

ENGAGING IN FAMILY/COMMUNITY EDUCATION

CASE LEARNING ACTIVITY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

LESSON OVERVIEW

Primary sources, such as the Hebrew Bible, and artifacts are clues to uncovering archaeological mysteries. When one surveys or excavates a site, the discovered artifacts provide insight into the society, its values and its culture. Educationally, what is most important is ensuring that the discoverer understands the proper context of the artifact, and is not merely interested in finding the most valuable piece of material. The importance in discovering an artifact is in understanding the time period, society, and region with which it is associated.

The overall idea of this activity is to enable Jews of all ages to relate to the history of the Jewish people. Further, the components of the activity require the group to work together, to explore various Jewish texts, and compose a deep and thorough understanding of their topic of study. If done correctly, each group's presentation allows for them to learn about a significant scene in the Hebrew Bible.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Traditional Jewish texts, including the Hebrew Bible (Tanach) and Talmud, are the foundational texts of the Jewish people and are deeply rooted in the land of Israel.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is the connection between Biblical and Rabbinic texts and events in Jewish history?
- What is the connection between Biblical and Rabbinic texts and places in Israel?
- What can we learn about Israel from artifacts?

OBJECTIVES:

Participants will:

- Participate in a mock archaeological dig
- Discover connections between texts, objects, and locations
- Construct meaning from their observations
- Engage in basic research

TIME RECOMMENDED:

60-90 Minutes

GRADE LEVEL:

All; Family education

ASSESSMENT:

Participants will create a graphic representation of the text passage and its geographic location.

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ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:

Activity One:

1. Divide participants into groups of 7-10 and provide each group with a box or container filled with packing peanuts. Within the packing peanuts, place small cut-out images of artifacts (arrowheads, pottery jugs, ancient Jewish artifacts – see below for potential artifacts for each of the passages) relating to the Biblical passages shown below – or feel free to choose your own. In addition, add several “artifacts” that have nothing to do with any of the Jewish texts listed below or chosen subject matter (i.e. kid’s toys, household items etc.)

Alternative – feel free to use real artifacts such as religious objects from your home and or synagogue but try to align them with the texts provided or other texts/themes that you may choose and make sure that you have a large enough container for younger students to “experience” the digging.

2. Distribute the following texts passages to the groups. (These are just a select sampling, feel free to add other texts as you see fit.)

Macabees → Talmud, Shabbat 21b...*and when the royal Hasmonean House gained the upper hand and vanquished them [the Greeks], [the Hasmoneans] searched and found only one flask of oil...with the Kohen Gadol's [High Priest] seal, and it contained only [enough oil] to burn for one day. A miracle occurred and it burned for eight days.* (Clue = Menorah, oil, Maccabee shield)

Gezer → Joshua 10:33 “Then Horam king of **Gezer** came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining.”

Meggido (Hazor) → Joshua 12: 7, 21: “...The local kings whom Joshua and the Israelites defeated on the west side of Jordan – from Baal-gad in the Valley of Lebanon to Mount Halak”; “The King of **Taanach (Hazor)**” (Clue = arrowhead, spear, etc.)

Dan → Judges 18:29: “and they named the town **Dan**, after the ancestor Dan who was Israel’s son. Originally, however, the name of the town was Laish.” (Clue = Tel-Dan inscription = King David)

Shechem → Genesis 12: 6-8: “Abram passed through the land as far as the site of **Shechem**, and the terebinth of Moreh...The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘I will assign this land to your offspring’. And he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him”. (Clue =, tree, altar)

Beer-Sheba → Genesis 26: 23, 25: “[Isaac] went up to **Beer-Sheba**”; “So he built an altar there and invoked the Lord by name.” (Clue = Altar, Isaac)

Jericho → Joshua 6: 1-5: (Israelites march around [**Jericho**] for 7 days with priests blowing horns; long blast the people yell; the city wall will collapse) (Clue = city walls, trumpets or shofars)

Arad → Numbers 21: 1, 3: “When the Canaanite, king of **Arad**...learned that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he engaged Israel in battle”; “The Lord heeded Israel’s plea and delivered up the Canaanites.” (Clue = arrowhead, spear)

Valley of Elah → Samuel 1: 2, 50: “Saul and the men of Israel massed and encamped in the **valley of Elah**”; “Thus David bested the Philistine with sling and stone; he struck him down and killed him.” (Clue = Slingshot, stone)

The Ark of the Covenant → 1 Samuel: 4:3: “When the [Israelite] troops returned to the camp, the elders of Israel asked, ‘why did the Lord put us to rout today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from **Shiloh**...’” (Clue= Ark of the Covenant, arrowhead)

Solomon’s Temple → 2 Chronicles 3:1: “Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on **Mount Moriah**, where the Lord had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” (Clue=stones, temple, mosaic tiles)

WORKING WITH ARTIFACTS

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ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES (CONTINUED):

3. Have each group dig out all of the artifacts and categorize them however they think they should be arranged.
4. After they have categorized their artifacts, have them select 2 of the passages from the list and match an artifact to each passage.
5. Using a map of Israel, see if each group can locate the place(s) that correspond to their text and artifacts.
Optional – Using a large map of Israel on the wall, place pins in the various locations with cut-outs of each text to show the diversity of text connections to the land of Israel.
6. Create a representation of the text passage and the artifact and geographic location they related to it. The representation can be a picture or other type of artistic representation or even a dramatic interpretation of the text. Have each group present their interpretation to the other participants. The interpretation should explain why they chose this particular artifact.