



## Music During the Temple Period

Submitted by: Yaniv Salzberg

**Subject Area:** Jewish music and Jewish history

**Target Age Group:** 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Duration:** 2 or 3 classes (45 min. each)

### **Lesson Objectives:**

It is difficult to realize that Jews who were alive during the period of the first temple in Jerusalem were actual people who weren't so different physically and emotionally from people alive today. This lesson can help history come alive and help students realize that people have enjoyed singing and playing instruments for thousands of years. Students will also realize part of the function of music in Jewish life and how it was used and celebrated in the past.

### **Lesson Plan Guideline:**

Besides simply informing students about the kind of music played during the time of the Temple in Jerusalem, the purpose of this lesson is to make the biblical period of history come alive in a more tangible way. Students will form an understanding that Jews during the time of the Temple were not so different from them—they liked to sing and dance and play instruments just like the students do today. The students will grow an appreciation for the celebration of holidays with music and the idea that Judaism is something vivid and alive and should be celebrated with music.

Students will begin this project with a discussion. The teacher will write this quote on the board: "Music has two powers: to express and to internalize." Students will discuss what it means to express something and what it means to internalize something. On one side of a piece of paper they will write the word "express" and on the other side they will write "internalize." On paper, the students will try to list situations when music fits each category. The expression side will likely be easier to fill with ideas like singing when you're happy, or making up a song to tell someone how you feel about them. The internalizing



## Music During the Temple Period

Submitted by: Yaniv Salzberg

side should include ideas like making up a song of vocabulary words or spelling when you're studying for a test in order to better memorize them.

Next students will discuss how these ideas relate to Jewish music. Which Jewish music is used to internalize and which is used to express? The melodies of many prayers help us remember the words and help establish a routine, which falls under the category of internalizing. The same is true of the chanted trope of the Torah. Students should realize that many Jewish melodies have been passed on through generations and have existed for a very long time. On the other hand certain melodies express different kinds of feeling. The teacher can sing a few prayers with the students and then discuss how the melodies make them feel.

In the next day's lesson, the class will discuss how all of this relates to music during the time of the first temple. Music was used for both expression and internalizing during the temple period. Events at the temple were accompanied by choirs of 12 male singers and 12 instrumentalists, according to the Mishna. The teacher will describe the different kinds of instruments and how they aren't so different from instruments today. The lesson will then become more hands as the students try to build some of the instruments out of wooden dowels, rubber bands, string, shoeboxes, waxpaper, etc. One of the instruments of the first temple was the "nevel" which was a 12-stringed harp. Another was the "halil" which was an oboe-like horn, the "kinor" which was a 10-stringed lyre, and different cymbals and drums. There were also many horn-like instruments including of course the shofar. Students will build miniature versions of these instruments and learn to play them. Students will also learn about the function of music in the old temple period such as signaling certain specific events and simply celebration. Students will learn what it means to be in an orchestra and about what an honor it must have been to be in the temple orchestra. The students will also learn about how Jewish musical life changed after the destruction of the temple, and how for a short time, music was forbidden outside of religious ceremony. This prevention didn't last long, because music is one of the basic needs of humanity.



## Music During the Temple Period

Submitted by: Yaniv Salzberg

### Summary:

Music has been an important part of Judaism for thousands of years. The power of music to express and internalize is as old, and older, than the first temple in Jerusalem. The people who lived during the temple period celebrated their Judaism with song the same way we do today.

### Resources and Links:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_Music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Music)

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1021&letter=M>

The Wikipedia website article has an extensive reference section which points to many more sources. Since my lesson plan is directed at early elementary school kids, I left out more particular information about the instruments. Some of the references mentioned on the Wikipedia website could be very useful if the lesson were reconfigured for older students.