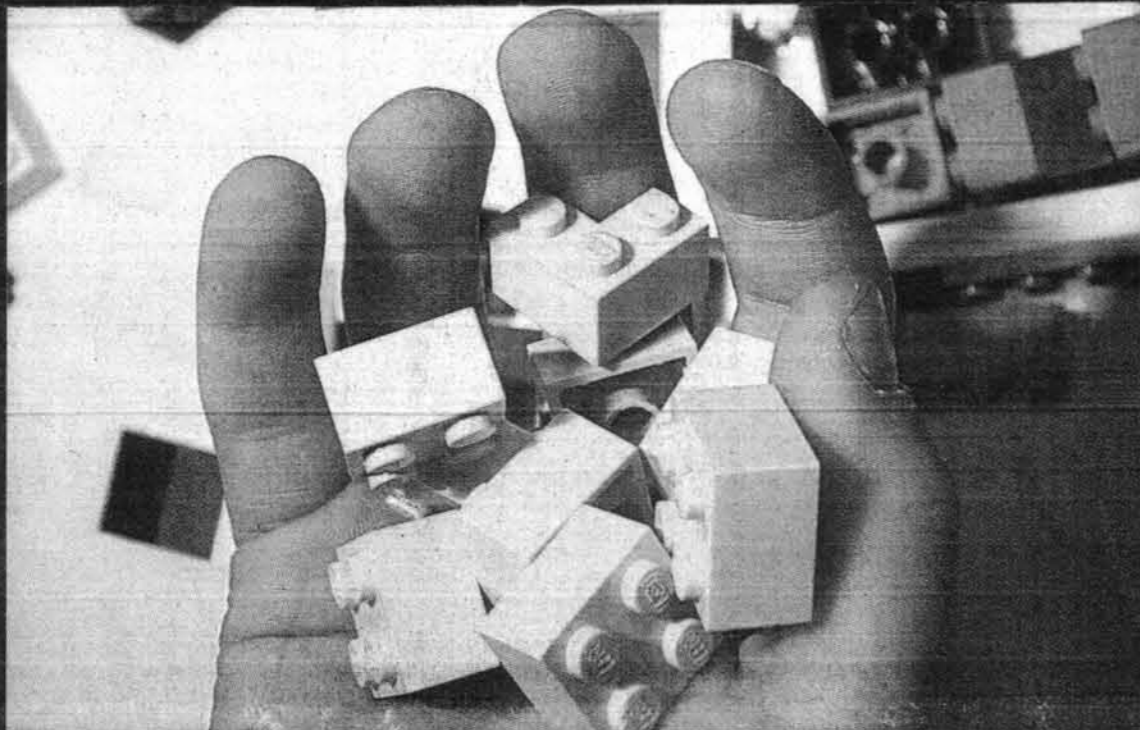


A city is built



Hour photos/MATTHEW VINCI

Legos are used to reconstruct the Old City of Jerusalem Sunday at Temple Israel in Westport.

Kids use Legos to reconstruct Jerusalem

By JILL BODACH
Hour Staff Writer

WESTPORT — Rome may not have been built in a day, but Jerusalem was built in just two hours — at least it was this Sunday in Westport at Temple Israel.

But instead of using bricks, mortar and stone to do it, fourth graders from Temple Israel's Hebrew School along with their parents and architect Stephen Schwartz of SWS Architects of Livingston, N.J. constructed a 16 foot by 16 foot model of the Old City of Jerusalem entirely out of Legos.

Nearly 15,000 of the popular children's building blocks were used to build the model complete with the walls, eight gates

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Maddie Melnick, 9, helps assemble the Old City of Jerusalem Sunday with Legos at Temple Israel in Westport.

Kids reconstruct city of Jerusalem

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to the city, the Kotel, King David's tower and several other important architectural elements of the city.

The builders, approximately 75 in all, were each given a specific portion of the wall of the city or one of the gates leading to the city.

The layout of the city took Schwartz 60 hours to draw but took the builders only two hours to put together. Once they are finished, the city is taken apart and Schwartz then brings his Legos to another group of junior architects.

Even though the completed city does not stay in the temple the memory of constructing it does, which is what Schwartz said is the goal of his project.

"After working on something like this, people really have a visual image in their minds of what the Old City of Jerusalem looked like so whenever they hear about it or learn about it in the future they will have a reference," Schwartz said. "It is a fun, hands-on way to learn."

Schwartz developed the project after using Legos to teach a lesson to his daughter's third-grade class.

He saw that the children grasped the concept of historic places much better when they actually constructed them themselves.

Schwartz then began using the technique to teach children in synagogues and temples about important places in Jewish history including the Old City of Jerusalem, Warsaw Ghetto and Beit Hamikdosh.

Schwartz and his Jewish History Lego Construction Series travels the tri-state area to help bring these places to life for children and adults.

"It is really an inter-generational activity that brings together children and their parents as they work towards a common goal," Schwartz said.

The opportunity for a shared experience was one of the reasons Andy Melnick and his



Hour photos/MATTHEW VINCI

Nine-year-old girls, Jessica Miller, Kelsey Landaver, Olivia Hammer and Ali Jabick help to build the Old City of Jerusalem Sunday from Legos at Temple Israel in Westport.



Klara Auerbach and Sarah Lavy, both 9, pick out Legos Sunday to build the Old City of Jerusalem with at Temple Israel in Westport.

daughter Maddie participated in Sunday's Lego Jerusalem building.

"It's nice to just get together with my daughter and share this learning experience with her," Melnick said. "It's more than just sending her off to Hebrew school. It's taking a role in her learning, and it's fun to share such an interactive project with her."

Nancy Landauer and her daughter Kelsey were among the other parent/child groups that

participated in Schwartz's construction project.

"There aren't many opportunities for parents to get involved in their children's education as far as Hebrew School goes," Landauer said. "There also aren't many opportunities for parents to meet other parents or other members of the community so this is a great, fun way to do that."

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