white sheet of a woman who is my enemy,

The towel of a man who is my enemy,

To wipe off the sweat of his brow.

In the sky of the Old City

A kite.

At the other end of the string,

A child

I can't see

Because of the wall.

We have put up many flags,

They have put up many flags.

To make us think that they're happy.

To make them think that we're happy.



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Ecology of Jerusalem

The air over Jerusalem is saturated with prayers
and dreams

like the air over industrial cities.

It's hard to breathe.

And from time to time a new shipment of history arrives
and the houses and towers are its packing materials.

Later these are discarded and piled up in dumps.

And sometimes candles arrive instead of people
and then it's quiet.

And sometimes people come instead of candles
and then there's noise.

And in enclosed gardens heavy with jasmine
foreign consulates,

like wicked brides that have been rejected,
lie in wait for their moment.

Father, don't get me down, our Father our King,
Leave us up here, our Father our King!"