

**Sacred Spaces**

**Introduction**

What is it like to visit a mosque? What is it like to visit a synagogue? During this time that houses of worship are closed, or attendance is limited, we can take a virtual tour of some sacred spaces.

Note: This topic has two parts, Synagogues and Mosques (1 or 2 meetings) and Pilgrimage Sites (1 meeting). They can be done in any order.

**Objective**: to learn about one another’s places of worship and pilgrimage. Looking at the buildings can lead to a discussion of worship, prayer, community, and ideas of the sacred.

**Procedure**: Ask one Muslim sister to present the tour of the Muslim site, and one Jewish sister to present a tour of the Jewish site. The presenters should familiarize themselves with the websites beforehand. The host of the Zoom meeting can “make the presenter the host”, so the presenter can share her screen with the other attendees.

A good guide to the etiquette of visiting a synagogue or a mosque can be found in *How to Be A Perfect Stranger: The Essential Religious Etiquette Handbook* 6th Edition (2015)*,* edited by Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur J. Magida.

**Part I: Mosques and Synagogues.**

**Virtual tour of a synagogue or a mosque.** One sister with a webcam can take the group on a tour of a local sacred space, or you can view an on-line virtual tour. Here are some suggested sites:

Prophet's Mosque <https://www.spinattic.com/1580/Prophet_Mosque?full>

Grand Mosque-Abu Dhabi, UAE

<https://www.p4panorama.com/panos/Sheikh-Zayed-Grand-Mosque-AbuDhabi-UAE-360-degree-virtual-reality-tour/>

Al-Azhar-Mosque, Cairo, Egypt

<http://www.3dmekanlar.com/en/al-azhar-mosque.html>

Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey  <http://www.3dmekanlar.com/en/blue-mosque.html>

Islamic Cultural Center of New York, Manhattan.  <https://www.vpix.net/index.php?tour=8589>

Central Synagogue, Manhattan <http://www.samrohn.com/360-panorama/central-synagogue-new-york-city/> . The site has information about the building, and links to the history of the congregation.

Beth Sholom, Elkins Park, PA <https://www.bethsholompreservation.org/virtualtours> The building was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

**Discussion Questions:**

* What are the different areas you see? How are the different spaces used? (Prayer space, space for socializing, education, recreation, eating, etc.)
* What special events take place in this space? Is the space adaptable to different kinds of events?
* What is it like to visit that place? Is the experience different for men and women?
* How does the space make you feel? Describe your experience while in that space or spaces like it. How does the style of the building and its decoration add to the atmosphere of the place? How does the style define it as Muslim/Jewish?
* How does the space express a Jewish or Muslim idea of sacredness?

**Part II: Pilgrimage sites.**

Take a virtual tour of the Kaaba in Mecca, and of the Kotel in Jerusalem.

* How is the space designed to accommodate crowds?
* What is the space like during pilgrimage/holiday times? What is it like at other times? If sisters have visited these sites, allow time for them to describe their experience. Is the experience different for men and women?
* What is the importance of pilgrimage in your tradition? If you visited these sites, how did it affect you personally? What aspects of the site affected you?

Virtual tour of the Kotel/Western Wall <http://www.samrohn.com/virtual-tour/synagogue/>

Virtual tour of the Kaaba <http://www.3dmekanlar.com/en/masjid-al-haram--kaaba.html>

A beautiful Hebrew Chant about building the holy place:

Shefa Gold chant: Building the Holy Place:  Vaasu. <https://www.rabbishefagold.com/vaasu/>