

## 350 Years of Jewish Settlement in America: Educational Resources

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**Description:** September 2004 marks the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first permanent Jewish settlement in America. Examine the sources librarians and educators can use to implement innovative and creative programming relating to American Jewish history from colonial times to the present and focusing on heroes such as Haym Solomon, Uriah P. Levy, Rebecca Gratz, and even sports heroes such as Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax. There will be curriculum suggestions, age-appropriate bibliographies, and sample classroom ideas.

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### [SLIDE 1]

Studying or teaching history should not be simply an exercise in memorizing facts and dates. Students can learn Jewish and *American values* and concepts while studying events or people, or even by simply examining a picture book. For example, the children's book *The Kingdom of Singing Birds* discusses the concept of freedom. While not at all about American Jewish history, it can be used as a great opener to a discussion of freedom, which can lead into a discussion of religious

freedom, which can lead into a discussion of religious freedom in AMERICA, and why so many Jews have emigrated to America. Another example is *When Zaydeh Danced on Eldridge Street*; with this book, one can integrate a discussion of the Lower East Side at the turn of the century with learning about the holiday of Simchat Torah. *Molly's Pilgrim*, or more recently, *Rivka's First Thanksgiving*, can be read around the American holiday of Thanksgiving and accented with a lesson on Hebrew prayers of thanksgiving such as "Modeh Ani." They can also be used to accent a discussion of Sukkot. It's all about "integration" in the classroom.

Many of the activity suggestions I present today are for the formal classroom setting in a synagogue or a day school; however, they can of course be modified for use as workshops in libraries, JCC's, etc. or even simply as ideas for designing a bulletin board.

### [SLIDE 2]

The first group of Jewish immigrants, 23 in number, arrived in America in 1654, only 34 years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Today there are approximately 6 million Jews in America. The Jewish people came from nearly every part of the globe in search of freedom and opportunity. They became actors and writers, scientists and doctors, manufacturers and entrepreneurs, and in the process helped shape the history of our country.

### [SLIDE 3]

Depending on how much time is allocated to the study of American Jewish history, a class may be able to study it **chronologically** during the entire year or during a several month span. However, it is highly likely that a class may have only one month allocated to the study of American Jewish history, with the rest of the year focusing on Biblical and/or Israeli history, along with the general Judaica curriculum. In this case, one may wish to present a curriculum via the theme of **people or heroes**, and study famous Jewish Americans that made impacts in different fields of American life. Each day or week can focus on a particular field, such as American Jews in science, art, or education. Another "theme" by which to study American Jewish history is **geographically** (studying the origins of Jewish life in various regions, states, or cities). Finally, one may simply integrate **values** from American Jewish history into a general Judaica curriculum, citing events from Jewish history that

highlight certain mitzvot or values, as I mentioned before with regards to the concepts of freedom or thanksgiving.

**[SLIDE 4]**

Several textbooks have been published in recent years that focus specifically on the history of Jews in America.

There is information about the most recent, Behrman House's *Challenge and Change*, on their website, along with a downloadable teaching guide.

**Rosenberg, Shelley Kapnek, Ed.D. *Challenge and Change: History of the Jews in America, Early Settlement Through Central Migration*. Springfield, N.J.: Behrman House, 2004. [two more volumes forthcoming, December 2004 and Spring 2005.]**

More information: <http://www.behrmanhouse.com/cat/tbgs/68cac.shtml>

Teaching Guide available for free download on website:

<http://www.behrmanhouse.com/cat/free/cac/>

**Rossel, Seymour. *Let Freedom Ring: A History of Jews in the United States*. West Orange, N.J.: Behrman House, 1995.**

**Kenvin, Helene Schwartz. *This Land of Liberty: A History of America's Jews*. West Orange, N.J.: Behrman House, 1986.**

Before going further into these four models of study, I'll briefly highlight a few titles from the bibliographies. Your handout has a general bibliography, which is useful for background information, as well as suggested titles for younger students with some activity suggestions, and a bibliography for older students. The last page presents some timelines available on the internet. The bibliography is in no way comprehensive.

**[SLIDE 5,6]**

Seymour Brody's *Jewish Heroes and Heroines of America* has been put on the web by Florida Atlantic University Libraries, so you can find each chapter's biography on the internet.

**[SLIDE 7]**

Two other highly useful resources are *Blessings of Freedom*, which includes brief vignettes highlighting different events or people from American Jewish History, and *Jewish Women in America*, which is a beautiful two-volume encyclopedia with biographies and other material about significant American Jewish women. These two titles were published by AJHS and are available for purchase on our website.

**[SLIDE 8]**

A useful website for biographical and other information is the Jewish Virtual Library, available at [israel.org/jsource](http://israel.org/jsource). I'd also like to mention the Jewish Women's Archives ([www.jwa.org](http://www.jwa.org)), which offers lesson plans with primary source documents, along with biographical material.

**[SLIDE 9]**

Some of the activity suggestions from the K-3 bibliography are compiled in part from Ellen Musikant and Sue Grass's *Judaism Through Children's Books: A Resource for Teachers and Parents*, published in 2001 by A.R.E. Publishing.

**[SLIDE 10]**

*The Keeping Quilt* activities (full detail on bibliography); also *Chanukah on the Prairie*, which demonstrates to children that there was (and is) indeed Jewish life outside of the Lower East Side.

**[SLIDE 11]**

I'll begin with the chronological approach, studying American Jewish history across various time periods.

**I. CHRONOLOGICAL APPROACH**

**[SLIDE 12-15]**

Several timelines have been published on the internet that are highly useful resources; these are highlighted on the last page of your bibliographies:

- <http://www.nmajh.org/timeline/index.htm> [National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia]
- <http://www.celebrate350.org/dan/news.php> [Celebrate 350: Jewish Life in America 1654-2004 is the national umbrella established to provide resources, stimulate ideas, and serve as the network hub for a year-long outpouring of activities to take place across the nation beginning in September 2004. The project involves hundreds of organizations, hundreds of discrete programs, and thousands of individuals.]
- <http://www.350th.org/history/timeline.html> [Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History, which includes the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Jewish Archives, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress]
- FORTHCOMING: Center for Jewish History will have an online timeline with images from the CJH Partners' collections; <http://www.cjh.org>

**[SLIDE 16]**

The American Jewish Historical Society has also published a timeline poster documenting 350 years of Jewish life in the Americas, with images from the AJHS collections. It is available for purchase on the AJHS website. Also, the first chapter of the reference source *American Jewish Desk Reference* is a very descriptive timeline.

**[SLIDE 17, 18]**

In terms of what else the AJHS is producing for the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there will soon be available a CD-ROM for purchase with 24 copyrighted images from our collections, each with a caption describing it. Synagogues and other organizations can purchase the CD, which we're currently calling the "350<sup>th</sup> Poster Series," and then use the images for posters or other projects. You can take them to a printer and print 1 or 20 of them, whichever you'd like, to use as posters to decorate classrooms, hallways, etc. I have two examples here. The first is Sandy Koufax's Rookie Year jersey, with a brief caption describing Koufax, and the second is an image of *The New Colossus*, the sonnet penned by Emma Lazarus that now sits on the Statue of Liberty (Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free). The AJHS owns the only original surviving copy of the sonnet in Lazarus' own handwriting.

**[SLIDE 19]**

American Jewish History can be divided into 5 main time periods, called "Migrations."

**[SLIDE 20]**

AJHS has published a five-volume series of books entitled *The Jewish People in America*, which highlights these five migrations.

One may wish to begin a unit of study with an introduction to the concept of immigration. There is a timeline and background information about immigration to the United States (not Jewish immigration) on the Ellis Island website: <http://www.ellisland.org/Immexp/indexframe.asp>.

**[SLIDE 21]**

Immigration studies can be connected to a Torah lesson by asking, “What are some examples of major Jewish immigrations in the Torah?”

- Abraham leaves Ur for Canaan; can connect to a lesson on the parsha *Lech Lecha*
  - teach Debbie Friedman’s song “Lechi Lach.”
- Migration to Egypt due to famine in Canaan
- Exodus out of Egypt because of slavery
  - There are several *haggadot* on your bibliographies that include images from American Jewish history to highlight the traditional *haggadah*.

**[SLIDE 22]**

Map projects can be used to study any time period.

**[SLIDE 23]**

These activities can be used to study any time period.

I will now offer several brief activity suggestions for each of these five time periods.

**[SLIDE 24]**

**Migration I (1654-1820)**

**1654-1820:** In the Autumn of 1654, twenty-three Jews aboard the ship *Sainte Catherine* landed at the town of New Amsterdam to establish the first permanent Jewish settlement in North America. The earliest days of Jewish life in America are described as the First Migration.

Classes may wish to study early synagogues of America. The first synagogue in the colonies was on Mill Street in New Amsterdam, which is now known as South William Street in Manhattan's financial district. Congregation Shearith Israel was constructed beginning in 1728, and is now located on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, known as the Spanish/Portuguese Synagogue. A congregation was established in Newport, Rhode Island in the 1740s; construction on Yeshua Yisrael, now known as the Touro Synagogue, was completed in 1763, and it is the oldest remaining synagogue building in the United States. Classes or libraries may wish to make large maps for the bulletin board, labeling the colonies with the years the Jews settled there and why. Other early Jewish settlements were founded in Savannah, Georgia (1733), Philadelphia (1745), Charleston, South Carolina (1749), Newport, Rhode Island (1763), and Richmond, Virginia (1789). [They can continue with the maps as other eras are studied when Jews moved south and westward (Jews followed the Gold Rush; Jews moved to Florida, Texas, Denver, etc.)]

Questions for discussion/research:

- Has the role of the synagogue in Jewish life changed since colonial times? In what ways? In what ways does it remain the same?
- How old is your synagogue?
- Did your congregation ever meet in another building? Where?
- Does your synagogue have a cemetery? Where?
- How many people belong to your synagogue?

- How many students attend your religious school?
- What is your synagogue's name? What does it mean in Hebrew? What does this tell you about the hopes, dreams, and expectations of the people who founded it?

Classes can explore the history of the earliest Jews in New York, Newport, Charleston, Savannah, and Pennsylvania. Who were the important families and prominent figures in the different areas? Chapters 1-4 in Kenvin's *This Land of Liberty* and Chapters 1-2 of Rossel's *Let Freedom Ring* are useful resources to explore this subject. Students can make a family tree of an important colonial Jewish family, and then make their own family trees.

(Jacob Franks, Billah Abigail Levy, Moses Levy, Asser Levy, Luis Moses Gomez, Aaron Lopez, Mordecai Sheftall, Abraham De Lyon, Gratz family, etc.)

The American Jewish Historical Society holds archival collections for many of these families, so you may wish to obtain copies of some primary source documents, such as the letters of Abigail Franks, for the students to look at and examine from a historical context.

Provide the students with a map of the colonies. They can write the names of the important families that were prominent in the different colonies on the map.

[SLIDE 25]

### **Migration II (1820-1880)**

**1820-1880:** Between 1820 and 1880, European Jews arrived in the United States in ever greater numbers. While later Jewish immigrants would criticize their "rush" to assimilation, the Jews of this period created the institutions that continue to shape Jewish life in America. This is known as the "second wave" of Jewish migration.

Making newspapers are fun activities for investigating this time period. Using large newsprint makes them look more authentic. Suggested headlines: "Judah P. Benjamin Serves as Confederate's Secretary of State!", "Jewish chaplains serve in the Union army!", "Ernestine Rose Speaks Publicly on the Rights of Women." Concepts include "Jews on the Frontier" and "Jewish life in the Civil War."

One may also wish to study the peddler life of the German immigrants when examining this migration. What was it like to be a peddler at the turn of the century? Ask the students to try to find out if there are any companies in the community that were started by Jewish peddlers at the turn of the century. Maybe a student's family owns their own business?

[SLIDE 26]

### **Migration III (1880-1920)**

**1880-1920:** The years between 1880 and 1920 marked the third great migration of Jews to the U.S.-including more than two million from the Russian empire, Austria-Hungary, and Rumania. Jews during this time both stayed in the large cities of the Northeast and Midwest as well as began moving to smaller towns in the deep South and the West.

Haberle, Susan E. *Jewish Immigrants, 1880-1924*. Mankato, Minn: Blue Earth Books, 2003.

Topics can include "Jewish family names." Many Jews changed or shortened their last names when they came to America. In some cases, immigration officials could not spell out long, unusual-sounding names, so they were shortened (Wallechinsky to Wallace). Some Jews changed their own names to sound more "American." Students can try to find out if their surnames were changed and what their name means.

#### Surname Dictionaries:

- Beider, Alexander. *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire*. Avotanyu, 1993.
- Beider, Alexander. *A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Kingdom of Poland*. Avotaynu, 1996.
- Guggenheimer, Heinrich and Eva. *Jewish Family Names and Their Origins: An Etymological Dictionary*. Ktav Publishing House, 1992.
- Kaganoff, Benzion. *A Dictionary of Jewish Names and Their History*. Jason Aronson, 1996.

Other activities that work well during this time period are of course family tree projects or map projects tracing the migrations of Jews from eastern Europe.

There are many young adult fiction novels that deal with the theme of immigration to the United States at the turn of the century. See bibliography for suggestions. *Dear Emma*, *All of a Kind Family*, and *Letters from Rifka* are just a few.

Several books have been published for the younger audience relating to the Ellis Island experience. An example is Tom Owens' *Ellis Island*, published by PowerKids Press (1997). One may wish to have a hands-on activity in which the experience is recreated.

Another event to examine is the International Ladies Garment Workers Union Strike of 1909. What is a strike? How did the ILGWU strike help working conditions today? Look at the website for Childright Worldwide (<http://www.childright.nl/english/>). According to UN estimates, more than two hundred million children, equivalent to the total population of the United States of America - are forced to work daily like adults. They are robbed of their childhood, of education, of health, of play and the chance of a humane future. What can we do to help improve the conditions of children and workers abroad?

#### [SLIDE 27]

#### **Migration IV: 1920-1945**

**1920-1945:** During the turbulent period between 1920 and 1945, Jews were poised to enter the mainstream of American life. Many issues surfaced that preoccupied America's Jewish community for the rest of the century. Despite the anti-semitism, signs of success and acceptance were everywhere.

#### Questions for discussion:

1. How did the Great Depression affect Americans and American Jews?
2. This is a good time to discuss some of the sports figures as Jewish heroes and role models (Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax, etc.)
3. Explore the connection American Jews had to Palestine and the beginnings of the State of Israel. What did it mean to be a *Zionist*? Study the origins of Hadassah.
4. Fiction
  - a. There are a number of novels for young adults that deal with the escape from Holocaust condition to the United States, such as Sonia Levitan's *Journey to America* and *Silver Days*.

#### [SLIDE 28]

#### **Migration V: 1945-Present**

**1945-Present:** Post World War II has been a time of rapid economic and social progress for Jews in America. Yet this phenomenal success has come at a cost. It is important to examine the potential threat to Jewish culture posed by assimilation and intermarriage. Will the Jewish people, having already endured so much, survive America's freedom and affluence as well?

For this time period, one may wish to examine the important role Jews have played in the American civil rights movement. Some say this was a natural outgrowth of the Jewish tradition of social justice. The Torah commands, “Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof; Justice, justice, shall ye pursue.” (Deuteronomy 16:20) The word “justice” is repeated, according to the rabbis, to teach that one must seek justice not only for Jews, but for non-Jews as well.

A useful resource to examine this is my colleague Norman Finkelstein’s *Heeding the Call: Jewish Voices in America’s Civil Rights Struggle*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997.

[SLIDE 29]

## II. PEOPLE / “HEROES” TO STUDY

[SLIDE 30]

To introduce a unit of study on heroes or heroines, a teacher may wish to begin with a discussion about what it means to be a hero. Look at different dictionary definitions of “hero.”

[SLIDE 31]

Questions to ask include, “What makes someone a hero? Does it mean different things in different generations?”, “What can we learn from our heroes and their stories?”, “Why do we idolize them?” “What does this say about our values and ourselves?” Many schools and synagogues now hold September 11<sup>th</sup> commemorations at the beginning of the year; this is a useful vehicle through which to connect the topic.

[SLIDE 32]

Many activities such as those listed here from Shirley Barish’s *The Big Book of Great Teaching Ideas For Jewish Schools, Youth Groups, Camps, and Retreats* (NY: UAHC Press, 1997) work well for ANY group of historical figures.

I will offer some activity suggestions for a few of the categories of “heroes.”

[SLIDE 33]

### *Jewish contributions to Business, Labor, and Finance*

The earliest Jewish contribution to business in America was mercantile. The largely Sephardic immigrants usually had resources and connections that the young country could benefit by. Later immigrants, usually from Germany, came without resources and built their stores and fortunes on the foundations of a peddler’s pack or a pushcart. Finally, the Eastern European immigrants of the latter part of the nineteenth century came in such number and with so few material belongings that tens of thousands of them had to take jobs in the factories created by their forerunners. The immigrants not only flooded into the garment industry and other manufacturing plants, they took the lead in organizing unions.

Activity Suggestions:

- Bring in newspaper circulars / magazine ads. Students will search for products/companies founded by Jews. They can make collages or scrapbooks. Examples include: **Liz Claiborne** products, **Levi’s** (Levi Strauss), **Calvin Klein**, **MGM film company** (look for ads for movies produced by this company; videos, DVD’s, etc.), **Samuel Goldwyn** films, **Warner Brothers** films, **Steven Spielberg** films, **Sumner Redstone**, **Filene’s / Filene’s Basement** (William Filene moved from peddler to owner of Filene’s Department Stores of Boston; his son Edward created the automatic markdown system that made Filene’s Basement famous), **Macy’s**, **Estee Lauder**, **Rite Aid** (founded by Alexander Grass in

1958), **Mattel Toy Company** (founded by Ruth Mosko Handler and her husband, who also named the **Barbie and Ken Dolls** after their daughter and son)

- Study the origins of Jewish peddlers. Ask the students to try to find out if there are any companies in your community that were started by Jewish peddlers at the turn of the century. Maybe someone's family owns their own business?
- Haym Salomon play from Josephine Peretz's *American History Plays and Playlets for Children* (New York: Vantage Press, 1972).

Historical Figures to Study:

- Haym Salomon (1740-1785): Considered "Financier of the American Revolution"
- Judah Touro (1775-1854): First large-scale Jewish philanthropist in America
- Levi Strauss (1829-1902): Creator of "blue jeans"
- Jacob Schiff (1847-1920): Financier, philanthropist
- Samuel Gompers (1850-1924): Labor leader
- Emma Goldman (1869-1940): Political activist
- Estee Lauder (1908-2004): Cosmetic queen
- Liz Claiborne (1929- ): Fashion designer; Liz Claiborne products are currently sold in department stores in over sixty countries
- Calvin Klein (1942- ): Fashion designer

[SLIDE 34]

### **Jewish contributions to Law, Government, and Politics**

Although no Jew has ever been elected to the office of President of the United States (yet!!), Jewish Americans have served in positions of great responsibility and respect in American government, have made a strong impact as political activists, and have risen to the highest ranks in the American legal and judicial system.

[SLIDE 35]

Historical Figures to Study:

- Francis Salvador (1747-1776): Elected to First and Second South Carolina Provincial Congresses; only Jew of the Revolutionary period to be elected to a state legislature
- Uriah P. Levy (1792-1862): Highest-ranking Jewish officer in the United States navy prior to the Civil War
- Louis Marshall (1856-1929): Lawyer, community leader; served as president of the American Jewish Committee
- Louis D. Brandeis (1856-1941): Lawyer, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court
- Benjamin Nathan Cardozo (1870-1938): Lawyer, Supreme Court Justice
- David "Mickey" Marcus (1902-1948): Military leader; American advisor in Israeli army (named Lieutenant General of the Israeli Army by David Ben-Gurion)
- Jacob Javitz (1904-1986): United States Senator
- Henry Kissinger (1923- ): Foreign Policy Expert
- Edward I. Koch (1924- ): Mayor of city of New York, 1977-1989
- Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1933- ): Supreme Court Justice
- Joseph Lieberman (1942- ): U.S. Senator from Connecticut

[SLIDE 36]

Activity Suggestions:

- Conduct a press conference, debate, or mock election.



- Create front pages of newspapers: teach the students the key questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- Pose the question: “How is democracy an American **and** a Jewish value?”
- “History Treasure Hunt”: Provide sources and pose questions such as “Who was the first Jew in the United States Senate?”; “Who was the first Jew to hold political office in America?”; “Which Jews are currently serving in Congress?,” “Name two Jewish Supreme Court Justices”, etc.

**[SLIDE 37]**

- Stone, Kurt F. *The Congressional Minyan: The Jews of Capitol Hill*. Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 2000.
- Levitan, Tina. *First Facts in American Jewish History: From 1492 to the Present*. Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1996.

**[SLIDE 38]**

**Jewish contributions to Sports and Games**

There is a very proud legacy of Jewish athletes, and each Jewish sports hero’s accomplishments in the world of sports have reflected on his or her particular society and era.

Historical Figures to Study:

- Max Baer (1909-1959): Boxer
- Lillian Copeland (1904-1964): Track and field athlete
- Henry “Hank” Greenberg (1911-1986): Baseball player
- Arnold “Red” Auerbach (1917- ): Basketball coach
- Thelma “Tiby” Eisen (1922- ): Baseball player, starred for nine years in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, the only professional women’s league in the game’s history
- Adolph Schayes (1928- ): Basketball player
- Sanford “Sandy” Koufax (1935- ): Baseball player
- Mark Spitz (1950- ): Olympic swimmer

**[SLIDE 39]**

An excellent resource for more information is <http://www.jewsinsports.org>, a website hosted by the American Jewish Historical Society. It include a search engine, as well as a listing of athletes by sport.

**[SLIDE 40]**

Activity Suggestions:

- Students design their own Jewish baseball (or football, or basketball, etc.) cards. Include years played, position, statistics, and other significant information. Each student can make a different card and the class will have a whole set! Add some Israeli Bazooka gum! **[SLIDE 41]** See the AJHS “Jewish Majorleaguers” set as a guide ([www.ajhs-store.com](http://www.ajhs-store.com))
- Studying “Jews in Sports” lends itself well to a Lag Ba’Omer program in the spring. Have a school-wide *Maccabiah* (“Color War”) after studying different Jewish sports figures.
  - Compare the sports that the Jews in the time of Akiva played to the sports of today.
- Watch the film *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg* by Aviva Kempner (<http://www.hankgreenbergfilm.org/>).
- Hebrew connection – Learn Hebrew names of sports.
- If it’s an Olympics year, this lends itself well to an Olympics project. See “American Jewish Olympic Medal Winners” in *American Jewish Desk Reference* (p. 276-277). Students can research what Jewish

life was like during the years that the ancient Greek games were played, a great peripheral activity, especially if the curriculum includes ancient and modern Jewish history!

**[SLIDE 42]**

**Jewish contributions to Science, Medicine and Social Science**

The first Jewish doctors came to American soil with Columbus and they have been here ever since. It is believed that the ship's doctor and surgeon aboard Columbus' *Santa Maria* were both Jewish physicians. During the colonial period there were a number of Portuguese Jewish physicians, and Jewish names continue to appear in medical records throughout the pre-Civil War era. There was even a Jewish doctor at the Alamo, Moses Albert Levy. By the mid-nineteenth century, the immigration of thousands of German-speaking Jews from Western Europe had greatly increased the number of Jewish physicians in all American cities, many becoming quite prominent. Likewise, the larger wave of Jewish immigration in the late nineteenth century also brought an increase of Jewish physicians. In 1907, a Jewish man named Albert Michelson won the first Nobel Prize awarded to an American scientist. Other scientists making significant contributions are Albert Einstein, who fled Nazi Germany in 1933, Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin.

Historical Figures to Study:

- Albert Michelson (1852-1931): First Nobel Prize to an American scientist (calculated the speed of light)
- Lillian Wald (1867-1940): Originator of public health nursing
- Joseph Goldberger (1874-1929): Studies are the basis for modern science of nutrition
- Albert Einstein (1879-1955): Physicist
- Albert Sabin (1906-1993): Physician; polio research
- Jonas Salk (1914-1995): Physician; polio vaccine
- Carl Sagan (1934-1996): Astronomer

**[SLIDE 43]**

Activity Suggestions:

- Jewish Nobel Prize winner posters for bulletin boards (*American Jewish Desk Reference*, p. 248)

**[SLIDE 44. 45]**

**Jewish contributions to Religious Life and Education**

Two strong forces contended in the development of American Judaism. On one side was the appeal of tradition, ritual, and religious law – the need to be true to a religious heritage that went back thousands of years. On the other side was the desire to live in the world one was born into, to respond to American culture in both its positive and negative aspects. Time and time again, as American Jews began to accommodate the culture of the United States, a new wave of immigrants from Europe arrived and insisted on the old ways and the old loyalties. Out of this flux came four distinct movements in American Judaism – Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist. Today almost six million of the world's 13 million Jews live in the United States.

Historical Figures to Study:

- Gershom Seixas (1746-1816): First native-born Rabbi
- Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869): Founded the Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia, the first of its kind, which gave women a role in determining Jewish educational curriculum for the first time
- Isaac Leeser (1806-1868): Published first American translation of the Bible
- Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900): Leader of American Reform Judaism
- Sabato Morais (1823-1897): Rabbi, founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary
- Solomon Schechter (1847-1915): Leader of Conservative Judaism

- Jacob Joseph (1848-1902): “Chief Rabbi” of New York
- Henrietta Szold (1860-1945): “Night school” founder for educating new immigrants; founded Hadassah
- Stephen Samuel Wise (1874-1949): Zionist leader
- Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983): Rabbi, founder of Reconstructionist Movement
- Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972): Philosopher, religious leader
- Judith Kaplan Eisenstein (1909-1996): Celebrated first Bat Mitzvah in America
- Sally Priesand (1946- ): First ordained female rabbi in America

#### [SLIDE 46]

##### Activity Suggestions:

- Four Streams of Judaism
  - Use the “Four Corners” technique, where first each student reads an overview of the 4 streams and then chooses a corner to stand in. The groups formed at the 4 corners will then discuss for a few minutes the pros of their choice, and then will present to the others. Alternate activities are debates and press conferences with students representing each of the 4 streams and defending their choice.
  - Resources:
    - <http://www.jewfaq.org/movement.htm> (Judaism 101 website)
    - *American Jewish Desk Reference*
    - Finkelstein, Norman H. *Forged in Freedom* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2002), pages 3-12 (does not include Reconstructionism).
- If you work in a synagogue or affiliated day school such as the Solomon Schechter schools, it is a good idea for students do some sort of research project into the history of the congregation or school’s denomination. Many students do not know what make Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism different and why their synagogue subscribes to that philosophy. Studying the founders of the Movements (for example, Mordecai Kaplan for Reconstructionism) in the same way that you have studied other heroes of American Jewish history is a good idea.

#### [SLIDE 47]

### III. GEOGRAPHIC APPROACH

- Can focus on:
  - Regions
    - Northeast, South, Southwest, Midwest, West
  - States
  - Cities
- Guidebooks.
  - Examine some Jewish guidebooks. Oscar Israelowitz Publishing has published several different guidebooks.
  - Make a Jewish guide to your city or town. Include establishments such as synagogues (each denomination!), kosher restaurants, Judaica shops, historical sites, etc. Include a map with the sites clearly identified. If you live in a very small town without any Jewish establishments, expand to a larger city near you.
- Map projects.
  - Study immigration patterns. How did your family come to America? Hang up a large map of the world and use yarn or string with thumbtacks to indicate the immigration patterns of the class.
- Each student chooses a state (or region) to study. Provide them with some sources.
  - Create a fill-in-the-blanks worksheet with such phrases as:
    - My state is \_\_\_\_\_.

- The first Jews came to \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_ (year).
  - They came to this state because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Some of the important/famous Jewish people from my state are \_\_\_\_\_.
- Or the students can write a report about the history of the Jews in their state.
  - Put a large map of the United States on the bulletin board and attach the students' projects in the right places on the map.

[SLIDE 48,49]

#### IV. VALUES / *MITZVOT*

##### 1. *Tzedakah, K'lal Yisrael (community) over time*

This lesson introduces students to the concept of *tzedakah* and *tikun olam*, discusses why anonymity is important in giving and receiving charity, and traces the history of Jewish charitable and other community organizations in the United States.

Activities:

- Read the story *What Zeesie Saw on Delancey Street*. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1996. It's a picture book, but sends a universal message and is suitable for all ages. Discuss the main ideas of the story: Charity can be anonymous; It is important to be able to receive when you have need; People in a community take care of each other. Have the students think about the people in their "community" – remind them that they belong to many communities (school, family, neighborhood, synagogue, camp, etc.) What kinds of things can people in a community do for each other?
- Learn about Rambam's Tzedakah Ladder. Ask the students to find out how long ago Rambam lived; what does this say about how important historically this value has been? [Use *Encyclopedia Judaica* to research Rambam.]
- Pages 13-15 and 121-124 of Helene Schwartz Kenvin's *This Land of Liberty* (Behrman House, 1986) discuss the origins of benevolent societies. There is a long article in *Encyclopedia Judaica* on "Charity" which provides information on the modern sense of the word. Create a timeline or chart to show the development of the different organizations in America (some are still in existence).
  - Examples: Hebrew Benevolent Societies (of different cities), Jews' Hospital, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Baron de Hirsch Fund, *landsmanschaften*, United Jewish Appeal (UJA)
    - AJHS has the papers of the Baron de Hirsch Fund and the Industrial Removal Office
- What charitable organizations exist in your community? Is there a federation? Find out how much money it raises each year and how it allocates money back to the communities. Look at the United Jewish Communities' website: <http://www.uja.org/> to help with your research.
- Make and decorate tzedakah boxes and collect change each week. Identify a needy group in your community and have your class raise whatever money it can to help. Or have the class vote on national charities that they could donate money to.

##### 2. *Freedom / Liberty*

- Activities from *The Kingdom of Singing Birds* or *When Zaydeh Danced on Eldridge Street*
- Torah parsha *Behar*: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land."
  - This quote from the Torah is on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia

In conclusion, I hope I have made it clear that whether you have one day, one week, one month, or even the whole year, American Jewish history can be incorporated *to some degree* into any curriculum, during this 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and every year.