



# **Machar's Jewish Cultural School**

## **THIRD GRADE CURRICULUM**

**This curriculum was developed through a grant from  
The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, DC's  
Initiative in Congregational Education**

**[www.machar.org](http://www.machar.org)  
202-686-1881**

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## THIRD GRADE CURRICULUM

**Overview:** Ancient Jewish history is used to illustrate Secular/Humanist values that have been presented in previous grades through holidays and family stories. In the third grade, the curriculum follows history chronologically for the first time. Throughout at least the first six months of the school year, the class can read and discuss sections of Stan Mack's comic book *The Story of the Jews: A 4,000 Year Adventure* – especially pages 39 to 90.

### VALUE 1: L'Dor V'Dor – Learning from other Generations

Discuss: How people learn from other generations. What did students learn about Judaism from their parents, grandparents, great grandparents, aunts, uncles, older friends or relatives about being Jewish? Share family stories about Jewish holidays, Jewish recipes, struggles, survival, knowledge, values.

### TOPIC 1: Tribes

Jacob fathered 12 sons. They are the ancestors of the tribes of Israel, and the ones for whom the tribes are named. Each occupied a separate territory except the tribe of Levi, which was set apart to serve in the Holy Temple.

The biblical Joseph was the 11th son of Jacob. He was born to Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, in Paddan-Aram after she had been barren for seven years. Joseph fathered two of the twelve tribes of Israel: Ephraim and Manasseh. Information about Joseph is found in Genesis chapters 37-50.

**THE STORY OF JOSEPH:** At the age of 17, Joseph was a shepherd alongside his brothers. Jacob loved Joseph more than he loved his other sons. Joseph would report his brothers' misdeeds to his father and Jacob gave Joseph a "coat of many colors." The other brothers were jealous of Joseph and hated him. Joseph only further provoked this hatred when he told his brothers about two of his dreams. In the first, sheaves of wheat belonging to his brothers bowed to his own sheaf. In the second, the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowed to him.

One day, Jacob sent Joseph to Shechem to check on his brothers. Joseph went to Shechem and, when his brothers were not there, followed them to Dothan. When the brothers saw him, they plotted to kill him and throw him into a pit. The oldest brother, Reuben, suggested that they merely throw Joseph into the pit, so Reuben could secretly save Joseph later. When Joseph approached, the brothers took his coat and threw him into the pit. They sat down to eat and saw a caravan of Ishmaelite traders from Gilead in the distance. Judah came up with the idea to sell

Joseph into slavery. Joseph was sold for 20 pieces of silver. The brothers then dipped his coat into the blood of a slaughtered goat and brought it back to Jacob. Jacob recognized the coat and concluded that a beast had killed his son. He mourned for many days and was inconsolable.

Meanwhile, the traders took Joseph down to Egypt where Potiphar, an officer and head of the kitchen of Pharaoh, bought him. Joseph was successful there and Potiphar made Joseph his personal attendant, putting him in charge of the entire household.

Joseph was handsome and Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. She approached Joseph day after day but he refused her each time, citing loyalty to Potiphar and to God. One day, Joseph came into the house to work. Potiphar's wife grabbed his coat and he ran away. She then pretended that Joseph had tried to kiss her and slandered him first to her servants and then to her husband. Potiphar was furious and sent Joseph to a jail for the king's prisoners.

In prison, the chief jailor liked Joseph and put him in charge of all the other prisoners, including Pharaoh's butler and baker. One night both the butler and the baker had strange dreams. Joseph interpreted the dreams, saying that in three days time the butler would be recalled to his former position while the baker would be killed. Sure enough, three days later, Pharaoh restored the butler to his job and killed the baker. Joseph asked the butler to mention his name to Pharaoh in the hope that he would be freed, but the butler forgot about Joseph.

Two years later, Pharaoh himself had two dreams that his magicians could not interpret. The butler then remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh sent for the 30-year-old Joseph. He appeared before Pharaoh and told him in the name of God that the dreams forecasted seven years of plentiful crops followed by seven years of famine. He advised Pharaoh to make a wise man commissioner over the land with overseers to gather and store food from the seven years of abundance to save for the years of scarcity. Joseph's prediction and advice pleased Pharaoh and he made Joseph his second-in-command. He gave Joseph his ring and dressed him in robes of linen with a gold chain around his neck. Pharaoh gave him the Egyptian name Zaphenath-paneah and found him a wife named Asenath, daughter of Poti-phera the priest of On.

Joseph traveled throughout Egypt, gathering and storing enormous amounts of grain from each city. During these years, Asenath and Joseph had two sons. The first Joseph named Manasseh, meaning, "God has made me forget (nashani) completely my hardship and my parental home" (Genesis 41:51). He named the second son Ephraim, meaning, "God has made me fertile (hiprani) in the land of my affliction" (Genesis 41:52). After seven years, a famine spread throughout the world, and Egypt was the only country that had food. Joseph was in charge of rationing grain to the Egyptians and to all who came to Egypt.

The famine affected Canaan and Jacob sent his 10 oldest sons to Egypt to get food, keeping only Benjamin, Rachel's second son and Jacob's youngest child, at home out of concern for his safety. Joseph's brothers came and bowed to Joseph, who recognized them immediately but pretended they were strangers. He asked them where they were from and accused them of being spies. They denied his claim but he continued to speak harshly to them and interrogate them. They told him they had a younger brother at home. Joseph then locked them in the guardhouse for three days before commanding the brothers to go home and bring their youngest brother back

with them to prove that they were telling the truth. The brothers spoke among themselves lamenting that they were being punished for what they had done to Joseph, who overheard them, turned away and wept, but then continued his act. He gave them grain and provisions for the journey, secretly returned their money and kept Simeon in jail pending their return.

The brothers returned to Canaan and told Jacob all that had happened in Egypt. They asked Jacob to send Benjamin down with them but he refused, "Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you would take away Benjamin" (Genesis 42:36). Even Reuben's offer that Jacob could kill Reuben's two sons if Benjamin did not return safely did not move Jacob. Eventually, they finished the rations from Egypt and the famine became so severe that Jacob no longer had a choice. Judah told Jacob to send Benjamin in his care and if Benjamin did not return, "I shall stand guilty before you forever" (Genesis 43:9) So Jacob sent the brothers back to Egypt with Benjamin, along with a gift for Joseph and double the necessary money to repay the money that was returned to them.

When the brothers arrived, Joseph brought them to the entrance of his house and instructed his servant to prepare a meal. The brothers were scared and told Joseph they did not know how the money got back in their bags. Joseph replied that their God must have put it there because he received their payment. The brothers then went inside and waited for Joseph to come eat with them. When he returned, they gave him the gifts and bowed to him. He asked about their father, and they responded that he was well, and bowed a second time. He asked if Benjamin was their brother, and left the room, overcome with emotion after seeing his brother again. He then returned and ate and drank with his brothers, giving Benjamin more food than the others. He then instructed his servant to fill the brothers' bags with food, return each one's money a second time, and put his own silver goblet in Benjamin's bag.

As soon as the brothers left the city, Joseph's servant overtook them and accused them of stealing Joseph's goblet. He said that whoever had the goblet in his possession would be kept as a slave, while the others would go free. He searched their possessions and found the goblet in Benjamin's bag. All the brothers returned to the city and threw themselves on the ground before Joseph. Judah expressed their willingness to become Joseph's slave. Joseph answered that only

the one in whose possession the goblet was found would become a slave. Judah then pleaded with Joseph, telling him of Jacob's reluctance to send Benjamin and of his own responsibility for Benjamin. He told of the sorrow that would overtake Jacob if Benjamin did not return. At this point, Joseph could not longer control himself. He sent away all of his attendants, began to cry loudly and revealed his true identity to his brothers.

Joseph's first query was about his father, but the brothers were too shocked to answer. He reassured them that it was God's providence that sent him to Egypt to ensure their survival during the famine, and he was not angry with them. He sent them back with instructions to tell

Jacob what had become of Joseph and to bring Jacob and his household to the nearby town of Goshen where Joseph could care for them during the next five years of famine. He then embraced Benjamin, kissed all of his brothers and wept.

Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come and told them to bring their households to Egypt where he would give them the best of the land. Joseph gave each of them a wagon, provisions for the trip and a change of clothing. He gave Benjamin 300 pieces of silver and several changes of clothing. He also sent a large present back for his father.

At first Jacob did not believe that Joseph was alive. After he saw the wagons that Joseph sent, however, he realized it was true. Then Jacob, at age 130, set out for Goshen with the 70 members of his household. He sent Judah ahead of him so Joseph knew that his father was coming. Joseph went to meet him and they embraced and cried. Joseph told Pharaoh that his brothers and father had arrived. The brothers informed Pharaoh that they were shepherds and Pharaoh put them in charge of his livestock. They lived in the best part of Egypt, in Rameses, and Joseph provided them with bread.

As the famine continued, the Egyptians eventually ran out of money. They begged Joseph for food and he gave them bread in exchange for their animals. After a year, their animals were gone and Joseph made a new deal with the people. He gave them seed to plant on their farms and in exchange they gave Pharaoh one-fifth of their crops. He nationalized all farmland except that belonging to the priests, and turned the people into serfs.

After Jacob had lived in Egypt for 17 years, he called Joseph to him and made him swear that when Jacob died, Joseph would not bury him in Egypt, but would take him to the burial place of his fathers. Joseph swore to this. Soon after, Joseph was told that his father was sick. He brought his two sons to Jacob. Jacob assured Joseph that he would consider Ephraim and Manasseh to be his sons just like Reuben and Simeon were when it came to the inheritance that God had promised Jacob's offspring. Jacob then blessed Ephraim and Manasseh. Although Manasseh was the first-born, Jacob put his right hand, the stronger hand, on Ephraim's head. When Joseph corrected him, Jacob said he did it on purpose and predicted that Ephraim would surpass Manasseh in greatness. Jacob told Joseph that he was about to die, but reassured him that God would be with him. He also assigned him an extra portion of his inheritance, a privilege usually given to the first-born.

Jacob blessed all of his sons, giving the longest blessing to Joseph. He instructed them to bury him in the cave of Machpelah, and then he died. Joseph flung himself at his father, cried and kissed him. Joseph then ordered his physicians to embalm Jacob. The Egyptians mourned for 70 days. Joseph received permission to go to Canaan to bury Jacob. He took his brothers and his father's household, along with all of Pharaoh's officials and dignitaries, and left Egypt in a large group. When they came to Goren ha-Atad, he observed a seven-day mourning period. Joseph and

his brothers then continued to the cave of Machpelah where they buried Jacob. They then returned to Egypt.

Once Jacob was dead, the brothers were scared that Joseph would take revenge on them for selling him. They sent a message to Joseph saying that before his death Jacob had instructed them to tell Joseph to forgive them. They then offered to be his slaves. Joseph reassured them, saying that God intended for Joseph to go down to Egypt to ensure the survival of many people, and Joseph would take care of them and their children. So Joseph, his brothers and his father's household remained in Egypt.

Joseph lived 110 years. He saw great-grandchildren from both his sons. Before he died, he told his brothers that God would one day bring them up from Egypt into the land that God promised their fathers. He made them swear to carry his bones out of Egypt into that land. Joseph died and was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt.

When the Jews eventually left Egypt, Moses carried out Joseph's bones. Joseph was buried in Shechem, on a piece of land that Jacob had previously bought. Joseph's two sons both became tribes in Israel and the northern Israelite kingdom is many times referred to as the "House of Joseph."

- Around 1180 BCE (refer to time-line), the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into Canaan. There, they remained a loose group of tribes for around 200 years.
- These tribes traveled through various terrain (mountains, desert, coastal plane) and developed complex ways of interacting with each other and their neighbors. They took a census to see how many people were a part of their tribe.
- There were twelve tribes, each made up of related families. Each tribe traced their ancestry back to Jacob, who was later named Israel, and who had twelve sons. The twelve tribes were: Asher, Dan, Naphtali, Zebulun, Issachar, Ephraim, Benjamin, Gad, Reuben and Simeon, Judah and Yissachar.
- Following a series of political upheavals, and the rise and fall of Kings Saul, David and Solomon, the people were divided into two kingdoms--Israel in the North (made up of ten of the twelve tribes) and Judah (the word "Jew" comes from the tribe of Judah) in the South.
- Around 722 century BCE, the ten tribes in the north were kicked out of their land and vanished- - thus the concept of the "10 lost tribes."

### **Symbols of the tribes:**

Reuben: Mandrakes (a plant with a forked root resembling a human body that was formerly believed to have magical powers and was made into a drug.) - Firstborn son of Jacob and Leah and father of the tribe of Reuben, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. His name comes from the Hebrew meaning: "Look, a son." He appears in the story of the mandrakes as the one giving



them to his mother (Genesis 30:14). Reuven has relations with Jacob's concubine Bilhah, angering Jacob and probably contributing to the curse of Reuven on Jacob's deathbed (Genesis 49:4). He succeeded in convincing his brothers not to kill Joseph but to trap him inside of a pit instead, to which he intended to return and rescue Joseph (Genesis 37:22). Later, when the family journeys to Egypt during the famine, he attempts to persuade his father that he should take responsibility for Benjamin while in Egypt (Genesis 42:37). The tribe of Reuven settled west of the Jordan River and agreed to join the other tribes in the war against the Philistines.

**Simeon:** Fortress - Simeon was the second son of Jacob and Leah and father of the tribe of Simeon, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Hebrew meaning of his name means "God has heard that I was unloved" (Genesis 29:33). He and his brother Levi destroyed the entire village of Shechem in retribution for the rape of their sister Dinah (Genesis 34). Simeon was a part of the plot to sell his brother Joseph into slavery. After the family was invited to Egypt during the famine in Canaan, he was appointed as the individual to stay behind as collateral for Benjamin so that his brothers would return from Canaan. The tribe of Simeon lived in the southernmost part of the Land of Israel.

**Levi:** Breast-plate - Third son of Jacob and Leah and father of the tribe of Levi, from whom the Levites are descended. The tribe of Levi is one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Since Leah had already given Jacob two sons, she said "Now my husband will be joined with me" (Genesis 30:34). The Levites were distinguished as servants to God because of their refusal to worship to Golden Calf (Exodus 32: 26-29). Levi's own three sons, Gerhson, Kahath and Merari, become Temple servants. After Levi's sister Dinah was raped by Shechem, he and his brother Simeon destroyed the entire town. Levi was later involved in the plot to sell his brother Joseph into slavery.

**Judah:** Lion - Fourth son of Jacob and father of the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. His name comes from the Hebrew word of gratitude. Leah gave birth to Judah and said "Now I will praise God" (Genesis 30:35). It was his idea to sell his brother Joseph to a Midianite slave trader rather than leave him to die in the pit (Genesis 37:27). He later became the spokesman for his father Jacob and his brothers when they traveled to Egypt during the famine in Canaan. He marries Shua, a Canaanite woman, and has three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah is also involved with Tamar and has twin sons with her named Perez and Zerach. The tribe of Judah inhabited Jerusalem during the reign of its kings David and Solomon and was later the kingdom of all of the southern tribes of Israel.

**Issachar:** Sun and Moon - Ninth son of Leah and father of Issachar, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. One interpretation of his name is "man of reward" (Hebrew: shcar). Issachar was the product of the mandrake incident (Genesis 30:9-18) and was involved in the plot to sell his brother Joseph into slavery. Issachar settled in Egypt after the famine in Canaan and had four sons: Tolah, Puvvah, Yov and Shimron. He receives a blessing from his father Jacob that he

"bends his back to the load, working like a slave" (Genesis 49:14-15). The descendants of Issachar are men of learning according to Jewish tradition.

**Zebulun:** Ship - Tenth son of Jacob and sixth of Leah and father of the tribe of Zebulun, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. When he was born Leah said "God has provided me with a good dowry" (Hebrew: zvad). He was part of the plot to sell Joseph into slavery, and later one of the group sent to Egypt to buy corn. He later lived in Egypt with his three sons Sered, Elon and Jahleel. Zebulun received the blessing from Jacob of: "Zebulun shall settle the seashores; he will be a harbour for ships; his border shall reach Sidon (Genesis 49:13). The tribe of Zebulun inhabited the northern land of Canaan. Both the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun are mentioned as brave soldiers in the Song of Deborah during the battle against Sisera (Judges 5:18).

**Dan:** Serpent - Son of Jacob and Bilhah (Rachel's maidservant) and father of the tribe of Dan and one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Dan was one of the brothers involved in the plot to sell his brother Joseph into slavery. Later, Dan's father Jacob sent him to Egypt to buy corn during the severe famine in Canaan. Dan receives a blessing from Jacob that "Dan shall judge his people" (Genesis 49:16). Similarly, one explanation of the name Dan is that when Rachel was convinced that she was unable to have children, she cried "God has judged me" (Genesis 30:5). The region of Dan in the Book of Judges is located in the far north of Canaan and referred to early in Genesis during Abraham's chasing of Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14:14). The tribe of Dan also settled in the southern part of the country and since the tribal territory covered both northern and southern parts of the country the expression "from Dan to Beer-sheba" indicates the entire span of the Israelite land.

**Naphtali:** Deer - Naphtali was the son of Jacob and Rachel's maidservant Bilhah and the father of the tribe of Naphtali, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The tribe of Naphtali settled in northern Canaan and were described as brave soldiers in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:18). Naphtali's blessing from his father called him "a running deer" (Genesis 49:21). Naphtali was given his name because Rachel said "With great wrestlings have I wrestled my sister" (Genesis 30:8).

**Gad:** Tent - Gad was the seventh son of Jacob and father of the tribe of Gad, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. His mother was Zilpah, Jacob's concubine and Leah's slave. Gad's name comes from the Hebrew word troop. Leah named him Gad, saying "A troop is coming." He was part of the plot to sell Joseph to Egypt and later sent to Egypt to buy corn during the famine in Canaan. Gad later moved to Egypt and lived there with his seven sons. Jacob blessed Gad on his deathbed, saying: "Raiders will raid Gad, but he will raid at their heel" (Genesis 49:19).

**Asher:** Olive Tree - Asher was the eighth son of Jacob and the father of the tribe of Asher, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. His mother was Zilpah, Leah's maidservant. Leah named him Asher, saying "Happy am I" (Genesis 30:13). Asher played a role in the plot to sell his brother Joseph into slavery. Asher and his four sons and daughter later settled in Egypt. Jacob blessed

Asher on his deathbed, saying: "From Asher will come the richest food; he will provide the king's delights" (Genesis 49:20)

**Ephraim:** Bullock (son of Joseph)

**Manasseh:** Wild Bull (son of Joseph)

Benjamin: Wolf - Benjamin was the son of Jacob and Rachel and father of the tribe of Benjamin, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Originally named Ben-oni, or "son of my affliction" by his mother as she lay dying in labor, his name was later changed to Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand" (Genesis 48:14). Next to Joseph, he was his favorite son. Benjamin the twelfth son of Jacob and born after Joseph was sold into slavery. After the family was invited to Egypt, Joseph sabotaged Benjamin's sack by putting a silver cup in it and accusing the brothers of stealing. Joseph thought Benjamin would remain in Egypt but Judah offered to take his place, saying that his father would be devastated if Benjamin did not return. Jacob later blesses Benjamin while on his deathbed, calling Benjamin "a vicious wolf, devouring the prey in the morning, and dividing the spoil at night" (Genesis 49:27).

**Objective:** Understand that Jewish people once lived in collective traveling communities.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Discuss the names of the tribes, and whether the students know people with these names today (or names derived from them).
2. Show students the Marc Chagall windows: (Hadassah Hospital in Israel)

([http://www.casaisrael.com/chagall\\_windows.htm](http://www.casaisrael.com/chagall_windows.htm)) – There are many sites online .

“This is my modest gift to the Jewish people who have always dreamt of biblical love, friendship and of peace among all peoples. This is my gift to that people which lived here thousands of years ago among the other Semitic people.” Marc Chagall, February 6, 1962

Have students draw one of the stained glass windows – or make them from a frame and cellophane paper.

3. Discuss the symbols of the tribes. Divide the class into groups of four and ask a representative from the group to pick a name of a tribe (with the symbol listed as well) out of a hat.

Explain that this is now their tribe and that their group needs to decide:

- a. Whether they have a hero or a story about a hero in the history of their tribe. If not, why, and, if so, what is the story?
- b. Where they live (this may be connected to their symbol).

- c. What the tribe does to host others and what their customs are when they visit others.
- d. Their leadership structure (how do they make decisions, are there leaders, and, if so, how do they become leaders).

Once they come to consensus on these questions, give them a piece of flip-chart paper with a large circle divided into four sections already drawn on it. Explain that they should draw pictures inside of each of the sections to represent their answers to the four questions above. Each student in the group may want to take responsibility for one of the sections. Have the "tribes" share their posters with the class and discuss differences and similarities between the groups.

- e. Create a group story or play about what might have happened to the ten lost tribes.

## VALUE 2: STANDING UP FOR YOUR BELIEFS, EVEN IF MAKES YOU UNPOPULAR

### TOPIC 1: Prophets

The tribes were governed by "warrior chiefs" also called Judges, or Shoftim in Hebrew. The judges heard legal cases, settled disagreements, and led the Israelites in battle against their enemies.

- **Samson** - (c. 12th cent. BCE) Judge in ancient Israel. Samson of the tribe of Dan, renowned for his extraordinary strength, lived as a Nazirite, forbidden wine and unclean food and not permitted to use a razor, performed a series of heroic deeds and judged Israel for 20 years (Judg. 15:20, 16:31), for it was said that he would begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines (13:5). Among his exploits were the slaying of a young lion with his bare hands (14:5-6), the slaying of 30 men of Ashkelon (14:19), the capture of 300 foxes, whom he set on fire and released in the fields of the Philistines (15:4-5), and the slaying of 1,000 Philistines with an ass's jawbone (15:15).

Samson was involved with three Philistine women. Rather than marry in his own tribe he married a Timnite woman with whom he had become infatuated, but her father later took her from him (14:2ff.). Subsequently he was with a woman in Gaza and barely escaped a Philistine ambush while at her house (16:1-3), and finally he fell in love with Delilah (16:4), hired by the Philistines to entice him to reveal the secret of his strength. When he finally told her that the secret was his unshaven hair, she caused him to fall asleep in her lap and had his hair cut off. The Philistines then took him away and put out his eyes and imprisoned him in Gaza. During a feast for Dagon the Philistines brought him out to mock him, but as his hair had grown back and he was seized with the spirit of the Lord he was able to take hold of two pillars and pull down the temple, killing the 3,000 Philistines within and himself as well (16:23-30).

The story of Samson with its marked folk elements may be intended to point to the dangers of marrying foreign women, and to underscore the power of the Lord in avenging his champions.

**Samuel** – Legends claim that Samuel traveled from city to city, enlightening the people as to the true meaning of the Torah and the belief in one God. His home was Ramah, his birthplace; but he went yearly round to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, to judge and instruct the people. Samuel longed to restore unity, peace, and safety to his nation; but he felt that this was impossible as long as they believed in idols. Therefore he called the people of Israel together and exhorted them to put away their strange gods. The people listened to his earnest appeal, and in response to it, they removed the images of Baal and Ashtarte (Canaanite gods). Then Samuel summoned them to Mizpah for a great public sacrifice and a day of prayer. The Philistines, hearing of this peaceful assembly, resolved to attack them at once, and the frightened Israelites

asked Samuel to pray for them.

The Jews saw the Philistines approaching and cried out to Samuel to pray to save them. The prophet offered up a burnt sacrifice to God and asked for help for the people. As the smoke was rising from the altar, the Philistines approached in battle array; but a terrific storm burst over their heads and they were put to flight, and the Israelites pursued them to the southern frontier of the land and utterly routed them. The Hebrews now easily re-conquered all the towns which the Philistines had previously taken. Indeed, the Philistines were thoroughly subdued and weakened and did not dare to attack the Hebrews again during the lifetime of Samuel.

The elders of Israel asked Samuel to appoint a King when he was old. Samuel appointed Saul, the first King of Israel.

**Deborah** – a famous judge who would sit under a tree, while people came to ask her for advice. She was famous for inspiring people in battle, although she did not participate. It is important that she was the one female judge during this period.

**Gideon** - a judge who destroyed the town's altar to the foreign god Baal. He is called by a messenger of God to free Israel from neighboring tribes. He doubts God's interest in him, in view of the fact that "his family is the poorest in Manasseh" and he himself is its most insignificant member. But he prepares food for God's messenger, and a fire consumes the food he has prepared for his divine visitor, who after giving this sign vanishes from sight. Gideon, reassured by God that he will not die as a consequence of seeing His messenger (that is, God Himself) face to face, builds an altar. Gideon then tests God before accepting being leader of the army. He puts wool on the ground and asks God to prove himself by making the wool wet, but not the ground, and on the next night he asks that the ground be wet, but not the wool. When it happens, he sends out messengers to gather together men from the tribes of Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, as well as his own tribe Manasseh in order to meet an armed force of the people of

Midian and the Amalek that had crossed the Jordan River and were encamped in the Valley of Jezreel.

However, God informed Gideon that he had gathered too many men, and God told Gideon only to use men who lapped water with their tongues like a dog –using their hands to their mouth, and not the men who kneeled down to drink. He reduced the army to 300 men.

During the night God instructed Gideon to approach the Midianite camp. Gideon overheard a Midianite man tell a friend of a dream in which God had given the Midianites over to Gideon. Gideon returned to the Israelite camp and gave each of his men a trumpet (shofar) and a clay jar

with a torch hidden inside. Divided into three companies, Gideon and the three hundred marched on the enemy camp.

"Watch me," he told them. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.' " .... The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and Gideon!" While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled. <sup>22</sup>When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. (*Judges 7:17-22*)

Gideon sent messengers ahead into Israel calling for the Ephraimites to pursue the retreating Midianites and two of their leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. Gideon and the three hundred two Midianite kings. When he had asked for assistance in his pursuit, the men of Succoth and Peniel refused and taunted Gideon. After capturing the two kings, Gideon punished the men of Succoth, and pulled down the tower of Peniel killing all the men there. Finally, Gideon himself killed the Midianite kings as justice for the death of his brothers.

The Israelites pleaded with Gideon to be their king, but he refused, telling them that only God was their ruler. Interestingly, however, he carries on to make an ephod (an elaborate shirt) out of the gold won in battle, which causes the whole of Israel again to turn away from God. Gideon had 70 sons from the many women he takes as wives. He also had a concubine who bore him a son that he named Abimelech (which means "my father is king"). There was peace in Israel for forty years during the life of Gideon. As soon as Gideon dies of old age, the Israelites turn to again worship the false god Baal-Berith and ignore the family of Gideon.

Samuel and Deborah are also considered prophets.

- Around this same time, the Prophets (Neviim, in Hebrew) entered the scene. The Prophets included Elijah, Amos, Micah, Jeremiah and Isaiah.
- Unlike the Kings who ruled and the judges who settled disagreements, the Prophets were people who spoke out about mistreatment of the poor, greed and injustice. Often, they did this even when no one was listening to them or when their ideas were rejected.

Sometimes their words were aimed at the rulers themselves.

The Talmud says that there were twice as many prophets as the number of people who left Egypt with Moses. Everything that all of these prophets said has not survived, but the words that continue to be relevant today have.

Amos was a herdsman who lived in the North and spoke passionately about the importance of helping the poor. He spoke about how some people lived in large mansions, while others were homeless or had very small homes. Archeological digs in Israel confirm that this was indeed the case.

**Amos:** He warned the rich people who had gathered their fortunes unjustly that they would not enjoy their riches, but would lose everything when the land went down in doom. He uses strong and beautiful language to tell rich people that they are ignoring the poor people. Much of the prophecy of Amos is directed at the heartlessness of wealthy merchants who ignore the plight of the poor, the lack of justice for the righteous, and the emptiness of religious ritual apart from true faith. Amos is a classical prophet, concerned with the well-being of the people and the purity of the faith. Amos announced the terrible punishment God would bring upon the sinful people of Israel. The boldness of the prophet's speech drew upon him and made people very angry. The people told King Jeroboam II that Amos had conspired against him and that he was telling the people that their king would be killed and that the House of Israel would be exiled. Jeroboam II had too much respect for the prophet to punish him, and God rewarded him for it. But Amaziah the priest did not rest. He incited the people against the prophet and warned him to flee to Judah where people of his kind would be more welcome, adding that he should never return to Bethel. Amos replied to Amaziah that he was no professional prophet, nor prophet disciple, but a simple man from the land who earned his living as a breeder of sheep. He came to Bethel because God had sent him to speak in His name and warn His people of their impending doom. Amos therefore continued to prophesy. However, he also predicts an ending of hope. "The days are coming, when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes.

New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, no more to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the LORD your God

**Elijah:** Elijah's story begins when he challenges Ahab and the people of Israel. He then must hide, and he goes to a widow and asks her for her last food. She gives it to him, and through a miracle, her food does not run out. When her son dies, Elijah prays to God to bring him back to life, and another miracle occurs, and he is brought back to life. Elijah goes back to challenge Ahab and sets up a test of the powers of Baal and the God of Israel. The people of Israel, 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah are summoned to Mount Carmel. Two altars are built, one for Baal and one for the God of Israel. Wood is laid on the altars. Two oxen are slaughtered and cut into pieces; the pieces are laid on the wood. Elijah then invites the priests of

Baal to pray for fire to light the sacrifice. They pray from morning to noon without success. Elijah ridicules their efforts. They respond by cutting themselves and adding their own blood to the sacrifice (such mutilation of the body was strictly forbidden in the Mosaic law). They continue praying until evening without success.

Elijah orders that the altar of the God of Israel be drenched with water from "four large jars" poured three times. He asks God to accept the sacrifice. Fire falls from the sky, igniting the sacrifice. Elijah seizes the moment and orders the death of the prophets of Baal. Elijah prays earnestly for rain to fall again on the land. Then the rains begin, signaling the end of the famine.

**Micah:** The Book of Micah falls into three distinct parts. Chapters 1-3 comment on the fall of Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, to the Assyrian king Sargon in 721. This, Micah says, is a punishment of God for the sins of Israel. Micah then foretells the same doom for



Jerusalem because the rich oppress the poor; the prophets of his time and the teachers condone this oppression; and moral cleanliness is not sought by men. Chapters 4-5 foretell the fall of Jerusalem and the restoration of its glory; he predicts that all the peoples of the earth will stream to the restored city in order to learn there how to observe the commandments of God and to attain holiness. Chapters 6-7 contain a series of oracles and denunciations. Israel's ingratitude, injustice, and cheating, the disappearance of godly behavior, and the rise of religious infidelity are all castigated by Micah. But the text ends with an expression of hope in the ultimate salvation of Israel and a petition for God's mercy and a fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham

**Jeremiah:** The Bible states that God appointed Jeremiah to confront Judah and Jerusalem for the worship of idols and other violations of the covenant. According to Jeremiah, the LORD declared that the covenant was broken and that God would bring upon Israel and Judah the curses of the covenant. Jeremiah's job was to explain the reason for the impending disaster (destruction by the Babylonian army and captivity), "And when your people say, 'Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?' you shall say to them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.'" God's personal prediction to Jeremiah, "Attack you they will, overcome you they can't," was fulfilled many times in the Biblical narrative as Jeremiah warned of destruction of those who continued to refuse repentance and its more moderate consequences. In return for his adherence to God's disciplines and speaking God's words, Jeremiah was attacked by his own brothers, beaten and put into the stocks by a priest and false prophet, imprisoned by the king, threatened with death, thrown into a cistern by Judah's officials, and opposed by a false prophet. Yet God was faithful to rescue Jeremiah from his enemies. For example, when his prophecies regarding the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem were fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar's army in 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar ordered that Jeremiah be freed from prison and treated well. His early message was simple: unless both king and people reformed their morals and returned to the true worship of God as taught by

Moses, Jerusalem would be destroyed and its people killed or exiled. Jeremiah's general message was that temple and priesthood and kings were of no avail if the heart of man was not clean from idolatry, from lies, and from deception of all kinds. His novel contribution as a prophet was his claim that God would replace the Old Covenant with the Israelites by a new covenant. Peculiarly, this new covenant was not to be restricted to Jews but was to include all the world. Jeremiah taught a universalist creed which would embrace all people.

The figure of Jeremiah on the Sistine Chapel ceiling, by Michelangelo:



**Isaiah:** Isaiah warns the people of Israel to turn back to God. Isaiah was sensitive to the common people's problems and was very outspoken regarding their treatment by the aristocracy. Isaiah challenges the people to reason. He tells them that G-d is ready to forgive them if they will turn back to Him, and he warns them that their disobedience will lead only to destruction: "Though your sins should be scarlet, they shall become white as snow; though they should be red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you be willing and obey, the best of the land you shall eat. But if you refuse and rebel, by the sword you shall be devoured; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!"

Isaiah is recognized both by Christians and Muslims as a prophet.

The picture is entitled: Isaiah's lips anointed with fire, by Benjamin West.



**Objectives:**

- Understand the historical and contemporary use of the term "prophet."
- Consider what it takes to speak up about injustice and the challenges of getting people to listen.
  - Although the stories of the prophets are legends, what can we learn about Jewish values from all of the stories. What are common threads of each of the prophet's stories?

## ACTIVITIES:

1. Give students pp 65-83 from the book *Torah and You* by Ruth Samuels and Sol Scharfstein. Let them read the story of Joseph and answer all questions – either at home, or at school.
2. Distribute "Samuel the Prophet" from *Prophets, Writings and You* by Ruth Samuels and Sol Scharfstein. Ask the students to identify which of the seven suggestions for "lubricating your thinking machine" they think that they already do well, and which one(s) they would like to improve.
3. Discuss what the Prophet Isaiah's words to the song *Lo Yisa Goy*- "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" mean and why the song has lasted for so many years. Sing the song in Hebrew and in English.

Have students make a wall hanging or book mark with these famous words – color or paint them.

4. Discuss Amos' words: "Let Justice Role Down Like Waters, We Must Defeat Racism" (students may have seen the sign outside of a church in Takoma Park with this quote).

Pass out 4" x 1" strips of white paper with waves already drawn on them. Ask the students to imagine that they are prophets. Ask them to think of one thing that they wish more people cared about. Have them write this in between the waves and decorate the strips. Explain that they can make multiple strips. Collect all of the strips and, following the class, reduce them together on a copy machine, making the front of a note card.

5. Discuss "modern-day prophets"- alive or dead--who speak/ have spoken up, even when their views are/ were not popular. Make a list of these people and compare what they speak about with the words of the ancient prophets.

Why might the words of the prophets then and today not be popular? - Do prophets speak only their personal truth or the truth of a community?

Have you ever felt like you were so right about something, yet others did not understand and/or agree with you? How might you get others to listen to you?

Have you ever heard someone say something and wanted to help them get their message out to more people?

Can people be prophets by their actions as well as by their words?

Is there a difference between a prophet and a leader/ king/ president?

**NOTE:** This discussion may lead to homework and/or a longer-term class project documenting "modern day" prophets in the news and/or a project wherein students decide to take a stand about something and try out different strategies for raising other people's awareness.

Using improvisation, have the students work in pairs exploring the following situations (ask them to switch roles):

- (a) Act as Prophet Isaiah and persuade a soldier that war is wrong and that he should spend his time farming.
- (b) Act as Prophet Jeremiah and persuade a priest that people can live in peace without a temple.
- (c) Act as Prophet Micah and persuade a tax collector that he should not seize small landowner's fields if they can not afford the high taxes.
- (d) Listen to, learn and sing Bob Marley's Redemption Song. Explain that many people consider Bob Marley to be a modern-day prophet.

Old pirates, yes, they rob I;  
Sold I to the merchant ships,  
Minutes after they took I  
From the bottomless pit.  
But my hand was made strong  
By the 'and of the Almighty.  
We forward in this generation  
Triumphantly.  
Won't you help to sing  
This songs of freedom  
'Cause all I ever have:  
Redemption songs;  
Redemption songs.

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;  
None but ourselves can free our minds.

Have no fear for atomic energy,  
'Cause none of them can stop the time.  
How long shall they kill our prophets,  
While we stand aside and look? Ooh!  
Some say it's just a part of it:

We've got to fullfil the book.  
Won't you help to sing  
This songs of freedom-  
'Cause all I ever have:  
Redemption songs (3x);  
Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery;  
None but ourselves can free our mind.

Wo! Have no fear for atomic energy,  
'Cause none of them-a can-a stop-a the time.  
How long shall they kill our prophets,  
While we stand aside and look?  
Yes, some say it's just a part of it:

We've got to fullfil the book.  
Won't you have to sing  
This songs of freedom? -  
'Cause all I ever had:  
Redemption songs -  
All I ever had:  
Redemption songs:  
These songs of freedom,  
Songs of freedom.

- (e) Write chants or a song about issues that the students are concerned about.
- (f) Discuss the prophet Elijah and decorate (with tissue paper and glue, stickers, glitter, etc) clear plastic Elijah cups for use during Passover.

## **VALUE 3: TOLERANCE, ACCEPTANCE, DIVERSITY, ALLOWING DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING**

### **TOPIC 1: Jews and Hellenism**

In 335 BCE, Alexander the Great-- a Greek leader-- took over Jerusalem. The Greeks brought their Greek culture, called Hellenism to the area. Hellenism included philosophy, drama, sports (such as wrestling), poetry and science.

Greek religion included numerous gods (sun god, Jupiter, etc), which were represented by sculptures and other art forms. This went directly against the Jewish concept of god which was that there was only one god who was invisible.

Some Jewish people found Hellenism interesting and began to assimilate (blend in) more with Greek culture-- becoming Hellenists themselves.

Other Jews were moderates who thought that they would leave the Greeks alone, and they would thus be left alone.

Still another group of Jews, the pietists, decided everything had just gone too far and that it was time to take up arms against the Greeks.

When King Antiochus (the Greek leader in charge of Jerusalem) outlawed Judaism, an old Jewish priest named Mattathia Hasmon killed another Jew who had become a Hellenist. After this, he took his sons and ran to the hills. One of his sons was Judas, whose nickname was Maccabee. Maccabee means hammer in Hebrew. In 162 BCE, the Maccabees' rebellion triumphed and the Jews took back Jerusalem. This is the story of Hanukkah.

The story of Hanukkah highlights the concept of pluralism (different cultures existing together) in terms of the impact of Hellenization on the Jews.

Pluralism relates to our lives as secular/humanistic Jews, since, like the Hellenists, we do not follow many of the religious aspects of being Jewish.



**Objectives:**

- Appreciate the value of religious pluralism.
- Understand Hellenization and its relationship to Jewish identity.
- Understand how the story of Hanukkah relates to contemporary secular/humanistic Jews.

**ACTIVITIES:**

1. Discuss the questions:

Did those who conquered the Jews allow different ways of thinking?

Did the Jews always allow different ways of thinking?

Discuss what the students have learned about Hanukkah previously.

2. Facilitate a simulation in which the students act as Israelites from various walks of life, re-enacting the process of deciding whether or not to join the Maccabees and fight the Greeks, or to join the Hellenizers.

Discuss the Society for Humanistic Judaism's symbol (the person menorah - Humanorah) and have the students draw (on index cards) their own version of the symbol, with a picture of themselves as the person holding up the menorah. Collect the cards, laminate them and give them back to the students with magnets attached to the back (use magnetic tape).

## VALUE 4: LEARNING AND STUDY

### TOPIC 1: The Torah and Talmud

Note: Many important events occurred between when the Maccabees took over Jerusalem and the period when the Romans took over the city --including the birth and death of Jesus. Life under Roman rule should also be covered. Use Stan Mack's book to help with this, and insert this class before the Torah and Talmud lesson.

- During the Roman siege of Jerusalem, no one could leave, but a Jewish scholar-Johanan Ben Zakkai -was hidden and carried out.
- Ben Zakkai founded Jewish schools, and the students and rabbis became responsible for maintaining Jewish religious practice and culture (instead of Jewish fighters or armies being responsible).

**JOHANAN BEN ZAKKAI** (first century C.E.), Johanan Ben Zakkai's personality and work are a blend of fact and legend. Johanan is said to have lived 120 years, divided into three periods: "For 40 years he was in business, 40 years he studied, and 40 years he taught. Hillel singled Johanan out on his deathbed, calling him "father of wisdom and father of the generations," and according to another tradition "it was said of him that he did not leave unstudied the Bible and Mishnah, Talmud, *halakhah*, and *aggadah*, exegetical details of the Torah and of the Scribes, inferences *a minori ad majus* and analogies, calendrical computations and *gematriot*, the speech of the ministering angels, of spirits, and of palm-trees, fullers' parables and fox fables, and any matter great and small, 'great' meaning: *ma'aseh merkavah* (mystical speculation); 'small' meaning: the discussions of Abbaye and Rava."

According to tradition Johanan expounded and taught "in the shadow of the Temple" and it may be there that he came into contact with "the sons of highpriests" His disputes about the Mishnah are legendary in character. Johanan's chief activity was directed to spreading the knowledge of the Torah. He used the dialogue as his method of instruction. He asked questions of his pupils, probed their answers, and praised the correct reply (Avot 2:9).

Johanan's method was to minutely study a biblical passage, inquiring into its motivation, and finding the grounds for some detail which he then converts into a universal idea transcending the specific context of the passage.

Johanan is the first sage explicitly mentioned in sources as having engaged in mysticism –

Nothing is clearly known concerning Johanan's attitude to the events that took place in Jerusalem during the tempestuous years preceding the destruction of the Second Temple. Statements ascribed to him concerning the establishment of peace "between nation and nation, between government and government, between family and family" According to the legend, the destruction of the Temple, which he foresaw, stunned Johanan no less than his contemporaries, and his immediate reaction was one of profound grief: "Rabban Johanan sat and watched in the

direction of the wall of Jerusalem to learn what was happening there, even as Eli sat upon his seat by the wayside watching [I Sam. 4:13]. When R. Johanan b. Zakkai saw that the Temple was destroyed and the *heikhal* burnt, he stood and rent his garments, took off his *tefillin*, and sat weeping, as did his pupils with him" (ARN<sup>2</sup> 7, 21). The cessation of the Temple service, one of the three things on which the world is based (Avot 1:2), led to a movement of excessive abstinence (Tosef., Sot. 15:11) and to a despair of the possibility of atoning for sins. Johanan took it upon himself to give guidance to the bewildered: "Once when R. Johanan b. Zakkai was leaving Jerusalem, R. Joshua was walking behind him and saw the Temple in ruins. R. Joshua said, 'Woe is us that this has been destroyed, the place where atonement was made for the sins of Israel.' 'No, my son, do you not know that we have a means of making atonement that is like it? And what is it? It is deeds of love, as it is said [Hos. 6:6]: 'For I desire kindness, and not sacrifice'" (ARN<sup>1</sup> 4, 21).

He supposedly took concrete steps toward the renewal of the nation's religious and national leadership by raising the prestige of the *bet din* at Jabneh. The tannaitic traditions preserve a number of decrees established by Johanan, concerning the blowing of the *shofar* on Shabbat, the "day of waving," the taking of the *lulav* outside of the Temple, the acceptance of testimony concerning the new moon (Neusner, *Development of a Legend*, 206–9). These decrees all reflect the need to bring accepted *halakhah* in line with the changed circumstances after the destruction of the Temple. The date of Johanan's death is unknown, but the esteem of the generations for his image and work was expressed in the Mishnah that "when R. Johanan b. Zakkai died, the luster of wisdom ceased."

- The rabbis and students began to sort through all of the Jewish books in order to make their job of keeping people interested in Jewish practice and religion easier (or so they thought).
- Everything they thought was inspired by god. They threw everything else out.
- When they finished, they announced the complete Hebrew bible, made up of the Torah, the words of the Prophets and the Writings. But people were not sure what all of these words meant, or how to explain them to others.
- So, they began to study the oral tradition (things that hadn't yet been written down). These stories, and records of the debates surrounding them became the Mishnah. Mishnah means to review in Hebrew.
- Eventually, more stories and debates circulated about the Mishnah. These were called the Gemarah, which means the supplement (there is a lot more in the Gemarah than the Mishnah).
- Together, the Mishnah and the Gemarah make up the Talmud.
- By 500 CE (1500 years ago), the rabbis had written everything down and completed the Talmud.
- For secular/ humanistic Jews today, the Talmud is one of many books in Jewish literature that is worth reading.

## ACTIVITIES:

1. Discuss how the movement personified by Ben Zakkai led to the value that all Jews must become literate in order to practice their religion.

2. Re-enact the process of creating the Torah and Talmud by dividing the students into two groups with identical large stacks of popular children's stories, poems and songs (Dr. Seuss, Snoopy-- things that the kids will be familiar with). Ask an adult to assist each group.

(a) Ask both groups to wade through the paper and pick five stories, poems or songs that they feel would be most important for children in the future to be familiar with.

(b) Ask them to write down everything they can think of connected to these five items-- i.e. Ethan's grandmother used to read him one of the books, Amy's brother likes one of the other books, etc.

(c) Ask them to write questions about the things that they wrote down during the second step-- i.e. Why did Ethan's grandmother read him that book? Why does Amy's brother like the book so much?

(d) Write down their answers to these questions. Explain that they have just created a Torah and Talmud of children's culture. Discuss what the process was like. Compare and contrast what each group created.

3. Create a 'Megillat Gimel'-- a 3rd grade scroll, using butcher/ mural paper with words and pictures representing the laws that they think people today should live by.

4. Bring in an actual Torah and Talmud and let the students touch and look at them.

5. Play the telephone game (one person starts by whispering a sentence in another person's ear and that person, without asking for it to be repeated, whispers whatever they heard into another person's ear, and so on, until the last person who has to say what they heard).

Compare this to the process of keeping an oral tradition-- which the Mishnah came from.

6. Read and discuss the Noah and the Flood Torah portion as an example of a Torah portion.

7. Read and discuss the Baba Metsiah 59B Talmud portion as an example of a portion from the Talmud. The Jewish Virtual Library provides the Talmud online.

# **VALUE 5: DARCHEI SHALOM, GETTING ALONG WITH OTHER GROUPS OF PEOPLE**

## **TOPIC 1: Diaspora**

By sometime around 70 CE (see page 77 of Stan Mack's book), the Jews could no longer live in the land that they had come to after leaving Egypt. They were on the road again.

- Some Jews had already left, so this was not new for everyone.
- "Diaspora" is the Greek word for the phenomenon of "hitting the road", or dispersion. A Diaspora is created when a group of people move away from where their ancestors have lived, yet maintain their group identity. For the Jews, this meant remaining "Jewish."
- Other diasporas exist-- such as the African Diaspora (there are African American people, African people living in France, in Canada, etc... and they all still think of themselves as African, along with being American, French, etc.)

Insuring that cultural practices and beliefs continue without everyone living in the same place can be difficult.

- One way that the Jewish people held onto their traditions was to write things down.
- To remember that they come from the east (east is relative, depending on where one lives), some Jewish people in Europe and the United States hang "mizrach" signs in their homes. Mizrach means east in Hebrew.

### **Objectives:**

- Understand that they are part of the Jewish Diaspora (and possibly other diasporas as well).
- Consider the challenges of maintaining ones culture over time and geographic space.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Discuss why being a people who live in the midst of larger groups around the world means it is to the self-interest of Jews to work for peace.
2. Discuss why the Jewish practice of holding onto their traditions by writing things down has led to study and learning becoming a major Jewish value.
3. Read and discuss:

- *One Day We Had To Run* by Sybella Wilkes. A refugee boy from Africa has to leave his home.
- *How Many Spots Does A Leopard Have? And Other Tales* by Julius Lester--a collection of Jewish and African folktales (explain to students that all of these stories have survived many relocations of African and Jewish people (and that some people are both African and Jewish)).

Create Mizrach signs: write the word Mizrach in Hebrew or English with a black magic marker on tin foil. Glue the foil to colorful construction paper. Discuss where in their homes the students will hang the sign (should be the eastern-most wall in their home). Explain that hanging this does not necessarily mean that they want to live somewhere else, but instead serves as a reminder that they are part of a diasporic community.

4. Discuss what students would bring with them if they had to move and could only bring what they could carry. Make a picture of a large suitcase to fill one piece of paper, and have students draw in it what they would bring. If it doesn't fit, they can't bring it....
5. Discuss what would be hard about living in a new country. What hardships do immigrants who come to America face? Show pictures of immigrants coming to America. What looks different about them? What challenges do they appear to have?
6. Sing a song in the round, but instead of having the students singing different parts sitting together, have the majority singing one way and have one or two individuals sitting amongst them, trying to hold onto their melody/ words. Discuss the difficulty in maintaining their melody/ words, and how this is similar to the challenges that living in a Diaspora presents. Allow different students to experience being in the minority.
7. Discuss how being a part of a Diaspora does not always mean being in the minority-- in the United States, especially, it may mean being in equal numbers with people from other diasporas. Also, discuss the Puerto Rican community in New York, the Salvadoran community in Washington, DC-- almost as many people from these countries now live in the United States (the "Diaspora"). How does the idea of home begin to shift?
8. Plant wildflower seeds outside (scattering them). Discuss how this act is similar to forming a Diaspora (people/ seeds spreading out).

## VALUE 6: ENCOURAGING INDIVIDUALITY AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

### TOPIC 1: Golden Age in Spain

**Resources:** [www.outofspain.com](http://www.outofspain.com) for sample curriculum and resources

Heritage: Civilization and the Jews CD-ROM and accompanying Teacher's Guide (part of PBS "Heritage" video series). This curriculum is for middle school aged students, but much of it can be adapted for 3rd graders. (Currently unavailable at AMAZON – and very expensive)

[www.thirteen.org/edonline/teachingheritage](http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/teachingheritage) (Guide to teaching the above CD-ROM) – but a source for other websites and material as well.

The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience, Jane S. Gerber, The Free Press, 1992  
This a teacher reference guide

### ACTIVITIES:

1. Review basics about Maimonides:



Maimonides was the first person to write a systematic code of all Jewish law, the *Mishneh Torah*; he produced one of the great philosophic statements of Judaism, *The Guide to the Perplexed*; published a commentary on the entire Mishna; served as physician to the Sultan of Egypt; wrote numerous books on medicine; and, in his "spare time," served as leader of Cairo's Jewish community.

Maimonides wrote:

I dwell at Fostat, and the sultan resides at Cairo [about a mile and a half away].... My duties to the sultan are very heavy. I am obliged to visit him every day, early in the morning, and when he or any of his children or any of the inmates of his harem are indisposed, I dare not quit Cairo, but must stay during the greater part of the day in the palace. It also frequently happens that one of the two royal officers fall sick, and I must attend to their healing. Hence, as a rule, I leave for Cairo very early in the day, and even if nothing unusual happens, I do not return to Fostat until the afternoon. Then I am almost dying with hunger. . . I find the antechamber filled with people, both Jews and gentiles, nobles and common people, judges and bailiffs, friends and foes—a mixed multitude who await the time of my return.

I dismount from my animal, wash my hands, go forth to my patients and entreat them to bear with me while I partake of some slight refreshment, the only meal I take in the twenty four hours. Then I go forth to attend to my patients, and write prescriptions and directions for their various ailments. Patients go in and out until nightfall, and sometimes even, I solemnly assure you, until two hours or more in the night. I converse with and prescribe for them while lying down from sheer fatigue; and when night falls I am so exhausted that I can scarcely speak.

In consequence of this, no Israelite can have any private interview with me, except on the Sabbath. On that day the whole congregation, or at least the majority of the members, come to me after the morning service, when I instruct them as to their proceedings during the whole week; we study together a little until noon, when they depart. Some of them return, and read with me after the afternoon service until evening prayers. In this manner I spend that day.

Maimonides's full name was Moses ben Maimon; in Hebrew he is known by the acronym of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, Rambam. He was born in Spain shortly before the fanatical Muslim Almohades came to power there. To avoid persecution by the Muslim sect — which was wont to offer Jews and Christians the choice of conversion to Islam or death — Maimonides fled with his family, first to Morocco, later to Israel, and finally to Egypt. He apparently hoped to continue his studies for several years more, but when his brother David, a jewelry merchant, perished in the Indian Ocean with much of the family's fortune, he had to begin earning money. He probably started practicing medicine at this time.

Maimonides's major contribution to Jewish life remains the *Mishneh Torah*, his code of Jewish law. His intention was to compose a book that would guide Jews on how to behave in all situations just by reading the Torah and his code, without having to expend large amounts of time searching through the Talmud. Needless to say, this provocative rationale did not endear Maimonides to many traditional Jews, who feared that people would rely on his code and no longer study the Talmud. Despite sometimes intense opposition, the *Mishneh Torah* became a standard guide to Jewish practice: It later served as the model for the *Shulkhan Arukh*, the sixteenth century code of Jewish law that is still regarded as authoritative by Orthodox Jews.

Philosophically, Maimonides was a religious rationalist. An old joke has it that some rabbis feared that a Jew would start reading a section in the *Guide to the Perplexed* in which



Maimonides summarizes a rationalist attack on religion, and fall asleep before reading Maimonides's counterattack-thereby spending the night as a heretic.

Throughout most of the Jewish world, Maimonides remained a hero, of course. When he died, Egyptian Jews observed three full days of mourning, and applied to his death the biblical verse "The ark of the Lord has been taken" (I Samuel 4:11).

To this day, Maimonides and the French Jewish sage Rashi are the most widely studied Jewish scholars. Maimonides formulated a credo of Judaism expressed in thirteen articles of faith, a popular reworking of which (the *Yigdal* prayer) appears in most Jewish prayerbooks. Among other things, this credo affirms belief in the oneness of God, the divine origins of the Torah, and the afterlife. Its twelfth statement of faith — "I believe with a full heart in the coming of the Messiah, and even though he may tarry I will still wait for him" — was often among the last words said by Jews being marched into Nazi gas chambers.

Maimonides was one of the few Jewish thinkers whose teachings also influenced the nonJewish world; much of his philosophical writings were about God and other theological issues of general, not exclusively Jewish, interest. In 1985, on the 850th anniversary of Maimonides's birth, Pakistan and Cuba — which do not recognize Israel — were among the cosponsors of a UNESCO conference in Paris on Maimonides. Vitali Naumkin, a Soviet scholar, observed on this occasion: "Maimonides is perhaps the only philosopher in the Middle Ages, perhaps even now, who symbolizes a confluence of four cultures: GrecoRoman, Arab, Jewish, and Western." More remarkably, Abderrahmane Badawi, a Muslim professor from Kuwait University, declared: "I regard him first and foremost as an Arab thinker." This sentiment was echoed by Saudi Arabian professor Huseyin Atay, who claimed that "if you didn't know he was Jewish, you might easily make the mistake of saying that a Muslim was writing." That is, if you didn't read any of his Jewish writings. Maimonides scholar Shlomo Pines delivered perhaps the most accurate assessment at the conference: "Maimonides is the most influential Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages, and quite possibly of all time" (*Time* magazine, December 23, 1985). As a popular Jewish expression of the Middle Ages declares: "From Moses [of the Torah] to Moses [Maimonides] there was none like Moses."

Read a short portion of his *Guide to the Perplexed*:

*The Guide for the Perplexed* was originally written in Arabic. The work is divided into three books. According to Maimonides, he wrote the *Guide* "to promote the true understanding of the real spirit of the Law, to guide those religious persons who, adhering to the Torah, have studied philosophy and are embarrassed by the contradictions between the teachings of philosophy and the literal sense of the Torah."

Write an outline as a class for a contemporary "guide to the perplexed"-about whatever the students think contemporary people are "perplexed" about.

Ladder of Charity: Excellent website with materials for classroom for Maimonides Ladder of Charity: <http://www.cjlmilwaukee.org/PJE/PJE%20XXXIX.pdf>

## **HANDOUT: MAIMONIDES LADDER OF CHARITY**

### **THE EIGHT DEGREES**

#### **First Degree: “Help a person Help Himself”**

Prevent poverty by teaching someone a trade, helping him get a job so that he will not need to appeal for help. This is the top rung of Tzedakah's golden ladder.

#### **Second Degree: “The Giver and Receiver Unknown to Each Other”**

One who gives charity to the poor without knowing to whom he gives and without the poor knowing from whom they take.

#### **Third Degree: “Receiver Known, Giver Unknown”**

One who knows to whom he gives, without the poor knowing from whom they receive. For example, in olden days, our ancestors brought gifts into poor people's homes and left without being seen.

#### **Fourth Degree: “Giver Does Not Know Receiver”**

The poor man knows from whom he takes but the giver does not know the receiver. For example, there were men who tied money in the corners of the cloaks they wore, so that the poor might take it without being seen.

#### **Fifth Degree: “Gives Before He is Asked”**

The man who gives before he has been asked, but who puts it into the poor man's hand, embarrassing him.

#### **Sixth Degree: “Gives After He is Asked”**

The man who gives cheerfully, and as much as he can, but only after being asked.

#### **Seventh Degree: “Gives Less Than He Should, But Cheerfully”**

The man who gives less than he ought to, but with a smile.

#### **Eighth Degree: “Gives Unwillingly”**

Lowest on the ladder is the man who gives only because he is forced to do so. This is the gift of the hand but not of the heart.

## ACTIVITY:

Distribute Maimonides' Eight Levels of Charity – Have students cut out each one of the levels, and create a ladder.

Have the class read each level aloud.

Lead a class discussion about each level and why there is a hierarchy in giving charity.

Questions to ask should include:

1. Is Maimonides arguing that the lower levels are “bad”?
2. Is he arguing that if one gives unwillingly then it is not worth giving at all?
3. Why is teaching a trade/job skill the highest Level of Charity?
4. How would you categorize giving money to homeless people on the streets?
5. Why do you think Maimonides considered a case where the giver knows who gets the clarity and the receiver doesn't know who has given it, (Step 6) as “higher” than when the poor person knows who gives it and the giver does not know who receives the charity (Step 5)?
6. Why is Step 7 – where neither the giver nor the receiver knows each other – “higher” than both of these other cases?
7. Why do we consider an interest-free loan or finding a job for a needy person a form of tzedakah? Do you think most people would consider this charity? Why or why not?
8. Which of the eight steps will cause the least embarrassment to the poor person?
9. Which one enables the needy to keep their self-respect?

Judah HaLevi: Spanish philosopher and Hebrew poet; born at Toledo, southern Castile, in the last quarter of the eleventh century; died in the Orient after 1140. Judah chose medicine as his profession; but he loved poetry and showed marked poetic talent. He also knew a lot about Greco-Arabic philosophy.

He married in Toledo; and from allusions in some of his poems it is evident that his only child was a daughter, through whom he had a grandson, also named Judah.

His secular poetry was about love, his friends and drinking songs.

"O city of the world, most chastely fair, In the far West, behold I sigh for thee. Oh! had I eagle's wings, I'd fly to thee, And with my falling tears make moist thine earth."

The life-work of Judah ha-Levi was devoted to poetry and philosophy. His poetry is usually classified under the heads of secular and religious.

"Wondrous is this land to see, With perfume its meadows laden, But more fair than all to me Is yon slender, gentle maiden. Ah, Time's swift flight I fain would stay, Forgetting that my locks are gray."

"Come, Belovèd, come thou to me, In the bower of lilacs woo me; Slay the flends that would pursue me.

Harps and chimes and cups all golden To the joy of old embolden, 'Neath the radiant glory olden."

"Bide thou thy time—within thy soul be peace, Nor ask complaining when thy pain shall cease; Speak, rime, and sing, for victory is thine, Nigh thee my tent is pitched, and thou art mine."

He also wrote beautiful religious poetry about God.

"Lo! sun and moon, these minister for aye; The laws of day and night cease nevermore: Given for signs to Jacob's seed that they Shall ever be a nation—till these be o'er. If with His left hand He should thrust away, Lo! with His right hand He shall draw them nigh."

"Zion, wilt thou not ask if peace's wing Shadows the captives that ensue thy peace, Left lonely from thine ancient shepherding?

"Lo! west and east and north and south—world-wide—All those from far and near, without surcease, Salute thee: Peace and Peace from every side."

"On Friday doth my cup o'erflow, What blissful rest the night shall know, When, in thine arms, my toil and wo Are all forgot, Sabbath my love!

"'Tis dusk, with sudden light, distilled From one sweet face, the world is filled; The tumult of my heart is stilled—For thou art come, Sabbath my love!

"Bring fruits and wine and sing a gladsome lay, Cry, 'Come in peace, O restful Seventh day!'"

Read other poets from the "Golden Age"

(<http://medievalhebrewpoetry.org/haleviseselectionnew.html>) and then write poems, individually or in groups. Hold a poetry reading and invite parents, decorate the classroom and intersperse readings of Jewish poems from the "Golden Age" with the students' poems. For tips on how to facilitate poetry writing, see June Jordan's Poetry for the People.

- Watch and discuss the Gracia (Nasi) Mendes segment of "The Fruit of Her Hands" video.

- Read and discuss section on Gracia (Nasi) Mendes in Jewish Heroes, Jewish Values.

## **VALUE 7: COURAGE**

### **TOPIC 1: Jews in Medieval Times**

Resources: PJLL film: *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, 15 minutes, 1992.

Internet Jewish History Sourcebook on Jews in the Middle Ages:

[http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishsbok.html#The%20Jewish%20Middle %20Ages](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishsbok.html#The%20Jewish%20Middle%20Ages)

Medieval Sourcebook: Medieval Jewish Life:

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook1t.html>

#### **ACTIVITY:**

Imagine what items Jewish children their age in Medieval Europe would have put in a time capsule and make a time capsule with items of significance to them.

## TOPIC 2: The Inquisition & Migration Patterns

### Resources:

*The Cross by Day the Mezzuzah by Night*, Deborah Spector Siegel, Jewish Publication Society, 1999. (Seville, Spain, 1492: Isabel de Carvallo is a wealthy Catholic girl. On her 13th birthday, she learns her true, secret identity-- her family are conversos. (sections of this may be too intense for 3rd graders, but some of it could be read in class))

*The Cardinal's Snuffbox*, by Kenneth Roseman, UAHC Press, 1982. It's a "choose your own adventure" type of book where the reader is faced with different decisions based on the premise that they're a wealthy Jewish child in Spain in 1492. While portions of the book are useful in illustrating how difficult the choices were for Jews living during the Inquisition, there are other sections (pg. 67 for example), that perpetuate racist images of indigenous people in the Americas. Use alternative readings and/or have the students create their own choose your own adventure book, in small groups or as a class.

### ACTIVITIES:

1. Read and discuss "The Truth About Maria" from *Rooftop Secrets*. It's the story of a Marrano girl who, at age eight (in 1492), begins to realize that she's Jewish. This can be assigned in entirety, or read it as a class up to page 13, paragraph 5 and ask the class to write/ discuss what they would do next in Maria's position.
2. Read and discuss *The Cardinal's Snuffbox*, keeping in mind the caveats above.
3. Break the students into four groups (in the different corners of the room)--one representing people who've decided to convert (conversos) to Christianity, one representing those planning to leave Spain immediately and one for those set on staying in Spain and living outwardly as Jews, even at the risk of their lives and the last those who stayed in Spain, stayed Jewish, but hid their Jewishness. Ask everyone questions such as "Why is your choice hard" "Why do you feel your choice is right for you?" Give the groups time to discuss their answers with each other before presenting them to the rest of the class. After this activity, ask each student to go to the group that they actually think they would have gone to, if they'd lived during the Inquisition. Once they're in these corners, ask them to explain why they stayed/moved.
4. Discuss the concept of scapegoats and the phenomenon of blaming certain groups of people for societal problems. Ask the students for present-day examples of this.

The terms "Marrano" and "converso" were applied in Spain and Portugal to the descendants of baptized Jews suspected of secret adherence to Judaism. They were outwardly Christian but actually Jews. Many were forced to convert to Christianity to save their lives. The laws in 14th and 15th century Spain became increasingly oppressive

toward practicing Jews, and conversion was provided as an alternative to death. Large numbers of middle class Jews outwardly adopting Christianity to avoid the laws, while secretly practicing Judaism.

5. What are organizations today that help “refugees” and particularly political or religious refugees to escape from their countries? How can we help these organizations?
6. Read "Edict of Expulsion" as a class and discuss.

In 1290, King Edward I issued an edict expelling all Jews from England. Lasting for the rest of the Middle Ages, it would be over 350 years until it was formally overturned in 1656. The edict was not an isolated incident but the culmination of over 200 years of conflict on the matters of usury, or the lending of money for profit.

Jews collected interest on money loaned to the people which the King could take at his pleasure. Jews acquired a reputation as money lenders who took advantage of other people, which made them extremely unpopular with both the Church and the general public. Medieval England was particularly antisemitic. An image of the Jew as a diabolical figure who hated Christ started to become widespread, and antisemitic myths such as the Wandering Jew and ritual murders originated and spread throughout England, as well as Scotland and Wales. Jews were said to hunt for children to murder before Passover so they could use their blood to make matzah. Antisemitism on a number of occasions sparked riots where many Jews were murdered, most famously in 1190 when over a hundred Jews were massacred in the city of York.<sup>1</sup>

In 1218, England became the first European nation to require Jews to wear a badge identifying them as Jews. When Edward ordered English Jews expelled, all their property was seized by the crown and all outstanding debts payable to Jews were transferred to the King's name.

The Jewish population in England at the time was relatively small. While population estimates vary, probably less than 1% of England was Jewish; perhaps 3,000 people.

They emigrated to countries such as Poland, that protected them by law.

Occasionally permits were given to individuals to visit England, as in the case of Dr. Elyas Sabot in 1410, but it was not until the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1497 that any considerable number of Sephardic Jews came to England.

Additionally there was an edict of expulsion from Spain in 1492.

“In the same month in which their Majesties [Ferdinand and Isabella] issued the edict that all Jews should be driven out of the kingdom and its territories, in the same month they gave me the order to undertake with sufficient men my expedition of discovery to the Indies.” So begins Christopher Columbus's diary.



The expulsion that Columbus refers to was so cataclysmic an event that ever since, the date 1492 has been almost as important in Jewish history as in American history. On July 30 of that year, the entire Jewish community, some 200,000 people, were expelled from Spain.

### **TOPIC 3: First Jews in the Americas/ New Amsterdam (1492-1800)**

#### **Resources:**

American Jewish History Society <http://www.ajhs.org/>

American Jewish Historical Society's Loeb Portrait Database:

[www.ajhs.org/research/loeb/](http://www.ajhs.org/research/loeb/) Portraits, photos, woodcuts and daguerreotypes of U.S. Jews painted before 1865.

Crypto Jews in the US Southwest <http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu/images/swja/crypto.htm> - attached p. 100

The Jewish People in America: A Time for Planting, The First Migration (1654-1820) Eli Faber, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992 (teacher reference)

#### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Ask the students to imagine that they live in colonial New York and Philadelphia and to write letters to their relatives in Europe describing what it's like--as Jews, as children, etc.
2. Assign famous Jewish figures from early U.S. history for the students to research as homework and have them come back to class prepared to introduce themselves to the class as this person... to describe themselves and their lives.

## TOPIC 4: Sephardim

**Note:** The separation of Sephardic culture/history into pre-1800 and post is just a way of acknowledging that this topic should be given more than one class. Exact dates are not critical. And although it's not listed, Mizrahi culture and history should be covered as well—so that the students are familiar with the terms Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Mizrahi.

### Resources:

The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book, Norman A. Stillman, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979 (Rabbi Biber has a copy)

Sephardic Communities Around the World [http://www.haruth.com/Sephardic\\_Stuff.htm](http://www.haruth.com/Sephardic_Stuff.htm)

The above site has a lot of information about Sephardic communities around the world, including music. Information about Sephardic communities in Aruba, Greece, Iraq, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, Bahamas, India, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, Bukhara, Iran, Mexico, Philippines and Syria.

### Films:

*Song of the Sephardi*, 75 minutes, color, 1978.

*Trees Cry for Rain: A Sephardic Journey*, 30 minutes, color, 1989.

*From Toledo to Jerusalem*, color, 60 minutes, 1990 (in Ladino with English subtitles).

*The Golden Pages of Sephardic Judaism*, color, 36 minutes, 1992.

*America's Synagogue: Touro Synagogue*, 12 minutes, color, 1998.

Touro Synagogue, dedicated in 1763, is the oldest synagogue in the U.S. and the only one to survive from the colonial era. The congregation was founded in 1658 by descendants of Marranos who fled the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal.

### ACTIVITIES:

1. From viewing the above films, make a list of Ladino words and phrases used.
2. Discuss Jews living in Arab lands today - Make crafts that represent their lives

## TOPIC 5: Modern Jewish Life Around the World

### Resources:

The internet is the best place to start for teachers and students beginning research on this topic. Curricula and other helpful materials are available.

### Websites:

You can contact long-time Machar member Rick Gold, who is a wonderful resource for the study of Moroccan Jews. <http://rickgold.home.mindspring.com/>. [rickgold@mindspring.com](mailto:rickgold@mindspring.com)

### Secular/ Humanistic Jews Around the World

International Federation of Secular Humanistic Judaism: <http://www.ifshj.org/communities.html>

Links to Jewish Secular/Humanistic communities in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, England, France, Israel, Italy, Russia, Sweden and Uruguay. To contact them for additional information, call (212) 564-6711 or email: [info@ifshj.org](mailto:info@ifshj.org) or [infoeurope@ifshj.org](mailto:infoeurope@ifshj.org)

### Jewish Population of the World--Statistics

Jewish Virtual Library <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/jewpop.html>

### Jewish Communities Around the World

Jewish Multicultural Project <http://www.jmcponline.org/> Includes detailed information and sample curriculum projects around Ethiopian Jews, Middle Eastern and N. African Jews, Central and East Asian Jews, Southern European and Latin American Jews, Central & Eastern European Jews, US Jews and Recent Converts.

World Jewish Congress <http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/communities/world.cfm> An abridged, online version of Jewish Communities of the World, published in 1998 by the World Jewish Congress and Lerner Publications Company (The JCS owns a copy). Detailed information, photos and contacts for Jewish communities in 120 countries around the world.

### Database of Jewish Communities

<http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/prevcomms.aspx> Information about Jewish communities in Afghanistan, Melbourne, Ancona, New Haven, Baghdad, Odessa, Bene Israel, Polaniec, Budapest, Recife, Cape Town, Recistencia, Chicago, Rome, Cochin, Salonika, Cuba, Samara, Dubrovnik, Sao Paulo, Egypt, Siberia, Fez, Singapore, Hong Kong, Tbilisi, Indonesia, Teheran, Izmir, Turnu Severin, Kyrgyzstan, Vienna, London, Vilna, Malta, Zamosc and Maui.

Haruth Communications "Jewish Communities of the World"

<http://www.haruth.com/JewsoftheWorld.html>

American Jewish World Service <http://www.ajws.org> AJWS supports 190 grassroots organizations in the developing world and Russia and Ukraine through grant making, technical assistance, emergency relief and advocacy. They also provide international service opportunities for the Jewish community, enabling Jews to play a role in the process of meaningful social change. Each year they send hundreds of volunteers to the developing world. Their website includes information about projects that may be of interest to JCS students, such as the Eradication of Child Labour from the Kanchipuram Silk Weaving Industry in India ([www.ajws.org/index.cfm?section\\_id=3&page\\_id=73](http://www.ajws.org/index.cfm?section_id=3&page_id=73) ).

European Council of Jewish Communities <http://www.ecjc.org/>

Jewish World Center <http://www.jewishworldcenter.com> Communication and information for everything Jewish around the world--Links by continent.

Jewish Community Centers Around the World <http://www.wcjcc.org/JCCDirectory.htm>

Internet Resources for Latin America and the Caribbean

<http://www.fiu.edu/~library/internet/subjects/jewishsites.html>

Online community of African Jews. [amyisrael.tripod.com](http://amyisrael.tripod.com)

[www.jewish-africana.com](http://www.jewish-africana.com) Promoting information on Jews of African origin and/or descent; Jewish communities in the African Diaspora.

[www.ublat.edu/kulanu.index..html](http://www.ublat.edu/kulanu.index..html) Kulanu (Kulanu means all of us in Hebrew). Lots of resources.

[www.shamash.org](http://www.shamash.org) (click on communities) Andrew Tannenbaum's Jewish Resources

### **Books:**

*Material World: A Global Family Portrait*, Peter Menzel, Sierra Club Books, 1994. (Use this to accompany the student's research of different countries.)

*Jews in Places you Never Heard Of*, Karen Primack

*All in My Jewish Family* (workbook, paperback) by Kenneth D. Roseman

*When I Left My Village* Maxine Rose Schur (details a family's journey from Ethiopia to Israel)

*Falasha No More* by Arlene Kushner – NOTE: This book can form the basis of an entire class.

## **Films:**

www.jewishvideo.com Has a "Jews Around the World" category in addition to a section on videos for children.

The PJLL is in Rockville, MD and rents videos to Machar teachers. Note--all of the following videos are recommended for Junior High and up, so watch them first and select appropriate sections):

*Jewish Community of Fez*, black and white, 14 minutes, 1985.

*Jewish Community of Salonika*, black and white, 11 minutes, 1985

*Routes of Exile: A Moroccan Jewish Odyssey*, color, 90 minutes, 1982

*Chinese Jews on the Banks of the Yellow River*, color, 13 minutes, 1985

*I Miss the Sun*, color, 20 minutes, 1993 (the story of Nona, an elderly Egyptian woman who was forced out of Egypt. Living with her extended family in Brooklyn, Nona longs for the "sun" of Egypt and reminisces about her life there. The film was made by her granddaughter and centers around the family's Passover celebration.)

## **Maps:**

Online (2004) Map of the World in PDF Format:

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/world\\_maps/world\\_physical\\_2004.pdf](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/world_maps/world_physical_2004.pdf)

Online (2002) Map of the World in JPG Format:

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/world\\_maps/world\\_pol02.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/world_maps/world_pol02.jpg)

## **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Pen Pals -Developing a pen-pal relationship with a Jewish student in another country is recommended. In many cases, this will be possible via the internet.

Ideally, the students will correspond with other secular/humanistic Jewish children their own age. In order for this to work, JCS teachers should contact (early on in the school year) the leadership of the secular/humanistic communities listed at the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Judaism's website and explain how many students there are who'd like pen pals and ask them the best way to proceed (the contact in the other country may suggest sending them a group of e-mails/ postal letters in bulk for them to distribute and/or they may provide individual children's names and addresses). It's also recommended that teachers contact the IFSHJ office for updates on additional country contacts and updated information that may not be on the website.

If there is a particular country that a student was hoping to get a pen-pal from that is not part of IFSHJ, contact the organizations listed at the World Jewish Congress website for that country and ask how to reach a teacher at a Jewish school/ community center and proceed. Explain to the student that the child they're corresponding with may have a different type of Jewish identity/experience not only because they live in another part of the world (remind them that there are many different ways of being Jewish in the United States and elsewhere).

Once the logistics are taken care of, ask the class if anyone's ever had a pen-pal before-- in another country, state, etc. Ask them to share what this experience was like.

Have the students brainstorm what they want to learn about Jews in the country where their pen pal lives-- possibilities: why/how Jews came there, name of the city where most Jews live, whether the Jewish population is going up or down and why (if down, where are people moving to?) Then, brainstorm together what they would like to share with and learn from their pen-pals.

Record their ideas and provide them with this list for future reference. Explain that they probably won't need to ask all of their questions in the first letter, but over the course of their correspondence, hopefully they'll get to most of them.

## 2. Studying other countries

In place of, or in addition to each student's research on the particular country in which their pen pals live, review information about other countries in class. One option for this is to focus on one particular country during each class. Another is to break the students into small groups and distribute information about different Jewish communities to each group and to have the groups come back and report what they've learned to the class (this can include an artistic presentation-- such as drawing pictures, making a collage, a skit, etc.)

Make/ decorate pie charts that illustrate the distribution of Jews around the world. Have a large map of the world posted in the classroom and have the students mark 'their' countries.

3. Discuss how Passover is observed differently around the world. Discuss the Bene Israel Jews in Bombay who still dip someone in the household's hand in sheep's blood, impress it on a sheet of paper and hang it above the doorway as a hamsa, to protect the home (related to the plague of killing the first born son and 'passing over' Jewish houses). Instead of using sheep's blood, have the students trace their hands on heavy paper and decorate it, to hang on their doorways. Discuss mezzuzot as well.
4. Group the students into teams and ask them questions, "Jeopardy" style related to Jewish population statistics, such as which of the following places have more Jewish people: Buenos Aires, Argentina or Washington, DC.

Paris, France or Philadelphia, PA.

USA or Israel.

France or Canada.

Russia or the United Kingdom.

After each question, ask the students to reflect on whether and why they were surprised by the answers.

5. Pass out short articles (edit information found on the internet and/or highlight certain parts for them to read) about Jewish communities in different countries to students in groups of 2-3. Ask them to read the materials over and Discuss terminology (use flash cards, jeopardy game, etc.)
6. Sephardim": Hebrew term for Jewish people with roots in Syria, Turkey and North Africa. (South Africa): "Afrikaners": White People in South Africa who treat black people in South Africa horribly (which was official government policy, called Apartheid, that was in effect until 1994), and who protested Jews moving to South Africa during World War II.

(Ethiopia): "Land of Kush": What Jewish people used to call Ethiopia.

(Ethiopia): "Falashas": What Ethiopian Jews are often called. "Falasha" means "stranger" or "immigrant" in the Ge'ez language of Ethiopia.

(Ethiopia): "Beta Israel": What the Ethiopian Jewish community calls itself.

(Iraq): "Baghadis": Jews from Iraq who came to India in India in the 1700s.

(Argentina): "Turcos": Argentinian Jews originally from the Middle East.

(Argentina): "Rusos": Argentinian Jews originally from Eastern Europe.

(Uzbekistan): "Mahalla": The traditional name for Jewish areas in Uzbekistan.

(Japan): "Gaijn": Foreign worker... someone from another country working in Japan. Many Jews in Japan are "gaijn."

(India): "Bene Israel": Jews in India who believe they are relatives of the original settlers who came to India nearly 2,000 years ago.

(India): "Thane" The suburb (town near a big city) outside of Bombay where most Jewish people in India live.



(Italy): "Nusach Italki": Term for the "Italian rite"--a special Jewish prayer tradition observed in Italy.

(Mexico): "Mestizo": Term for a person living in Mexico who has indigenous/Indian and European ancestry. There are "Mestizo" Jews.

## Handout: Jews From Arab Countries: Focus on Syria

The first Jews to live in Arab lands were the Jews who had to leave the land of Israel (known as Judea) when the first Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians.

Jews settled in many countries that were either Arab or were ruled by Muslims, like Turkey and Syria and Palestine.

For much of the time Jews in these areas were not really treated badly, although there were many things that they were not allowed to do. Known as dhimmis in Arabic, Jews could not build any building higher than a mosque, or ride horses, and had to wear special clothing. They were often better off than their Jewish neighbours in Christian lands.

One of the largest countries near Israel is Syria. The port town of Aleppo served as a beginning point for trade along the famous Silk Route to China. The Jewish communities of Syria and other Middle Eastern countries were known as the Mizrach (the Hebrew word for 'East'). Jewish refugees (people who ran away from) Spain and Portugal, known as "Sephardim" joined them. Often, the Sephardim became the leaders in the community.

Jews were famous traders, selling silks, spices, perfumes, and jewels to Europe, together with local products like olive oil, sesame seeds and pistachio nuts.

The Jews lived much like their Arab neighbours and were called musta-arabeen or 'almost Arabs'. The main synagogue was named for the prophet Elijah and the religious leader was called a chacham or 'wise person'. The Syrian Chief Rabbi was known as the Chacham Rashi or 'Chief Wise Person'.

As in Sephardi synagogues, the Torah scroll was kept in a solid case. Grandparents and elder family members were given great honour. If a grandfather were called to the Torah, the younger family members would rise and stand until the end of the call-up as a mark of respect.

Boys could become BarMitzvah at any age that they understood the prayers, by reciting first the prayers for Rosh Chodesh on a Monday or Thursday, and, at a later ceremony, the Torah blessings on Shabbat. A boy did not actually read from the Torah scroll until aged thirteen.

## Handout: Brief Overview of World Jewish History Post -Spanish Expulsion

(consult the Machar JCS timeline and Stan Mack's The History of the Jews for more detail)

1492 Jews are expelled from Spain. Columbus, with conversos Jews aboard, reaches the New World.

1500s Rise of Kabbalah in Safed, Palestine.

1628 First Jews settle in Barbados, an English colony. By 1710 there are two synagogues on the island.

1648-49 Chmielnicki cossack massacres in Poland.

1650 Twelve Jewish families granted permission to settle in Curacao. Jews settle in Jamaica, permitted to own land and practice their religion.

1654 Jews expelled from Brazil; twenty-three land in New Amsterdam.

1655 Jews allowed to resettle in England from which they had been barred since 1290.

1700s Rise of Hasidism in Russia and Poland.

1732 Congregation Mickve Israel, oldest synagogue in Western Hemisphere, built in Curacao.

1760 Jewish merchants and their families settle in New Orleans.

1791 Jews granted citizenship in France. Beginning of Jewish Emancipation in Europe.

1820s Rise of Reform Judaism in Germany.

1840 Jews in Damascus, Syria, are accused of blood libel, arousing world reaction.

1858 Edgardo Mortara, a little boy, is abducted in Italy after forced conversion, creating world-wide protests.

1868 Benjamin Disraeli becomes English prime minister. Queen Victoria makes him Earl of Beaconsfield.

1881 Czar Alexander II assassinated in St. Petersburg, Russia. Pogroms and persecution of Jews follows, and immigration to America is accelerated. Two million Eastern European Jews will emigrate to America through 1914.

### **Recent Dates Related to Modern Jewish Life Around the World:**

1985 Operation Moses, airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel.

1989 Soviet Union permits Jews to emigrate on their first application for visa.

1992 Operation Solomon brings almost all Ethiopian Jews to Israel.

## **Handout: Population Statistics**

There are approximately 13 million Jewish people in the world today. It's difficult to get a good count because a) there's a traditional Jewish reluctance to count members of the community and b) it's difficult to reach the many unaffiliated Jews in the Diaspora.

United States 5,800,000

United Kingdom 300,000

Israel 4,847,000

Argentina 250,000

France 600,000

Brazil 130,000

Russia 550,000

South Africa 106,000

Ukraine 400,000

Australia 100,000

Canada 360,000

### **Cities Outside of Israel with the Largest Jewish Population**

1) New York, USA

9) London, UK

2) Miami, USA

10) Moscow, Russia

3) Los Angeles, USA

11) Buenos Aires, Argentina

4) Paris, France

12) Toronto, Canada

5) Philadelphia, USA

13) Washington DC, USA

6) Chicago, USA

14) Kiev, Ukraine

7) San Francisco, USA

15) Montreal, Canada

8) Boston, USA

16) St. Petersburg, Russia

## The Crypto-Jews: An Ancient Heritage Comes Alive Again

From the Leona G. and David A. Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives, Southwest Jewish History  
Volume 2, Number 1, Fall 1993

<http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu/images/swja/sjhart.htm>

Historians recounting the Jewish presence in the American Southwest have dated Jews in Texas about 1820, in New Mexico in the early 1840s and in Arizona in the mid-1850s. Today we know that Jewish history in the Southwest actually can be traced back some four hundred and fifty years.

This new dating is not the work of revisionist historians, but rather the result of a dramatic and often mysterious emergence of so-called crypto-Jews, who also have been called Marranos and conversos. Marrano, the Spanish word for pig, often was used in Spain during the bitter days of the Inquisition by non-Jews who despised, perhaps even feared, Jews who had converted to Catholicism but were thought to be secretly practicing their old religion. They were feared because even after conversion they often were returned to their same posts under Spanish kings because of their special expertise in various areas.

The conversos, or converts, who fled the Inquisition in Spain came into the New World, often with new names and forged papers because of the decree of Ferdinand and Isabella that no Jew could live in any Spanish territory. They came and settled into new lands that had only had native Indian populations, but shortly after the earliest arrivals the Inquisition followed them into the New World, setting up Holy Courts at Lima, Peru, in Cartagena, Columbia and the most active one in Mexico City in Nueva Espana.

Now, with the Inquisition on their heels once again, the conversos began to move again. Some found ways to remain in lands of South America, Central America and Mexico, but others once again moved to where they hoped to be safe. They have been traced to every area of the North American continent where Spaniards had adventured. One party of Sephardim fleeing from Recife, Brazil after it became a Portuguese possession and landed on the Dutch- owned island of Manhattan.

This article, however, is directed to one area that has been the center for the recent emergence of crypto-Jews--the American Southwest. There are direct links between those conversos who traveled from Spain to New Spain and those who moved north into what is now Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. Here, in this area, Hispanics who have followed Catholicism for generations, now are tracing their roots back to Spain, or to Portugal, through the research capabilities of the Bloom Southwest Jewish Archives at the University of Arizona. Their stories are those that we are presenting in this article. A few of the stories have been told in lectures, some are being presented for the first time and in many cases no names are used because of sensitivities within Hispanic families. Some want to search out their roots, but in the same family

there are those who either are indifferent or antagonistic and do not want to know of a different historic past.

Before turning to these stories it should be understood that descendants of crypto Jews can be found from Florida across the country to California. While research has been heaviest in New Mexico, Texas and Arizona, more will be done in these other areas in the years ahead.

The following are some of the interviews that have been recorded by the Southwest Jewish Archives:

An administrator on the University of Arizona campus recalls that when he grew up in Tucson "there was a kid who spoke a funny Spanish. We used to kid him. One day when I was in the University library I ran across a Ladino dictionary. I finally realized that kid had been speaking Ladino. I asked myself: 'Was he a descendant of conversos from Spain?' Then I began to think about my own family and I puzzled as to why we always had a menorah in our Catholic home!"

A minister in the Assembly of God in Florida one day found the birth certificate of his grandmother from Havana, Cuba dated in 1901. He called the Southwest Jewish Archives because he was stunned to find written on the official document--"descendiente Español Judio". He has left his ministry, has been circumcised and is considering joining an orthodox Jewish congregation.

'Mrs. O.' in Flagstaff called the Archives to ask for some research on her family name because she said "I have a feeling I must be Jewish." Asked for a further explanation she said she was raised in a Hispanic community where "we were the only family who were intellectuals, so therefore we must have been Jewish." Pressed further, she said, "Well, we were the only family there who had books in our house therefore we must have been Jewish." She added that there was never a crucifix in their home.

A professor at the University of Arizona remembered that when his sister died his mother told him she had to tell him a secret that had been passed down through generations of their family, but only through women. Now that his sister was gone, he had to have the secret. The professor said, "She leaned over and whispered to me, 'Somos Judios.' I was stunned to learn that we were Jews, but then I remembered that in our house my mother never served pork or shell fish."

A young man from a small, ingrained community in New Mexico, described the different feelings within families. He told interviewers that he remembered seeing his grandfather carve menorahs and place them in the window of their house at Chanukah. "My grandmother," he said, "would take them out quickly and insist we have a Christmas tree." He also remembered that in the spring his grandfather would hang a lamb, cut the jugular vein (according to Jewish tradition) and let the blood run into the ground. "He would cover the blood with soil," the young man said, "but my grandmother would get angry because she wanted the blood to make sausage. I also

remember my grandfather going to a secret house to pray. I think he prayed there in Hebrew, although we were raised Catholic."

A dentist in Denver joined a Jewish congregation in Denver, saying he did not have to convert because although his father was a church-going Catholic, his mother did not want him to go to church and told him repeatedly that she was Jewish and therefore he was as well. "My mother was the clever one in our family," he recounted. "She was the business woman and had a store in the Hispanic area of northeast Denver. She always closed the store on Yom Kippur, even though our Catholic friends sneered at us. I am sure we are descendants of Jews who fled the Inquisition in Spain." His family name is one that was called by the Inquisition not once, but many times.

"...scratch a New Mexican and his Indian blood will flow. Scratch a little deeper and his Jewish or Moorish blood will flow. Scratch no deeper 'cause that's all you need to know. Can you believe, 500 years and we're still looking for our identity?"

Ruth Ruiz Reed, a Spanish translator on the University of Arizona campus, brought an amulet to the Archives for identification. She said it had been passed down through the women of her family for generations but she had no idea of what it really was. It turned out to be a silver amulet in the shape of the tablets with the Ten Commandments inscribed in Hebrew. When she was told this, Ruth Reed began to search her memory. She recalled that her grandfather Jose Maria Ruiz went to a seminary in Jalisco, Mexico. There the bishop told his pupils that they should live by the precepts of the Old Testament and at graduation he gave eight boys Old Testament bibles.

Ruth Ruiz Reed also recalled that her grandfather told her that his father used to take candles "and do certain ceremonies" at night in his room and also read the Old Testament. She said, "My mother never served pork or shell fish in our home."

Most recently a young Hispanic raised in the eastern section of Los Angeles learned that he came from a converso background and converted to Judaism. "Not long after that," he said, "I met a young Hispanic girl and I fell in love and decided to marry her. I told her that we might have a problem. I told her that I had converted to Judaism and that she would have to keep a kosher home. "She looked at me, I remember, smiled and said, 'That's no problem, you see, because I am from a hidden Jewish family.' "

# **SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM – Overview and Review**

## **FOR K-3 Jewish Cultural School**

From a power point presentation to introduce prospective members to Humanistic Judaism created by Dr. Scott Randell and Fay Kalman from Kol Haskalah, NC, based partially on an Introduction to Humanistic Judaism talk by Rabbi Miriam Jeris – Rabbi for Society of Humanistic Judaism

Humanism: Everyone should feel proud of who they are. All people should be treated fairly and equally.

### **SELF-RELIANCE**

- Trust ourselves and trust other people.
- We do not rely on a God that we can not see.

### **SELF-RESPONSIBILITY**

- We must be responsible for what we do.
- Doing what needs to be done, rather than expecting others to do it.
- Taking responsibility for making things better for ourselves, our families, our community and our world- in Judaism this is referred to as tikkun olam- repairing the world.

### **INTEGRITY**

- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Do not say things that you do not believe.

Beliefs and behavior are consistent.

### **IDENTITY/CONNECTION**

- We like being Jewish.
- We Celebrate Jewish holidays and life cycle events- they are meaningful.
- We educate ourselves and our children about being Jewish
- We participate in the greater Jewish community.



## **DIGNITY**

- Dignity creates a focus and purpose to life. Dignity is being proud of how we behave and who we are.
- Dignity means that we make our own decisions and that we respect ourselves and others.
- Achieving dignity is a life-long process.
- Dignity gives us control over our own life.
- Dignity means making ethical decisions that consider the consequences of our behavior on yourself and others.

## **COMMUNITY**

People need.....

- to be friends
- to ask for help sometimes
- to educate our children and ourselves
- to celebrate holidays and life's special moments

## **HUMANISTIC JUDAISM**

Provides a meaningful alternative for people who identify with the values, history and culture of the Jewish people.

- Educates children and adults in the traditions of Judaism.
- Celebrates/commemorates Jewish holidays and life cycle events.
- Welcomes people from diverse backgrounds who will be embraced by our community.

Humanistic Jewish Values -The practice of Humanistic Judaism is a way to personal growth, meaning, and fulfillment. (Cary Shaw, Congregation for Humanistic Judaism CTCHJ)

As a Humanistic Jew I seek:

- To increase the well-being of others (Tzedakah).
- To perform acts of loving kindness (Gemilut Chassadim).
- To pursue justice, counter oppression, and make the world a better place (Tikkun Olam).
- To use my reasoning power to understand the world about me, applying this knowledge

to advance ethical, moral goals.

- To treat adversity, not as divine punishment for wrongdoing, but as a challenge to be overcome with all the personal strength and community support I can muster.
- To build a community of Humanistic Jews and like-minded people who care for and support each other from birth to death, through joys and sorrows.
- To reflect personally on my own behavior, its motivations, expression and consequences, and to commit to improving myself, throughout the year, with renewed emphasis at High Holidays.
- To recognize and celebrate the role of the Jewish people and culture in living these values.
- To support Israel in its search for peace.
- To foster understanding of Humanistic Judaism in the broader community so that beliefs such as ours can be expressed without fear of prejudice.
- To live my life, so that at my death, I may live on through my positive impact on others' lives.

**TRADITIONAL JEWISH VALUES:** Cheerfulness, Clothing the naked, Comforting mourners, courtesy and respect, do not covet, feed the hungry, guard your tongue (No gossip), kindness to animals, peace in the home, repairing the world, do not destroy needlessly, bringing peace between people, respecting the elderly, return of lost articles, righteous deeds, righteousness, justice, saving a life, seeking peace, study, truth, visiting the sick, welcoming guests, love your neighbor as yourself