



Holy Cleaning!

Topic

Hanukkah

Grade Level(s)

2nd and Up

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will:

- Recall that the Maccabees and their followers cleaned the *Beit Hamikdash* (Holy Temple) before worshipping there
- Relate their own cleaning of a holy/sacred/special space to that of the Maccabees
- Consider how cleaning their own physical or spiritual spaces might affect them personally

Materials needed

- To be determined by the particular project chosen (See Prepare in Advance)

Prepare in Advance

- After choosing a space to clean, confirm with administration that the space chosen is one that will be available. Arrange for that space to be left in disarray. (See Description of Activities)
- Collect materials based on the cleanup/beautification project chosen. These might include cleaning supplies, art materials, etc.

Background for Teachers

The defiling of the **בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ** (*Beit Hamikdash*, Holy Temple) in Jerusalem during the dominion of the Seleucid Greeks was a major blow to the Jewish people. While many Jews at the time had become Hellenized (i.e. chose to follow Greek cultural and religious norms over Jewish ones), a group of Jews led by the Maccabees revolted against the Greeks and the Hellenized Jews and eventually regained control of the *Beit Hamikdash* (1 Maccabees 2:1-48, et al.).

However, the *Beit Hamikdash* was in bad shape. Much of the structure had fallen into disrepair, and parts were overgrown with vegetation (1 Maccabees 4:36-51, Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 12:7:6). Famously, there was not even enough pure oil to light the menorah for eight days (Tractate *Shabbat* 21b). Thus, the Maccabees and their followers embarked on a cleanup project to make their sacred space appropriate for worshipping God again and celebrated the rededication of the *Beit Hamikdash* only after cleansing it.



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Description of Activities

1. Choose a space in your building that students can clean and/or beautify. Make sure that the space is good and messy so as to shock students when they arrive.
 - a. Two examples:
 - i. Synagogue sanctuary
 1. Scatter *siddurim* and *Chumashim*.
 2. Disorganize chairs, benches, etc.
 - ii. Library/Beit Midrash (Study Area)
 1. Take books off shelves and leave them in disarray.
 2. If there is artwork on the walls, leave it hanging off center.
 3. Leave food and/or drinks lying around. Possibly leave crumbs on the tables.
 4. Disarrange chairs.
2. Take students to the space and give them time to take in the mess before them. Remark, "Oh no, what happened here? What shall be done?" Give students the opportunity to offer their reactions and suggestions.
3. Explain that students will clean/beautify the space to enhance people's experiences.
 - a. Note that, depending on the chosen space, students might create art to fill empty spaces.
4. After students are finished, discuss how the space feels different than it did before they started and why it matters.
5. Explain that the *Beit Hamikdash* was in disrepair when the Maccabees regained control of it. Ask students what they think the Maccabees did when they first entered the *Beit Hamikdash*.
 - a. Why would they clean it first?
 - b. Why might it have been difficult for them to worship God in the state in which the Assyrian Greeks left it?
6. Depending on the abilities of students, ask one of the following questions:
 - a. Think about a place that is special to you personally. How do you feel being in that place when it is in disarray? How do you feel when it is organized and clean? Why is it different?
 - b. Now that you have reflected on physically cleaning sacred spaces, think about the things that clutter your mind. What can you do to clear your mind? How might doing so change your inner self? Your relationship with others? How you approach life?