



# **Machar's Jewish Cultural School**

## **FIFTH GRADE CURRICULUM**

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**Machar's Jewish Cultural School**  
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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>UNIT 1: JEWISH LIFE IN WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>TOPIC 1: EARLY GHETTO LIFE IN EUROPE .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES:.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOPIC 2: COURT JEWS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>TOPIC 3: KABBALAH AND FALSE MESSIAHS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>TOPIC 4: HASIDISM AND MIS(T)NAGDIM .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES:.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>TOPIC 5: EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWISH NAMES.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES:.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>HANDOUT How Jews Got Their Names .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>TOPIC 6: THE ENLIGHTENMENT/HASKALAH.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES:.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>TOPIC 7: DOIKAYT AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO ZIONISM.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES:.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>UNIT 2: ZIONISM, ISRAEL PALESTINE.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>TOPIC 1 THE ORIGINS OF ZIONISM – JEWISH NATIONALISM .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>ACTIVITY: .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>TOPIC 2: THEODORE HERZL – FIRST WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>ACTIVITY .....</b>	<b>52</b>

<b>TOPIC 3: - BALFOUR DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>TOPIC 4: - SELECTING A LANGUAGE – DIFFERENT STRANDS OF ZIONISM .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>TOPIC 5: HOW LAND WAS ACQUIRED FROM THE ARABS.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>TOPIC 6: - ISRAELI GEOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>TOPIC 7: ISRAELI CULTURE .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>TOPIC 8: KIBBUTZIM/MOSHAVIM .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>TOPIC 9: POLITICS .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>ACTIVITY .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>TOPIC 10: PEACE MOVEMENT.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>ICE BREAKERS .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>HOLIDAYS –HUMANISTIC MEANINGS AND PRACTICES .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>HOLIDAYS – TRADITIONAL MEANINGS AND PRACTICES .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES:.....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>SECULAR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM – Overview and Review .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>FIFTH GRADE TIMELINE: From 1492 when Jews were expelled from Spain to 1933 when Hitler took over Germany.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Life in the Shtetl .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Holocaust: An End to Innocence, by Seymour Rossel .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>COMPARING HARRIET TUBMAN and GRACIA MENDES NASI .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Excerpts from The Jewish Socialist Labor Bund and Zionism .....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Israel in 600 Words or Less .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>How did the Zionists get their land*? .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Land Ownership in Palestine/Israel.....</b>	<b>103</b>

## **UNIT 1: JEWISH LIFE IN WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE**

Assist the students in transitioning from fourth to fifth grade by reviewing how bad things were for the Jews in Eastern Europe (the pogroms, etc.) at the turn of the century. Explain that the fifth grade curriculum goes into more detail about how Jewish people in Eastern and Western Europe responded to anti-Semitism and to new ideas about individual equality. Remind the students that after the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they did not all settle in Eastern Europe. This is where the fifth grade curriculum begins.

## TOPIC 1: EARLY GHETTO LIFE IN EUROPE

**SOURCES:** *My People - Abba Eban's History of the Jews* - Volume I

“Life in the Shtetl” attached and Seymour Rossel’s Holocaust, attached -

Differences between a ghetto and a shtetl –

A shtetl was a self imposed Jewish community set apart from non-Jewish communities. The real criteria for the size of a shtetl were vague and ill-defined, as the actual size could vary from much less than 1,000 inhabitants to 20,000 or more. When the community was very small it would be called a klaynshtetl or even a shtetele; however both terms could also carry the connotation of a parochial lack of sophistication or, at times, a feeling of warmth or nostalgia.

The shtetl first emerged in Poland-Lithuania before the partitions of the kingdom. Jews had been invited to settle in the private towns owned by the Polish nobility that developed from the 16th century, on relatively very favorable conditions. In many of such private towns Jews soon formed the preponderant majority of the population.

In Russia, the shtetl developed in the Pale of Settlement. In 1815, Congress Poland was incorporated into the Pale, which continued to exist until the October Revolution of 1917. Within Austria-Hungary, the shtetl communities were scattered in Galicia, Bohemia, Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, Bukovina, and Hungary. In the area under Prussia the shtetl pattern did not develop to the same extent. Despite the basic cultural homogeneity which had consolidated in the past few centuries, the communities in the partitioned regions developed specific social traits in each of the states in which they were situated. This was the result on the one hand of the varying cultures of their host societies and on the other hand of the differing social and economic policies and trends which developed in the host society under the Hapsburg emperors or Russian czars.

During the 19th century, the anti-Jewish persecutions, economic restrictions, and outbreaks of violence pressed increasingly on the socioeconomic foundations of the Jews, in czarist Russia in particular, while political and ideological revolutionary trends and movements began to undermine the strength of the life style of the shtetl, which became more and more unsatisfactory to younger generations. Thus weakened in its foundations, the shtetl entered the last phase of its existence. The liberal revolution of 1917 liquidated the Pale of Settlement, while the Communist revolution that followed liquidated the traditional shtetl life. Between the two world wars, independent Poland became the greatest Jewish center in Eastern Europe.

Jewish Ghettos were instituted in Western and Eastern Europe commencing in the 1500’s in Venice, Italy. This ghetto was mandated by the government, and Jews were forced to live there. On March 29th, 1516 the Italian Government issued special laws, the first Ghetto of Europe was instituted. It was an area where Jews were forced to live and which they could not leave from sunset to

dawn. The area was closed by gates watched by guards and even today the marks of the hinges are visible there. Jews were allowed to practice only some professions: they were doctors, because they were the most prepared and able to understand Arab writings, money lenders, because Catholic religion forbade this practice, merchants and "strazzarioli", ragsellers. The Ghetto existed for more than two and a half centuries, until Napoleon conquered Venice and finally opened and eliminated every gate (1797): Jews were finally free to live in other areas of the city.

In 1516 the Jews in Venice were forced into walled areas called ghettos. Other Western European cities kept Jews in ghettos as well.

The word ghetto comes from the Italian (pronounced jet-toe) meaning "casting" or Venetian geto meaning "foundry."

For Jews, living in the ghetto meant:

- Cramped quarters, and not being able to leave between sunset and sunrise.
- Not owning real estate.
- Wearing yellow hats (men) and yellow veils (women).
- Not owning, as a community, more than once synagogue.
- Forced conversions (these were not supposed to happen any more, but they did).
- Being taxed towards the maintenance of these conversion operations
- Having your synagogue invaded during the High Holy Days by conversionist preachers (often renegade Jews), with a cross put up on the Ark, and the Torah burnt.
- Being expelled (this was not supposed to happen any more but it did—except in Rome and Ancona—port cities where Jews controlled trade).
- Living within a certain pecking order (within the ghetto, there were hierarchies—in Venice for example, the Sephardic—Spanish and Portugese/Levantine Jews were at the top, German Jews in the middle and Italians the lowest).

Various authorities, ranging from local municipal authorities to the Austrian Emperor Charles V, ordered the creation of other ghettos for Jews in Frankfurt, Rome, Prague, and other cities in the 16th and 17th centuries.

During World War II ghettos were city districts (often enclosed) in which the Germans concentrated the municipal and sometimes regional Jewish population and forced them to live under miserable conditions. Ghettos isolated Jews by separating Jewish communities from the non-Jewish population and from other Jewish communities. The Germans established at least 1,000 ghettos in German-

occupied and annexed Poland and the Soviet Union alone. German occupation authorities established the first ghetto in Poland in Piotrków Trybunalski in October 1939.

Modern Day use of the word “ghetto”: A Black “ghetto” is an alternate, derogatory term for a poor, black, inner city neighborhood, or any poverty-stricken urban area. The word is also used to mean "uncouth," "unruly." “Ghetto” is used to stigmatize blacks. Referring to unacceptable behaviors as "ghetto" clearly links those behaviors to "the ghetto," where many black people in this country happen to live.

A ghetto is formed in three ways:

- As ports of illegal entry for racial minorities, and immigrant racial minorities.
- When the majority uses compulsion (typically violence, hostility, or legal barriers) to force minorities into particular areas.
- When economic conditions make it difficult for minority members to live in non-minority areas.

**Objectives:** Appreciate what ghetto life was like for Western European Jews.

Understand how the term ghetto was used historically compared to how it is used today.

Consider what Jewish people's responsibility is in terms of people living in "ghettos" today and/or towards people required to wear specific symbols on their clothing to identify their religious or ethnic group.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Ask the students to map their neighborhoods, listing all of the places that they see or visit each week, including school, home, friends' houses, markets, play areas, favorite shops, places where their parents work, etc. Then, have them try to add buildings, parks, streets and other sites in the area. Compare the difficulty of this task -- of getting all of these places in the picture (and to scale) -- with how easy it was for people to draw maps of their lives in the ghetto, because the ghettos were so small that most people living there would probably be able to draw a map of the area quite easily.
2. Transform the classroom into Venice, with a small part of the classroom separated off as the Jewish ghetto. As students arrive, ask them to pick character cards out of hat. These character cards will indicate whether they are Christian or Jewish (and if Jewish, where in the hierarchy they fall), and thus where they can live. Have yellow hats and scarves for the Jewish people to wear. Create scenarios wherein the students have to make decisions and interact with one another based on their assigned roles. Present dilemmas that may lead them to take risks

(leave the ghetto after dark, etc). This activity could easily take the full class period-- leave time for discussion about how it felt to play the different roles, etc.

3. Discuss the term "ghetto"-- brainstorm all of the different meanings/ uses of the word with which the students are familiar. Do these meanings have positive or negative connotations? Brainstorm what they've heard about people living in "ghettos." If people in the United States are said to live in the "ghetto," yet there is no government ruling that this is where they must live, why do so many people live in these areas? Is the government and/or other institutions still responsible?
4. Discuss situations of conflict: Being forced to wear certain colors, a Venetian citizen requiring the services of a Jewish doctor, forced conversion. Show students online video of Venetian ghetto, including photos of wedding

Photos of synagogues in Venice;

<http://www.ghetto.it/ghetto/en/foto.asp?padre=2&figlio=1>

<http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=photos+and+synagogues+in+Venice&FORM=IGRE&qpv=photos+and+synagogues+in+Venice#>

5. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shtetl/shtetlscript.html>- Frontline show - woman smuggled out of shtetl returns 50 years later. Transcript.

**(References:** the [American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise's Jewish Virtual Library](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/intro.html)

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/intro.html> and Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghetto>)



## TOPIC 2: COURT JEWS

Following the Expulsion from Spain, all Jews in Western Europe did not live in ghettos. Some were able to live outside of the ghetto as Court Jews.

Court Jew is a term for Jewish leaders who rose to positions of influence in Christian European noble houses. The first historical examples of what would be later called "court Jews" emerged during the Renaissance, when local rulers used services of wealthy Jews for short-term loans. Noble patrons of court Jews employed them as financiers, advisers, suppliers, diplomats, and trade delegates. Court Jews could use their family and community connections to supply their sponsors with loans of money and needed provisions, including food, clothing, spices, arms, ammunition, and precious metals.

Some court Jews were also prominent people in the local Jewish community or even famous rabbis. Righteous court Jews were noted philanthropists who used their influence to help and protect their brethren, being the only Jews who could interact with the local high society and present petitions of the Jews to the ruler.

In return for their services, court Jews gained social privileges—sometimes even titles—and could live outside the Jewish ghettos. Moreover, because these were under noble protection, they were exempted from rabbinical jurisdiction and thus did not have to adhere closely to Jewish law. This proved a mixed blessing, as some court Jews developed reputations, both among the Christian populace and their fellow Jews, as being unethical and greedy. Because they also lent money at interest to middle-class Christians and were often used by Christian rulers as tax collectors, the court Jew became a negative stereotype that fed into later Christian anti-semitism.

Moreover, due to the precarious social position of Jews, some nobles could simply ignore their debts to the court Jews and often blamed them for the nation's economic woes. Many debts were also canceled during pogroms, when the Jewish creditor could disappear. If the sponsoring noble died, his Jewish financier could even face exile or execution. The last court Jews lived in the mid-nineteenth century, in Germany.

Court Jews, called also court factors, and court or chamber agents, played a part at the courts of the Holy Roman emperors and the German princes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and at the beginning of the nineteenth. Not always on account of their learning or their force of character did these Jews rise to positions close to the rulers: they were mostly wealthy businessmen, distinguished above their co-religionists by their commercial instincts and their adaptability. Court rulers looked upon them in a personal and, as a rule, selfish light; as being, on the one hand, their favorites, and, on the other, their whipping-boys. Court Jews frequently suffered through the denunciation of their envious rivals and co-religionists, and were often the objects of hatred of the people and the courtiers. They were of service to their fellow-Jews only during the periods, often

short, of their influence with the rulers; and as they themselves, being hated parvenus, often came to a tragic end, their co-religionists were in consequence of their fall all the more harassed. The court Jews, as the agents of the rulers, and in times of war as the purveyors and the treasurers of the state, enjoyed special privileges. They were under the jurisdiction of the court marshal, and were not compelled to wear the Jews' badge. They were permitted to stay wherever the emperor held his court, and to live anywhere in the Holy Roman Empire, even in places where no other Jews were allowed. Wherever they settled they could buy houses, slaughter meat according to the Jewish ritual, and maintain a rabbi. They could sell their goods wholesale and retail, and could not be taxed or assessed higher than the Christians.

Their Sovereigns sometimes assigned them the role of local tax collection from the above named classes of the ruler's subjects. These roles built up a long (and some would say still) standing enmity between the Jewish (educated middle and upper) professional class, and the Christian lower middle, working, lower and agricultural classes. The resentments had far-reaching consequences in the history of European Jews. When the ruler's bad economic decisions or profligate personal household spending resulted in a decline in national income or a rise in interest rates, with the resultant failure in small share Christian businesses and farms, the Court Jews domestically and abroad were easy to be blamed by the sovereign and his lesser nobles. From 19th century central and eastern European industrialization and into the European wars and economic depressions of the 20th century the working classes and lower middle classes, small share entrepreneurs, and small scale farmers would draw upon these historical stereotypes. These Christian classes would rally against "International Jewish Money-Capitalism" and because of these beliefs support anti-Jewish policies.

### **At the Austrian court**

The Holy Roman Emperors from the House of Habsburg kept a considerable number of court Jews. Among those of Emperor Ferdinand II are mentioned the following: Solomon and Ber Mayer, who furnished for the wedding of the emperor and Eleonora of Mantua the cloth for four squadrons of cavalry; Joseph Pincherle of Görz; Moses and Joseph Marburger (Morpurgo) of Gradisca; Ventura Pariente of Trieste; the physician Elijah Chalfon of Vienna; Samuel zum Drachen, Samuel zum Straussen, and Samuel zum Weissen Drachen of Frankfort-on-the-Main; and Mordecai Meisel, of Prague. A specially favored court Jew was Jacob Bassevi, the first Jew to be ennobled, with the title "von Treuenberg".

Important as court Jews were also Samuel Oppenheimer, who went from Heidelberg to Vienna, and Samson Wertheimer (Wertheimher) from Worms. Oppenheimer, who was appointed chief court factor, together with his two sons Emanuel and Wolf, and Wertheimer, who was at first associated with him, devoted their time and talents to the service of Austria and the House of Habsburg: during the Rhenish, French, Turkish, and Spanish wars they loaned millions of florins for provisions, munitions, etc. Wertheimer, who, by title at least, was also chief court factor to the electors of Mainz, the Palatinate, and Treves, received from the emperor a chain of honor with his miniature.

Samson Wertheimer was succeeded as court factor by his son Wolf. Contemporaneous with him was Leffmann Behrends, or Liepmann Cohen, of Hanover, court factor and agent of the elector Ernest Augustus and of the duke Rudolf August of Brunswick. He also had relationships with several other rulers and high dignitaries. Behrends' two sons, Mordecai Gumpel and Isaac, received the same titles as he, chief court factors and agents. Isaac Cohen's father-in-law, Behrend Lehman, called also Bärman Halberstadt, was a court factor of Saxony, with the title of "Resident"; and his son Lehman Behrend was called to Dresden as court factor by King Augustus the Strong. Moses Bonaventura of Prague was also court Jew of Saxony in 1679.

### **Intrigues of Court Jews**

The Models were court Jews of the margraves of Ansbach about the middle of the seventeenth century. Especially influential was Marx Model, who had the largest business in the whole principality and extensively supplied the court and the army. He fell into disgrace through the intrigues of the court Jew Elkan Fränkel, member of a family that had been driven from Vienna. Fränkel, a circumspect, energetic, and proud man, possessed the confidence of the margrave to such a degree that his advice was sought in the most important affairs of the state. Denounced by a certain Isaiah Fränkel, however, who desired to be baptized, an accusation was brought against Elkan Fränkel; and the latter was pilloried, scourged, and sent to the Würzburg for life imprisonment November 2, 1712. He died there 1720. David Rost, Gabriel Fränkel, and, in 1730, Isaac Nathan (Ischerlein) were court Jews together with Elkan Fränkel; Ischerlein, through the intrigues of the Fränkels, suffered the same fate as Elkan Fränkel. Nevertheless, Nathan's son-in-law, Dessauer, became court Jew. Other court Jews of the princes of Ansbach were Michael Simon and Löw Israel (1743), Meyer Berlin, and Amson Solomon Seligmann (1763).

The Great Elector, Frederick William, also kept a court Jew at Berlin, Israel Aaron (1670), who by his influence tried to prevent the influx of foreign Jews into the Prussian capital. Other court Jews of the elector were Gumpertz (died 1672), Berend Wulff (1675), and Solomon Fränkel (1678). More influential than any of these was Jost Liebmann. Through his marriage with the widow of the above-named Israel Aaron, he succeeded to the latter's position, and was highly esteemed by the elector. He had continual quarrels with the court Jew of the crown prince, Markus Magnus. After his death, his influential position fell to his widow, the well-known Liebmannin, who was so well received by Frederick III (from 1701 King Frederick I of Prussia) that she could go unannounced into his cabinet.

The last actual court Jews were Israel Jacobson, court agent of Brunswick, and Wolf Breidenbach, factor to the Elector of Hesse, both of whom occupy honorable positions in the history of the Jews.

Industrious and often restless, the Court Jews showed a strong drive toward success, both in business and social status, with the allied urge "to assimilate as completely as possible to his environment in speech, dress, and manners" (S. Stern, *Court Jew* (1950), 11). A decidedly dynastic attitude led them to prefer marriages with the families of other Court Jews and to attempt to secure their positions for their descendants, both contributing factors to the tendency of their families to form a particular group within Jewry. The personal relationship between the prince and the Court Jew was based not only on common interests but also on the isolation in which both lived: the prince in his omnipotence and inaccessibility and the Court Jew because of his descent and

religion. Thanks to his privileged position, the Court Jew was often able to act as \*shtadlan for the Jewish groups; frequently, he was the head of the community and could procure the right to establish new settlements and prepare the way for emancipation. On the other hand, his often adventurous and risky career, necessarily involved with the court intrigues, could end abruptly on the death of the prince, with the gravest consequences for the Court Jew's property, and even life.

As in the south, the greater number of Court Jews came from Frankfurt, so in the north, Hamburg (with Altona and Wandsbek) became a similar center. Various members of both the Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities were in the service of the Danish court. In the service of the crown of Portugal abroad, notwithstanding their religious status, similar positions were held.

Noah Samuel Isaac of Sulzbach, who helped finance the marriage of the Wittelsbach prince-electors Charles Albert to Princess Maria Amalia of Austria in 1722, was at the same time a banker of the elector of Cologne and of the Teutonic Order.

Joseph Suess Oppenheimer, court factor of Duke Charles Alexander of Wuerttemberg, had dealings with many other rulers, including the elector of Cologne, the landgraf of Hesse, and the elector of the Palatinate, but it was in Wuerttemberg where his financial influence reached its peak. At the same time, he saw possibilities of political action which would transform the duchy into a modern absolutist state based on mercantilist principles. He failed, however, and was executed in 1738. By then the zenith of the Court Jew had already passed. Although Jews served the German courts as mint entrepreneurs well into the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in general, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, which gave rise to wide-ranging changes in patterns of finance, commerce, and international trade, put an end to the epoch of the Court Jews.

In all their varied activities, the Court Jews played a remarkable part in the development of international credit facilities especially in the Central European states and to some degree in northern Europe also, from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to late-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Generally, they were agents who arranged transfers of credit rather than possessors of vast capital in their own right; through their far-reaching commercial relationships and their organizing skill, they were able to provide funds more swiftly than most Christian bankers. Because of their specialization in the money business, they were able to furnish the silver for the mints more easily and could better act as army purveyors, once more because of their ability to organize and their network of family relationships. With their entrepreneurial spirit, they contributed in part to the process of industrialization within the frame of mercantilist policies. There is no doubt that they were instrumental in the growth of the modern absolute state, and at the end of the era there emerged a group of several important Jewish private bankers who exemplify the transition to modern methods of economy and government, primarily the Rothschilds, the Goldschmidts, the Oppenheimers, and the Seligmanns. However, it should not be forgotten that the courts had their Christian bankers, entrepreneurs, and army agents, too, who also played a part in this development.

## Famous Court Jews

- Don Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1508), financier for Portuguese and Spanish courts
- Abraham Zacuto (c. 1450 – c. 1510)
- Aron Beer of Frankfurt
- Moises Isaac of Bamberg
- Josel of Rosheim; de (1476–1554)
- Mordecai Meisel (Miška Marek Meisel) (1528–1601)
- Jacob Bassevi von Treuenberg (a noble) (1580–1634)
- Chajim Fürst, (1592–1653), court agent in Hamburg, elder of the Jewish community in Hamburg, richest Jew in Hamburg.
- Daniel Itzig (1723–1799) was a court Jew of Frederick II the Great and Frederick William II of Prussia.
- Bernhard von Eskeles (1753-1839) was a court Jew of Joseph II and Francis II of the Holy Roman Empire and I of Austria.
- Moses and Rachel Fishel of Krakow, court Jews during the reign of John I Albert of Poland. Rachel was lady-in-waiting of the Queen Mother Elizabeth.
- Moses Israel Fürst, (1617–1692), court agent in Hamburg and Mecklenburg-Schwerin
- Leffmann Behrends (Liepmann Cohen) of Hanover (c. 1630–1714)
- Samuel Oppenheimer (1635–1703), military supplier for the Holy Roman Emperor.
- Samson Wertheimer (1658–1724), Austrian financier, chief rabbi of Hungary and Moravia, and rabbi of Eisenstadt.
- Issachar Berend Lehmann; de (1661–1730)
- Joseph Suss Oppenheimer (1698–1738), financier for Karl Alexander von Württemberg
- Loew Sinzheim (Löb Sinzheim) (? – 1744?), court purveyor of Mainz
- Raphael Kaulla & "Madame Kaulla"
- Joachim Edler von Popper (1720–1795), court agent and lessee of the tobacco monopoly from the Habsburgs. Second Austrian Jew to be ennobled (1790).
- Israel Edler von Hönigsberg, (1724–1789), court agent and lessee of the tobacco monopoly from the Habsburgs. "Bankaldirektor" for Joseph II. First Austrian Jew to be ennobled (1789).
- Israel Jacobson (1768–1828), philanthropist and reformer, court agent of Brunswick.
- In fiction, Isaac the Jew in Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" serves this purpose to Prince John and other nobles.

(References [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Court\\_Jew](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Court_Jew))

The Ottoman Empire (known as Turkey today) is one place where Court Jews lived. Since 1492, through five centuries, the Ottoman sultans and the modern day Turkish Republic, welcomed the Jews and offered them a safe haven from persecution in the European countries. The Ottoman Empire at its zenith became one the largest empires in World History covering most of Mediterranean basin region extending from North Africa to Eastern Europe. It has been suggested that one of the characteristics that extended the domination of the Ottoman Empire was its allowance of religious freedom for the different nationalities and minorities under its rule. While many European nations expelled, persecuted or tried to convert the Jews under their dominion, the

Turkish people of the Ottoman Empire, remained as an outstanding example of tolerance of different nationalities with different religions. The history of the Ottoman Jews is rich with mutual complementary cultural influences. The Jews coming from Spain established the first printing presses that had just emerged as a most important tool of the modern culture. Many Jewish doctors served in the courts of Ottoman sultans and in the Ottoman army. Jews engaged in commerce enhanced trade between countries of the region for the benefit of all. The religious freedom allowed the flourishing of famous rabbis that produced outstanding works of comments on the Old Testament.

From the early 15th century on, the Ottomans actively encouraged Jewish immigration. Western European Jews received three invitations to settle in the Ottoman Empire. Two were from Muslim sultans, Muhammad (Mehmet) II in the middle of the 15th century and Bayazid II in 1492. The third came in a letter sent by Rabbi Yitzhak Sarfati (from Edirne) in 1454 to Jewish communities in Europe in the first part of the century that "invited his coreligionists to leave the torments they were enduring in Christendom and to seek safety and prosperity in Turkey." Rabbi Sarfati wrote that "here every man dwells at peace under his own vine and fig tree."

When Mehmet II "the Conqueror" took Constantinople in 1453, he encountered an oppressed Romaniot (Byzantine) Jewish community which welcomed him with enthusiasm. Sultan Mehmet II issued a proclamation to all Jews "... to ascend the site of the Imperial Throne, to dwell in the best of the land, each beneath his vine and his fig tree, with silver and with gold, with wealth and with cattle...".

In 1470, Jews expelled from Bavaria by Ludvig X found refuge in the Ottoman Empire.

A Haven for Sephardic Jewry -Sultan Bayazid II's offer of refuge gave new hope to the persecuted Sephardim. In 1492, the Sultan ordered the governors of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire "not to refuse the Jews entry or cause them difficulties, but to receive them cordially." According to Bernard Lewis, "the Jews were not just permitted to settle in the Ottoman lands, but were encouraged, assisted and sometimes even compelled".

Immanuel Aboab attributes to Bayazid II the famous remark that "the Catholic monarch Ferdinand was wrongly considered as wise, since he impoverished Spain by the expulsion of the Jews, and enriched Turkey."

The arrival of the Sephardim altered the structure of the community and the original group of Romaniote Jews was totally absorbed.

Over the centuries an increasing number of European Jews, escaping persecution in their native countries, settled in the Ottoman Empire. In 1537 the Jews expelled from Apulia (Italy) after the city fell under Papal control, in 1542 those expelled from Bohemia by King Ferdinand found a safe haven in the Ottoman Empire. In March of 1556, Sultan Suleyman "the Magnificent" wrote a letter to Pope Paul IV asking for the immediate release of the Ancona Marranos, which he declared to be

Ottoman citizens. The Pope had no other alternative than to release them, the Ottoman Empire being the "Super Power" of those days.

By 1477, Jewish households in Istanbul numbered 1,647 or 11% of the total. Half a century later, 8,070 Jewish houses were listed in the city.

### **The Life of Ottoman Jews**

For 300 years following the expulsion, the prosperity and creativity of the Ottoman Jews rivaled that of the Golden Age of Spain. Four Turkish cities: Istanbul, Izmir, Safed and Salonica became the centers of Sephardic Jewry. The Tu B'Shevat seder was developed in Izmir in the seventeenth century. The creator may have been Shabetai Zvi, the pseudo Messiah and founder of the Sabbatean movement. In reaction to Zvi, Izmir's Jews withdrew from any secular pursuits

Most of the court physicians were Jews: Hakim Yakoub, Joseph and Moshe Hamon, Daniel Fonseca, Gabriel Buenaventura to name only very few ones.

One of the most significant innovations that Jews brought to the Ottoman Empire was the printing press. In 1493, only one year after their expulsion from Spain, David & Samuel ibn Nahmias established the first Hebrew printing press in Istanbul.

Ottoman diplomacy was often carried out by Jews. Joseph Nasi, appointed the Duke of Naxos, was the former Portuguese Marrano Joao Miques. Another Portuguese Marrano, Alvaro Mandes, was named Duke of Mytilene in return of his diplomatic services to the Sultan. Salamon ben Nathan Eskenazi arranged the first diplomatic ties with the British Empire. Jewish women such as Dona Gracia Mendes Nasi "La Seniora" and Esther Kyra exercised considerable influence in the Court.

In the free air of the Ottoman Empire, Jewish literature flourished. Joseph Caro compiled the Shulchan Arukh. Shlomo haLevi Alkabes composed the Lekhah Dodi a hymn which welcomes the Sabbath according to both Sephardic and Ashkenazi ritual. Jacob Culi began to write the famous MeAm Loez. Rabbi Abraham ben Isaac Assa became known as the father of Judeo-Spanish literature.

On October 27, 1840 Sultan Abdulmecid issued his famous statement concerning the "Blood Libel Accusation" saying: "... and for the love we bear to our subjects, we cannot permit the Jewish nation, whose innocence for the crime alleged against them is evident, to be worried and tormented as a consequence of accusations which have not the least foundation in truth...". An important event in the life of Ottoman Jews in the 17th century was the schism led by Sabetay Sevi, the pseudo Messiah who lived in Izmir and later adopted Islam with his followers.

(References: Brief History of Turkish Jews - <http://www.science.co.il/hi/Turkish/>;  
[www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Turkey.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Turkey.html) ;  
[www.naqshbandi.org/ottomans/protectors/protectors.htm](http://www.naqshbandi.org/ottomans/protectors/protectors.htm))

## Objectives:

- Understand the contributions and dilemmas of 16th century Court Jews.
- Understand that while non Jewish leaders were placing rules and regulations on the Jews, Jewish people were also busy creating additional Jewish "laws" for themselves.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Have each child research one Court Jew. Child can come dressed like the Court Jew and present a biography of his character, or teacher can assign one index card with biography of a Court Jew and student can present his or her character to the class.
2. Learn the meaning of these words:

### Romaniote Jews

The Romaniotes are a Jewish population who have lived in the territory of today's Greece for more than 2000 years. Their language is Greek. The Romaniotes are distinct from the Sephardim, some of whom settled in Greece after the 1492 expulsion of the Jews from Spain. "Romaniote" is a historical term, denoting Jews who date their ancestry back to the Roman Empire. The term has come to mean "Hellenized" Jews, Greek-speaking Jews, who like Jews throughout history, living in most circumstances as small minorities surrounded by non-Jewish majorities, have absorbed many of the attributes, customs, traditions and, certainly, language of the surrounding non-Jewish majority, in this case, the Greek world of their time, whether it be pagan or Christian. The largest community was in Thebes, where there were c. 2000 Jews. They engaged mostly in cloth dyeing, weaving and making silk garments. When the waves of Sephardic Jews coming from Spain with the expulsion of 1492 settled in Ottoman Empire Greece, they were richer, prouder and more cultivated, separating themselves from Romaniotes.

Eventually, most of the Romaniote communities were assimilated by the more powerful Sephardim. The Romaniotes had their distinct customs very different from those of the Sephardic Jews; unlike the Sephardic Jews, they did not speak Ladino, but Yevanic Greek dialect and Greek. Romaniot scholars translated the Tanakh into Greek. At the beginning of the Twentieth century the Romaniote community of Ioannina numbered approximately 4000 people, mostly lower class tradesmen and craftsmen. Economic immigration caused their numbers to dwindle and at the eve of the World War II there were approximately 1950 Romaniotes left in Ioannina.

**Musta'rab (Arabzal) Jews** Arab-speaking, old established Jewish communities and residents in the Middle East.

**Sephardic Jews** - A Sephardi Jew is a Jew who follows the customs and traditions followed by Jews who lived in the Iberian Peninsula (modern Spain and Portugal) before their expulsion in the late 15th century. This includes both the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain under the Alhambra decree of 1492, or from Portugal by order of King Manuel I in 1497, and the descendants of crypto-Jews who left the Peninsula in later centuries to North Africa, Asia Minor, the Philippines and elsewhere around the world, and the descendants of crypto-Jews who remained



in Iberia. In modern times, the term has also been applied to Jews who may not have been born Sephardi (or even Jewish) but attend Sephardic synagogues and practice Sephardic traditions. Today there are around 12,000 Jews in Spain and 2,500 in Portugal (although it must be taken account that, when expelled from Portugal, Jews were allowed to stay if they converted to Christianity, resulting in a big percentage being assimilated in the Portuguese population.

Historically, Sephardic Jews have been more integrated into the local non-Jewish culture than Ashkenazic Jews. In the Islamic lands where Sephardic Judaism developed, there was less segregation and oppression than that for Ashkenazi Jews. Sephardic Jewish thought and culture was strongly influenced by Arabic and Greek philosophy and science.

Sephardic Jews' prayer services are somewhat different from Ashkenazic ones, and they use different melodies in their services. Sephardic Jews also have different holiday customs and different traditional foods. Sephardic Jews have their own international language: Ladino, which was based on Spanish and Hebrew in the same way that Yiddish was based on German and Hebrew. Sephardic Jews may eat rice, corn, peanuts and beans during Passover, while Ashkenazic Jews avoid them. Although some individual Sephardic Jews are less observant than others, and some individuals do not agree with all of the beliefs of traditional Judaism, there is no formal, organized differentiation into movements as there is in Ashkenazic Judaism.

In contrast to Ashkenazic Jews, who do not name newborn children after living relatives, Sephardic Jews often name their children after the children's grandparents, even if they are still alive. The first son and daughter are traditionally named after the paternal grandparents, and then the maternal parent's names are next up in line for the remaining children. After that, additional children's names are "free", so to speak, meaning that one can choose whatever name, without any more "naming obligations." The only instance in which Sephardic Jews will not name after their own parents when one of the spouses shares a common first name with a mother/father-in-law (since Jews will not name their children after themselves.) There are times though when the "free" names are used to honor the memory of a deceased relative who died young or childless. These conflicting naming conventions can be troublesome when children are born into mixed Ashkenazic-Sephardic households.

Throughout the medieval period in Europe, the Sephardic Jews were treated as elites among Jews. Many times they had a secular education and often had great wealth. In the 18th century, the Sephardic Jews who lived in Amsterdam and in London, tended to discriminate against non-Sephardic Jews who wanted to pray at their synagogues by forcing them to sit separately from the rest of the congregation.

North Africa and the Arab World - For hundreds of years, Sephardic Jews lived, as (non-Muslim members of monotheistic faiths), in relative peace with Muslim neighbors and rulers in North Africa and in the Ottoman Empire. They were considered second-class citizens, but were free to practice their own religion and participate in commerce. Similar to Spain and Portugal during the Golden Era, the Sephardic upper class in the Ottoman Empire were employed as translators.

The Sephardic communities in the Arab world were more receptive to modernity than their Ashkenazi counterparts in Europe. The Zionist movement became popular among Sephardic Jews in

North Africa. Many Sephardic rabbis in the Ottoman Empire supported Zionism and the Zionist movement spread to many Muslim countries in North Africa, such as in Egypt and Tunisia.

- **Crypto-Jews**, are those who choose to remain hidden since the Spanish and Mexican Inquisitions, but practice secret Jewish rites in privacy. (Library of Congress, Microfiche 7906177).

The first Jews to leave Spain settled in what is nowadays Algeria after a terrible massacre in Catalonia that took place in 1391. Following the 1492 expulsion from Spain, and the subsequent expulsions in Portugal (1497), these Jews, the nascent Sephardim, settled mainly in the Ottoman Empire, on the northern coast of Morocco, in southern France, Italy, Spanish North America, Spanish South America and the Philippines and Portuguese Brazil, as well as the Netherlands (whence a number of families continued on to the former Dutch possessions of Curaçao, Suriname, Aruba and New Netherland (now New York), England (as well as English colonies such as Jamaica), Germany, Denmark, Austria and Hungary.

Among the Sephardim were many who were the descendants, or heads, of wealthy families and who, as Marranos, had occupied prominent positions in the countries they had left. Some had been state officials, others had held positions of dignity within the Church; many had been the heads of large banking-houses and mercantile establishments, and some were physicians or scholars who had officiated as teachers in high schools. Their Spanish or Portuguese was a lingua franca that enabled Sephardim from different countries to engage in commerce and diplomacy.

With their social equals they associated freely, without regard to religion and more likely with regard to equivalent or comparative education, for they were generally well read which became a tradition and expectation. They were received at the courts of sultans, kings, and princes, and often were employed as ambassadors, envoys, or agents. The number of Sephardim who have rendered important services to different countries is considerable. (Reference: Wikipedia [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi\\_Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardi_Jews) )

**Ashkenazi Jews**- Descendants of Jews from France, Germany and Eastern Europe. The name Ashkenaz was applied in the Middle Ages to Jews living along the Rhine River in northern France and western Germany. The center of Ashkenazi Jews later spread to Poland-Lithuania and now there are Ashkenazi settlements all over the world. The term "Ashkenaz" became identified primarily with German customs and descendants of German Jews.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century, the first Ashkenazim, Jewish merchants in France and Germany, were economic pioneers, treated well because of their trading connections with the Mediterranean and the East. Jewish communities appeared in many urban centers. Early Ashkenaz communities were small and homogeneous. Until Christian guilds were formed, Jews were craftsmen and artisans. In France, many Jews owned vineyards and made wine. They carried arms and knew how to use them in self-defense. The Jews of each town constituted an independent, self-governing entity. Each community, or kahal, established its own regulations made up by an elected board and judicial courts. They enforced their rulings with the threat of excommunication. The Ashkenazim generally shied away from outside influences and concentrated on internal Jewish sources, ideas and customs.

Ashkenazim focused on biblical and Talmudic studies. Centers of rabbinic scholarship appeared in the tenth century in Mainz and Worms in the Rhineland and in Troyes and Sens in France. Ashkenazi scholarship centered around oral discussion. Sages focused on understanding the minutiae of the texts instead of extracting general principles. The most famous early teacher was Rabbenu Gershom of Mainz. Some of his decrees, such as that forbidding polygamy, are still in existence today. The first major Ashkenazi literary figure was Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, 1040-1105), whose commentaries on the Bible and Talmud are today considered fundamental to Jewish study. The tosafists, Ashkenazi Talmudic scholars in northern France and Germany, introduced new methods and insights into Talmudic study that are also still in use. Early Ashkenazi Jews composed religious poetry modeled after the fifth and sixth century piyyutim (liturgical poems). While prayer liturgy varied even among Ashkenazi countries, the differences were almost insignificant compared to the differences between Sephardi and Ashkenazi liturgy.

While Ashkenazi Jews occasionally experience anti-Semitism, mob violence first erupted against them at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Many Jews were killed in what Robert Seltzer calls a "supercharged religious atmosphere." Many were willing to die as martyrs rather than convert.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, many Ashkenazi Jews became moneylenders. They were supported by the secular rulers who benefited from taxes imposed on the Jews. The rulers did not totally protect them, however, and blood libels cropped up accompanied by violence. In 1182, Jews were expelled from France. Ashkenazi Jews continued to build communities in Germany until they faced riots and massacres in the 1200s and 1300s. Some Jews moved to Sephardi Spain while others set up Ashkenazi communities in Poland.

The center of Ashkenazi Jewry shifted to Poland, Lithuania, Bohemia and Moravia in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Jews were for the first time concentrated in Eastern Europe instead of Western Europe. Polish Jews adopted the Ashkenazi rites, liturgy, and religious customs of the German Jews. The Ashkenazi mahzor (holiday prayer book) included prayers composed by poets of Germany and Northern France. In Poland, the Jews became fiscal agents, tax collectors, estate managers for noblemen, merchants and craftsmen. In the 1500-1600s, Polish Jewry grew to be the largest Jewish community in the diaspora. Many Jews lived in shtetls, small towns where the majority of the inhabitants were Jewish. They set up kehillot like those in the Middle Ages that elected a board of trustees to collect taxes, set up education systems and deal with other necessities of Jewish life. The Jews even had their own craft guilds. Each kahal had a yeshiva, where boys over the age of 13 learned Talmudic and rabbinic texts. Yiddish was the language of oral translation and of discussion of Torah and Talmud. Ashkenazi scholars focused on careful readings of the text and also on summarizing legal interpretations of former Ashkenazi and Sephardi scholars of Jewish law.

Ashkenazim focused on Hebrew, Torah and especially Talmud. They used religion to protect themselves from outside influences. The Jews at this time were largely middle class. By choice, they mostly lived in self-contained communities surrounding their synagogue and other communal institutions. Yiddish was the common language of Ashkenazi Jews in eastern and central Europe. With the start of the Renaissance and religious wars in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, a divide grew between central and eastern European Jews. In central Europe, particularly in Germany, rulers forced the Jews to live apart from the rest of society in ghettos with between 100 and 500 inhabitants. The

ghettos were generally clean and in good condition. Eastern European Jews lived in the shtetls, where Jews and gentiles lived side by side.

In the 1600s and 1700s, Jews in Poland, the center of Ashkenazi Jewry, faced blood libels and riots. The growth of Hasidism in Poland drew many Jews away from typical Ashkenazi practice. After the Chmielnicki massacres in Poland in 1648, Polish Jews spread through Western Europe, some even crossing the Atlantic. Many Ashkenazi Polish Jews fled to Amsterdam and joined previously existing communities of German Jews. Sephardim there considered the Ashkenazim to be socially and culturally inferior. While the Sephardim were generally wealthy, the Ashkenazim were poor peddlers, petty traders, artisans, diamond polishers, jewelry workers and silversmiths. As the Sephardim became poorer in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the communities became more equal and more united.

The Jewish community in England also changed in the 1700s. It had been primarily Sephardi throughout the 1600s, but it became more Ashkenazi in culture as growing numbers of German and Polish Jews arrived.

By 1750, out of 2,500 Jews in the American Colonies, the majority was Ashkenazi. They were Yiddish-speaking Jews from Holland, Germany, Poland and England. The first Jews were merchants and traders. Since then, Ashkenazi Jews have built up communities throughout the United States.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of Russian persecution, there was massive Ashkenazi emigration from Eastern Europe to other areas of Europe, Australia, South Africa, the United States and Israel. Ashkenazim outnumbered Sephardim everywhere except North Africa, Italy, the Middle East and parts of Asia. Before World War II, Ashkenazim comprised 90% of world Jewry.

Over time Ashkenazim and Sephardim developed different prayer liturgies, Torah services, Hebrew pronunciation and ways of life. Originally, most Ashkenazim spoke Yiddish. Ashkenazi and Sephardi tunes for both prayers and Torah reading are different. An Ashkenazi Torah lies flat while being read, while a Sephardi Torah stands up. Ashkenazi scribes developed a distinctive script. One major difference is in the source used for deciding Jewish law. Sephardim follow Rabbi Joseph Caro's Shulhan Arukh. The Ashkenazim go by Rabbi Moses Isserles, who wrote a commentary on the Shulhan Arukh citing Ashkenazi practice. (Reference: Jewish Virtual Library [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Ashkenazim.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Ashkenazim.html))

## ACTIVITY

Divide the class into Sephardic Jews and Ashkenazi Jews. Have them make poster boards with differences from each other.

**The Kahal System** In 1633, a law forbid Poland's nobility from selling liquor or engaging in commercial activities. The Polish noble citizens retained political control of the country, but lost economic control because they were forbidden to engage in commercial activity. Because the Polish

magnates owned the land but were unable to engage in commerce, they were forced to hand over the job of income extraction to the nation's Jews, who would pay a set fee for a lease to raise the money the nobles needed. The system of pre-paid, short-term leases was known in Poland as "arenda." The connection between the arenda system of tax-farming and the Jews was so intimate that it eventually found expression in the Polish language. In legal contracts in the 17th and 18th century, the Polish word "arendarz" or tax-farmer and "Jew" are synonymous. According to Pogonowski, "15 percent of urban and 80 percent of rural Jewish heads of households were occupied within the arenda system."

The Jewish legal system, or kahal, brokered these licenses to well-to-do Jews, who in turn often subleased them to less well-to-do relatives. The Jewish tax-farmers had the support of the state—20 to 70 percent of the income of the large estates was generated by tax-farming leases held by Jews— but lacked the good will of the community which was the source of that livelihood. The peasants and Cossacks in Kresy [the newly colonized lands of the east] bitterly resented having to pay Jews for the use of Eastern Orthodox and Greek-catholic churches for funerals, baptism, weddings and other similar occasions (Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, *Jews in Poland: A Documentary History The Rise of Jews as a Nation from Congressus Judaicus in Poland to the Knesset in Israel* [New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc.1993], p. 68). (Reference: [www.culturewars.com/2003/RevolutionaryJew.html](http://www.culturewars.com/2003/RevolutionaryJew.html) )

**The Kehillah System-** When the Jews were exiled from the Land of Israel, nearly 2000 years ago, they dispersed across many countries, fragmenting into small groups among widely divergent cultures and empires. Under Christian and Islamic rule, in the German ghetto or the Polish shtetl, Jews remained internationally united. The glue was an allegiance to a code of laws and rituals set forth in the Torah and Talmud.

Judaism is a way of life experienced through the kehillah, the community. Forced to endure harsh conditions, without anyone to rely on for assistance but themselves, Jews developed a communal infrastructure that was uniquely Jewish. With an obligation in Jewish law to help the less fortunate, everyone in the community made regular contributions to the collection box, the kuppah. This fundraising system neither shamed nor glorified: both recipient and giver remained anonymous.

Community trustees divided the funds among a plethora of welfare providers. From the burial society to the soup kitchen to the dowry fund for poor girls, a communal organization existed to fit virtually every need. The kuppah, then, was the ultimate safety net for Jews who throughout the centuries lived through difficult times, from poverty to pogroms.

This system continued in the new country, as Eastern European Jews, many destitute and illiterate, streamed into North America's largest cities. As hard as it was, these Jews, for the first time, went about their business with relative freedom – and many immigrants became quite successful. They continued to be involved with human rights and now looked out for their less fortunate neighbors by creating a sophisticated philanthropic network that served the needs of the whole community.

The traditional kehillah, whose origins were in Babylonia in the sixth century BCE after the destruction of the First Temple, and which reached its apogee between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, was autonomous and compulsory for all Jews. That is to say, Jews were recognized by

their host nations as a nation in exile, subject to local rulers, on one hand, but with substantial rights of self-government, on the other. There was no single pattern for the kehillah. In some places the kehillah could even exercise the power of capital punishment under the charter granted by a local ruler. The local ruler granted the charter which defined the kehillah and its powers from the perspective of the host society, but the kehillah itself was governed by halakhah, Jewish law, as it had developed through the Bible, the Talmud, the Codes, and the rabbinical responsa that formed an ever-growing body of case law, 80 percent dealing with matters of civil government in the various kehillot.

Not only that, but every Jew had to belong to the kehillah in which he or she resided if they wanted to remain Jewish. Since there was no way to leave the Jewish people except by converting to another religion, this effectively meant that anyone who did not want to become a Christian or a Muslim was subject to the authority of the kehillah. Those who governed the kehillah were basically the wealthier members of the community who could afford to pay the taxes demanded of it by the foreign rulers. But kehillot ranged from medieval democracies to oligarchies. Because of the scope of their powers, most of what they did was civil in nature rather than religious, as we would understand the term.

The kehillah system began to break down in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at the opening of the modern epoch as nation-states emerged and eliminated the idea of different laws for different groups in their boundaries in favor of the principle of one national law for all. Still, in Europe most Jews continued to be required to belong to their kehillah just as Christians were subject to the discipline of their churches. (Reference: A Brief History of the Jewish Federation [www.jewishdayton.org/page.aspx?ID=23803](http://www.jewishdayton.org/page.aspx?ID=23803))

### **Takkanot**

A takkanah (plural takkanot) is a major law within halakha (Jewish law). A takkanah is an enactment which (1) revises an ordinance that no longer satisfies the requirements of the times or circumstances, or which (2), being deduced from a Biblical passage, may be regarded as new. (Reference: [Wikipedia en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takkanah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takkanah) )

### **Beit Din**

Rabbinical court of justice. In ancient times, it was the building block of the legal system in Israel. Today, it is invested with legal powers in a number of religious matters (din Torah, "matter of litigation," plural dinei Torah) both in Israel and in Jewish communities in the Diaspora, where its judgments hold varying degrees of authority (depending upon the jurisdiction and subject matter) in matters specifically germane to Jewish religious life. (Reference [Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beth\\_din](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beth_din) )

### **Ma'amad**

Sephardi equivalent of the Ashkenazi kahal, or community leadership. The ma'amad ruled over all community matters, and its decisions were binding. Members of the ma'amad were not elected, but each ma'amad appointed its successors. Those designated to serve had no choice but to accept the

assignment. Schooled by bitter memories of the crisis in Spain on the eve of the expulsion, the policy of the ma'amad tended to be conservative and authoritarian in the extreme. Those who disobeyed the directives of the ma'amad were fined heavily, and in some cases were even excommunicated. (Reference: Answers.com; [www.answers.com/topic/ma-amad-mahamad](http://www.answers.com/topic/ma-amad-mahamad) )

**Shulchan Arukh** and Rabbi Joseph Caro - (1488-1575) was a Talmudic authority, Kabbalist, and the author of the Shulchan Aruch (Prepared Table), one of the most respected compilations of Jewish law ever written. He was born in Toledo, Spain and he died in Safed, Israel. Rabbi Joseph Caro left Spain in 1492 as a result of the Spanish expulsion of the Jews, and settled with his family in Turkey. In 1536, he emigrated to Israel and became the chief rabbi of Safed, an important center of Jewish learning and industry.

Caro spent twenty years writing Beth Yosef, a commentary on Rabbi Yaakov ben HaRosh's work Turim. In this gigantic work, Caro presents Talmudic arguments for each topic and then explains the reasons for the Halachic decision. The Shulchan Aruch, an abridgement of Beth Yosef, was a short digest of all Jewish laws. The Shulchan Aruch described, in concise language, what Jews were supposed to do in every circumstance. He called the work Shulchan Aruch (Prepared Table) because it brought Jewish Law in an orderly way to all who wanted to get it.

One reason the Shulchan Aruch became so influential in the Jewish world was because it was the first code to be printed on the printing press. It was printed in 1565 and distributed around the Jewish world.

Moses Isserles, a great Polish rabbi, added a commentary called Mappah (Tablecloth) of Ashkenazi customs to the Shulchan Aruch in 1569. After several more commentaries and editions, the Shulchan Aruch became the universally accepted code of Jewish law. (Reference: About.com: Judaism [http://judaism.about.com/library/2\\_history/leaders/bldef-p\\_josephcaro.htm](http://judaism.about.com/library/2_history/leaders/bldef-p_josephcaro.htm))

- Compare and contrast the lives of Harriet Tubman and Gracia Mendes (Gracia Nasi). –

### **Comparison Chart - Attached**

Harriet Tubman (born Araminta Ross; c. 1820 or 1821 – March 10, 1913) was an African-American abolitionist, humanitarian, and Union spy during the American Civil War. After escaping from slavery, into which she was born, she made thirteen missions to rescue over seventy slaves using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad. She later helped John Brown recruit men for his raid on Harpers Ferry, and in the post-war era struggled for women's suffrage.

As a child in Dorchester County, Maryland, Tubman was beaten and whipped by her various masters to whom she had been hired out. Early in her life, she suffered a traumatic head wound when she was hit by a heavy metal weight thrown by an irate overseer, intending to hit another slave. The injury caused disabling seizures, headaches, powerful visionary and dream activity, and spells of hypersomnia which occurred throughout her entire life. A devout Christian, she ascribed her visions and vivid dreams to premonitions from God.

In 1849, Tubman escaped to Philadelphia, then immediately returned to Maryland to rescue her family. Slowly, one group at a time, she brought relatives with her out of the state, and eventually guided dozens of other slaves to freedom. Traveling by night and in extreme secrecy, Tubman (or "Moses", as she was called) "never lost a passenger," as she later put it at women's suffrage meetings. Large rewards were offered for the capture and return of many of the people she helped escape, but no one ever knew it was Harriet Tubman who was helping them. When the far-reaching United States Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850, she helped guide fugitives farther north into Canada, and helped newly freed slaves find work.

When the American Civil War began, Tubman worked for the Union Army, first as a cook and nurse, and then as an armed scout and spy. The first woman to lead an armed expedition in the war, she guided the Combahee River Raid, which liberated more than seven hundred slaves. After the war, she retired to the family home in Auburn, New York, where she cared for her aging parents. She was active in the women's suffrage movement until illness overtook her and she had to be admitted to a home for elderly African-Americans she had helped open years earlier. (Reference: Wikipedia [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet\\_Ross\\_Tubman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet_Ross_Tubman) )

Gracia Mendes Nasi (Gracia is archaic Portuguese and Spanish for the Hebrew Hannah, also known by her Christianized name Beatriz de Luna Miques, 1510-1569) was one of the wealthiest Jewish women of Renaissance Europe. She married into the eminent international banking and finance dynasty of Mendes, and was the aunt of Joseph Nasi, who became a prominent figure in the politics of the Ottoman Empire.

Dona Gracia was born in Lisbon, Portugal, into an ancient, venerable family of marranos, originally from Aragon, that fled to Portugal when the Catholic Monarchs expelled the Jews in 1492 .

In 1528, Gracia and Francisco Mendes married in a public Catholic wedding and then a Crypto-Judaic ceremony with the signing of a ketubah. Francisco Mendes (originally Benveniste) ran, along with his brother Diogo, a powerful trading company and bank of world repute with agents across Europe and around the Mediterranean. The House of Mendes probably began as a company trading precious objects. Following Portuguese exploration, which led to the sea route to India, they became important spice traders.

In 1538 Francisco died, leaving her with an infant daughter, Brianda (known privately as Reyna, queen), (future wife of Joseph Nasi). Diogo had opened a branch office of their banking house in the Habsburg Netherlands city of Antwerp with the help of a member of their family, Rabbi Abraham Benveniste. She moved to Antwerp and joined Diogo.

Soon after she settled in the city, the last of the Nasi-Mendes brothers, Diogo, died in 1542. Dona Gracia assumed the management of the Mendes commercial empire and was a very successful businesswoman. Her enormous wealth put her into a position to influence kings and popes, which she used to protect crypto-Jews and contribute money to free various hostages. It is believed she



was the driving force in the publication of the Ferrara Bible from Sephardic source texts; the second, public printing of this document was dedicated to her.

Under Dona Gracia, the House of Mendes dealt with Henry II of France, Henry VIII of England, Charles V of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, Maria of Austria, Regent of the Low Countries, Popes Paul III and Paul IV, and Suleiman the Magnificent, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. These dealings involved commercial activities, loans, and bribes. Payments to the Pope delayed the establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal.

In 1544 she fled to the Republic of Venice. In 1551, a bubonic plague epidemic broke out, and the Jews, who were blamed for causing it, were forced out of the city. She tried to help those evicted but was arrested once her sister denounced her as a Jew. After she was freed she moved to Ferrara, where she lived openly as a Jew for the first time in her life. At that time she adopted her Jewish name, Gracia Nasi.

In 1553 she moved to the Ottoman domains, and married her daughter to her nephew Joseph. In 1556 the Pope sentenced a group of Marranos who had returned to Judaism in Portugal to death by fire. In response, Dona Gracia organized a trade embargo on the port of Ancona in the Papal States. She built synagogues, yeshivas and hospitals. One of the synagogues is still standing in Istanbul and is named after her (La Señora).

In 1558 she leased Tiberias, in Palestine, from Sultan Suleiman, for a yearly fee of 1000 ducats and, in 1561, Joseph Nasi obtained ruling authority over Tiberias and Safed, developing major new centres of Jewish settlement. Gracia Nasi died near Istanbul. (Reference: Wikipedia [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gracia\\_Mendes\\_Nasi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gracia_Mendes_Nasi) )

### TOPIC 3: KABBALAH AND FALSE MESSIAHS

Many Jews were suffering at the turn of the 17th century. Because of their hard lives they turned to the Jewish mystical (considered the higher realms of experience--arrived at via meditation or ecstasy) philosophy called Kaballah (see Stan Mack's book, pages 147-149 for a brief description of Kaballah). The rabbis of the Talmud regarded the mystical study of God as important yet dangerous.

Right around the same time, many people began to declare that they were the messiah-claiming to perform miracles and to speak with God.

- Shabbetai Zevi, born in 1626 in Turkey was once such person. Faced with the threat of being killed or converting to Islam, Zevi chose to convert. Shabbetai Zvi was born in Smyrna in 1626, he showed early promise as a Talmudic scholar, and even more as a student and devotee of Kabbalah. More pronounced than his scholarship were his strange mystical speculations and religious ecstasies. He traveled to various cities, his strong personality and his alternately ascetic and self-indulgent behavior attracting and repelling rabbis and populace alike. He was expelled from Salonica by its rabbis for having staged a wedding service with himself as bridegroom and the Torah as bride. His erratic behavior continued. For long periods, he was a respected student and teacher of Kabbalah; at other times, he was given to messianic fantasies and bizarre acts. At one point, living in Jerusalem seeking "peace for his soul," he sought out a self-proclaimed "man of God," Nathan of Gaza, who declared Shabbetai Zvi to be the Messiah. Then Shabbetai Zvi began to act the part, as Gershom Scholem describes:

Riding around on horseback in majestic state [he] summoned a group of his followers, appointing them as apostles or representatives of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The messianic news spread like wildfire to other communities in Palestine ... First reports about Shabbetai Zvi reached Europe early in October 1665 ... detailed accounts, deeply involved with legendary material, arrived in Italy, Holland, Germany and Poland.

Messianic fervor took hold of communities that had no immediate experience of persecution and bloodshed as well as those which had.... Repentance alternating with public manifestations of joy and enthusiasm was the order of the day.

From many places delegations left bearing parchments signed by the leaders of the community which acknowledged him as the Messiah and king of Israel.

Not only did Shabbetai Zvi gain militant adherents in his native Turkey and in the Near East, but even in such cosmopolitan European cities as Venice, Livorno, and Amsterdam leading rabbis and sophisticated men of affairs were caught up in the messianic frenzy. On September 15, 1666, Shabbetai Zvi, brought before the Sultan and given the choice of death or renouncing Judaism, prudently chose the latter, setting a turban on his head to signify his conversion to Islam, for which he was rewarded with the honorary title "Keeper of the Palace Gates" and a pension of 150 piasters a day.

His renunciation shocked the Jewish world. Leaders and followers alike refused to believe it. Many continued to anticipate a second coming, and faith in false messiahs continued through the eighteenth century. In the vast majority of believers, revulsion and remorse set in and there was an active endeavor to erase all evidence, even mention of the pseudo-Messiah. Pages were removed from communal registers, and documents were destroyed. Few copies of the books that celebrated Shabbetai Zvi survived, and those that did have become rarities much sought after by libraries and collectors.

(Reference: Jewish Virtual Library <https://jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Zvi.html> )

Jacob Frank – ( 1726–1791) was an 18th century Jewish religious leader who claimed to be the reincarnation of the self-proclaimed messiah Sabbatai Zevi and also of King David. Frank and his followers were excommunicated due to his extremely unconventional doctrines that included acceptance of the New Testament, Enlightenment and some controversial concepts such as purification through transgression. Frank arguably created a new religion, now referred to as **Frankism**, which combined some aspects of Christianity and Judaism.

The heyday of Frank's messianic movement occurred during a period of the loss of relative social and economic stability in the late 1770s resulting from the Koliyivshchyna rebellion, an uprising of Ukrainian peasantry that resulted in many Polish and Jewish casualties. The mystical cult of the Sabbateans is believed to have included both asceticism and sensuality: some did penance for their sins, subjected themselves to self-inflicted pain, and "mourned for Zion"; others disregarded the strict rules of modesty required by Judaism. The Polish rabbis attempted to ban the "Sabbatean heresy" at the assembly at Lwów in 1722, but could not fully succeed, as it was widely popular among the nascent Jewish middle class.

Jacob Frank proclaimed himself as a direct successor to Sabbatai Zevi and Osman Baba, and assured his adherents that he had received revelations from heaven. These revelations called for the conversion of Frank and his followers to the Christian religion, which was to be a visible transition stage to the future "Messianic religion."

At the discussion in 1759, the rabbis energetically repulsed their opponents. After the discussion the Frankists were requested to demonstrate in practice their adherence to Christianity; Jacob Frank encouraged his followers to take the decisive step. The baptism of the Frankists was celebrated with great solemnity in the churches of Lvov, with members of the Polish nobility acting as god-parents. However, the Frankists continued to be viewed with suspicion, due to their unusual doctrine. Frank was arrested in Warsaw on February 6, 1760 and delivered to the Church's tribunal on the charge of heresy. The Church tribunal convicted Frank as a teacher of heresy, and imprisoned him in a monastery.

Frank's imprisonment lasted thirteen years, yet it only increased his influence. Many Frankists kept up constant communication with their "holy master". Frank inspired his followers through mystical speeches and epistles, in which he stated that salvation could be gained only through the "religion *dat* ("law"), a mixture of Christianity and Sabbateanism. (Reference: Jewish Encyclopedia.com; [www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=305&letter=F](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=305&letter=F) )

- Today, we refer to Shabbetai Zevi, Jacob Frank and the other self-proclaimed messiahs as "false messiahs."

- Kaballah is still studied by religious Jews, but some people believe that a person should be a mature adult before they begin such studies.

- Kaballah means the "received tradition" of Jewish mysticism and is expressed in various texts including the thirteenth-century Zohar. Kabbalah is an aspect of Jewish mysticism. It consists of a large body of speculation on the nature of divinity, the creation, the origin and fate of the soul, and the role of human beings. It consists also of meditative, devotional, mystical and magical practices which were taught only to a select few and for this reason Kabbalah is regarded as an esoteric offshoot of Judaism. Some aspects of Kabbalah have been studied and used by non-Jews for several hundred years.

The Zohar is written in Aramaic (the language of the Talmud) in the form of a commentary on the five books of the Torah. The Zohar first appeared in Spain in the 13th century. Whereas most commentaries interpret the Torah as a narrative and legal work, mystics are as likely to interpret it "as a system of symbols which reveal the secret laws of the universe and even the secrets of God" The Zohar contains a discussion of the nature of God, the origin and structure of the universe, the nature of souls, redemption, the relationship of Ego to Darkness and "true self" to "The Light of God," and the relationship between the "universal energy" and man. Its scriptural exegesis can be considered an esoteric form of the Rabbinic literature known as Midrash, which elaborates on the Torah. The Zohar was lauded by many rabbis because it opposed religious formalism, stimulated one's imagination and emotions, and for many people helped reinvigorate the experience of prayer. In many places prayer had become a mere external religious exercise, while prayer was supposed to be a means of transcending earthly affairs and placing oneself in union with God.

The Zohar was censured by many rabbis because it propagated many superstitious beliefs, and produced a host of mystical dreamers, whose over-heated imaginations peopled the world with spirits, demons, and all kinds of good and bad influences. Many classical rabbis, especially Maimonides, viewed all such beliefs as a violation of Judaism's principles of faith.

Its mystic mode of explaining some commandments was applied by its commentators to all religious observances, and produced a strong tendency to substitute a mystic Judaism in the place of traditional rabbinic Judaism.

- Jewish mystical ideas--such as the existence of dybbuks-- still survive today. In Jewish folklore, a dybbuk is a malicious possessing spirit, believed to be the dislocated soul of a dead person.

Dybbuks are said to have escaped from Gehenna (a Hebrew term loosely analogous to the concept of hell) or to have been turned away from Gehenna for serious transgressions, such as suicide. The word "dybbuk" is derived from the Hebrew, meaning "attachment"; the dybbuk attaches itself to the body of a living person and inhabits the flesh. According to belief, a soul that has been unable to fulfill its function during its lifetime is given another opportunity to do so in dybbuk form. It supposedly leaves the host body once it has accomplished its goal, sometimes after being helped.

**Objectives:**

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand that Jewish people, like people from other traditions, have been drawn to mysticism.
- Consider the connection between how people are treated and their religious/ superstitious fervor.

**ACTIVITIES:**

1. Discuss the idea of a messiah and a "false" messiah-- explain that secular/ humanistic Jews do not believe that there will ever be such a thing as a messiah, but that many religious Jews do. Discuss the students' opinions. If they were to announce that they were the messiah, how would they present themselves, who would they appeal to?
2. Research and report on contemporary false messiahs.
3. Read and discuss portions of the Zohar. Discuss the historical context of the Zohar (thirteenth century Spain) and why people might have written such a book at that time.
4. Discuss the concept of "dybbuks" as one example of Jewish mysticism.
5. Create a class story or play starring a dybbuk.

## TOPIC 4: HASIDISM AND MIS(T)NAGDIM

The fact that so many Jews had been fooled by Shabbetai Tsevi left its mark. The Jews were still being persecuted, but they needed a different answer.

- One alternative was offered by Yisra'el ben Eli'ezer (born in 1700), the Ba'al Shem Tov (Besht for short), the "Master of the Good Name." Besht revived the ideas of the Kaballah in a popular way. He was a charismatic teacher who stressed warmth of feeling within the structure of Jewish law. This included ecstatic singing, dancing and storytelling. Practicing Judaism in this way became known as Hasidism (Chassidus means piety).
- Hasidism held that the sacred was found in everyday life. Hasidic communities were established around inspirational rebbes (somewhat higher than everyday people, but not messiahs). The Hasidic movement started in the 1700's (CE) in Eastern Europe in response to a void felt by many average observant Jews of the day. The founder of Hasidism, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (referred to as the "Besht," an acronym of his name) was a great scholar and mystic, devoted to both the revealed, outer aspect, and hidden, inner aspect of Torah. He and his followers, without veering from a commitment to Torah, created a way of Jewish life that emphasized the ability of all Jews to grow closer to God via everything that they do, say, and think. In contrast to the somewhat intellectual style of the mainstream Jewish leaders of his day and their emphasis on the primacy of Torah study, the Besht emphasized a constant focus on attachment to God and Torah no matter what one is involved with.

Early on, a schism developed between the Hasidic and nonHasidic (i.e., *Misnagdim*, lit. "opponents") Jewish movements, primarily over real or imagined issues of *halachic* observance. The opposition was based on concern that the Hasidim were neglecting the laws regarding appropriate times for prayer, and perhaps concern about the exuberance of Hasidic worship, or a concern that it might be an offshoot of false messiahs Shabbtai Zvi or Jacob Frank. Within a generation or two, the rift was closed. Since then, many Hasidic practices have influenced the Misnagdim, while the Misnagdim, in turn, moderated some of the extremes of early Hasidism. Nevertheless, the dispute between particular groups of Hasidim and Misnagdim continues to this day, especially in Israel.

### Critics of Hasidic Judaism:

- decried the apparently novel Hasidic emphasis on different aspects of Jewish law;
- found problematic the overwhelming exuberance of Hasidic worship;
- expressed concern that Hasidism might become a deviant messianic sect (similar to what had occurred among the followers of both Shabbatai Zvi and Jacob Frank).

Some other important differences between hasidim and *misnagdim* included:

- Hasidism believed in miracle workers; they believed that the *Ba'al Shem Tov* and some of his disciples literally performed miracles. Stories of their miracles became a part of Hasidic

literature. The Misnagdim held such views as heretical, based on classical rabbinic works such as Saadia Gaon's *Emunoth ve-Deoth*. (Ultimately, their descendants were to regularly tell similar stories about respected Misnagdic leaders.)

- Hasidic philosophy (*chasidus*) holds as a core belief that God permeates all physical objects in nature, including all living beings. According to the sixth Lubavitcher rebbe, Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn, Baal Shem Tov used to say, that *God is all and all is God*. In opposition many Jewish religious rationalists misunderstood this seemingly pantheistic doctrine as a violation against the Maimonidean principle of faith that God is not physical, and thus considered it heretical. In fact, Hasidic philosophy, especially the Chabad school, views all physical and psychological phenomena as relative and illusionary; God, the absolute reality in itself, is beyond all physical or even spiritual concepts and boundaries.
- Hasidism teaches that there are sparks of goodness in all things, which can be redeemed to perfect the world. Many held such a view to be false and dangerous.

On a more prosaic level, other *misnagdim* regarded hasidim as pursuing a less scholarly approach to Judaism, and opposed the movement for this reason. At one point Hasidic Jews were put in *cherem* (a Jewish form of communal excommunication); after years of bitter acrimony, a rapprochement occurred between Hasidic Jews and their opponents within Orthodox Judaism. The reconciliation took place in response to the perceived even greater threat of the *Haskala*, or Jewish Enlightenment. Despite this, the distinctions between the various sects of Hasidim and other Orthodox Jews remain, although now, there is almost no conflict between these two groups. (Reference: Answers.com [www.answers.com/topic/hasid](http://www.answers.com/topic/hasid) )

- The Gaon of Vilna, the supreme Jewish legal figure in Eastern Europe did not approve of Hasidism. He felt that it went against Jewish law. His followers were known as Misganim “opponents” in Hebrew. A large group of Misnagdim and their families, numbering over 500, were inspired by the Vilna Gaon to settle in Palestine between 1809 and 1812. They are known as Perushim.

- He did not succeed at ending Hasidism, and it still exists today- including in the United States.

### **Objectives:**

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand that debates regarding what does and does not go against "Jewish law" have existed for centuries.
- Consider why the organization and practices of Hasidic communities have appealed to people from the 18th century forward.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Read and discuss Hasidic stories.
2. Read and discuss quotes from the Ba'al Shem Tov.

*The world is new to us every morning - this is God's gift; and every man should believe he is reborn each day.*

*From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven, and when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, the streams of light flow together and a single brighter light goes forth from that united being.*

*Prayer recited with great joy is undoubtedly significant and more acceptable to God than prayer recited in a melancholy fashion and with tears*

3. Invite an Orthodox/Hasidic Jew to speak to your class.

4. Listen to Hasidic songs/ melodies

- Hannah Rachel, the Hasidic woman rebbe. Hannah Rachel, the Maid, was the only daughter of Monesh Verbermacher, an educated and well-to-do Jew in the Ukraine. From an early age she was distinguished not only because of her beauty but also--unusually for a girl--by dint of her ardor in prayer and remarkable aptitude for scholarship. Her betrothal to a beloved childhood playmate, which entailed the customary separation of bride and groom until the wedding, distressed the Maid and led her to withdraw from society. Her distress was exacerbated by the sudden death of her mother, following which she became a recluse, never leaving her room except to visit her mother's grave. On one of her visits to the cemetery she fell into unconsciousness, which was followed by a prolonged and mysterious illness. When she recovered she claimed to have been given "a new and elevated soul." She broke off her engagement and declared that she would never marry, having "transcended the world of the flesh."

From then on she adopted the full rigor of male ritual observance and absorbed herself, like a male pietist, in intense study and prayer. She became known as the "holy Maid" or the "Virgin" of Ludomir, and acquired a reputation for miracle working. Men and women, including rabbis and scholars, flocked to the *beit midrash* in Ludomir which functioned as her hasidic court. She would grant blessings on request and deliver her weekly hasidic teaching at the third Sabbath meal, as was customary among male Tzaddikim.

While her popular following grew, the male leadership of the movement disapproved, viewing her activities as a pathological manifestation of the powers of evil and impurity. Pressure was put on the Maid to abandon the practice of Tzaddikism and to resume her rightful female role in marriage. Following the personal intervention of Mordecai of Chernobyl (1770-1837)--the most eminent tzaddik of the region--she reluctantly agreed to marry, but the marriage was never consummated and soon ended in divorce. She married again, but divorced once more, apparently remaining a "maiden" to the end of her life.

However, her marriages did have the desired effect of putting an abrupt end to her career as a Rebbe. She eventually immigrated to the Holy Land, a remote corner of nineteenth-century Hasidism. Here, as is almost certainly confirmed by archival documentation from the 1860s and 1870s, she spent the last years of her life in Jerusalem as a childless widow affiliated to the



Volhynian Hasidic *kolel* (a group of Ashkenazi Jews in Palestine, from one country or district, whose members received funds from their countries of origin).

The Maid of Ludomir was exceptional among the cluster of women reputed to have exercised charismatic authority within the Hasidic world of their day. Unlike most of them, she was not related by family ties--as mother, daughter, sister or widow-- to any of the illustrious male Zaddikim. She could not, therefore, draw on the associative authority which some Jewish women were able to derive from their connection to distinguished male relatives; her powers were entirely her own. Nevertheless, while her career is often celebrated as a pioneering "feminist" success, the very terms in which the Maid tradition has been preserved present her case as an instructive failure. It serves precisely to reinforce, rather than undermine, the gender boundaries she attempted to cross. The phenomenon of a spiritually empowered holy virgin, so familiar to the wider Christian environment of Hasidism, was alien to the Jewish tradition, which had always prized, albeit within limits, the practice of sexual abstinence by some men, while greeting with suspicion and ascribing no value to the adoption of celibacy by women. The anomaly of the celibate female Rebbe was therefore perceived as an aberration of nature and a social deviation which the Hasidic leadership was quick to suppress. Only in the 20th century, under the impact of modern feminism and the egalitarian elements of Zionist ideology, could the Maid of Ludomir tradition present itself as an inspirational model for national revival and proof of the alleged eradication of gender boundaries in Hasidism. (Reference: *Reprinted from Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*; Ada Rapoport-Albert is Reader in Jewish History and head of the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at UCL, London University.

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern\\_History/Early\\_Modern/Hasidism/Maid\\_of\\_](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern_History/Early_Modern/Hasidism/Maid_of_))

- Vilna Gaon: full Elijah Ben Solomon Zalman, also called by the acronym Ha-gra, from Ha-gaon Rabbi Eliya-hu, also called Elijah Gaon born April 23, 1720, Sielec, Lithuania, Russian Empire and died Oct. 9, 1797, Vilna [now Vilnius, Lithuania] The gaon (lit. "genius") of Vilna, and the outstanding authority in Jewish religious and cultural life in 18th-century Lithuania. Born into a long line of scholars, Elijah traveled among the Jewish communities of Poland and Germany in 1740-45 and then settled in Vilna which was the cultural center of eastern European Jewry. There he refused rabbinic office and lived as a recluse while devoting himself to study and prayer, but his reputation as a scholar had spread throughout the Jewish world by the time he was 30. As a mark of nearly universal reverence, the title gaon, borne by the heads of the Babylonian academies and virtually extinct for many centuries, was bestowed upon him by the people. Elijah's scholarship embraced mastery of every field of study in the Jewish literature up to his own time. His vast knowledge of the Talmud and Midrash and of biblical exegesis, as well as of mystical literature and lore, was combined with a deep interest in philosophy, grammar, mathematics and astronomy, and folk medicine. (Reference: Encyclopedia Britannica; [www.britannica.com/facts/5/267854](http://www.britannica.com/facts/5/267854) )

## **TOPIC 5: EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWISH NAMES**

In France and the Anglo Saxon countries, the use of surnames went back to the 16th century, and Sephardic Jews had surnames stretching back centuries. But, other than those who were aristocrats or wealthy, Jews did not get surnames in Eastern Europe until the Napoleon years of the early 19th century. Most of the Jews from countries captured by Napoleon – Russia, Poland and Germany – were ordered to get surnames for tax purposes. After Napoleon’s defeat, many Jews dropped these names and returned to “son of” names such as: Mendelsohn, Jacobson, Levinson, etc.

During the so-called Emancipation, Jews were once more ordered to take surnames. In Austria, the Emperor Joseph made Jews take last names in the late 1700s, Poland in 1821, and Russia in 1844.

It’s probable that some of our families have had last names for 175 years or less.

**Objective:** Learn about our family names.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Students ask their parents about the origin of their last names, and report back to class.
2. If you were named for your parent’s occupation, your town, or if you wanted to buy a name (or have one assigned to you) – what would your name be? If you wanted to be a name – what would it be?

## **HANDOUT: How Jews Got Their Names**

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MENDELSON, JACOBSON, LEVINSON, etc.

During the so called Emancipation, Jews were once more ordered to take surnames. In Austria The Emperor Joseph made Jews take last names in the late 1700s, Poland in 1821 and Russia in 1844. It's probable that some of our families have had last names for 175 years or less. In general there were five types of names (people had to pay for their choice of names; the poor had assigned names).

### **1. Descriptive Names of Heads of Households:**

Examples:

HOCH (tall) KLEIN (small) COHEN (rabbi) BURGER (village dweller) SHEIN (good looking)

LEVI (temple singer) GROSS (large) SCHWARTZ (dark or black) WEISS (white) KURTZ (short)

### **2. Describing Occupations:**

Examples:

HOLTZ (wood) HOLTZKOCKER (wood chopper), GELTSCHMIDT (goldsmith), SCHNEIDER (tailor), KREIGSMAN (warrior), MALAMED (teacher), EISEN (iron), FISCHER (fish),

### **3. Named for City**

Examples: BERLIN, FRANKFURTER, DANZIGER, OPPENHEIMER, DEUTSCH (German)  
POLLACK (Polish), BRESLAU, MANNHEIM, CRACOW, WARSHAW

### **4. Bought Names**

Examples: GLUCK (luck), ROSEN (roses), ROSENBLATT (rose paper or leaf), ROSENBERG (rose mountain), ROTHMAN (red man), DIAMOND, KOENIG (king), KOENIGSBERG (king's mountain), SPIELMAN (spiel is to play), LIEBER (lover), BERG (mountain), WASSERMAN (water dweller), KERSHENBLATT (church paper), STEIN (glass)

### **5 Assigned Names (usually undesirable)**

Examples: PLOTZ (to die), KLUTZ (clumsy), BILLIG (cheap), DREK (poop)

## TOPIC 6: THE ENLIGHTENMENT/HASKALAH

In developments that paralleled the general Enlightenment in European culture following the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, Jewish life was also about to be forever changed as a result of emancipation, integration and mass secularization. In 1791, shortly after the French people successfully organized a Revolution against the wealth and power of their rulers (and the church), Jews were declared to be full citizens of France. France was the first European country to do this, but many followed. Once the visible and invisible walls of the ghetto were breached by emancipation, Jews were open to participation in and confrontation with general European culture and overall integration into the "grand European world". This was a very rapid and successful development, perhaps too much so. Within one generation or two, Jews moved from being newcomers and solely consumers of European culture to becoming among the most outstanding creators of it. Not surprisingly, the dominant and highly developed non-Jewish milieu had an immense impact on the Jews.

It brought about the great movement of Jewish enlightenment, the Haskalah – which means "Western Style," referring to the fact that much of the Jewish Enlightenment occurred in Western Europe. Coming out of the ghetto meant also coming out from the Orthodox Talmud Torah school into a modern school and university. It meant exchanging the ideal of a rabbi, learned in the Talmud and Jewish sources only, for that of a Jewish scholar equally at home with science or Shakespeare, as with Jewish studies. A very important result of all these developments was a gradual but persistent and ever widening process of secularization. This process brought about the rise of Jewish secular movements such as Zionism, and socialism based on Yiddish ethnicity and culture.

Jews who were proponents of Haskalah were referred to as Maskilim. The Musar Movement ("musar" means ethics) was begun by Rabbi Israel Lipkin Salanter. Its proponents tried to mix everything – blending Haskalah modernity, with the fervor of Hasidism and the study and practice of Misganim.

One Court, or Salon Jew, Moses Mendelssohn, a philosopher, tried to explain the Enlightenment to Jews and Judaism to Germans. When talking to the Jews, he focused on Judaism being about rules and not about miracles. The traditional rabbis were not happy about this. They were hostile to ideas about individual equality, the "scientific method" and revived philosophies from ancient Greece and Rome which had begun earlier in 18th century Europe to replace medieval thought. People saw that the universe works by scientific principles, not by superstition, etc.

For different reasons, the rulers of Europe also did not like the Enlightenment since it held that everyday people had rights.

Baruch Spinoza, a Dutch Jew (born in 1632, but his writings became popular in the 1800s), was a major Jewish Enlightenment thinker who wrote about something that secular Jews accept as common knowledge today: that we don't know who wrote the bible.

The rise of the Jewish Reform Movement in Germany followed the Haskalah – combining elements of the Haskalah with religious services. In England, France and Germany, Jewish people worked as mathematicians, scientists and doctors. The idea of germs, for example, was developed by a Jew.

### **Objectives:**

- Recognize and use the vocabulary highlighted above.
- Understand that the Haskalah was the precursor to secular/ humanistic Judaism today. Appreciate that within the group of Jews questioning traditional practice and thought, there have always been differences.
- Understand the impact of the Haskalah on the Enlightenment and vice versa.

### **ACTIVITIES:**

1. Read and discuss Yiddish stories in which Haskalah concepts which are reflected:
  - Individual freedom
  - Use of reason for discovery of truth
  - Rejection of authoritarianism in favor of democratic processes
  - Equality among people
  - Secular education as the basis for progress
  - Increased nationalisms
2. Create a classroom simulation: Have one group of students reflect the ideas of Moses Mendelsohn and one group reflect the ideas of Rabbi Rabbi Israel Lipkin Salanter, with one group representing Hasidic ideas (Ba'al Shem Tov) and one representing Mitnagdim, Vilna Gaon.

It is Yom Kippur and a Cholera epidemic is raging and many people are dying. Jewish law, of course, calls for fasting on Yom Kippur, but the Talmud also says "If you save one life, it is as though you have saved the entire world"-- referred to as pikuah nefesh. Hold a town meeting to decide whether the Jews should fast. Have each group prepare, in advance, what they will say during the meeting.

3. Read and discuss the attached biographies of Spinoza and Mendelssohn and write a report on Machar through their eyes-what would each of these men think of Machar?

### **Some Who Challenged Orthodoxy - by Zev Katz**

The Secular and Humanistic form of Judaism is a synthesis of the Jewish tradition with modern science and humanism. It was a long time in the making. It is not an entirely recent innovation. It was heralded by a long line of thinkers, writers and reformers. It is constantly evolving. Actually, it will never reach a final form. It will always be developing and changing, an ever living body of thought and practice, and this is its strength.

#### **BARUKH SPINOZA (1632-1677)**

The first great spirit who made a breakthrough from medievalism into modern rationalism, from dogmatic religion into some form of secularism, was the Jewish Dutch philosopher, Barukh Spinoza. He was a precursor of Secular Humanistic Judaism in a number of ways. He rejected the uncritical acceptance of Bible and religious dogma. He pioneered a rational, critical approach to the Bible and to Judaism at large. He argued that because nature is ruled by its own unchanging laws, miracles are simply not possible. His major contribution lay in two fields: a novel conception of God and his relation to the universe, and a revolutionary definition of morality. Spinoza denied the existence of a transcendental personal God who intervenes in earthly and human affairs. Spinoza's God was identical with the universe, not a separate being who is beyond, before or after nature, but one clearly perceived in the rationality of the laws of nature. Furthermore, according to Spinoza, perceiving this rationality of God is the highest activity of which a human is capable.

This concept of God is central to the philosophy of Spinoza, so much so that some thinkers label him as "God intoxicated." However, others regard him as a secular thinker. The point becomes even more pronounced when his main compendium, Ethics, is considered. Spinoza builds his ethical laws entirely on rational grounds, without invoking any supernatural, metaphysical agencies. He wrote Ethics in the form of a book on geometry. At first he formulated several self-evident axioms; then he proceeded by means of logical deduction to rules of moral behavior. Ultimately he proposed that if a man would think rationally about the consequences of his behavior he would never do any evil. Good is to do what is rational; evil is to stray from rationality. At a time when morality was inevitably linked to a concept of an interventionist and transcendental God, who is the absolute creator and guardian of humans and their morals, Spinoza developed a system of coherent thought and morals which did away with such a god. Whereas the concept of an external deity is the basis of existence of all theistic religions, Spinoza's god is the undoing of religion's clerics and institutions. For if God is identical to the immutable laws of the universe and not a personified, interventionist power ruling human affairs, then there is no point in praying to

him, worshipping him, or loving him in response to his love for you. There is nothing more secular, in the sense of denying all supernatural religious practice, than the natural God of Spinoza. It is no surprise, therefore, that he was excommunicated by the Jewish religious community of Amsterdam, and that even today the Orthodox regard this religious ban on him as valid. It is also not surprising that some outstanding modern Jewish personalities, including Einstein and Ben-Gurion, declared themselves to be believers in the "God of Spinoza".

### **MOSES MENDELSSOHN (1729-1786)**

The next major step in the direction of developing a modern rational Judaism is connected with the name of a German Jewish philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn. Whereas Spinoza rejected Judaism as a belief and practice, Mendelssohn was an observant Orthodox Jew during his entire life. And precisely because of that his rational interpretation of Judaism had such a major impact. In fact, he is regarded as the father of both the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment movement) and of the movements adapting Judaism to the modern age (Neo-Orthodoxy, Reform, Conservative). Mendelssohn was also a role model personally. He was a major philosopher in the non-Jewish world, an orthodox Jew, and a major interpreter of Judaism in the light of the modern age. He was a Jew with an extensive education, both in Judaism and in contemporary non-Jewish knowledge. For most of his life, Mendelssohn did not write about Jewish subjects. He died in 1786, several years before the French Revolution and the beginning of Jewish emancipation. Only towards the end of his life did he turn to major Jewish topics. He was under mounting pressure from Christian personalities, who proposed that since he was such an enlightened person, he should leave the "ossified", and "harsh" Old Testament religion and convert to Christianity, the "religion of love". That was then the prevailing image in Europe. Judaism was regarded as the outdated, backward religion of the Old Testament desert God, and Christianity was presented as the loving creed that Christ described in the Sermon on the Mount.

As befits a scholar, Mendelssohn answered by publishing a book, *Jerusalem*. In it he presented an entirely different picture of Judaism as an enlightened, rational and thoroughly moral "religion of Law", and not a dogmatic irrational creed. Mendelssohn indicated that basic moral truth is common to all religion. He argued that according to Judaism "salvation of the soul" is possible in other religions as well as within Judaism. This is in complete contrast to many fundamentalist Christian denominations, especially Catholicism, which postulated that there can be no salvation outside the Church.

Mendelssohn's assertion was based on the halakhic stipulation that a non Jew can gain a place in the life-to-come by keeping the seven mitzvot of Noah, which include only basic commandments, such as not serving pagan gods, setting up courts of law, not eating a part of a live animal, or not indulging in promiscuity. Like Spinoza, Mendelssohn argued that religion and the state are two different realms. The state deals with the worldly needs of people, while religion is occupied with the spiritual.



Though not creating a formal "school" of his own, Mendelssohn naturally attracted a new generation of young highly talented and educated Jews who like him, were at home in Jewish learning and in general culture. Together with them he pioneered several revolutionary Jewish ventures. As a rationalist, Mendelssohn believed that people should understand the Torah. All male Jews were able to read their prayers and the Torah in Hebrew but did not necessarily understand what they were reading. He therefore translated the Bible into German. He did it also because he felt strongly that Jews should know the language of their country. Most Jews did not know proper German since they spoke Yiddish in their ghettos. This translation was then accompanied by a commentary called Biur. The translation and the commentary, maintained the Orthodox tradition, yet were a great innovation, written in a modern language and in the spirit of contemporary knowledge. Mendelssohn argued strongly for a new type of education as a result of which a Jew would be familiar with both Jewish and general knowledge. Since the Jewish schools were absolutely opposed to "gentile" learning, he and his innovative followers pioneered Jewish schools of a new modern type. They also began publishing scholarly journals and periodicals on Jewish topics. These were written in Hebrew to enable educated Jews everywhere to read them, and to maintain a scholarly tradition. The deeply orthodox rabbis regarded these innovations and Mendelssohn's books with outright enmity. They could not excommunicate him since he was a strict observer of Orthodoxy. However, they put a ban on his translation and commentary of the Bible. The new schools and journals spread widely after the death of Mendelssohn and became the basis of far reaching changes in Jewish life.

**MARTIN (MORDECHAI) BUBER (1878-196)** Though Buber's writings appeared more than a century after Mendelssohn, and though there were important thinkers before him with whom we will deal, he is discussed here because his thought had much in common with theistic rationalists like Mendelssohn and especially Spinoza. His roots were in Eastern Europe, and he was deeply influenced in his youth by Chasidism. In fact, much of his writing was devoted to presenting this religious movement to the West. On the other hand, he evolved his own specific interpretations of deity and religion, which were very much a rejection of the established Jewish God and religious practice. To Buber, the center-point of religion is not in creed, dogma and worship but in a relationship, in an encounter between human beings and God. Relationships can be of two basic kinds: "I and Thou" and "I and It". The first is a direct relationship between the entire man and the living God, a true dialogue in which a person encounters God and God responds to that person. It is a profoundly unique, deeply personal and, one could say, mystical experience. It is the hallmark of true religiosity. The second relationship, that of "I and It", is the total opposite. In this kind of relationship the "other" is an alienated, routinized, objectified "thing", an "it". In this relationship there can be no true encounter, whether with God or with any other living being. Paradoxically, by creating his own purely subjective notion of a religious experience and of a mysterious dialogue as the only valid way of reaching God, Buber actually denies the validity and necessity of the notions and structures of all established religion.

NOTE TO TEACHER: SpinozaJumpStart.ppt is a wonderful power point about Spinoza on Grovesite – Society for Humanistic Judaism online resource center – password necessary. There are also articles on Spinoza and a list of other resources.

## TOPIC 7: DOIKAYT AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO ZIONISM

**Note to Teacher:** For background, read the attached Article Topic: The Jewish Labor Bund and The Idea of Doikayt As An Alternative to Zionism by Abraham Brumberg - p. 99

- The full name of the organization begun in 1897 was Der algemeyer yidisher arbeterbund in polyn un rusland (The General Jewish Workers Bund of Poland and Russia).
- The Bund believed in the Yiddish concept of doikayt – hereness—which expressed the Bundists' belief that Jews would find their “redemption” not in the ancient world of Palestine, but rather in Eastern Europe, in the lands where they had been rooted for so long. They believed that Jews should fight for their rights in the Diaspora, in whatever nation they reside. They should not focus on going to Israel.

### Objectives:

- Recognize and use vocabulary: doikayt, socialism, May Laws, May Day, Jargon Committees, Di Arbeter Shtime, Yugnt bund tsukunft, workers' defense/ strike funds (kases), tsar.
- Understand that Jewish people were involved in forming labor unions and fighting anti-Semitism before arriving in the United States.
- Consider the risks involved in creating an organization committed to linking the rights of Jews with the rights of workers.
- Consider the contemporary relevance of the Bund's message.

### ACTIVITIES:

- Learn and sing (or listen to) Di Shvue & Shvester Un Breeder/ All Sisters and Brothers...
- Employers whom the Bund struck against were Jewish. Debate whether organizing against other Jews inflamed anti-Semitism.
- Discuss/ debate the concept of doikayt.
- Discuss the question: Why did the Jewish Labor Bund oppose Zionism? Stress that the Bundists were not the only Jews with a critique of early Zionism, but their opposition stands out due to their overall concern with anti-Semitism and with the Jewish continuity (as opposed to other Jews at the time who weren't interested in much related to Jewish identity).
- Present the students with the following scenario:

It is 1903, after the Kishniev pogrom and Rebecca and Saul Smalgofsky are feeling despondent. Their entire community has been destroyed, including much of their own property, and many friends and extended family members have been killed or injured. It does not seem safe to be

Jewish in Russia. They are very torn and don't know what to do. Their younger daughter, Hanna, is staying in Russia. She's become very active politically with the Jewish Labor Bund, and believes that the only way to insure the future of the Jewish people is to stay put and fight for their rights. After all, where else has it ever been safer for Jews? This is where their family has lived for years and she's not about to let the tsarist police scare her away. Plus, Hanna's heard that there are people already living in Palestine and she doesn't want to become part of a conquering people herself. She's also heard that it's very hard work in Palestine, and she knows nothing about farming. As for America, she's heard from a relative who went recently that the streets are not actually paved with gold and that people live in poverty there as well. Her brother, Leib, is leaving for America and will send for his wife and children as soon as possible. He knows it will be hard, but anything must be better than what they just experienced with the pogrom. Hanna and Leib's older sister, Sarah, is planning to leave with her husband Chaim for Palestine. They're interested, if a little nervous, in becoming farmers. The idea of creating a new state, a place where Jews can be free, is very exciting to them. They're Socialist Zionists and believe that the opportunity exists, in Palestine, to create a utopian society where people dwell together in equality. As for the issue of people who already live in Palestine, they figure that they'll meet them and figure out some way to live together.

## UNIT 2: ZIONISM, ISRAEL PALESTINE

As preparation for beginning the Israel/Palestine unit, ask the students to research any connections to the region that their family and friends have: family living in (or who used to live in) Israel; family who have visited the region, friends and family who have given money to support Israel and/or to support peace efforts; who have been active on behalf of Palestinians, etc. When the students have done the research, hold a discussion and ask students why they think it is/is not important for Jewish Americans to learn about Israel/ Palestine.

Speakers may be invited to share trips/life in Israel.

### Sources For this Unit:

Sources: *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* by Phyllis Bennis

<http://www.endtheoccupation.org/section.php?id=53> NOTE: The entire book is online. It is an excellent resource for all aspects of the conflict.

“Israel in 600 Words or Less” by Etgar Keret - attached

Neve Shalom/ Wahat-al-Salam, by Laurie Dolphin, which tells the story of this joint Arab/Jewish village in Israel. For more information, see their web-site at [www.nswas.com](http://www.nswas.com).

*For Teacher: Please be aware that administrators from Neve Shalom come to America, and may be available as classroom speakers.*

Review the various attempts at negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis Source: Numerous web-sites, such as [www.gush-shalom.org/media/barak\\_eng.swf](http://www.gush-shalom.org/media/barak_eng.swf), present various proposals with colorful maps.

Discuss Images/ postcards from Zionist Culture and West European Jewry Before the First World War by Michael Berkowitz. Explain to the students how the early Zionist Movement sought to create among Jews a sense of belonging to a Jewish Nation. Ask the students-- if they were trying to sell the idea of nationalism to any group of people, what images would they use? How would they communicate their message?

### ACTIVITIES:

1. Have the students conduct interviews with Jewish Americans that they know of about their feelings about Israel. How do students feel about Israel as a “homeland?”
2. See and discuss The Wonders of Israel, which the Israeli embassy makes available free. While there is much to commend in this resource, it gives misleading background information about Palestinians.

3. Study Israeli archeology efforts. The Israel Museum's Virtual Dig web-site, [http://2002.imj.org.il/arc-tel/m\\_step2.html](http://2002.imj.org.il/arc-tel/m_step2.html) is excellent. Discuss the different layers/ periods of history unearthed during archeological digs in Israel and how different groups may attempt to use this information to lay claim to a particular site or area of land.
4. Read and discuss *Psalmist with a Camera: Photographs of a Biblical Safari* by Gail Rubin (Abbeville Press). Israel's natural areas and wildlife are the subject of many books and resources-- this one being a colorful choice for young people. Rubin, a Jewish American, was on vacation taking the photographs that appear in this book when she was killed during a terrorist attack. For more information on environmental efforts in Israel, or [www.spni.org/e/](http://www.spni.org/e/) or [www.parks.org.il](http://www.parks.org.il) for information about natural parks in Israel.
5. Have the class send e-mails and/or postal letters to Israeli secular Jewish schools/ organizations. These letters may relate to the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict and/or to daily life in Israel-- what the children study at their school, what their hobbies are, etc.
6. Learn about the Maccabiah, the International Jewish sport games for young people at [www.macabbiah.org](http://www.macabbiah.org).
7. Learn basic Israeli folk dancing steps – Musicians in Machar know many, and the JCC and Jewish Federation also have contacts of Israeli dance specialists.
8. Listen to popular Israeli music (such as Ofra Haza) and Arabic music (such as the "Arabic Groove" collection from Putumayo).
9. Learn and sing: The trilingual (Arabic, Hebrew and English) version of the song "Tzena Tzena," We All Want Peace/ Haveynu Sholem Aleykhem (in Hebrew, English and Yiddish) A Song to Peace/ Shir Lashalom (in Hebrew and English) Tomorrow/ Machar (in Hebrew and English) Ani V'ata (in Hebrew and English) Bashana Haba'ah (in Hebrew and English) Hi-ne Ma Tov (in Hebrew) Hevenu Shalom/ Peace Unto You (in Hebrew) Lo Yisa Goy (in Hebrew and English) Zemer Atik (in Hebrew) Mayim (in Hebrew) Dodi Li (in Hebrew) Shalom Chaverim (in Hebrew) Erev Shel Shoshanim (in Hebrew) Na'aseh Shalom (in Hebrew)

### **WATCH AND DISCUSS:**

“Yitchak Rabin: Soldier in the Army Of Peace,” a documentary film. To order, contact Alden Films at 732-462-3522 or visit [www.aldenfilms.com](http://www.aldenfilms.com).

PROMISES, a documentary film in English (2000). The seven children featured in Promises offer a compelling human portrait of the Israeli & Palestinian conflict. The film draws viewers into the hearts and minds of Jerusalem’s children by giving voice to those captured by the region's hatreds as well as those able to transcend them. Call 510-525-8998 to order or by e-mail at [promises@pobox.com](mailto:promises@pobox.com). [www.promisesproject.org](http://www.promisesproject.org).

PALESTINE, in Arabic with English subtitles (produced in 2002 in the Netherlands, directed by Rashid Masharawi). A Palestinian couple, Jabar and Sana, live in a refugee camp near Ramallah. Sana volunteers with the emergency service of the Red Crescent Society. Jaber is unemployed and with no job prospects in the immediate future. He immerses himself in his passion, running a mobile cinema for children throughout the West Bank. One day, an opportunity to organize a screening in the old city of Jerusalem is made available to him. Despite the numerous obstacles that face him, he is determined to keep his commitment. The DC Filmfest showed this film in 2002. Contact them at [ww.filmfestdc.org](http://ww.filmfestdc.org) for more information.

Explain that there has always been many different ways to be a Zionist. Spiritual/cultural Zionism; political Zionism, practical Zionism, synthetic Zionism, Socialist Zionism, Labor Zionism, religious Zionism, revisionist Zionism and general Zionism. After discussing each of these, ask the students to explain which is most compelling to them and why.

Play the "Zionist Congress Game." Students explore the actual issues that were discussed at the 1904 World Zionist Congress -- including the Uganda proposal and Jewish settlements in Palestine. The students develop their own **posters** and slogans based on their affiliation as political, socialist, revisionist or cultural Zionists and Western European Reform Jews and Orthodox Jews.

Read and discuss the seven goals included in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel: arrange them in order of importance:

1. The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the ingathering of the Exiles.
2. It will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all inhabitants
3. It will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel
4. It will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex
5. It will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture.
6. It will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions.
7. It will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

In what ways does it seem that Israel lives up to these goals, and in what ways does it seem it has not lived up to these goals?

## TOPIC 1: THE ORIGINS OF ZIONISM – JEWISH NATIONALISM

Discuss anti-Semitism in Russia and Eastern Europe in the 1880s-90s, and the fact that many Jews began searching for ways to build a new Jewish life in the Diaspora.

Review the history of early Zionism using *The Story of the Jews*, a comic book by Stan Mack.

Zionism is an ideology which expresses the yearning of Jews the world over for their historical homeland - Zion, the Land of Israel. Zionism is the term used to define the international movement for the return of the Jewish people to their original homeland and the resumption of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

The major event that led to the growth of the Zionist movement was the emancipation of Jews in France (1791), followed shortly thereafter by their emancipation in the rest of continental and Central Europe. After having lived for centuries in the confines of Jewish ghettos, Jews living in Western and Central Europe now had a powerful incentive to enter mainstream European society. Jews, who had previously been confined to petty trade and to banking, rapidly rose in academia, medicine, the arts, journalism, and other professions. The accelerated assimilation of Jews into European society radically altered the nature of relations between Jews and non-Jews. On the one hand, Jews had to reconcile traditional Judaism, which for nearly 2,000 years prior to emancipation had developed structures designed to maintain the integrity and separateness of Jewish community life, with a powerful secular culture in which they were now able to participate. On the other hand, many non-Jews, who prior to the emancipation had had little or no contact with Jews, increasingly saw the Jew as an economic threat. The rapid success of many Jews fueled this resentment.

A minority of Jews, who believed that greater assimilation would not alter the hostility of non-Jews, adopted Zionism. According to this view, the Jew would remain an outsider in European society regardless of the liberalism of the age because Jews lacked a state of their own. Jewish statelessness, then, was the root cause of anti-Semitism. The Zionists sought to solve the Jewish problem by creating a Jewish entity outside Europe but modeled after the European nation-state. After more than half a century of emancipation, West European Jewry had become distanced from both the ritual and culture of traditional Judaism. Thus, Zionism in its West European Jewish context envisioned a purely political solution to the Jewish problem: a state of Jews rather than a Jewish state.

For the bulk of European Jewry, however, who resided in Eastern Europe's Pale of Settlement --on the western fringe of the Russian Empire, between the Baltic and the Black seas--there was no emancipation. East European Jewry had lived for centuries in *kehilot* (sing., *kehillah*), semiautonomous Jewish municipal corporations that were supported by wealthy Jews. Life in the *kehilot* was governed by a powerful caste of learned religious scholars who strictly enforced adherence to the Jewish legal code. Many Jews found the parochial conformity enforced by the *kehilot* leadership onerous. As a result, liberal stirring unleashed by the emancipation in the West had an unsettling effect upon the *kehilot* in the East.

By the early nineteenth century, not only was *kehilot* life resented but the tsarist regimes were becoming increasingly absolute. In 1825 Tsar Nicholas I, attempting to centralize control of the



empire and Russify its peoples, enacted oppressive measures against the Jews; he drafted a large number of under-age Jews for military service, forced Jews out of their traditional occupations, such as the liquor trade, and generally repressed the *kehilot*. Facing severe economic hardship and social upheaval, tens of thousands of Jews migrated to the cities, especially Odessa on the Russian coast. In their new urban environments, the restless and highly literate Jews clamored for the liberalization of tsarist rule.

In 1855 the prospects for Russian Jewry appeared to improve significantly when the relatively liberal-minded Tsar Alexander II ascended the throne. Alexander II ended the practice of drafting Jewish youth into the military and granted Jews access, albeit limited, to Russian education institutions and various professions previously closed to them. Consequently, a thriving class of Jewish intellectuals, the *maskalim* (enlightened), emerged in cities like Odessa, just as they had in Western Europe and Central Europe after emancipation. The *maskalim* believed that Tsar Alexander II was ushering in a new age of Russian liberalism which, as in the West, would eventually lead to the emancipation of Russian Jewry.

The hopes of the *maskalim* and of Russian Jewry in general, however, were misplaced. Alexander II was assassinated in 1881, and a severe pogrom ensued that devastated Jewish communities throughout the Pale of Settlement. The new Tsar, Alexander III, enacted oppressive policies against the Jews and denied police protection to those Jews who remained in the countryside. As a result, a floodtide of impoverished Jews entered the cities where they joined various movements that sought to overthrow the tsar.

The openly anti-Semitic policies pursued by the new tsar and the popularity of these policies among large segments of the non Jewish population posed serious political, economic, and spiritual dilemmas for Russian Jewry. On the economic level, the tsar's anti-Semitic policies severely limited Jewish economic opportunities and undermined the livelihood of the Jewish masses. Many impoverished East European Jews, therefore, emigrated from the Russian Empire. Between 1881 and 1914, an estimated 2.5 million Jews left the empire, 2 million of whom settled in the United States.

For many Jews, especially the *maskalim*, however, the pogroms and the anti-Semitism of the new tsar not only meant economic hardship and physical suffering but also a deep spiritual malaise. Before 1881, they had been abandoning the strict confines of the *kehilot* en masse and rebelling against religious orthodoxy, anxiously waiting for the expected emancipation to reach Russia. The 1881 pogroms and their aftermath shattered not only the faith of the *maskalim* in the inevitable liberalization of tsarist Russia but also their belief that the non-Jewish Russian intellectual would take an active role in opposing anti-Semitism. Most of the Russian intelligentsia were either silent during the pogroms or actually supported them. Having lost their faith in God and in the inevitable spread of liberalism, large numbers of Russian Jews were forced to seek new solutions. Many flocked to the revolutionary socialist and communist movements opposing the tsar, while others became involved with the Bund, a cultural society that sought to establish a Yiddish cultural renaissance within Russia.

A smaller but growing number of Jews were attracted to the ancient but newly formulated notion of reconstituting a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. Zionism as it evolved in Eastern Europe, unlike Zionism in the West, dealt not only with the plight of Jews but with the crisis of Judaism. Thus,

despite its secularism, East European Zionism remained attached to the Jewish biblical home in Palestine. It also was imbued with the radical socialist fervor challenging the tsarist regime.

Zionism's reformulation of traditional Judaism was deeply resented by Orthodox Jews, especially the Hasidim. Most East European Jews rejected the notion of a return to the promised land before the appearance of the messiah. They viewed Zionism as a secular European creation that aspired to change the focus of Judaism from devotion to Jewish law and religious ritual to the establishment of a Jewish nation-state.

Zionism synthesized the two goals, liberation and unity, by aiming to free the Jews from hostile and oppressive alien rule and to reestablish Jewish unity by gathering Jewish exiles from the four corners of the world to the Jewish homeland. However, Zionism itself was never a unitary endeavor -- there were constant squabbles and internal political upheavals. And not all Jews were Zionists; for many reasons, large numbers of Jews did not support all or part of the Zionist agenda in any of its forms. But because the Zionists were always in desperate need of money, non-Zionists became irreplaceable as generous givers.

(Reference: Origins of Zionism, US Library of Congress; Helen Chapin Metz, ed. *Israel: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1988.  
<http://countrystudies.us/israel/>)

### **The Dreyfus Affair:**

Alfred Dreyfus, an obscure captain in the French army, came from a Jewish family that had left its native Alsace for Paris when Germany annexed that province in 1871. In 1894 papers discovered in a wastebasket in the office of a German military attaché made it appear that a French military officer was providing secret information to the German government. Dreyfus came under suspicion, probably because he was a Jew and also because he had access to the type of information that had been supplied to the German agent. The army authorities declared that Dreyfus' handwriting was similar to that on the papers. Despite his protestations of innocence he was found guilty of treason in a secret military court-martial, during which he was denied the right to examine the evidence against him. The army stripped him of his rank in a humiliating ceremony and shipped him off to life imprisonment on Devil's Island, a penal colony located off the coast of South America. The political right, whose strength was steadily increasing, cited Dreyfus' alleged espionage as further evidence of the failures of the Republic. Édouard Drumont's right-wing newspaper *La Libre Parole* intensified its attacks on the Jews, portraying this incident as further evidence of Jewish treachery.

Dreyfus seemed destined to die in disgrace. He had few defenders, and anti-Semitism was rampant in the French army. An unlikely defender came to his rescue, motivated not by sympathy for Dreyfus but by the evidence that he had been "railroaded" and that the officer who had actually committed espionage remained in position to do further damage. Lieutenant Colonel Georges Picquart, an unapologetic anti-Semite, was appointed chief of army intelligence two years after Dreyfus was convicted. Picquart, after examining the evidence and investigating the affair in greater detail, concluded that the guilty officer was a Major named Walsin Esterhazy. Picquart

soon discovered, however, that the army was more concerned about preserving its image than rectifying its error, and when he persisted in attempting to reopen the case the army transferred him to Tunisia. A military court then acquitted Esterhazy, ignoring the convincing evidence of his guilt.

“The Affair” might have ended then but for the determined intervention of the novelist Émile Zola, who published his denunciation (“J’accuse!”) of the army cover-up in a daily newspaper. [Note: Zola was found guilty of libeling the army and was sentenced to imprisonment. He fled to England, where he remained until being granted amnesty.] At this point public passion became more aroused than ever, as the political right and the leadership of the Catholic Church — both of which were openly hostile to the Republic — declared the Dreyfus case to be a conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons designed to damage the prestige of the army and thereby destroy France.



Sometime later another military officer discovered that additional documents had been added to the Dreyfus file. He determined that a lieutenant colonel (Hubert Henry) had forged the documents — which seemed to strengthen the case against Dreyfus — in anticipation that Dreyfus would be given a new trial. Immediately after an interrogation the lieutenant colonel committed suicide. In 1899 the army did in fact conduct a new court-martial which again found Dreyfus guilty and condemned him to 10 years detention, although it observed that there were “extenuating circumstances.”

In September 1899, the president of France pardoned Dreyfus, thereby making it possible for him to return to Paris, but he had to wait until 1906 — twelve years after the case had begun — to be exonerated of the charges, after which he was restored to his former military rank.

“The Affair” had inspired moderate republicans, Radicals, and socialists to work together, and the ultimate exoneration of Dreyfus strengthened the Republic, in no small part because of the conduct of its enemies, most notably the army and the Catholic hierarchy. In 1905 the Radical party, emphasizing the role of the Catholic leadership in the Dreyfus case, succeeded in passing legislation separating church and state. (Reference: The Jewish Virtual Library; [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/Dreyfus.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/Dreyfus.html) ·)

## **ACTIVITY:**

Have students do a radio show reporting the Dreyfus Affair, and/or write newspaper articles telling the story of the Dreyfus Affair.

## TOPIC 2: THEODORE HERZL – FIRST WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS

Theodor Herzl, a Viennese journalist who wrote *The Jewish State (Der Judenstaat)* (1896), called for the formation of a Jewish nation state as a solution to the Diaspora and to anti-Semitism. Herzl had been the Paris correspondent of a Viennese newspaper, sent to cover the Dreyfus trial, and was energized by the virulent anti-Semitism he witnessed. In his room in the hotel close to the Place de la Concorde, he wrote feverishly, and as he described in his diary, he felt as if there was a murmur of angels' wings in the room.

In 1897 Herzl called the first World Zionist Congress at Basel, which brought together diverse proto-Zionist groups into one movement. The meeting helped found Zionist organizations in most countries with large Jewish populations. The term Zionism was coined in 1893 by Nathan Birnbaum who played a prominent part at the First Zionist Congress. At the Congress, the Zionist platform was formulated with this mission statement: "Zionism aspires to establish a homeland for the Jewish people, guaranteed by international law, in the land of Israel."

The first World Zionist Congress adopted Hatikvah as its anthem.

**ACTIVITY:** Teach students the song Hatikvah.

200 participants from seventeen countries, 69 of whom were delegates from various Zionist societies and the remainder were individual invitees.

On the second day of its deliberations (August 30), it was stated: "Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law."

The program, which came to be known as the Basel program, set out the goals of the Zionist movement. It was adopted on the following terms:

Zionism aims at establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine. For the attainment of this purpose, the Congress considers the following means serviceable:

1. The promotion of the settlement of Jewish agriculturists, artisans, and tradesmen in Palestine.
2. The federation of all Jews into local or general groups, according to the laws of the various countries.
3. The strengthening of the Jewish feeling and consciousness.
4. Preparatory steps for the attainment of those governmental grants which are necessary to the achievement of the Zionist purpose.

Alternatives were discussed as countries and territories for emigration of the European Jews suffering greatly under Hitler and his madmen including Madagascar, Uganda and several other areas including Cyprus. None of this ever amounted to anything as the British government, with

minor exceptions including Churchill, were aggressively anti-semitic and did little to nothing to help the plight of the Jews. In fact historical documents clearly document that they stalled on this matter contributing to the death of millions. However, to be fair the entire death camp apparatus was outside of allied bombers and troop until mid-1944 and the revelations on Auschwitz were hidden until late 1943.

As an aside Cyprus is next to Greece. And Greece under Nazi control in 1944 deported and murdered their Jewish citizens in Birkenau and Auschwitz. These people suffered eight days in cattle cars before being released and marched into the gas chambers.

Africa was not safe either with many in Palestine fearing for their lives when the Nazis were doing well in North Africa. The Nazis were also active in portions of Africa approaching Uganda...so this would have had it' dangers as well. The best solution in 1942 and 1943 would have been Palestine since the Germans were out of Africa in large during this time period, which would have saved several million people. The real question is how could the British be so cruel and heartless towards the Jews in Europe in 1942, '43 and '44? How could the USA drop the ball so badly in '43 and '44? How could the soviets also not care in '43 and '44? History will not be kind to these facts.

The counterpoint to Herzl's political Zionism was provided by Asher Ginsberg, better known by his pen name Ahad HaAm (One of the People). Ahad HaAm, who was the son of a Hasidic rabbi, was typical of the Russian *maskalim*. In 1886, at the age of thirty, he moved to Odessa with the vague hope of modernizing Judaism. His views on Zionism were rooted in the changing nature of Jewish communal life in Eastern Europe. Ahad HaAm realized that a new meaning to Jewish life would have to be found for the younger generation of East European Jews who were revolting against traditional Jewish practice. Whereas Jews in the West could participate in and benefit from a secular culture, Jews in the East were oppressed. While Herzl focused on the plight of Jews alone, Ahad HaAm was also interested in the plight of Judaism, which could no longer be contained within the limits of traditional religion.

Ahad HaAm's solution was cultural Zionism: the establishment in Palestine of small settlements aimed at reviving the Jewish spirit and culture in the modern world. In the cultural Zionist vision, a small number of Jewish cadres well versed in Jewish culture and speaking Hebrew would settle in Palestine. Ahad HaAm believed that by settling in that ancient land, religious Jews would replace their metaphysical attachment to the Holy Land with a new Hebrew cultural renaissance. Palestine and the Hebrew language were important not because of their religious significance but because they had been an integral part of the Jewish people's history and cultural heritage.

Inherent in the cultural Zionism espoused by Ahad HaAm was a deep mistrust of the gentile world. Ahad HaAm rejected Herzl's notion that the nations of the world would encourage Jews to move and establish a Jewish state. He believed that only through Jewish self-reliance and careful preparation would the Zionist enterprise succeed. Although Ahad HaAm's concept of a vanguard cultural elite establishing a foothold in Palestine was quixotic, his idea of piecemeal settlement in Palestine and the establishment of a Zionist infrastructure became an integral part of the Zionist movement.

### **TOPIC 3: - BALFOUR DECLARATION**

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 (dated 2 November 1917) was a formal statement of policy by the British government stating that

"His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

The declaration was made in a letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron Rothschild (Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild), a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland, a Zionist organization. The letter reflected the position of the British Cabinet, as agreed upon in a meeting on 31 October 1917. It further stated that the declaration is a sign of "sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations."

The statement was issued through the efforts of Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Sokolow, the principal Zionist leaders based in London; as they had asked for the reconstitution of Palestine as "the" Jewish national home the declaration fell short of Zionist expectations.

The "Balfour Declaration" was later incorporated into the Sèvres peace treaty with Turkey and the Mandate for Palestine. The original document is kept at the British Library.

The issuance of the Balfour Declaration greatly increased the immigration of Jews to Palestine. In 1947, Great Britain decided to turn its Mandate over to the United Nations, which, in the same year, adopted Resolution 181, partitioning the land into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. Israel agreed to the partition, but Arab countries and Palestinian Arabs did not, resulting in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the first in a series of wars fought between Israel and the Arab world. It would take thirty years for an Arab country to recognize Israel— through United States mediation during the 1978 Camp David Accords. Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty. Nevertheless, the Arab world reacted angrily to Sadat's separate peace with Israel and refused to endorse or participate in it. The Arab League moved its headquarters from Cairo and most of its members broke ties with Egypt, ushering in nearly a decade of Egyptian isolation." The Balfour Declaration thus had many implications.

(Reference: [www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm](http://www.mideastweb.org/briefhistory.htm) )

## TOPIC 4: - SELECTING A LANGUAGE – DIFFERENT STRANDS OF ZIONISM

The Hebrew language belongs to Canaanite branch of the so-called Semitic family of Afroasiatic languages. It strongly resembles Aramaic and to a lesser extent the South-Central Arabic, sharing many linguistic features with them. For 1,300 years, from 1200 BC until the Bar Kokhba war in 135 AD, Jews spoke Hebrew or, from the end of the Bar Kokhba war until the Middle Ages, Aramaic. For the next sixteen centuries, until the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language from about 1880, Hebrew was employed as a literary and official language and the language of prayer. During the Middle Ages, Hebrew was used as a written language in Rabbinical literature, including in judgments of Halakhah, Responsa books of meditation. In most cases, certainly in the base of Hebrew's revival, 18th and 19th century Europe Hebrew is currently spoken by a community of about 10 million people, of whom about 5 million live in the State of Israel, and the rest in the various countries of the Jewish diaspora. Hebrew is one of the three official languages of Israel, alongside English and Arabic.

A preceding process to the revival of literary Hebrew took place during the Haskalah. Members of this movement, the maskilim sought to distance themselves from Rabbinic Judaism, decided that Hebrew, specifically biblical Hebrew was deserving of fine literature. The Haskalah-era literature written in Hebrew based itself upon two central principles: purism and flowery language. Purism was a principle which dictated that all words used should be of biblical origin (even if the meaning was not biblical). The principle of flowery language was based on bringing full verses and expressions as they were from the Tanakh, and the more flowery a verse was, the more quality it was said to possess. But while it was easy to write stories taking place in the biblical period and dealing with biblical topics, Haskalah-era writers began to find it more and more difficult to write about contemporary topics. This was due mostly to the lack of a broad and modern vocabulary, meaning translating books about science and mathematics or European literature was difficult.

The most famous work originally written in Hebrew is the Bible. Although the texts of the first five books of the Bible were written down relatively late, perhaps as late as 500 BC, it is apparent that some of them date back to as early as the 9th century BC. We can know less, however, about the more ancient Hebrew language of the early texts due to the editing that the texts must have undergone in the process of being written down.

The formal language of the Babylonian Empire was Aramaic (its name is related to "Aram Naharayim", Mesopotamia). The Persian Empire, which had captured Babylonia a few decades later under Cyrus, adopted Aramaic as the official language. Aramaic is also a Semitic language, quite similar to Hebrew. Aramaic has contributed many words and expressions to Hebrew, mainly since it was the language of the Talmud and other religious works.

In addition to numerous words and expressions, Hebrew has also borrowed the Aramaic writing. Although original Aramaic letter forms were derived from the same Phoenician alphabet that was used in ancient Israel, they have changed significantly both in the hands of the Mesopotamians and of the Jews, coming to the forms familiar to us today at around the first century A.D.. Writings of

that era (most notably, some of the Dead Sea Scrolls found in Qumran) are written in a script very similar to the "square" one still used today.

Hebrew was revived as a spoken language by the efforts of a single man, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922). Ben-Yehuda, previously an ardent revolutionary in Tsarist Russia, had joined the Jewish national movement and emigrated to Palestine in 1881. Motivated by the surrounding ideals of renovation and rejection of the diaspora lifestyle, Ben-Yehuda set out to develop a new language that the Jews could use for everyday communication.

For many East European and Russian Jews, Yiddish was the spoken language, and the written language was Hebrew for liturgical purposes and the language of the broader culture – but depending where Jews lived, Russian, German, French, Polish or Czech were used for secular purposes.

The revival of the Hebrew language in practice advanced in two parallel strains: The revival of written-literary Hebrew and the revival of spoken Hebrew. In the first few decades, the two processes were not connected to one another and even occurred in different places: Literary Hebrew was renewed in Europe's cities, whereas spoken Hebrew developed mainly in Palestine. The two movements began to merge only in the beginning of the 1900s, and an important point in this process was the immigration of Haim Nahman Bialik to Palestine in 1924.

“Should You Wish to Know the Source” by Haim Nahman Bialik

Should you wish to know the Source,  
From which your brothers drew...  
Their strength of soul...  
Their comfort, courage, patience, trust,  
And iron might to bear their hardships  
And suffer without end or measure?

And should you wish to see the Fort  
Wherein your fathers refuge sought.  
And all their sacred treasures hid,  
The refuge that has still preserved  
Your nation's soul intact and pure  
And when despised, and scorned, and scoffed,  
Their faith they did not shame?

And should you wish to see and know  
Their Mother, faithful, loving, kind  
Who...sheltered them and shielded them.  
And lulled them on her lap to sleep?



If you, my brother, know not  
Then enter now the House of God,  
The House of study, old and gray,  
Throughout the scorching summer days  
Throughout the gloomy winter nights,  
At morning midday or at eve...  
And there you may still behold,  
A group of Jews from the exile who bore the yoke of its burden who forget their toil,  
through a worn out page of the Talmud.

And then your heart shall guess the truth,  
That you have touched the sacred ground  
Of a great people's house of life.  
And that your eyes do gaze upon  
The treasure of a nation's soul.

Read and discuss the following poem by Shlomit Segal (explain that the Chmelniecki massacre took place in Eastern Europe where lots of Jewish people were killed. Ask the students what they think is the meaning of the poem:

I tell a story in which things happened differently:

No Romans conquered Jerusalem

No exile of the Jewish people

No Crusades

No Chmelniecki massacres

No genocide of one third of my people in Hitler's camps

No wandering nation

No blood and fire return

My people were never forced to leave their homeland

So none ever returned to a land inhabited by another people.

## **TOPIC 5: HOW LAND WAS ACQUIRED FROM THE ARABS**

Explain that many Israeli settlers were extremely religious Jews who feel that they have a God-given right to all of the land described in the Bible as belonging to Jews thousands of years ago and that other settlers are not religious, and instead are recent immigrants to Israel who don't have much money and can't afford as easily to live within Israel (the Israeli government assists some of them in living in the settlements). The fact that separate roads exist solely for Jewish settlers' travel, which Palestinians must wait for hours, sometimes days at check-points along different roads should also be mentioned, as well as water usage (some Palestinian wells go dry while Jewish settlers in the same area have swimming pools). B'tselem, the Israeli Human Rights organization, at [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org) maintains statistics regarding water usage and other aspects of the settlements. Ask the students to imagine being one of the many Jewish children who grow up in the settlements and to imagine being a Palestinian child living in a village that Jewish settlers have built within.

Palestine is the name given by Arabs to an area in the Middle East. Palestine was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire in 1517 and remained under the rule of the Turks until World War One. Towards the end of this war, the Turks were defeated by the British forces led by General Allenby. In the peace talks that followed the end of the war, parts of the Ottoman Empire were handed over to the French to control and parts were handed over to the British – including Palestine. Britain governed this area under a League of Nations mandate from 1920 to 1948. To the Arab population who lived there, it was their homeland and had been promised to them by the Allies for help in defeating the Turks by the McMahon Agreement - though the British claimed the agreement gave no such promise.

The same area of land had also been promised to the Jews (as they had interpreted it) in the Balfour Declaration and after 1920, many Jews migrated to the area and lived with the far more numerous Arabs there. At this time, the area was ruled by the British and both Arabs and Jews appeared to live together in some form of harmony in the sense that both tolerated then existence of the other. There were problems in 1921 but between that year and 1928/29, the situation stabilised.

The main problem after the war for Palestine was perceived beliefs. The Arabs had joined the Allies to fight the Turks during the war and convinced themselves that they were due to be given what they believed was their land once the war was over.

Clashing with this was the belief among all Jews that the Balfour Declaration had promised them the same piece of territory.

In August 1929, relations between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine broke down. The focal point of this discontent was Jerusalem.

The primary cause of trouble was the increased influx of Jews who had emigrated to Palestine. The number of Jews in the region had doubled in ten years

The city of Jerusalem also had major religious significance for both Arabs and Jews and over 200 deaths occurred in just four days in August (23rd to the 26th).

Arab nationalism was whipped up by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haji Amin al-Husseini. He claimed that the number of Jews threatened the very lifestyle of the Arabs in Palestine.

The violence that occurred in August 1929 did not deter Jews from going to Palestine. In 1931, 4,075 Jews emigrated to the region. In 1935, it was 61,854. The Mufti estimated that by the 1940's there would be more Jews in Palestine than Arabs and that their power in the area would be extinguished on a simple numerical basis.

In May 1936, more violence occurred and the British had to restore law and order using the military. Thirty four soldiers were killed in the process. The violence did not stop. In fact, it became worse after November 1937.

For the Arabs there were two enemies – the Jews and the British authorities based in Palestine via their League mandate.

For the Jews there were also two enemies – the Arabs and the British.

Therefore, the British were pushed into the middle of a conflict they had seemingly little control over as the two other sides involved were so driven by their own beliefs. In an effort to end the violence, the British put a quota on the number of Jews who could enter Palestine in any one year. They hoped to appease the Arabs in the region but also keep on side with the Jews by recognising that Jews could enter Palestine – but in restricted numbers. They failed on both counts.

Both the Jews and the Arabs continued to attack the British. The Arabs attacked because they believed that the British had failed to keep their word after 1918 and because they believed that the British were not keeping the quotas agreed to as they did little to stop illegal landings into Palestine made by the Jews.

The Jews attacked the British authorities in Palestine simply because of the quota which they believed was grossly unfair. The British had also imposed restrictions on the amount of land Jews could buy in Palestine.

An uneasy truce occurred during the war when hostilities seemed to cease. This truce, however, was only temporary.

Many Jews had fought for the Allies during World War Two and had developed their military skills as a result. After the war ended in 1945, these skills were used in acts of terrorism. The new Labour Government of Britain had given the Jews hope that they would be given more rights in the area. Also in the aftermath of the Holocaust in Europe, many throughout the world were sympathetic to the plight of the Jews at the expense of the Arabs in Palestine.

However, neither group got what they were looking for. The British still controlled Palestine. As a result, the Jews used terrorist tactics to push their claim for the area. Groups such as the Stern Gang

and Irgun Zvai Leumi attacked the British that culminated in the destruction of the British military headquarters in Palestine – the King David Hotel. Seemingly unable to influence events in Palestine, the British looked for a way out.

In 1947, the newly formed United Nations accepted the idea to partition Palestine into a zone for the Jews (Israel) and a zone for the Arabs (Palestine). With this United Nations proposal, the British withdrew from the region on May 14th 1948. Almost immediately, Israel was attacked by Arab nations that surrounded in a war that lasted from May 1948 to January 1949. Palestinian Arabs refused to recognize Israel and it became the turn of the Israeli government itself to suffer from terrorist attacks when fedayeen (fanatics) from the Palestinian Arabs community attacked Israel. Such attacks later became more organized with the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). To the Palestinian Arabs, the area the Jews call Israel, will always be Palestine. To the Jews it is Israel. There have been very few years of peace in the region since 1948.

**ATTACHED:** For Palestinian perspectives read: “How Did the Zionists Get Their Land” by Dr. Ullah Jaffor – a person whose parent, grandparent lost land to Zionists. Does he leave any information out? (The First Aliyah was in the 1880’s, the first Jewish kibbutz Daganiah was established in 1909, the same year as the city Tel Aviv) How many Jews were in Israel before Theodore Herzl’s attempt to obtain land? Was there ever a time in history when there were no Jews in Palestine? Were Arabs paid for their land? Does that make a difference? How many Arabs lived in Palestine in 1947? Does the UN vote to give Israel their land justify it?

**ATTACHED:** Also read: “Land Ownership in Palestine/Israel” By Nasser Abufarha

See: [http://www.zionism-israel.com/maps/Palestine\\_Land\\_Ownership.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/maps/Palestine_Land_Ownership.htm) - A land ownership map from 1942.

The issue of land ownership is crucial to understanding the evolution of Zionism in Palestine and the genesis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The issues surrounding the Land Question are not simple.

The two major Palestinian claims are 1) that Zionists were systematically dispossessing Arab fellahin in the period 1917-1948 and 2) by 1948, the Zionists had purchased less than 8% of the land of Palestine, while the Arabs "owned" about 45% and the rest was government land.

It appears that while Zionists had purchased about 6-10% of land, depending on how it is figured, the actual share of Arab holdings may have been much lower than is stated and the share of government land was much higher. There was never a systematic survey of Palestinian lands. The inability of Zionists to acquire land was due in part to the fact that the mandate government violated the conditions of the mandate and tended to make government land available at cut rate prices to Arabs rather than to Zionist purchasers. The high figure of Arab ownership was apparently generated by counting all village and town land and other dubious claims as "Arab," though under the terms of the mandate, Jews and the Zionist organization should have had a share in ownership of public land. None of this land was ever purchased by any Arab, but it was assigned

as "Arab land." Arab "ownership" was further inflated by chaotic registration policies that legitimized squatting after the fact, and by counting land as "owned" when in fact it had been leased. Most of the land in Palestine registered in the name of individuals was not held privately, but was registered as "Miri" holdings, that gave the user the right to the usufruct of the land. The land itself remained property of the government. If the land lay fallow for three years, it should have reverted to the government. There was an unknown but large area of such unused land that was not reverted to government use because of the wishes of mandate personnel to please Palestinian Arabs.

The Arab Fellah had been steadily displaced or "dispossessed" from the land by factors other than Zionist purchases. These included gradual industrialization and urbanization which was taking place throughout the Middle East and was accelerated by Zionist settlement, as well as the poor administration and unfair nature of archaic Ottoman land laws. The number of landless Arabs was apparently deliberately exaggerated in the Hope Simpson report by misrepresentation of statistics.

The Jewish Agency and other Jewish organizations and individuals had purchased perhaps a third or even half of the available arable agricultural land in what would become Israel by 1948.

An exact assessment of the distribution of real ownership in the above categories is probably impossible. Land registration in Palestine can charitably be described as chaotic under both the Ottoman and British regimes. In 1925, three quarters of the land in Palestine was "held" by unregistered title. Supposedly, this was because fellahin were unwilling to register title, because under the Ottoman law, it would obligate them for military service, as well as taxes. To an unknown extent, this also reflected encroachments and squatting on various forms of government land. While much of this land was unused, much of it was used in fact by nomadic or sedentary Bedouin, who never bothered to file any land claim, so that they would not need to pay taxes, and because they were, paradoxically, afraid that once registered, the land could be alienated from their ownership through marriage of daughters, owners dying intestate etc. In general, Ottoman administration was such that residents tried to avoid all contact with authorities whenever possible, fearing conscription, taxes and other eventualities.

The British never managed to overcome this chaos. They considered that land was "owned" for tax purposes if someone could be found to pay the taxes, and the figure of 45 % Arab "ownership" is based on this calculation, including village commons and other areas that were used for cultivation as well as unregistered holdings of different type, land that was "acquired" by squatting etc. Most of it, except for a tiny portion of holdings, was not owned in the conventional sense even if it was registered. The proliferation of abandoned land in Palestine had long been noted by travelers. Land that was abandoned reverted to the state.

The only exact records of ownership and transfer of ownership that existed, insofar as this was possible without accurate information, were the Land Books of Jewish settlements, which were legally recognized by the Mandate government in 1926, in the framework of their attempts to regularize land registration.

## TOPIC 6: - ISRAELI GEOGRAPHY

The geography of Israel is very diverse, with desert conditions in the south and snow-capped mountains in the north. Israel is bounded to the north by Lebanon, the northeast by Syria, the east by Jordan and the West Bank, and to the southwest by Egypt, with this border also being the border between Asia and Africa. To the west of Israel is the Mediterranean Sea which makes up the majority of Israel's 273 kilometers (170 mi) coastline and the Gaza strip. A small window onto the Red Sea exists in the south. The south of Israel is dominated by the Negev desert covering some 12,000 square kilometres (4,633 sq mi), more than half of the country's total land area. Israel has limited natural resources.

See "Geography of Israel," from the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website

As a class, calculate the approximate area of Israel and ask what U.S. state would be closest to Israel's size? (Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey). Find the following Israeli cities on the map: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Safed, Netanya, Eilat. Research who lives in each location, what are their lives like, etc.

### Geography questions:

1. What is the southern-most Israeli city that also borders the Red Sea? (Eilat)
2. What is the capital of Israel and a city that is very important to Muslims, Christians and Jews? (Jerusalem)
3. Where is Dizengoff Square? (Tel Aviv)
4. What city is famous for Jewish mysticism? (Safed)
5. What is the lowest point on earth? (the Dead Sea)
6. What city has the largest population in Israel? (Jerusalem)
7. What country borders Israel to the east? (Jordan)
8. Where is the American embassy in Israel? (Tel Aviv)
9. Which city is Israel's largest sea port? (Haifa)
10. Which city is located between Tel Aviv and Haifa and is a major tourist attraction, known for its pleasant climate? (Netanya)
11. Connected to geography, discuss the concept of Israeli settlements. Why are the Israeli settlements located outside Israel's borders?

NOTE: There are many maps of Israel online including relief maps. It is also interesting to explore how Israel's map has changed between 1947 and today, due to wars and treaties.

Maps online: [http://geography.about.com/od/israelmaps/Israel\\_Maps.htm](http://geography.about.com/od/israelmaps/Israel_Maps.htm)

## TOPIC 7: ISRAELI CULTURE

Israeli culture is a blend of a modern democracy, with a western and eastern population and Arabic/Middle Eastern foods, setting and dynamics. It continues to be a land of immigrants, with many political and societal issues. It is a country that has been war torn since its inception, and a land that has evolved from a desert and farms to bustling cities and modern technology. There are religious and non-religious Jews in Israel, and Israel remains a cultural and religious locale for Muslims and Christians as well. Possibilities for studying Israeli culture are films of Israel, photographs of Israel, videos of life in Israel, speakers and museums. Israeli dance and music may be introduced as well as organizing an Israeli pot luck dinner, or lunch.

Study and discuss what schools are like in Israel. Explain that there are seven different types:

1. Mamlachti, public secular schools for Jewish children with no religious studies
2. Mamlachti Dati, public Jewish religious schools
3. Tali, public secular schools for Jewish children with classes offered in Jewish studies
4. Atma'i, independent, ultra-Orthodox alternative schools
5. Ma'ayan Hahinuch Hatorani, schools for Edot Hamizrah children, Jewish students from Eastern countries
6. Aravi, schools for Arab children
7. Druzi, schools for Druze children

Explain that at the age of 18, all Jewish Israeli citizens (female and male) are required to serve for three years in the Israeli army (the IDF). Orthodox Jews are exempt from army service, as are Arabs living within Israel. Over the past few years, some Jewish Israeli young people have come forward as "conscientious objectors" and have refused to serve in the army. Others (504 as of November, 2002), called "refuseniks" have refused to serve in the army so long as Israel maintains its illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They are morally opposed to serving in an "army of occupation." More information can be found at [www.newprofile.org](http://www.newprofile.org) and [www.seruv.org](http://www.seruv.org).

## **TOPIC 8: KIBBUTZIM/MOSHAVIM**

Discuss the concept of a "kibbutz." Explain that while only a minority of Israelis live on kibbutzim, they were very popular in the early days of the country and expressed the utopian ideals of many of the newly arrived Jewish immigrants. Hold a mock kibbutz meeting. Decide how the meeting should be run. How should decisions be made? Select a couple of issues in advance such as curfew for young people to discuss at the meeting.

A kibbutz is a collective community in Israel that was traditionally based on agriculture. Today, farming has been partly supplanted by other economic branches, including industrial plants and high-tech enterprises. Kibbutzim began as utopian communities, a combination of socialism and Zionism. In recent decades, many kibbutzim have been privatized and changes have been made in the communal lifestyle. Originally, people who chose to live on a kibbutz worked together, ate together and raised their children together. They did not own personal property and shared equally in the wealth of the kibbutz.

A moshav is also a cooperative but has more independence for the people. Each family owns their own farmland. They own their own homes. Purchasing and selling are both done cooperatively. At a moshav, people make their own decisions, cook in their own kitchens, and eat at their own tables. There are a number of villages grouped around a central town in a moshav. The town collects and gives out the produce and furnishes the needed equipment and materials. The town is the administrative center. Within this central town there is a secondary school, a concert hall, a theater, and classes in cultural subjects for adults.

While the kibbutz and the moshav are both cooperatives there is a marked difference, especially in the independence of the people involved.



## TOPIC 9: POLITICS

Visit the web-site of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs at [ww.mfa.gov.il/mfa/home.asp](http://ww.mfa.gov.il/mfa/home.asp).

Politics of Israel take place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic republic, whereby the Prime Minister of Israel is the head of government, and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in the Knesset. The Judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. The political system of the State of Israel and its main principles are set out in 11 Basic Laws. Israel does not have a constitution.

The Knesset is Israel's parliament and is located in Jerusalem. Its 120 members are elected to 4-year terms. The Knesset enacts laws, supervises government activities, and is empowered to elect or remove the President of the State or State Comptroller from office.

There are currently five prominent political parties, each with more than ten seats in the Knesset.

The president selects the prime minister as the party leader most able to form a government, based on the number of parliament seats his or her coalition has won. After the president's selection, the prime minister has forty-five days to form a government.

The Judicial branch is an independent branch of the government, including secular and religious courts for the various religions in Israel. Some issues of family law (marriage and divorce in particular) fall either under the jurisdiction of religious courts or under parallel jurisdiction of those and the state's family courts.

### **Prime Ministers of the last ten years:**

1. Benjamin Netanyahu (1996–1999)
2. Ehud Barak (1999–2001)
3. Ariel Sharon (2001–2006)
4. Ehud Olmert (2006–2009)
5. Benjamin Netanyahu (2009–present)

### **ACTIVITY:**

1. Have students choose an Israeli leader and bring in pictures, information about the leader and what happened during his or her term.

Major issues in Israeli political life include:

- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Arab-Israeli conflict
- The relationships between Jewish religious movements
- The nature of the state of Israel; (e.g. in what ways should it represent Judaism and in what ways should it represent secular democracy?)
- The economy, and trade issues with other nations.

## TOPIC 10: PEACE MOVEMENT

Begin the section on peace and justice organizing by asking the students what they think the following quote (from 1990) by Veronika Cohen, a Jewish Israeli Peace Activist means. Ask them whether they've ever felt this way about something: When people ask me, "Are you optimistic or pessimistic?" My answer is "I'm neither, I'm working."

Explain that most of the peace and justice activists in Israel, Palestine and the U.S. are involved because they care about Israel and Palestine and want to see peaceful futures for both peoples. Many of them risk their own lives and/ or careers in order to work for justice. Explain that sometimes the media/ press does not cover the work of these organizations, so it is up to us to research and learn more about their accomplishments.

Ask the students what other reasons there might be for learning about these groups (gives us hope & dispels the myth that everyone's given up on peace, etc.

Ask the students to think of a time when they've had to negotiate for something. Who were they negotiating with? Did they get what they wanted (why/ why not)? What went into their decision as to whether to accept or not accept an offer? Did one of the parties involved in the negotiations seem to have more power than the other (i.e. if they were negotiating with their parents, they and their parents do not come to the negotiating table from a place of equal power)? Relate this discussion to the Israeli/Palestinian peace process.

The Israeli Peace Now movement, "Shalom Achshav," was established in 1978, when 348 Israeli senior reserve army officers and combat soldiers came together to urge their government to sign a peace treaty with Egypt. They knew then what remains true today – real security for Israel can be achieved only through peace. In the years since its establishment Shalom Achshav has worked for the achievement of peace agreements between Israel and all her Arab neighbors, and has come to be recognized, both in Israel and abroad, as Israel's leading grassroots, Zionist movement. Best known for mobilizing mass demonstrations, for many years Shalom Achshav has also been the only group conducting comprehensive monitoring of Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank (and the Gaza Strip, until Israel's 2004 evacuation of Gaza settlements). Shalom Achshav is widely cited in the Israeli and international media as the foremost authority on settlements.

Discuss the concept of Rodef Shalom-- seeking Peace. Ask students for examples of times when they have helped their friends or family members settle their disagreements, or when you avoid unnecessary arguments at home. Explain that when they act in this way they are preparing themselves to become more skilled peacemakers. Ask the students to consider additional ways/ venues that would allow them to practice these skills and write a letter to themselves

Create and send artwork to decorate Israeli and Palestinian peace centers and community organizations as a show of solidarity.

**Belief Continuum:** Discuss the following concepts, eliciting the students' opinions:

- Having a Jewish state is necessary for Jewish people to survive
- Every Jew should live in Israel
- Every Jew should visit Israel, send money to Israel and otherwise support the state's existence
- If you're Jewish and you're outwardly critical of Israel than you're contributing to anti-Jewish oppression in the world
- Palestinians have a right to their own state
- The United States government should continue to provide Israel with substantial financial support and weapons
- It is possible to live a fulfilling life as a Jewish person outside of Israel
- The Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem are necessary; are wrong.

#### **WATCH AND DISCUSS:**

**IF YOU MAKE IT POSSIBLE:** Documentary Portraits of Middle East Peacemakers (1996). Profiling Israelis and Palestinians who have devoted their lives to achieving non-violence and coexistence in the Middle East, this film presents a perspective not seen in television news. Examining the unique lives, viewpoints, and character traits of these Middle East peacemakers, the film is a study of heroism and strength. Order from the National Center for Jewish Film at 781-899-7044 or by e-mail at ncjf@brandeis.edu. [www.jewishfilm.org](http://www.jewishfilm.org).

**STRUGGLE FOR PEACE: ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS** by Elizabeth Fernea (1992). It shows Israeli peace groups like Women in Black and Yesh Gvul, and Palestinian-Israeli dialogue groups at work. Participants explain why they are committed, and why it is hard to accomplish their aims. The video is available from First Run/Icarus Films in New York.

**PEACE OF MIND**, a documentary film in English (1999). Seven Palestinian and Israeli youth joined forces to produce this documentary film that marks the first time that youth from both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict have come together to produce a documentary. Call 800-343-5540 to order. [www.global-action.org](http://www.global-action.org).

Visit Peace Middle East Dialog Group at [www.ariga.com/peacewatch/deceng.htm](http://www.ariga.com/peacewatch/deceng.htm). Compare and contrast different organizations listed as links on the Jews for Peace in Palestine and Israel (JPPI-based in Washington, DC) web-site [www.jppei.org/links.html](http://www.jppei.org/links.html).

Students should go to this site and pick a few groups that are of interest to them and then pick one which they find most compelling. They should bring in a copy of pages from the website and be prepared to discuss why they chose this particular group.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

David J. Albert at the University of Texas- Austin has compiled an extensive bibliography of "Resources for Peace Activists on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict and the Peace Process." [www.junity.org](http://www.junity.org) and click on resources.

The Middle East Children's Alliance's [www.mecaforpeace.org](http://www.mecaforpeace.org)

[www.miftah.org](http://www.miftah.org) is the website for the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialog and Democracy.

[www.palestinechronicle.com](http://www.palestinechronicle.com) (news and commentary)

[www.palestinecenter.org](http://www.palestinecenter.org) (The Jerusalem Center & The Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, which together provide humanitarian relief and information on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Based in Washington, DC)

MERIP, the Middle East Research and Information Project, based in Washington, DC posts numerous timely op-eds and articles, as well as writing its own reports.

[www.merip.org/newspaper\\_opeds](http://www.merip.org/newspaper_opeds).

Books, Films and CDs:

Shalom Chaver, two-volume CD set that came out after Rabin was killed.

Habibi by Naomi Shihab Nye: Fourteen year old Liyana and her family move from St. Louis to a new home situated between Jerusalem and the Palestinian village where her father was born. She knows little of her family's Arabic heritage and feels strange among her relatives, not understanding their culture nor their language. When she meets Omer, a Jewish boy, there is an instant bond between them but they must deal with the on-going tensions between Jews and Palestinians. (271 pages).

PBS' Bill Moyers interviewed Nye in the fall of 2002 and some of her poems, as well as additional information is available at [www.pbs.org/now/arts/nyepoems1.html](http://www.pbs.org/now/arts/nyepoems1.html).

Shalom, Salaam, Peace by Howard Bogot: Presented in English, Arabic and Hebrew, the book is a poem that asks what is peace? The last two pages have quotes from children in the Middle East who describe what peace is for them. Special addition available for educational use with a leader's guide: [www.ccarnet.org](http://www.ccarnet.org).

Turbulent Times, Prophetic Dreams: Art From Israeli and Palestinian Children by Harold Koplewicz: children ages 10-12 offer a collection of images and drawings that contrast war and peace and the children's thoughts about both (87 pages).

The Secret Grove by Barbara Cohen: Two young boys, one Israeli and the other Jordanian meet one afternoon in an orange grove and form a secret friendship. Published by the UAHC Press.

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

The material is 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 Jerris – Rabbi for Society of Humanistic Judaism

**Humanism:** A perspective common to a wide range of ethical stances that attaches importance to human dignity, concerns, and capabilities, particularly rationality. Although the word has many senses, its meaning comes into focus when contrasted to the supernatural or to appeals to authority. Since the nineteenth century, Humanism has been associated with an anti-clericalism inherited from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophies. Twenty-first century Humanism tends to strongly endorse human rights, including reproductive rights, gender equality, social justice, and the separation of church and state. The term covers organized non-theistic religions, secular humanism, and a humanistic life stance.

### **SELF-RELIANCE**

- Not looking outside the natural world or the realm of humanity to address concerns.
- Unable to confirm or deny existence of an intervening supernatural authority, live according to what is known.
- Jewish history teaches the danger of relying on the kindness of fate.
- We need to rely on ourselves and others.
- Embracing self-reliance provides a strong guide for behavior in all aspects of our lives.

### **SELF-RESPONSIBILITY**

- Self-responsibility flows from self-reliance.
- Self-responsibility means accepting responsibility for our behavior and its consequences.
- 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.
- Integrity is harmony between what we think and feel and say and do. (Paraphrased from Rabbi Sherwin Wine). This is a liberating facet of Humanistic Judaism and allows us to live as Jews and as a human populating this planet, authentically.
- Beliefs and behavior are consistent.

## **IDENTITY/CONNECTION**

- We value...
- Jewish identity, connecting to the Jewish people and are attached to its culture. Otherwise, we would be secular humanists.
- Celebrating Jewish holidays and life cycle events- they are meaningful.
- Educating ourselves and our children about being Jewish, which enhances our identity and connection to other Jews.
- Participating in the greater Jewish community is positive and important.

## **DIGNITY**

- Dignity creates a focus and purpose to life.
- Dignity includes the behaviors of autonomy, competency, self-respect and respect for others.
- Achieving dignity is a life-long process.
- Dignity follows a path consistent with espoused values.
- Dignity gives one control over the direction of their life.
- Dignity means making ethical decisions that consider the consequences of our behavior on yourself and others.

## **COMMUNITY**

People need.....

- to associate with others
- to seek support in times of difficulty



- 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.

## **FIFTH GRADE TIMELINE: From 1492 when Jews were expelled from Spain to 1933 when Hitler took over Germany**

15th century

1478

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain institute the Spanish Inquisition.

1486

First Jewish prayer book published in Italy.

1488–1575

Rabbi Yosef Karo spends 20 years compiling the Beit Yosef, an enormous guide to Jewish law. He then writes a more concise guide, the Shulkhan Arukh, that becomes the standard law guide for the next 400 years. Born in Spain, Yosef Karo lives and dies in Safed.

1488

Obadiah ben Abraham, commentator on the Mishnah, arrives in Jerusalem and marks a new epoch for the Jewish community.

1492

The Alhambra Decree: Approximately 200,000 Jews are expelled from Spain, The expelled Jews relocate to the Netherlands, Turkey, Arab lands, and Judea; some eventually go to South and Central America. However, most emigrate to Poland. In later centuries, more than 50% of Jewish world population lived in Poland. Many Jews remain in Spain after publicly converting to Christianity, becoming Crypto-Jews.

1492

Bayezid II of the Ottoman Empire issued a formal invitation to the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal and sent out ships to safely bring Jews to his empire.

1493

Jews expelled from Sicily. As many as 137,000 exiled.

1496

Jews expelled from Portugal and from many German cities.

[edit] 16th century

1501

King Alexander of Poland readmits Jews to Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

1516

Ghetto of Venice established, the first Jewish ghetto in Europe. Many others follow.

1525–1572

Rabbi Moshe Isserles (The Rema) of Kraków writes an extensive gloss to the Shulkhan Arukh called the Mappah, extending its application to Ashkenazi Jewry.

1534

King Sigismund I of Poland abolishes the law that required Jews to wear special clothes.

1534

First Yiddish book published, in Poland.

1534–1572

Isaac Luria ("the Arizal") teaches Kabbalah in Jerusalem and (mainly) Safed to select disciples. Some of those, such as Ibn Tebul, Israel Sarug and mostly Chaim Vital, put his teachings into writing. While the Sarugian versions are published shortly afterwards in Italy and Holland, the Vitalian texts remain in manuscript for as long as three centuries.

1547

First Hebrew Jewish printing house in Lublin.

1550

Moses ben Jacob Cordovero founds a Kabbalah academy in Safed.

1567

First Jewish university Yeshiva was founded in Poland.

1577

A Hebrew printing press is established in Safed, the first press in Palestine and the first in Asia.

1580–1764

First session of the Council of Four Lands (Va'ad Arba' Aratzot) in Lublin, Poland. 70 delegates from local Jewish kehillot meet to discuss taxation and other issues important to the Jewish community.

## Life in the Shtetl

by Leon Weliczker Wells

I, Leon, the son of Abraham, was born before World War II in a small town, a "shtetl," in southern Poland in an area known as Galicia. I don't know how long my parents or grandparents lived there, but the tales told go back many generations. The first Jewish settlement dates back to the eleventh century. My father's family came from Sokal and my mother's from Krystynopol, a town forty kilometers south of Sokal. Our small town, Stojanow, had about a thousand Jews and an equal number of Poles and Ukrainians. Almost all of the Jews resided in the center of town, while the others lived out in the country. The Poles were Roman Catholic and the Ukrainians were primarily Greek Orthodox according to the practices of the Russian church. Religion took precedence over nationality. The Jews kept small shops and were artisans such as shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, and watchmakers. The Poles and the Ukrainians were mostly farmers.

In previous times, before the downfall of the aristocracy, the *Szlachta*, who were the sole large land owners, prevented even Poles from the lower classes from joining their privileged group. However, if a Jew converted to Christianity, he automatically could become an "aristocrat." The other Poles and Ukrainians worked like slaves on the large estates owned by the *Szlachta*; they and their families were considered part of the property. When reform came the farms were subdivided and these serfs were given parcels of the large estates. The Jews who originally came to Poland from western countries did not have an agricultural background. This, combined with their lifestyle and religious practices, resulted in their settling in town.

Twice a week the farmers gathered at the market in the center of town to sell their farm products. While they were there they shopped for necessities like salt, sugar, matches, kerosene for their lamps, tobacco, dry goods, and other items they did not produce themselves. Most of the Jews lived in wooden houses behind their storefronts. These marketing transactions were the only contact that they had with the Polish population.

In addition to farming, the Poles were also employed as policemen, teachers, and mailmen, and held various other municipal and federal jobs. Veterans of the Polish Independence Army were given priority in obtaining these posts. Because the Jews were a very small minority among these veterans, they were hardly represented in these jobs. Even the small minority of Jewish veterans who had fought for Polish independence preferred to get government licenses for tobacco and liquor stores, instead of government jobs, because these licenses allowed them to keep the Sabbath and other Jewish holidays. At that time, Poland still had a six-day work week, and the official rest day was Sunday. By owning tobacco and liquor stores the Jews continued the traditional Jewish practice of keeping small shops. This arrangement suited everybody and resulted in the Jews becoming the middle class. We Jews never analyzed why we started to live in the center of town and why we were not farmers. No one thought about it. That's how it was. Life was to be lived and not examined. We were neither the rich landowners nor the small, poor farmers. We looked down on the small farmer, whom we called *Cham*, which was an old traditional way of saying *Am Haaretz* (people of the earth), which to us meant simpletons.

The gentiles called the Jews *Parach*, a very negative expression which means an oozing, bleeding scab.

Jewish boys often had these crusts on their heads, possibly because their hair was close-cropped or perhaps because genetic factors weakened their ability to resist this scourge. Small towns were practically inbred, with cousins marrying cousins. The whole small shtetl was related.

We lived in a self-imposed ghetto without walls. The Jewish religion fostered our living together in groups which separated us from non-Jews. The women, in order to have kosher food for their families, had to patronize religious Jewish stores, preferably where the owner was known for his piety. Before the days of refrigeration, the Jewish woman went daily to the religious slaughterer, the *schochet*, to get her chicken slaughtered. Married women had to attend the ritual bath every month after their menses. They also had to bring their boys to a Jewish "cheder" to learn the basic reading of the Hebrew prayer book. The men had to pray with a "minyan," a quorum of ten Jewish men, whenever possible. Jews did not travel a great distance to get together for prayers on the Sabbath and other religious holidays, as it was forbidden to travel on such days. Thus the social life of the Christian, which centered around coming to church on Sunday by horse and buggy was not a Jewish prerogative. After prayers Jews couldn't socialize at the local tavern because they were forbidden to handle money on Saturday. Even playing with a ball was forbidden on this day. All of these restrictions caused the Jews to live in ghetto-like societies so that they could maintain their Jewish way of life.

Although the community was divided into three parts—Polish, Jewish, and Ukrainian—there were only two societies for us Jews: Yiddish and *goish* (gentiles). We had virtually no contact with the outside world, surely not social contact, as our interests and responsibilities were completely different from the *goish's*. From early childhood the farmers' children were involved in farm projects, helping their parents graze the cows and sheep, feeding and riding horses, and living with dogs and cats in their homes, whereas we were completely estranged from animal life. Our religion forbade us to have animals in our homes. So even in our childhood play we were different. We young Jewish boys did not take part in any sports as this was considered *goish*.

In the center of town there were three synagogues: two of them were *Beith Hamedrash* (houses of study) and one was a shul (house of worship). There was also a Catholic church and a Greek Orthodox church called a *cerkiew*. We Jews even tried to avoid passing a church, and if that was impossible, we muttered an appropriate curse as we hurried by. Although all these houses of worship were in the center of town, they were located in different sections; the three Jewish prayer houses and the ritual bath--the *mikveh*--were near each other.

There was a difference between the *Beith Hamedrash* and the shul. Although they were all prayer houses, the shul had no "mezuzah" on the entrance door. According to the Bible, when the Jews were slaves in Egypt, they marked their houses so that God could recognize a Jewish house and pass over it during the plague of the killing of first-born sons. Thereafter, Jews had to put a sign on the side of their doorframe as a remembrance of the blood the Jews in Egypt had put on their doorframes. The mezuzah is a small receptacle which contains a tiny scroll of parchment inscribed with the statement of faith, the *Shma*. When we passed over the threshold of a Jewish home we kissed the mezuzah. In large cities, a Jewish beggar, new to the town, could recognize a Jewish house by the mezuzah. Having a mezuzah was so ingrained in us that even during the beginning of the Nazi regime we did not remove it.

One had to put a mezuzah on the side of the door only on the dwelling where he stayed overnight. A poor Jew passing through town could sleep in the *Beith Hamedrash* but not in the shul. We did not study

and socialize in shul because we might fall asleep there; we often studied late into the night. Because the *Beith Hamedrashes* were used for sleep as well as study, their construction and furnishings differed from those of the shul. The young people attended the *Beith Hamedrash*, since the shul was only a place of worship. Mysterious stories and rumors circulated about the shul. For example, we believed that at Chazot, exactly at midnight, the skies opened and prayers went directly to God in heaven. The souls in purgatory, who in their lifetime had sinned against animals, entered the animal bodies and came to shul at Chazot to pray. It was rumored that rats and cats and other animals were seen in the dark of night, coming and going to the shul. It was obvious to us that when we spoke of souls we meant only Jewish souls. Even the "Ethics of Fathers," which we read every Saturday afternoon during the summer, began by stating that every Jew has a part in the world to come. There are no benefits attached to being observant, merely being born of a Jewish mother is enough. The Talmud adds that a few of "the others" will get to heaven, too, but they have to be righteous ones.

We Jews felt superior to all others, as we were the "chosen people," chosen by God Himself. We even repeated it in our prayers at least three times a day, morning, afternoon, and evening, thanking God that He chose us to be His beloved and chosen. "Atu Bechartunu mkol ahamim. . ." (you chose us from all other people). And if our Torah said so, who could question it?

Israel Zangwill, the noted Jewish-English writer who translated the Jewish prayer book from Hebrew into English, remarked that "the claim that Jews are the 'Chosen People' has always irritated the gentiles. 'From olden times,' wrote Philostratus in the third century, 'The Jews have been opposed not only to Rome but to the rest of humanity'. . . [Mount] Sinai, said the Rabbis with a characteristic pun, has evoked *Sinah* (hatred). [It is a] 'claim to spiritual supremacy over all the peoples of the world.' "1

Jews, being middle class and more educated than the Polish peasant, achieved intelligentsia status, and were thus hired by the ruling *Szlachta poretz* to super vise their estates. The poor peasants, the majority of the population, had contact only with the Jews and not with the rich Polish *Szlachta*. The Jews thus represented the rich oppressors of the poor. The Polish child grew up knowing that Jews were in supervisory positions. A few admired them, but most felt envy and resentment, which led to hatred. They felt that Poland was their country. I remember hearing a story about a poor small child who, coming home from school, asked her mother to teach her Yiddish. When the mother asked why Yiddish, the child answered that Jesus must understand prayers better in Yiddish than in Polish, because the Jewish children brought better breakfasts to school.

Middle-class businessmen and professionals had a more conspicuous standard of living than even well-to-do farmers, who saved every penny to buy additional property. The credo that we repeated three times a day--that any day Messiah will come and take all of us Jews to Palestine (now Israel)--reminded us not to invest too much in lives here in Galuth (diaspora). The farmers, who, even considering their low living standards, couldn't support an entire family, sent their daughters to town to become servants in the Jewish households. I never knew a Jewish girl to be a servant in a Polish household, but the reverse was the norm. The gentile maid was referred to in negative terms as the "shiksa" (Hebrew for "a vermin like a cockroach"). There was a repertoire of jokes about these girls. For example, there was the joke about how Jewish mothers made sure that the servants were "clean," because their sons' first sexual experience was usually with this girl.

At that time, our society expected a male to fulfill his sexual needs; Jewish daughters were for bearing



children. In the more sophisticated and affluent strata, a man did not marry until he was well established and capable of supporting a family. This often meant that he would not get married until in his thirties, whereas girls wed much earlier. It was also believed that fertility depended only on a woman. The Talmud states that since the primary purpose of marriage is to propagate, a woman who does not give birth during the first seven years of marriage should be divorced. In our shtetl a childless woman was a sure divorcee. Whether she and her husband loved each other and lived happily together was not taken into consideration, since a suggestion in the Talmud was taken as an absolute directive. It was the higher authority, and no one would question it.

We were strangers to the neighboring gentiles because of our religion, language, behavior, dress, and daily values. Poland was the only country where a nation lived within a nation. Rabbi J. Heschel writes that Poland was the only country where a Jew lived outside his house as he did inside his house. There was a saying among the Jews in Germany: "Em Jude zu Hause, und em Deutscher in draussen" (a Jew at home and a German outside the house.) In Poland the Jew dressed completely different from others, had beards and peyes (side curls), spoke a different language (Yiddish), went to separate religious schools, and sometimes even to different public schools, where they had Saturday off and went to school on Sunday. The government even set up these schools where large groups of Jews lived, mostly in cities.

One has to remember that Poland was a strict Catholic country. The Jews had their food stores which only sold kosher food, owned by a proprietor who could be trusted with kashruth. Since every meal on Sabbath and holidays started with the blessing of the wine, there was no possibility of a pious Jew sharing a festive meal with a gentile because the wine, once opened, became nonkosher if a gentile merely looked at it. The laws of kashruth prevented a Jew from eating at a gentile's nonkosher table. Thus, there was very little social interaction between Jews and non-Jews. We never spoke Polish at home, only Yiddish. Polish was negatively called *goish*. When we spoke Polish we had a Yiddish accent. The newspapers and books in our homes were in Yiddish. When we dropped a Yiddish book, we kissed it after picking it up reverently, because the Hebrew letters could spell the name of God. We lived in a strictly self-imposed ghetto, and it suited our requirements and wishes. The Poles, having endured centuries of occupation, were very proud of the independence they won in 1918 after World War I. The Jews, on the other hand, spoke about the good old days under Austrian rule, about the great Emperor Kaiser Franz Josef of Austria. Our parents not only praised that time as being better for the Jews, but spoke with pride about the superiority of German culture and its people compared to the Polish culture. This attitude was very badly received by the Polish people. They hated German civilization and Germany as a whole, as the Germans had always been their enemy and occupiers. Poland was located between two big powers, the Germans on one hand and the Russians on the other. Austria, south of Poland, was considered to be Germanic. Our mothers, having been educated during the Austrian occupation, proudly spoke about their "westernized culture." To show off their refined education they quoted German poets such as Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing, especially Lessing's "Nathan der Weise," which means Nathan (Jewish name) the wise man. German sayings and philosophical statements were also very much in vogue. To be able to quote a German writer like Heine was to show one's elevated status. We children again and again heard Heine's poem, "Keinen Kaddish wird man sagen, keine Messe wird man singen auf meinen Sterbe Bett" (No kaddish will be said and no Holy Mass will be sung at my death bed). With tears in their eyes and with trembling voices, our mothers always emphasized that if one forsook Judaism he died completely lost, alone like a dog. Moreover, at the end of his days he regretted converting to Christianity. This was like a statement of faith, teaching us children what can really happen if one gives up his religion.

A small minority of Jewish people who were as assimilated liked to quote Poland's leading poet, Adam Mickiewicz, and his positive images of the Jew, as in his depiction of Yankiel, the bartender. Mickiewicz was evidence that not every gentile was antisemitic, even though that was what most Jews believed. They were also proud of a Jewish poet, Tuwim, who wrote only in Polish. The belief that German culture was superior continued even to the time when Germany occupied Poland in 1939, and its eastern part in 1941. I remember when the Jews spoke among themselves about the future under the Nazi regime: "Under the Germans it couldn't be so bad as the press wants us to believe because they are the leading civilized nation." Our main worry was that under the Russians we might be sent to Siberia; we did all we could to protect ourselves from that happening.

I was arrested in 1941 right after the German entry into Lvov, together with five thousand other Jews. Most of us were taken to the nearby woods and shot. By Friday evening less than one hundred of us were still alive, I and my father among them. Since they planned to take the weekend off, the Nazis freed us, not wanting to be bothered with this small group. As we passed through the gate I saw my mother waiting for us. When I asked her how she got there, as it was already evening and after curfew, she answered, "What could they do to me? They would not touch a woman." This was so obvious to her that she was surprised at my question. When the Nazi Police at the gate pushed her away as she tried to get to us, they never hit her. That was in 1941. Wasn't that proof of their being a civilized people?

The author is an advisor to the Holocaust Library in New York. The above represents the first portion of a chapter of the same title in his book *Shattered Faith: A Holocaust Legacy*, 1995 University Press of Kentucky. It is to be used for educational and research purposes only.

## Holocaust: An End to Innocence, by Seymour Rossel

# HOLOCAUST

## **An End to Innocence**

by

## **SEYMOUR ROSSEL**

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### 5

## ISOLATION

### *Ghetto and Shtetl*

To make their spiritual lives richer, Jews had usually chosen to live in Jewish communities, close by a synagogue. Nevertheless, these were voluntary settlements, and there were always some Jews who lived outside of them for one reason or another. During the fourteenth century in Spain and Portugal, however, Jews were compelled for the first time to live apart from non-Jews. Then in 1516, in Venice, Italy, the Catholic Church ordered that walls be built around the Jewish quarter. Venice gave this walled-in compound the name *ghetto*, which may come from *borghetto* ("little borough") or from the Italian word for a nearby iron foundry, *gettare* ("to cast in metal"). At night the ghetto gates were sealed and guards were posted to make sure that the Jews would not come out until daybreak.

In part, the Catholic Church created the ghetto to protect the Jews from attack. Ignorant peasants believed not only that the Jews were guilty of having killed Jesus, but also that the Jews brought bad luck or practiced evil magic. So when things went wrong, or life became difficult, they blamed the Jews, and often did them bodily harm. But in part the Church built the ghetto in order to separate Jews from Christians, and this isolation only served to make matters worse, for it heightened the superstitions of the peasants.

In a short time--and for like reasons--ghettos appeared throughout Europe. Jews were sometimes forced to wear badges on their clothing to show they were Jewish (this was another idea that the Nazis would later borrow). By generally accepted practice, often written into Church law, Jews were not allowed to own land and were forbidden to participate in many professions.

In eastern Europe, particularly in Poland and Lithuania, there were fewer ghettos. Instead, Jews lived in small private towns called *shtetls*. The government often protected shtetls, and the government would sometimes use taxes collected from the Jews living in these small communities to support the local rabbi or even a town council. But the shtetl had much the same effect as the ghetto: it singled out the Jews and separated them from the non-Jewish world.

The ultimate aim of the Church was to convert the Jews to Christianity. To achieve this, the Church did its utmost to make Jewish life uncomfortable. Jewish holy books were sometimes burned, and Jews were often forced to sit through long sermons promising hell to those who died Jewish. This, of course, marked a great difference between the anti-Jewish behavior of the Church and the anti-Semitic behavior of the Nazis: the Church wished to destroy Judaism by converting the Jews, and Hitler wished to destroy the Jews themselves.

### ***Jewish Values***

In the ghetto and the shtetl a Jewish way of life grew up based on the teachings of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud, a book of law and legend compiled by the rabbis of Palestine and Babylonia and completed in the sixth century. In the Jewish world, education was valued over riches. Outside, illiteracy and ignorance were common. Within the Jewish world schools were supported by the community; and most Jews--men and women--could read and write in as many as three languages.

At the center of the community the synagogue, the house of worship, was the most frequent gathering place for the Jews. There the rabbis and the teachers were the most respected citizens. Typically, Jewish time was spent in the study of holy books, in prayer, and in small trades. Each community had its own government, collected its own taxes, and had its own courts of law.

Partly because they were kept somewhat isolated from their non-Jewish neighbors, the Jews learned to rely on one another. Then as today, every Jew was considered responsible for every

other Jew. All Jews contributed to charity, even the poorest finding something to give. Family and family life were the core of the community. Within one's family one found entertainment and warmth, kindness, and care.

The Jews managed in this way to survive attack after attack from non-Jews. After each assault life went on. Jewish merchants, bakers, tailors, and "fixers," (as handymen were called) continued to work and trade with their non-Jewish neighbors. But they often closed themselves off from friendships with non-Jews, trusting, instead, in God and one another.

### ***The Jews in the West***

The way of life established in the shtetls of eastern Europe continued right down to the time of Hitler. But the ghettos in the west were torn down at the end of the eighteenth century when the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte swept across Europe. Bonaparte believed that the Jews would be loyal to him if he freed them from their walled towns, and he was correct. In time, the Jews of western Europe told legends about the great Napoleon, even making him a part of their folklore.

When Napoleon was defeated, many of the things he had done were reversed, and a few ghettos were rebuilt. But for the most part, Jews were allowed to enter the mainstream of European life for the first time in hundreds of years. In fact, in Germany in the early years of the twentieth century, Jews were German citizens and, according to the law, fully equal with non-Jews. Some German Jews steadfastly maintained that they were "Germans first, Jews second."

Before Hitler came to power, German Jews had gained status as lawyers, physicians, business people, writers, and professors. Although the Jews were only about one percent of the population, the majority of the leading German scientists were Jewish, a great number of them Nobel Prize winners. Two of Germany's greatest composers were Jewish--Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schonberg. And Germany had produced great Jewish writers; one, still called the "Shakespeare of the German language," was Heinrich Heine.

In places like Germany, where it was possible, many Jews stopped practicing Judaism and became "assimilated," or absorbed, into the general population. For these Jews it seemed that the ideals of Germany and those of Judaism were much the same. Judaism taught the equality of all human

beings, and so did German law. Judaism taught love of justice, and so did Germany's greatest thinkers. Judaism believed in fairness and respect for others, and so did Germany's writers and philosophers. The position of Jews in Germany before Hitler was much like the position of American Jews today. Germany took pride in the achievements of her Jewish minority.

## COMPARING HARRIET TUBMAN and GRACIA MENDES NASI

Harriet Tubman

Gracia Mendes Nasi

What were their names?		
Why did they change their names?		
Where were they born?		
Where did they live?		
What was their childhood like?		
How did they work secretly?		
What are they famous for?		
How did they help their own group of people?		

## **Excerpts from The Jewish Socialist Labor Bund and Zionism**

By Abraham Brumberg Copyright 1999 by Indiana University Press

(NOTE: this is not as esoteric as it seems from the title. It deals with issues that are at the heart and root of Secular/Humanistic Judaism]

One hundred years ago, in the attic of a small house belonging to a poor workingman's family in Vilna, Lithuania, 13 men and women representing small Jewish socialist groups in Lithuania, Belorussia, and Poland met clandestinely for three days. Everyone in the group was in their twenties, but they all had years of conspiratorial experience behind them. At the end of the meeting, they issued a manifesto that proclaimed the formation of Der Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Rusland un Poyln (the Jewish Labor Union of Russia and Poland), known as the Bund.

Since this event took place around the same time as the birth of the Zionist movement, it is not surprising that its anniversary was not marked with nearly so much fanfare as the second.

The contrast between the circumstances under which Zionism and the Bund were conceived was emblematic of the differences between their historic paths and achievements. The founding congress of the Zionist movement in October 1897 was a dazzling affair: over 200 men wearing frock coats and white ties and about 20 elegantly attired women observers gathered at Basel's ornate Stadt Casino; the galleries were crowded with distinguished visitors, Jews and Christians alike; and correspondents from all over Europe filed long reports about the proceedings. Compared to this, the founding of the Bund was modest indeed. The conspirators wrangled for a while over the projected title, "The Union of Social Democratic Groups in Russia," then settled unanimously for Der Yidisher Arbeter Bund as one that would "rally all the [Jewish] working masses around it."

Within two years the new organization, drawing its strength from the various Jewish social democratic groups that had already sprung up in the Jewish Pale prior to 1897, did indeed manage to rally thousands of Jewish workers and intellectuals to its banner, becoming the largest--not just Jewish but generally largest--workers' socialist party in tsarist Russia. In fact the formation in 1898 of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP)--which five years later split into two factions, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks--was largely the work of tireless Bund activists. ... [By 1905] the Bund had grown into a disciplined political organization, with branches in many towns, a well-functioning press in three languages--Yiddish, Russian, and Polish--and a representational body abroad (Switzerland).

That the Bund had towering historic achievements to its credit was acknowledged by many of its ideological enemies, including the founder of Socialist Zionism, Ben Borokhov and by other Zionists. But it should be noted that, whatever the achievements of the two movements, neither Zionism nor Bundism saw the realization of their fundamental goals. In Basel, Theodor Herzl had begun his speech with the words "We are here to lay the foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish nation." The words entailed the essence of the Zionist dream: kibbutz galuyot,



the "ingathering of exiles." Yet this principle proved little more than a devout wish, and the hope of the Zionist leaders in the 1920s and 1930s to save European Jews from their approaching doom (even in the 1940s David Ben-Gurion still spoke of an aliyah--emigration--of two million Jews) came crushingly to grief: not only were the doors of Palestine (and of other countries) slammed in their faces, but the vast majority of East European Jews themselves showed little inclination to migrate abroad.

At the founding conference of the Bund, no delegate laid claims as ringing as Herzl's. And understandably so, since the aim of the Bund was not to build a "house for the Jewish people," as Herzl's was, but to build one for the Jewish workers in Russia and Poland (the word "Lithuania" was added later). If this goal seemed more modest, it was also more ambitious than the Zionist program, for it envisioned a rising, in classic Marxist terms, of the "oppressed" against the "oppressors," a revolution aimed at liberating all the "victims of capitalism" regardless of country, nation, or race. The Bund placed its faith in a socialist revolution that would free both Jew and non-Jew and liberate humankind from economical, political, and national oppression--including anti-Semitism. In this sense the fundamental hope of the Bund was, like that of the Zionists, not to be fulfilled. It has proved little more than utopian. But for decades, the dream kept the movement alive.

When Hitler attacked Poland, it seemed that the Bund as a viable entity was about to collapse. Some of its members stayed put; some fled east, to end up in Soviet-occupied Poland or deported to the Soviet Far East; and many later succeeded in reaching the United States. The Bund -- what remained of it -- regrouped and then played an active role in the ghettos of Poland and Lithuania. After the war, its ranks nearly depleted, it bravely tried to carry on under the postwar Polish regime. But the communists had different plans for it: in 1949, the Bund was dissolved.

Historical disputes outlast the events that beget them, and this holds true for the dispute between the Bund and Zionism. More than half a century after the Holocaust and nearly that many years after the establishment of the State of Israel, the debate as to which of these two movements was historically and ideologically "correct," once a burning political issue, still lingers on. The voice of the Bund in this Historiker-Streit is weak, if occasionally rancorous -- after all, not much remains of the movement, and its major spokesmen are long since gone.

On the Zionist side, however, the temptation to demonstrate that Zionism has won the historical battle against the Bund endures. The creation of the State of Israel is thus regarded as the final vindication of the Zionist ideal as well as of the political and moral bankruptcy of its critics. According to this notion, the history of modern Jewish political movements is fundamentally a march to that preordained end -- Israel. (The Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv is a striking illustration of this teleological doctrine. The history of the Jews is portrayed there as guided by one central idea: the creation of a Jewish state, consummated in 1948. Other momentous developments, such as the growth of a secular movement based on the Yiddish language, are given short shrift.) This triumphalist view has entailed a contempt for the Diaspora, for the "ghettoized" Jews, their culture and mentality. It was manifested, among other things, in the fierce campaign against Yiddish in

Palestine, which led not only to the banning of Yiddish newspapers and theaters but even to physical attacks against Yiddish speakers. The struggle for Hebrew can be understood in a country that spoke a bewildering array of languages and that had to be fused into some kind of a whole, including one dominant language. Yet the attitude toward Yiddish was not based merely on ideological or practical considerations; it was often suffused with sulfurous hatred, whatever its philosophic-historical rationale. The attitude toward Yiddish was part of a much larger story. As Howard Sachar put it, the conventional wisdom in Israel was "that the overseas community was inhabited by half-men, or at least by an inferior breed of half-Jews, who preferred the comforts of life abroad to the challenges and dangers of life in Israel." In the words of the Israeli historian Dina Porat, "the assumption prevailing in Israel [after] the end of the war was that the Yishuv [Jewish community in Palestine] respected only those who took up arms; [the Jews of the Diaspora] were considered inferior human beings who went 'like lambs to the slaughter.'"

Thus, a view that was both patronizing and ignorant and that for centuries had been part of the anti-Semitic image of the craven, groveling Jew became part of mainline Zionist --and then Israeli -- wisdom. So powerful was this stereotype that for years the Holocaust--as the most potent symbol of Jewish "cowardice"--was rarely discussed in Israel. The rejection of the Diaspora outlived the Holocaust. On the eve of the Yom Kipur War, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion himself forecast the extinction of Jews in the United States--the largest community of both Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews--"whether in ten years or fifty years." They had neither the will nor the wherewithal to be saved.

Immigration to Israel was the only way to escape their fate. Only a person who immigrates to and settles in Israel, said Ben-Gurion, can be considered a "real" Jew --ergo also a "real Zionist." By now this attitude has become attenuated -- but it persists. Only recently a distinguished Israeli scholar told me that, because East European Jewry between the two world wars was "doomed," everything possible should have been done to get them out to Palestine (note: not "out," but "out to Palestine"). When I reminded him of such "minor" obstacles as British exclusionary policies, culminating in the White Paper of 1939, and the fact that other Western countries, too, were severely curtailing Jewish immigration, he dismissed it as unimportant. "Even a relative handful of emigrants" to Palestine, he said, "legal or illegal, would have been worth the effort." "And why not be equally in favor of immigration to the United States?" I asked, "if rescue mattered above all else?" "As we can see already," he replied, "American Jews, too, were and are doomed--not physically, but to assimilation. Only in Israel will a Jewish community survive and function as Jews"--a classic Zionist formulation.

The scorn for Jews opting for immigration to the United States or other Western countries, and the tendency to regard those who opted for Palestine as the ones worth saving, is not only morally dubious but also reflects an astonishing lack of historical perspective. It is instructive to be reminded, for instance, that in the 1930s many Zionist leaders, even after the proclamation of the Nuremberg Laws, refused to countenance measures to encourage Jewish emigration from Germany on the grounds that Palestine at that time was not ready to accommodate a large influx of Jews.

The Bund objected to Zionism not simply because it was a "nationalistic" or a "bourgeois" organization, or because it "pursued princes and rulers" (to use Chaim Weizmann's expression) "who were to 'give' Palestine" to the Jews, or because it was addicted to philanthropy and snuggled up to "capitalist" and "imperialist" powers, or because it diverted the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe from their struggle for social and economic rights --all of which may be true, partially true, or false. It also rejected Zionism on pragmatic grounds. "There were certainly practical reasons," as an Israeli historian of the Bund put it recently, "for in the Bund's view, Palestine could not absorb millions of immigrants into its economy, and was thus unsuitable for mass immigration; the danger to Jews from Arab attacks was as great as the threat posed by anti-Semites in Poland; and the Diaspora would not be ended even if hundreds of thousands of Jews were to emigrate to Palestine."

This was the Bund's principal objection to the Zionist idea, and it remained so from the early years of the Bundist movement until the 1940s. In 1901, the Fourth Congress of the Bund, meeting in Bialystok, adopted a resolution to this effect:

"[T]he final goal of political Zionism--the creation of a territory for the Jewish people--insofar as it could only accommodate a small segment [of it], is a matter of little significance and cannot solve the "Jewish question." To the extent Zionism pretends to concentrate in [Palestine] the entire Jewish people or at least a major part of it, this congress considers it as a utopia incapable of realization."

Nearly four decades later, Henryk Erlich, one of the Bund's foremost leaders and theoreticians, had the following to say on the subject of the Peel Commission's 1937 plan to partition Palestine:

"What type of Jewish state would it be? Is there anything in this that is new for the millions of Jews in Poland and other countries? The area of Palestine is approximately equal to that of the province of Warsaw. Only a small portion of this would be allocated to the Jews. Where will the millions go? What place exists for them there? In the Jewish state there are 300,000 Jews and approximately the same number of Arabs. The immigration of millions more to the Jewish state is not possible. The Zionists say that in the future the Jewish country will probably grow. What does this mean? Is this acceptable to the Arabs?" Doctrinal myopia has hardly been a strictly Zionist affliction, and one can think of many examples of how it hobbled the Bundist vision of its adversaries. "Philanthropy," for instance, was something the Bund detested. It suggested precisely the same type of *shtadlones* -- the wheedling and cajoling attitude of the Jew to the Gentile -- that the traditional Orthodox Jews regarded as the one effective way of obtaining redress or concessions, and that was detested as much by Zionists as by the Bund. Yet in the first decades of this century the Zionist resort to philanthropy (however demeaning they might consider it) clearly served the needs of Jewish settlers in Palestine who might otherwise have perished from starvation or hideous living conditions.

The Bund was not, of course, opposed to emigration as such, including immigration to Palestine. It even maintained its own emigration bureau, designed to offer aid and advice to Jewish workers desiring to leave the country. The Bund objected to what it called "emigrationism": the idea that

emigration was the fundamental solution to the "Jewish problem." It bitterly attacked those Zionists who, it said, played into the hands of the Polish anti-Semites by maintaining that Jews had no future in Poland and must therefore leave en masse --an attitude, aside from its sheer impracticability, that was characterized by the Bundist leader and theoretician Viktor Alter as one that views Jews "as 'excess baggage' in Poland."

No movement, of course, can or should be judged by its founding principles. In the hundred years of its existence, Zionism has gone through many changes and has spawned numerous ideological variants. A good number of the old beliefs have receded into limbo; many are devoid of any relevance. Kibbutz galuyot is no longer on. No one speaks of aliyahs; even the Russian exodus has virtually come to a halt. American Jews are happier staying in the United States and supporting the State of Israel by buying Israel Bonds and lobbying the U.S. government than moving to Tel Aviv or Haifa. The various chalutz (pioneer) movements that inspired so many young people in the 1940s and 1950s have disappeared. If Zionists still refer to Zionism--which in fact they do less and less--as "the solution to the Jewish Problem," then they have something else in mind, more along the lines, arguably, of Ahad Ha-am's culturalist conception than of Ben-Gurion's statist version.

Similarly, many of the Bund's original articles of faith have been firmly laid to rest. The vision of a Jewish proletariat building its political and cultural institutions in the Yiddish language is extinct. Anti-Semitism has proved remarkably tenacious in "capitalist" as well as in so-called "socialist" and post-communist societies. And if Bundists speak of socialism as humankind's noblest ambition, then they do not have in mind any pat ideological formulas, Marxist or otherwise, but rather a general goal that they hope can be achieved and adjusted piecemeal and in a manner suitable to local needs, wishes, and expectations.

The basic ideas of both Zionism and Bundism were decimated by the Holocaust. Whether this would have happened anyway is of course an unanswerable question. But in fact the very death of six million Jews determined the success of the final version of Zionism -- a Jewish state encompassing a minority of the Jews throughout the world. And only the death of six million Jews (in particular of the Polish Jews) put an end to the program of the Bund -- not, to paraphrase Marx, the "poverty of its philosophy."

Before proceeding to the ultimate problem I will examine in this article--the historic significance of the Bund--a few more words about its history are in order. What in effect prevented the Bund from [becoming part of the Soviet Russian led Communist movement] and helped it to remain an independent party was not so much doctrinal differences with communism as it was the loyalty of the vast bulk of the members to their organization and to their fellow-members. This profound sense of loyalty has been an extraordinary feature of the Bund from its inception to the present day. Indeed, it has more than anything else saved the Bund, over the years, from the curse of brutal internal antagonisms and factionalism that haunted all other left-wing parties. In 1903, the Bund refused to give up its independence, its cherished mishpokhedikayt ("familiness"), on the altar of what Lenin and his disciples chose to call "proletarian unity."

During the first decade in independent Poland, the Bund was a fairly small party, both within the Jewish community and nationally. But the role it played in the social and cultural life of the more than three-million-strong Jewish community in Poland was immense, what with its network of the various institutions it dominated (including the Jewish trade union movement, schools, and summer camps).

In the mid-1930s the Bund crossed the divide from a class to a mass party. Partly as a result of Poland's fervent nationalism and hostility to the striving of its national minorities (which composed one-third of the country's total population), and partly encouraged by the rise of Nazism in Germany, Poland was swept by a wave of frenzied anti-Semitism. A rash of pogroms in towns and villages, assaults on Jews in the cities, the creation of special "ghetto benches" for Jewish students in the universities, poisonous propaganda fanned by the Catholic Church, and steps designed eventually to expel the Jews from the country all galvanized the Bund to come out forcefully on behalf of the entire Jewish community, to organize paramilitary defense units, and to seek more common actions with the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, or PPS). Attempts to secure collaboration with the Polish socialists had been a regular feature of the Bund's political strategy, but with the rise of fascism and anti-Semitism, they were redoubled.

This led to a phenomenal rise of popularity. Within a few years, Bund membership doubled and henceforth kept growing. By the end of the 1930s the Bund found itself the strongest Jewish political party in Poland, in control of several of the largest Jewish municipal elective bodies and with decisive majorities in several city councils, including Warsaw. Simultaneously, the strength of Zionist and clerical parties, such as Agudas Yisrael, drastically declined.

During the war, the Bund's underground press was the largest and most dynamic. In the ghettos it maintained schools, theaters, and even courses for adults, as did a few left-wing Zionist youth groups. Though consistently advocating armed resistance to the Nazis, it was at first opposed to the formation of a joint fighting organization with Zionist groups, on the grounds that the Bund put its faith in an "international" socialist revolution (in this case, a joint Polish-Jewish uprising) rather than in a national -- that is, purely Jewish -endeavor. This view continued for some time, but in the end the differences between the Bund and the other groups were ironed out, and a unified Jewish Fighting Organization came into being. The Bund came to play a leading role in Warsaw as well as in other ghetto uprisings.

Few of the Bundist Warsaw ghetto leaders survived, and only one, Marek Edelman, still lives in Poland. The Bund was the first underground Jewish organization to send a full report of the extermination of the Jewish community to the Polish government-in-exile. That famous report, by the Polish courier Jan Karski in 1943, was based largely on what he was told in Warsaw by the Bundist leader L. Feiner and a leader of the Poale Zion party, Adolf Berman. In May 1943, Shmuel (Arthur) Zygelbojm, the Bund's representative at the Polish National Council in London who seems to have been more aware of the real dimensions of the Nazi extermination policy than his

comrades in New York, and who was desperate about his failure to rouse the conscience of the world, committed suicide.

In his farewell letter he explained the reason for this act: his suicide, he hoped, would finally goad the Western Allies into action. Tragically, it did not. In postwar Poland, the Bund's renewed activities may be described as the triumph of hope over experience. The Jewish community in Poland was decimated. Only several thousand Bundists survived, Jews were losing their lives to anti-Semitic gangs, and the communist authorities were sharpening their own knives. But the Bund was undaunted: the Jewish people will prevail, socialism will triumph. For the first time in its history, however, its mantra of *doikayt* ("here and now"—the doctrine of waging a political struggle now and where the Jews resided, not for nebulous goals in the future) acquired some disagreeable features. The Bund tried to revive Jewish cultural institutions while urging Polish Jews to stay put and portraying life in Palestine in unrelievedly somber terms. In fact, it cooperated with the communist authorities in making it difficult for the Jews to immigrate to Palestine. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Kielce pogrom of July 1946, about 60,000 Jews left Poland, among them hundreds of Bundists. For the Polish Jews, as for Jews in most of postwar Europe, the idea of a Jewish homeland acquired an attraction unmatched in that part of the world -- or for that matter anywhere -- before the war.

In 1948, the communists began to tighten the screws. Several hundred additional Bundists left the country illegally. Others were forced to confess their "errors," and in January 1949, the Bund -- or what remained of it -- was absorbed by the new United Polish Workers' Party, concocted out of a merger between the communists (at that time known as the Polish Workers' Party) and the PPS in December 1948. With that the Polish Bund breathed its last.

What, after so stormy a century, can be said of the Bund's distinguishing characteristics, and what, finally, of its historic achievements? First, the Bund was the leader in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in bringing the message of national and social liberation to the poor and disfranchised (which is to say the vast majority) of Jewish people in Eastern Europe--the growing number of workers in large industrial towns and the denizens of those impoverished, hidebound, and stultifying shtetls so romanticized by some contemporary writers.

One social stratum to which the Bund successfully appealed was women. In the traditional middle-class movements of the nineteenth century, and also in the Zionist movement in the early twentieth, women were conspicuous by their relative or total absence. In the Bund, however, from the end of the nineteenth century on, women played a significant role -- larger, incidentally, than in the Russian socialist parties. The Zionist groups in the nineteenth century were overwhelmingly middle class, and even the Zionist-socialist groups that arose in the early 1900s, by proffering a vision of a Jewish classless society thousands of miles away, did not address themselves to the interests and basic concerns of those they wished to liberate from oppression and anti-Semitism. The Bund, on the other hand, was firmly grounded in its tenet of *doikayt* as a way to solve the overwhelming needs of the Jews in situ, together with the other dispossessed members of society.

The second distinguishing characteristic of the Bund was the spirit of democracy that pervaded it. The claims to be bastions of democracy have been made by many political parties, and indeed in some of the political movements of the twentieth century it had real meaning. The Bund, however, breathed a new ethos into the concept of political democracy. The sense that the Bundists owed an allegiance to both the party and each other, that they were a family--a mishpokhe -- whatever the differences and conflicts among them, became a hallmark of Bundism.

A third characteristic was the Bund's remarkable sense of pragmatism. There were times when this party, proud of its Marxist and "revolutionary" credentials, seemed to set greater store by ideological dogmas than recognition of realistic options. But, in the end, realism inevitably triumphed. In the mid-1930s, for instance, the Bund in effect set its sectarian compulsions aside by defending the religious Jews' right to ritual slaughter (which the government wanted to abolish), by abandoning its hostility to the kehiles (which for many years most of the Bundists considered seats of nationalistic and clerical power), and by including religious young men dressed in Orthodox garb in paramilitary defense units.

The Bund's "ecumenical" spirit, so much in contrast with its declared "proletarian" character, had deep roots. Already in tsarist Russia the Bund insisted that it represented the interests of "the Jewish masses." As Henryk Erlich was to write later, "The Bund has always and consistently thought of itself as an organic part of the Jewish people . . . [as] the standard bearer and champion of the broadest masses of the Jewish people with whom we identify.

Another major achievement was the Bund's role in maintaining and developing Yiddish, Yiddish literature, and many other secular cultural activities in the language of the Jewish masses. It was the first political party in tsarist Russia, in 1896, to publish a Yiddish paper--Der idisher arbeter. In 1922, the population census in Poland still showed that the vast majority of Jews considered Yiddish their mother tongue. The demand for the right of the Yiddish language was part and parcel of the Bund's theory of "national-cultural autonomy," borrowed from the Austrian socialists in the early part of this century. This theory stipulated the right of the Jewish minority to use its language and maintain its own cultural institutions in all areas where it constituted a significant part of the local population. The theory was formulated in 1901 and carried over into independent Poland. It became one of the foundations of the Bund ideology. Another achievement of the Bund was its influence in the United States, both in the labor movement and in Yiddish-language activities, such as schools, book publishing, magazines, and summer camps. Abe Cahan, first editor of the New York-based, Yiddish Forward (which celebrated its centennial in 1997), was for a long time a dedicated supporter of the Bund. David Dubinsky, president of the Ladies Garment Workers Union for years, had been a member of the underground Bund in tsarist Russia. He became a practiced orator in English but often addressed meetings of his union in Yiddish -- the language of most of its members at one time.

Irving Howe's *The World of Our Fathers* lists an array of activities the Bund sponsored and kept alive from the early years of this century until the present. The Bund also maintained a close

relationship with the American Socialist Party, fiercely criticizing Norman Thomas's early "anti-imperialist" stance during World War II (the notion that socialists could have no sympathy for one or the other "imperialist camp"), then becoming a dedicated supporter of the party after the socialist leader and his party changed their position.

The hostility to the Bund, resulting from its obstinate opposition to the Jewish state, lingers on. But this hostility is probably far greater among the post-Holocaust generations than it was in the ghettos, where the attitude of the Bund was taken as a matter of course and its cooperation was vigorously solicited not only because of the important contributions the Bund could make -- such as access to the Polish underground and contacts with the Polish government-in-exile -- but also because it was known that the Bund was entirely dedicated to armed resistance.

True, the Bund remained deadlocked in its ideological dicta and in a *modus operandi* from which there seemed to be no escape. The Bund's antipathy to other parties on both left and right and insistence on upholding its own ideological verities was a matter of general knowledge, but in fact a penchant for theoretical exegesis and hair-splitting was characteristic of nearly all Jewish radical parties, frequently lampooned in the Jewish press. (The legacy of hours of disputations over this or that part of the Scriptures which thousands of Yeshiva graduates brought to their party meetings no doubt had something to do with it.)

Without Yiddish the Bund could not possibly exist, and all of the brave attempts to keep Yiddish alive in the United States or anywhere else in the Western world came to naught. I remember as a teenager in New York being harangued by Bundist comrades to do more "to help build the youth movement of the Bund" -- perhaps a kind of successor to Skif and Tsukunft. For a while the Bund even maintained a summer camp built on the same principles as its children and youth organizations in Poland, replete with confident Yiddish songs, blue shirts and red ties, and resonant greetings of *khavershaft* (comradeship). But the several dozen children of Bundist survivors could not replicate an historic era.

The Bund in the United States, Australia, and France remained, fundamentally, immigrant organizations, never able to overcome cultural and linguistic barriers in order to become legitimate components of the new social realities. All attempts at grafting "some of its strands into the fabric of post-Holocaust Jewish life" were bound to fail.





## Israel in 600 Words or Less

By Etgar Keret, LA Weekly

Posted on December 7, 2001, Printed on June 30, 2010

<http://www.alternet.org/story/12045/>

My mother says I'll never be able to understand what it's like for a nation to be without a country. Now, my mom, she really knows what she's talking about. After all, she went through the Holocaust, saw her home destroyed in Poland, lost her mom and dad and little brother and finally ended up here, in the land of Israel, her country, the land she swore she would never leave.

My Palestinian friend Ghassan says I'll never be able to understand what it's like for a nation to live under occupation. No, he didn't go through the Holocaust, and his whole family is alive, thank God, at least for the time being. But he's had it up to here with the Israeli soldiers at the border checkpoint. "Sometimes you make it through the roadblock in a second or two, but sometimes, when they're bored, they can make you feel like life isn't worth living. They force you to wait for hours in the sun for no reason, to humiliate you. Just last week, they confiscated two packs of Kent Longs from me, simply because they felt like it. An 18-year-old kid with a rifle in his hand and a face full of zits just came and took them."

Adina, the neighbor from downstairs, says that I'll never be able to understand what it's like to lose a loved one in a suicide bombing. "No death can be more meaningless than that," she says. "My brother died for two reasons -- because he was Israeli and because he felt like having an espresso in the middle of the night. If you can think of any dumber reasons for dying, let me know. And there isn't even anyone to get mad at. After all, the guy that killed him is already dead himself, blown to pieces."

My mother says that we have no other place to go, that no matter where we go, we'll always be strangers, hated, Jews. Ghassan says that my country, the state of Israel, is an alien and strange entity and that there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world. There it is, in the middle of the Middle East, pretending to be in the heart of Europe, participating in the Eurovision song contest every year, making sure to send a soccer team to the European cup games, and it just doesn't get that it's located in the heart of the desert, surrounded by a Middle Eastern mentality that it refuses to acknowledge. Adina says we're living on borrowed time, that every time she sees the Palestinian children going wild with joy and handing out candy after every terror attack, she thinks about how these children are going to grow up. So I should stop all that nonsense about peace.

And if there is one thing that my mother, Ghassan and Adina have in common, it's that they are all certain, absolutely certain, that I simply can't understand what's going on in their heads.

But I'm actually pretty good at figuring out what's going on in other people's heads, sometimes, especially when times are bad. I even manage to make a living at it. All kinds of foreign publications call me and ask me to explain, if possible in 600 words or less, what people in Israel are thinking.

It's just a shame that I can't invent new thoughts for them, too -- ones that are a little less afraid, a little less hateful. Thoughts more positive, optimistic, compact, no more than 600 words.

*Etgar Keret, one of Israel's most popular young writers, is author of "The Bus Driver Who Wanted To Be God and Other Stories." This article was translated from Hebrew by Ruchi Avital.*

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## How did the Zionists get their land\*?

By A.H. Jaffor Ullah

Before initiating any serious discussion on the present-day plight of Palestinian people whose grandfather and father had lost land to Jewish people in 1948 or before that when the modern nation of Israel was established by Great Britain with assistance from America, which became the super power in the aftermath of World War II. Many of us do not know how Israel was formed carving land from Palestine, an entity that was under Turkish Empire before World War I.

What is really Zionism? Who started this movement? What was the idea of early Zionists in respect to an independent state for Jewish people? For some thought on that, let us examine Zionism. Since Zionism started one hundred years or so before my birth, I have to rely on scholarly works of many writers. I am not going to cite any specific reference; rather my write up on it may be desultorily penned.

In 2002, America's National Public Radio (NPR) had a series of reporting on Zionism because there were some anniversary date relating to Zionism or its founder, Theodor Herzl, an Austrian journalist and intellectual of Jewish origin. I jotted down some historical dates of the important meeting of the Zionists and the outcome of those important meetings that would shape up the concept of an independent Jewish state somewhere in the world. The very idea of establishing a Jewish land near Jerusalem came way late and after the death of Theodor Herzl. We have to know these historical facts before we start arguing whether it was all right for the world Jewry of 1930s and 40s to cry for establishing Israel in the middle of Palestinian land. Why did they not address the issue of displacement of a huge number of local Arabs by the establishment of Israel?

Now let me turn to the history of Jewish nationalist movement that had its goal to creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine, which the Jewish folks claimed to be their ancient homeland. The origin of the word Israel is Hebrew word “Eretz Yisra’el” or “the Land of Israel.” We learn from history that Zionism had its beginning in latter part of the 19th century in eastern and central Europe such as Poland, Germany, etc. However, the concept of assimilation of world Jewry into one land is a continuation of the ancient nationalist attachment of the Jews and of the Jewish religion to the historical region of Zion (one of the hills of ancient Jerusalem), which was within Palestine, a land inhabited by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Arabs.

Since one of the basic tenets of Jewish religion is the coming of a Messiah (the deliverer) into this world to unify them and taking them closer to God, in the 16th and 17th centuries a number of “messiahs” came forward trying to persuade Jews to “return” to Palestine. In contrast to this view, *The Haskala* (Enlightenment) Movement of the late 18th century, urged Jews to assimilate into Western secular culture. Thus, we see that there were two opposing forces acting upon world Jewry in that turbulent time. Some scholars are of the view that in the early 19th century, mostly Christian millenarians kept alive the interest in a return of the Jews to Palestine. Despite the *Haskala*, Eastern European Jews did not assimilate to join the European secularist movement but instead they joined the movement to promote the settlement of Jewish farmers and artisans in

Palestine. Many a historian of Europe had opined that the Eastern European Jews did this in reaction to Tsarist pogroms and they formed the “*Hovevei Ziyon*” (Lovers of Zion) Movement.

As I mentioned earlier, the Austrian newspaperman, Theodor Herzl, gave a political turn to Zionism in later part of the nineteenth century. Herzl regarded assimilation as most desirable but in view of widespread anti-Semitism, impossible to realize. Therefore, he argued, if Jews were forced by external pressure to form a nation, they could lead a normal existence only through concentration in one territory. With this view in mind, Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress at Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. In this convention, Herzl and fellow Zionists drew up the Basel program of the movement, stating, “Zionism strives to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.”

The Zionists chose Vienna as the center of the political movement because Mr. Herzl published the official weekly *Die Welt* (The World) in this city and because he was the brain behind the establishment of Israel somewhere in this world but preferably around Jerusalem. As per historical account, the Zionist congresses met yearly until 1901 and then every two years. The Ottoman government refused Herzl’s request for Palestinian autonomy from their Sultanate. The Zionists however found support in Great Britain. In 1903, the British government offered 6,000 square miles (15,500 square km) of uninhabited Uganda for Jewish settlement, but the Zionists refused; they preferred Palestine over the land in Uganda.

The Zionist leader, Theodor Herzl, died in 1904 and the leadership moved from Vienna to Cologne, then to Berlin. Before World War I, Zionism represented only a handful of Jews, mostly from Russia but led by Austrians and Germans. It then began its propaganda via Zionist orators and well-written pamphlets, established its own newspapers, and gave a lift to what was called a “Jewish renaissance” in letters and arts. Many modern historians and linguists think that the development of the Modern Hebrew language largely took place during this period. Therefore, we see that a well-orchestrated propaganda bears fruit!

The first wave of migration of Jewish people to Palestine took place after the failure of the Russian Revolution of 1905, which led to a wave of pogroms. The Russian Jewish people were alarmed by this nasty development of pogroms. Thus, the first pioneer Jewish to migrate to Palestine were Jewish youth folks from far-flung provinces of Imperial Russia. About 90,000 Jews in Palestine; 13,000 settlers lived in 43 Jewish agricultural settlements by 1914; many of them supported by the French Jewish philanthropist Baron Edmond de Rothschild (the famous banker). This however did not catch the attention of Arab people. The land of Palestine was under the Sultanate of Turkey, anyway. It should have been the headache of the Türkic Sultanate; consequently, the local Arabs did not view this mass migration of Russian Jews with an alarming eye.

The World War I broke out in 1914 after the first wave of Jewish migration to Palestine during 1905-1914. With the war raging through Europe, the political Zionism reasserted itself, and its leadership passed to Russian Jews living at the time in England. Two such Zionists were Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Sokolow. They were credited for obtaining the infamous *Balfour Declaration* from Great Britain (Nov. 2, 1917) as the war was winding down. The *Balfour Declaration* promised British support for the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The declaration was included in Britain's League of Nations mandate over Palestine (1922). Thus, it is

very clear that without the political backing by the British political establishment, the Zionists could not have accomplished what they did a quarter century later.

Let us then see what did happen in the aftermath of World War I. Powered by *Balfour Declaration* the Zionists started building up the Jewish urban and rural settlements in Palestine, perfecting autonomous organizations and solidifying Jewish cultural life and Hebrew education. By March of 1925, the Jewish population in Palestine was officially estimated at 108,000, and it had risen to about 238,000 (20 percent of the population) by 1933.

Jewish immigration to Palestine remained however slow in the late 1920s and early 1930s. All that would change because of the rise of Hitlerism in Europe. More Jewish people from Europe and Russia started to pour in Palestine. This had caused some concern among the Arab population of Palestine who rightfully thought that unless the flow of Jewish people to Palestine is stopped the land would eventually become a Jewish state. The local Arabs then bitterly resisted *Zionism* and the British policy supporting it.

The first wave of some serious Arab revolts took place during 1936–39. This had caused some concern among the British political establishment but they devised schemes to reconcile the Arab and Zionist demands. In the meanwhile, Hitlerism and the large-scale extermination of European Jews had alarmed the secularist Jews; many of them started seeking refuge in Palestine knowing that many Jewish people are already there forming communities and many others migrated to the United States. These immigrants started to embrace Zionism in droves. As tensions grew among Arabs and Zionists in the 1940s, Britain submitted the Palestine problem first to Anglo-U.S. discussion for solution and later to the United Nations, which on Nov. 29, 1947, proposed partition of the country into separate Arab and Jewish states and the internationalization of Jerusalem. Five months after this, the State of Israel was created on May 14, 1948, which brought about the first Arab–Israeli war of 1948–49. As the luck would have it, Israel obtained more land than had been provided by the UN resolution because of this short-lived war. This war drove out 800,000 Arabs who became displaced persons known as Palestinian refugees. Many of them would settle in neighboring Jordan and other parts of the Middle East.

We, therefore, see that 50 years after the first Zionist congress and 30 years after the *Balfour Declaration*, Zionism achieved its goal of establishing an independent Jewish state in Palestine. Nevertheless, the Israelis had to pay a price for this monumental achievement. The state of Israel had become an armed camp surrounded by hostile Arab nations and Palestinian Liberation Organizations. To help support Israel, during the next two decades (1950s and 1960s) Zionist organizations in many countries especially in America continued to raise financial support for Israel and to encourage Jews to immigrate to the new republic. Many orthodox Jews in Israel held this weird view that the Jews outside Israel were living in “exile” and could live a full life only in the Promised Land, Israel.

Briefly going over the pages of history, we see that Zionism was a concept developed by a handful of Jewish intellectuals in central Europe in mid nineteenth century. Many world events such as the Russian Revolution, the two world wars had helped the Zionists to materialize their demand for a separate homeland for world Jewry. The political establishment of Britain is the main culprit who fueled the fire of Zionist’s desire to move Jewish people into a disputed territory. Worst of all, the

British never thought of the consequence of this mass migration of outsiders to a tiny land and had no plan for the welfare of the indigenous Palestinian people.

I would request the forum members to discuss the plight of present day Palestinian people. It is good to know the history of deception by the British and the selfish behavior of the Zionists but at the same time we should realize that what was done cannot be undone. We should not blame the grandchildren of the early Jewish settlers. They have not created this mess in Palestine. How these two distinct groups of people can live side-by-side harmoniously and peacefully should be the concern of us at this time.

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Dr. A.H. Jaffor Ullah, a researcher and columnist, writes from New Orleans, USA

## **Land Ownership in Palestine/Israel**

**By Nasser Abufarha**

**Control over territories, land use, and ownership are central issues to the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. What follows is a historical overview of the system of land ownership in Palestine, including an examination of the methods by which the Israeli government and Jewish agencies acquired land in Palestine.**

### **Palestinian Land Ownership**

The majority of the lands in Palestine were the properties of the Palestinian rural population, the fellahin. In the process of the creation of the state of Israel, over 418 Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed. Bedouin semi-nomadic tribes were displaced and 104 Palestinian populated villages remained under Israeli control.

Understanding the culture of the fellahin is key to understanding the system of land ownership in Palestine. Referring to the fellahin of Palestine as peasants, as they are often referred to, is an unfair misrepresentation of Palestinian society and culture to say the very least. A peasant in European culture is a farming worker with little or no land ownership. The fellahin of Palestine are rural farming communities with communal shared ownership of the land and own the means of cultivation.

The concept of the peasant did exist in the culture of the fellahin and the term applied to it is qatrutz. The qatrutz is a farming worker with little or no land ownership that has no possession of working animals. The qatrutz would work for landowners for a share of the harvest. Although the concept of the peasant (qatrutz) existed in Palestinian society, it was not widespread due to the communal nature of the culture of the fellahin.

To understand the land ownership system in the society of the fellahin, one needs to understand the concept of the feddan. There is widespread misconception that the feddan is a unit of measurement for an area of land. This is an inaccurate understanding of the concept. The feddan is a measurement of a share of land that varies in size from village to village and may vary from year to year, even within the same village.

Villages owned their land collectively by the village residents or by the hamoula (family). Physical features and traditional names of lands were used to describe the boundaries of a certain village land and were respected by neighboring villages. In the plowing and seeding season, lands were divided between village residents every fall based on ability to cultivate. Zalameh wa 'ammal (a man and a working animal) would get one feddan share. A man without 'ammal would get half a feddan. A man would get half a feddan for each additional working animal he owned that was available for work.

This system was used by the villages for the distribution of ardh as-sahil (the lands of the fields) for cultivation. The concept is still used today in some villages in the West Bank. In the village of Sanour between Nablus and Jenin, residents of the village have collective ownership of Marj Sanour (the Sanour Plains). The residents of Sanour divide the land among themselves every year based on manpower. With the introduction of tractors, the working animal is no longer counted. The new measurement of share today is zalameh (a man), which is based on the man only. People get a zalameh, half a zalameh, or a quarter zalameh as their share today. In the mountains or the hillside, people had individual or family ownership of orchards or land with trees (ardh mushajjara). Ownership was based on planting and maintaining trees or by inheritance. Boundaries marked by the cactus trees or sinisleh (walls built by collecting stones and stacking them at the boundaries) were respected by everyone. Boundaries for grazing grounds for the semi-nomadic tribes were also respected out of tradition with reference to land names.

In 1858 the Ottoman Authority introduced the law of tabu to establish rights of land ownership. Landowners were instructed to have their property inscribed in the land register. The tabu was resisted by the fellahin. They saw a threat to their community in registering their land for two main reasons: 1) the cultivated fields were classified as ardh ameriyeh (the land of the emirate) and were taxed, so owners of registered fertile land were forced to pay tax on it; 2) data from the land register were used by the Turkish Army for the purpose of the draft. Owners of registered lands were often drafted to fight with the Turkish Army in Russia.

The Turkish Land Register was not able to document the state of land ownership in Palestine (Falah, 1983). People continued their traditional communal ownership of the land. This tradition continued with the exception of some families or individuals who took advantage of the loose manner in which the tabu registered lands. They registered large pieces of land that were not necessarily theirs in their names, especially those who held positions in government.

Under the British system, the Land Settlement Ordinance was introduced in 1928. Rights of ownership were confirmed only after the land survey was completed. The registration of land was to be in the names of specific individuals and not in the name of the village, the family, or the tribe (Falah, 1983). This was an attempt to break village or tribe solidarity and an effort to promote the capitalist system of private ownership and individualism. The British Land Settlement Ordinance was resisted by fellahin society mainly because it did not allow for their tradition of collective ownership. Individual ownership posed a threat to the power structure in the village social order. The village mukhtar and wujuh el-'alih (the notables of the family) and the Bedouin tribes' sheikhs took their power from this system of collective land ownership.

In addition to the practical reason mentioned above, the fellahin saw the land register as an insult to tradition. This system had been working for generations as an efficient and fair use and distribution of the land. The fellahin were also too proud to involve the government in the protection of their land. It has been said that when the land register arrived at the village of Al-silehal-harthiyeh, west of Jenin, to register their land, the reply by the mukhtar of the Jaradat family was "lesh insajilha, hay il-ardh u hay el-asayel fiha, khalli izalameh yiqareb alayha" (Why register it, this is the land and here are the Arabian horses on it. Let he who dares come near it). The Arabian horses are a symbol of power. The Jaradat family still cultivates their land today and does not have any form of deed or title to it.



At the time of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and its success in taking control of the majority of Palestine, most of the lands in the rural areas were owned by the villages collectively and there was little individual land ownership in the countryside or for the members of the Bedouin tribes. This traditional system of ownership that existed for generations on the land was not recognized by Israel.

### **Jewish Land Ownership in Palestine**

The process of land acquisition by the Jewish agencies and the Israeli government in Palestine is a rather complex intertwined process. An effort is made here to shed light on these processes as briefly as possible. Most of the information presented here is compiled from Sabri Jiriye's work on the subject, which is based on Israeli government records.

Once the Zionist movement adopted the idea of establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine, it approved buying land in Palestine at its sixth convention in 1903. The movement was successful in buying the first land in 1905 and in 1907 the Jewish National Fund (Kayron Kayem) was officially registered in Britain. Its goals were declared to buy lands in Palestine. This was the Zionist central arm for land acquisition in Palestine (Jiryis, 1973).

After 42 years of organized well-funded efforts on the part of the Zionist organization, the total Jewish ownership of land in Palestine in 1947 was 1,734,000 dunums or 1,734 square kilometers, which is 6.6% of the total land. The Jewish National Fund owned 933,000 dunums out of the total Jewish-owned land of Palestine (Jiryis, 1973). Some of these lands were sold to the Zionist Agency by individuals who were not the rightful owners of the land, but used their positions in previous governments to register large portions of lands to their names.

The Palestinian land confiscation for Jewish settlement started well before the establishment of the state of Israel. The British Authority in Palestine was preparing the country for the creation of the Jewish national homeland. The mandatory authority introduced the Woods and Forest Ordinance in 1920, which was designed to confiscate lands that were largely utilized as grazing grounds by the Bedouin community and the rural population. These lands were then classified as state forest owned by the state. Table 1 shows the acceleration of this confiscation process. The forest reserves were defined by the British Authority as "provincial reservation of scrub areas which are being protected so far as possible pending land settlement" (Falah, 1983, p. 29).

**Table 1: Forest Reservation in Palestine Under the British Mandate 1926-1947**

Year	Area in Dunums Northern Region	Area in Dunums Southern Region
1927/28	3,918	9,050
1928/29	21,262	
1929/30	750	534
1930/31		
1931/32	2,531	
1932/33	4,358	2,890
1933/34	4,432	
1934/35	5,481	906
1935/36	32,710	4,320
1936/37	84	
1937/38	4,068	186
1938/39	9,072	
1939/40	1,070	
1940/41	2,612	113
1941/42	2,281	663
1942/43	56,008	
1943/44	57,956	24,184
1944/45	43	908,291
1945/46	39,794	722
1946/47	4,136	121
Total	805,680	1,034,906

Source: Adopted from Ghazi Falah, the role of the British Administration in the Sedentarization of the Bedouin Tribes in Northern Palestine, 1983.

With the establishment of the state of Israel on May 15, 1948, these lands were regarded as Israeli state lands. As Israel took control of all the territories that were allocated to the Jewish state in addition to nearly 50% of the territories allocated to the Arab state under the 1947 UN partition plan, a total of 15,025,000 dunum were considered state lands. These lands include the lands that were classified as forest by the British Authority and any other lands that were not titled to individuals i.e. village lands (Jiryis, 1973). The state also implemented measures and passed various laws that were employed to transfer land ownership to the Jewish agencies and settlements.

On May 13, 1948, two days before the declaration of independence of the state of Israel, Ben Gurion summoned the administration of the Jewish National Fund, offering to sell to the agency

two million dunums of the lands under Jewish militia control at a price of half a Lira per dunum. The Jewish National Fund rejected the deal but accepted it after the declaration of independence (Jiryis, 1973).

As a result of the 1948 war and the armistice agreements Israel reached with Egypt and Jordan, Israel controlled 20.5 million dunums of the total land of Palestine, representing 78% of the land. The vast majority of these lands were owned by Palestinian residents who were evacuated from their villages or who fled their homes during the war.

In September 1948 a Trustee on Absentee Properties was appointed by the state of Israel and the state issued measures to organize the seizure and the allocation of these properties. On March 15, 1950 the Israeli Knesset passed the Law of the Absentee Properties Law #5710. This law considered, among other factors, the Trustee on the Absentee Properties as the legitimate owner of these properties and gave him the authority to sell and transfer ownership of such properties to the Israeli Department of Construction and Development (Jiryis, 1973).

In September 1953 the Trustee on Absentee Properties executed a contract with the Israeli Department of Construction and Development whereby he transferred ownership of all the lands under his control to the department. The price for these properties was to be retained by the Israeli Department of Construction and Development as a loan. At the same time, the Trustee on the Absentee Properties transferred the ownership of the houses and commercial buildings in the cities to Amidar, an Israeli company set up to settle Jewish immigrants (Jiryis, 1973).

Three months before this transfer of ownership to the Department of Construction and Development, the Jewish National Fund had executed a contract with the Israeli Department of Construction and Development whereby the department would sell a total of 2,373,677 dunums of state lands and lands of the department to the Jewish National Fund. The deal was completed after the department completed its transaction with the Trustee. Following this transaction, the Jewish National Fund "ownership" totaled over 90% of the total territories that fell under the control of the state of Israel. These properties are referred to as the "nation's land" limited to the use of Jews (Jiryis, 1973).

The third phase of Israeli land acquisition in Palestine was the confiscation of the lands of the remaining Palestinian villages in what is now Israel. The Israelis used military, acts of ethnic cleansing along with legal maneuvers to confiscate these lands.

### **Ethnic Cleansing and Land Confiscation**

The ethnic cleansing campaign started in the 1948 war where by the Jewish militias ethnically cleansed 418 Palestinian villages, seized their properties and depopulated 11 Palestinian cities and took them for their own use. The 1948 war was not the only cycle of ethnic cleansing, between October 1948 to November 1949, the Israeli army evacuated the villages of al-Safsaf, Iqrit, Kufr Biram, Kufr 'Anan, Khasas, Jau'neh, Qayttiyeh, al-Ghabasiyya, al-Majdal, and al-Battat and later seized all of their properties. In 1951 the Israeli army evacuated 13 villages in the triangle area and seized their properties. In October 1956 the Israeli army forced the Palestinian Bedouin tribe al-Bakara to cross the border into Syria. In October 1959 some Bedouin tribes in the Negev desert

were forced to cross the borders into Egypt and Jordan. The lands for all these villages and tribes were confiscated after their cleansing (Jiryis, 1973).

### **Legal Maneuvers**

The Israeli government was so concerned to legalize its confiscation process in the Israeli legal system in order to legitimize its ownership of confiscated properties. Various laws were introduced to accomplish this task. When the Absentee Law was introduced, it considered all the properties of the exiled Palestinians as absentee property. It also considered any person who left his home between November 29, 1947 (the UN partition of Palestine) and June 19, 1948 (the day the Israeli government declared an end to the state of emergency) an absentee as well. According to this definition of an absentee, over 30,000 Palestinians who remained in what became Israel after the war were considered absentees and their properties were confiscated. Also under the absentee law, the properties of the Islamic endowments were all confiscated (Jiryis, 1973). These legal maneuvers continued from the 1950's to the present as the Israeli government introduced various laws to present some "logic" to its policies of land confiscation from their rightful owners.

### **The Use of Emergency Laws**

Law 125 gives the military officers the discretion to declare certain areas closed military areas where people can only enter such an area by permit from the Israeli Army Chief of Staff. The Israeli Army considered the 12 villages in the Galilee as closed military zones and prevented their residents from returning to them after orders of evacuation for security purposes (Jiryis, 1973).

The Use of Security Zones Law 5709 granted the Defense Minister the authority to declare any area within a 35 Kilometer-wide stretch along the Lebanese border and near Gaza as a closed security zone and granted him the ability to order residents of such areas to evacuate for security reasons. The villages of Iqrit and Kufr Biram were declared security zones and evacuated on November 5, 1948. Later on December 25, 1951 the village of Iqrit was destroyed and its lands totaling 15,650 dunums were confiscated. The village of Kufr Biram was destroyed on September 16, 1953 and the village lands totaling 11,700 dunums were also confiscated. Also the village of Khasas near the Syrian border was evacuated under the same law in 1949 (Jiryis, 1973).

### **The Introduction of Utilization of Vacant Lands Laws**

These regulations granted the Ministry of Agriculture the ability to acquire any unutilized lands that are "neglected" or "abandoned" by its owners to ensure proper and efficient use. Using Article 24 of Law 5709 of these regulations, the Ministry of Agriculture legalized some Kibbutz seizure of neighboring Palestinian villages' lands (Jiryis, 1973).

These laws were used in conjunction with security laws to confiscate lands. The Army would declare an area as a closed military zone, barring farmers from reaching their fields. At a later point the Ministry of Agriculture issued confiscation orders regarding these fields due to 'neglect' by their owners. And then the army officers would issue permits for the settlers to whom the lands were assigned by the Department of Agriculture.

Introduction of Measures to Confiscate Properties in the Palestinian Cities Law 5710, Article 3, grants the government the right to appoint a Special Authority that has the right to issue orders to confiscate real estate that "may be necessary for the protection of the country and general security or for the absorption of returnees or for the relief of discharged soldiers. This law at first limited the use of such properties to a period of three years. Then before the end of the term, the period was extended for six more years. And then, before the end of the six years, it was adjusted to give the right to the Special Authority to extend the term indefinitely if the Authority considers it necessary for the general security of Israel (Jiryis, 1973).

The second phase of seizing the properties of the Palestinians living in what is now Israel was the transfer of ownership of these properties to Jewish hands. In 1953 Law 5713 was introduced which granted the Minister of Finance the ability to transfer ownership of properties confiscated by the previous laws over the last five years to the Israeli Department of Construction and Development. Article 2 of this law states that if the Minister of Finance issues a certificate on a property, it must meet the following three conditions:

1. It was not as of April 1, 1952 under the control of its owner.
2. It was designated for the period between July 14, 1948 and April 1, 1952 for development, settlement, or security.
3. The property is still needed for any of the purposes in item 2.

If a property meets these conditions, then the property will be transferred to the ownership of the Israeli Department of Construction and Development (Jiryis, 1973).

During the 1950s the government of Israel transferred ownership of the majority of the lands that belonged to the Palestinians who remained in what became Israel to the state. A total of 704,809 dunums were lost from the lands of 78 populated Palestinian villages. These figures do not include an additional 26 villages.

Similarly, the Palestinian Bedouin community in the Negev desert suffered a similar loss in land in the same period. However, since the Bedouin community owned vast pieces of land as fields and grazing grounds, Israel is still on a continuous campaign to seize more of their lands by limiting their movement and forcing their urbanization through orders of security concerns. The process of land confiscation of the Palestinian residents of what is now Israel continues to this day, but on a smaller scale in the Galilee and continues on a large scale in the south region.

The next round of Israeli land acquisition was the occupation of the remaining Palestinian territories, the West Bank and Gaza, in June 1967. Israel used the same methods for confiscation of the lands in the West Bank and Gaza. The lands that were classified as forest under the British rule were confiscated as state lands. The use of the Absentee Law was used in the West Bank and Gaza in the same manner. Other lands were confiscated for military use or security purposes. The final phase of transferring the lands Israel confiscated in the West Bank and Gaza is being carried out today through the Oslo Peace Process.