

**Tisha B'av**

Concept: Makom Kadosh

Goal: Try to understand what it means for a space to be holy

**Intro:** On Tisha b'av we commemorate the destruction of God's house. God's holiness was concentrated in the Temple, and on Tisha b'av that holiness was dispersed throughout the world. One understanding of God is that God is an energy source/force that permeates everything.

- If God exists everywhere, how can certain places be considered more holy than others?
- How can we harness that holy energy and bring it into the space we occupy?

**First Activity:**

Each group will brainstorm and come up with a list of values that are important to them (ex: charity, family, relationship with God/prayer, nature, good deeds, learning Torah, etc.). Then assign each value to a certain color of your stickers (ex: charity is blue).

Place pictures of the different places on the ground in middle of circle. Each kid will place their own sticker on the bottom of the picture with the value they think that picture represents (ex: a pic of beit midrash would get sticker representing learning Torah; pic of a forest would get nature sticker, etc.). If they see a picture of a place that they think is holy but don't have a value on their list to match up with it, they can think of the value on the spot (ex: a pic of Rachel's grave can represent the value of honoring one of our righteous eemahot). Some pictures the kids may think are not holy at all (ex: movie theater).

Try to rank the places from most holy to least holy.

**Thought-Provoking Questions:** What makes a place holy? Is it the place or what is done in that place that makes it holy? Do you feel the holiness? Is it palpable? Can you describe that feeling? Do all holy places remain holy forever? (the Kotel is now just a wall but we still consider it holy)

Can we make a non-holy place holy?

**Torah Intro:** In Genesis Parshat Vayeitzei, Yaakov leaves Be'er SHEVA and goes to Charan where he takes the stones of the place and arranges them around his head in order to lay on. In his dream, Hashem appeared to Yaakov comforting him that Hashem will protect him and be with him. When Yaakov woke up he said "Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know!"... "How awesome is this place!" (Genesis 28, 16-17). Can we recognize Hashem's presence in different places? How can we make certain places awesome?

**Second Activity:**

Send your kids out to find a place ALONE where they feel they can sanctify it (ex: by the agam, sitting under a tree, etc.) – maybe just on bside. You can provide them with ideas of how to sanctify their place (ex: creating a mound with twigs, writing their thoughts down on paper and burying it, meditating, singing, saying a prayer, repeating a phrase such as "Ma Norah Hamakom Haze" "How awesome is this place!" etc.). After 10 minutes, counselors will circulate and bring kids back at certain time.

Kids will share why they chose their place and how they sanctified it.

**Thought-Provoking Questions:** How did you feel in your holy space? Do you think your place will remain holy? Is the Temple Mount holy right now? Did you feel connected or disconnected to the other people in your group? Is it easier for you to pray/worship God in solitude or in a communal space?

**Conclusion:** After the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish people went into exile and no longer had a communal house of worship. (today we have synagogues that are spread out all over the world). On Tisha B'av, we mourn the loss of a holy space where we were able to develop our relationship with God. Today, we work towards creating our own holy spaces where we can bring in God's energy, in hope of ultimately coming together in the third Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem.