



Jewish Heritage Short Lessons



COMBAT
ANTISEMITISM
MOVEMENT

קרן תקווה
TIKVAH

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JEWISH PILGRIMS

The first Jews arrived in America with the Roanoke Colony in 1585, followed by Elias Legarde in Jamestown in 1621. In 1789, the first Virginia Jewish congregation was founded in Richmond, intertwining Jewish and Virginia history.

A significant milestone occurred in September 1654 when 23 Jewish immigrants arrived in New Amsterdam (now New York City) on the *Sainte Catherine*, fleeing persecution in Recife, Brazil. These Jews had previously been expelled from Spain and Portugal during the Inquisition and sought safety in the Dutch colony.



Manischewitz matza box cover issued in honor of the Tercentenary depicting 1654 arrival of the first Jews of New Amsterdam.

New Amsterdam was notably diverse, with around 1,000 inhabitants speaking 18 different languages. Despite initial resistance from Governor Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch West India Company allowed the Jews to settle, recognizing their economic contributions.

The Jewish settlers established themselves as merchants, connecting New Amsterdam to other trading hubs. By 1730, they founded Congregation Shearith Israel, the oldest Jewish congregation in the United States, which became a cornerstone of Jewish religious life in America.

- How did the arrival of Jewish immigrants on the *Sainte Catherine* in 1654 contribute to the economic and cultural development of New Amsterdam, despite initial resistance from Governor Peter Stuyvesant?
- In what ways did the establishment of Congregation Shearith Israel in 1730 serve as a cornerstone for Jewish religious life in America, and how does it reflect the broader integration of Jewish settlers into the early American society?

THE JEWISH BALANCING ACT IN AMERICA: CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS RESILIENCE

In colonial America, Jewish settlers had to navigate "blue laws" prohibiting work on Sundays while also observing Shabbat from Friday evening to Saturday night. This was especially challenging for Jewish merchants who needed to sell goods throughout the week. Despite these difficulties, religious observance often took precedence over business.

Aaron Lopez, a Jewish merchant in Newport, Rhode Island, ensured his ships did not sail from Friday night until Monday morning, reflecting the Jewish community's commitment to their faith amidst the pressures of colonial life.



Cenotaph at the Colonial Jewish Cemetery, Newport. (July 31, 2013).

Jewish holidays, based on the lunar calendar, marked the year's rhythm, providing respite and fostering community cohesion, unlike the Christian Gregorian calendar. The High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover were significant, and Jews would travel long distances to celebrate together, reaffirming their faith. Isaac Solomon, a Jewish merchant from Halifax, journeyed to New York to observe the High Holidays, illustrating the lengths taken to maintain religious practices. Jews maintained friendships with Christian neighbors but adhered to customs like kashrut, often taking on roles such as meat slaughterers to ensure access to kosher food.

Aaron Lopez also emphasized the importance of ritual circumcision and Jewish burial rites, underscoring their commitment to cultural traditions. The Jewish community established benevolent societies and mutual aid organizations, vital for support in a time without social welfare systems, highlighting communal values. Jewish education was crucial for maintaining religious identity and transmitting values. Despite limited resources, families and communities ensured children learned Hebrew, religious texts, and the meaning of Jewish heritage, fostering a strong sense of faith in a predominantly Christian society.

- How did Jewish settlers in colonial America balance their religious observance with the challenges posed by "blue laws" and the need to maintain their businesses, and what impact did this have on their community cohesion and religious practices?
- In what ways did Jewish merchants like Aaron Lopez and Isaac Solomon demonstrate their commitment to maintaining Jewish traditions and practices, and how did this influence the broader Jewish community's ability to observe their faith during the colonial period?
- How did the establishment of benevolent societies, mutual aid organizations, and Jewish education systems reflect the values and priorities of the Jewish community in colonial America, and what role did these institutions play in preserving Jewish identity in a predominantly Christian society?

JEWS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

When Congress proclaimed the end of the Revolutionary War just before Passover in 1783, many Jews drew parallels between themselves and the deliverance of their ancestors who were freed from bondage in Egypt. One wrote to his son, "Thanks to the Almighty, [the war] has come to an end... we have the world to begin again." Congregation Shearith Israel in New York composed a prayer for the occasion, which thanked God for America's victory but asked for their own redemption: "As Thou hast granted these 13 states of America everlasting freedom, so may Thou bring us forth once again from bondage into freedom...."



Jewish Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island, built 1763, Peter Harrison (1716-75)

The distribution of Jews in the colonies also changed. Newport, Rhode Island, formerly one of the four largest Jewish communities in America, had its port destroyed in the war and its Jews scattered. Jewish families in Savannah, Georgia, were almost uniformly supporters of the patriot cause. Many of these families had developed silk businesses in Colonial times and were forced to abandon them when the British captured the city in 1778. On the other hand, two cities that were spared destruction, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Charleston, South Carolina, emerged from the war with even larger and better organized Jewish communities.

In 1790, Moses Seixas engaged in a notable correspondence with George Washington, which has become a significant historical document expressing the Jewish community's hopes for religious freedom and equality in the newly established United States. Seixas, serving as the warden of the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, penned a letter as part of a welcoming address to President Washington during his visit to the town.

In this letter, Seixas praises the U.S. government for ensuring liberty and freedom of worship, and, in what has become a famous quote in American history, wrote that the government "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

He speaks of the appreciation felt by the Jewish community for their newfound ability to live securely under a government that offers its protection to all, regardless of religious beliefs.

George Washington's response to Seixas is equally famous and often cited for its eloquent support of religious liberty. Washington echoes the words of Seixas and goes further, stating, "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights." He affirms that all citizens should be free to profess and support their religious beliefs without fear of reprisal or discrimination, reflecting the principles of freedom and equality that are foundational to American democracy.

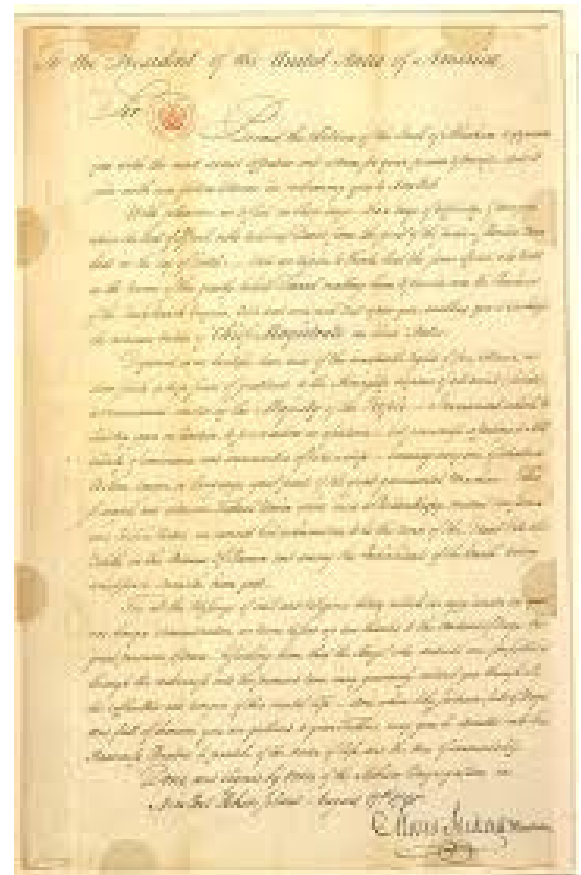
This exchange is celebrated as a pivotal moment in the history of religious freedom in the United States, demonstrating the commitment of the country's leadership to maintain and protect these ideals.

Excerpts from the letter of Moses Seixas to George Washington, August 17, 1790:

"Deprived as we heretofore have been of the invaluable rights of free Citizens, we now (with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of all events) behold a Government, erected by the Majesty of the People—a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

"We rejoice in the belief that the present day would be hailed by posterity as the great epoch, when the compassionate Ruler of the universe would establish on the most lasting foundations, civil and religious liberty in the western world."

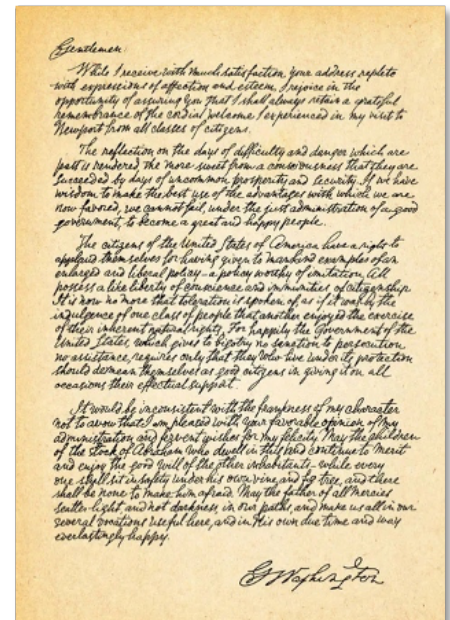
"For all these Blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the Ancient of Days, the great preserver of Men – beseeching him, that the Angel who conducted [guided] our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised Land, may graciously conduct [guide] you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life: – And, when, like Joshua full of days and full of honor, you are gathered to your Fathers, may you be admitted into the Heavenly Paradise to partake of the water of life, and the tree of immortality."



Excerpts from the response of George Washington to Moses Seixas, August 18, 1790:

"The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support."

"May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy."



Discussion Questions

- Seixas writes that the Jews have been "deprived...of the invaluable rights of free Citizens," but looks forward to living in a nation which does not permit "bigotry" or support "persecution." Why would the threat of bigotry and persecution be a major concern for many Jewish immigrants to America?
- What does Seixas mean when he says that the United States affords "to all Liberty of conscience, and immunities of Citizenship"?
- Seixas concludes by thanking G-d "for all these Blessings of civil and religious liberty." He also blesses Washington, asking G-d to help guide him like the "Angel who conducted [guided] our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised Land." In what sense is America of 1790 still in the wilderness? What is the "promised land" that Seixas is imagining?
- Why do you think Seixas compares Washington to the biblical Joshua in the letter's very last line? Consider the two biblical figures he mentions: David and Joshua. What is the significance of choosing these two Israelite leaders in particular?

EMMA LAZARUS: THE JEWISH POET OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

Emma Lazarus, born in 1849 into a prominent New York family, descended on her Sephardi side from Jewish communal leader Moses Seixas. (Sephardi Jews originated from the Iberian Peninsula, including Spain and Portugal and represent one of the two largest sects within Judaism. Ashkenazi Jews are the other large sect who trace their origins to Europe) By the 1880s, Lazarus had established herself as a widely acclaimed poet, essayist, political activist, and translator of renowned European writers into English.

Emma Lazarus saw America as a beacon of liberty not only for the world but particularly for Jews around the world who had been strangers and persecuted over the Centuries in other foreign lands.

She saw America as a beacon of hope for Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants fleeing persecution and hardship in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, she foresaw a global renaissance of Jewish civilization, fueled by the vibrant interplay between the Jews in America and the emerging generations in the Holy Land. (Described further below, her vision materialized in 1948 with the re-establishment of the State of Israel with significant support from the United States).



Amidst America's "melting pot" ethos of the time, many Jews felt compelled to forsake their distinct identity to become solely Americans. Others, wary of the assimilative pressures of American society, chose to insulate themselves, fearful that broader cultural engagement might sever their ties to Jewish traditions and community. Some of the bravest Jews challenged the notion that they had to choose between their American and Jewish identities. They argued that these identities were not only compatible but also mutually enriching. Emma Lazarus embodied this belief vividly. Her iconic poem, "The New Colossus," inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

It was only fitting that the famous Lazarus poem below appears on the Statue of Liberty as Ellis Island, often referred to as the 'Gateway to America,' as it played a pivotal role in the history of Jewish immigration to the United States. From 1892 to 1954, the island served as the nation's busiest immigration inspection station. For millions of Jewish immigrants, mostly fleeing persecution and seeking a new life in America, Ellis Island was the threshold between their past hardships and future hopes. Upon arrival, they were subjected to rigorous health inspections and interrogations. Those who passed were allowed entry into the United States, a country that promised freedom and opportunity. It is estimated that nearly 40 percent of current U.S. citizens can trace at least one ancestor to this iconic portal, which for many Jewish families, was the beginning of a new chapter in a land where they could live, worship, and prosper freely.

"The New Colossus"

*"Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*



This poem is a powerful declaration of Lazarus' vision, illustrating how the American dream extends its promise to all those seeking refuge, embodying a profound connection between her Jewish heritage and American identity.

Emma Lazarus was a fascinating figure with a rich legacy beyond just her famous poem, "The New Colossus." Here are a few more facts that can be added to deepen the portrayal of her life and impact:

- Lazarus was influenced by the transcendentalist movement and the works of writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom she met personally. Her literary style and themes reflect a deep engagement with social issues and personal identity, which was somewhat ahead of her time, particularly in her expressions of Jewish identity and feminism.

- In addition to her writing, Lazarus was actively involved in aiding Jewish refugees who were fleeing the pogroms in Eastern Europe in the 1880s. She worked with refugee organizations, wrote articles, and used her position in society to advocate for better treatment and aid for these new immigrants.
- Lazarus was also an early feminist, advocating for the rights and education of women. She wrote essays and letters that discussed the role of women in society and argued for greater opportunities for women's education and economic independence.
- Though she died before the movement began to reestablish the State of Israel in the Jewish homeland, Emma Lazarus is often seen as a precursor to this so called Zionist movement. Her writings on Jewish identity and nationhood, as well as her poems and essays, prefigured some of the themes that would later be central to Zionist ideology.
- Lazarus also wrote significant essays and dramas that explored her Sephardi Jewish heritage and historical themes. She was deeply engaged with Jewish history and its implications for contemporary Jewish identity in America.
- These facets of her life illustrate her multi-dimensional persona as a writer, activist, and thinker, deeply involved in the major social and cultural debates of her time.

Discussion Questions

- Did you know the poem on the Statue of Liberty was written by a Jewish poet? What does this say about the Jewish meaning of America?
- Emma Lazarus rejected the idea that a Jew must choose between being an American and being a Jew. How do the Jewish and American identities complement each other? How do they conflict?
- Why should America seek those “yearning to breathe free” rather than the “storied pomp” of “ancient lands?” Is this the most important verse from Lazarus’s poem? What is her hope for the “tired ... poor ... the wretched refuse?” How has America benefited from these people?

A PROPOSED GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES (1776)

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress, which was the legislative body of the American revolutionaries, appointed Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams to create a seal for the newly formed United States of America. Working together, Jefferson and Franklin devised a design that integrated Franklin's concept of depicting the biblical story of the parting of the Red Sea with Jefferson's vision of illustrating the "Children of Israel in the Wilderness, led by a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by night..." Although this proposal was ultimately not accepted, it underscores the significant influence of Hebraic themes in the ideological foundation of America during its founding period.

Discussion Questions

- Why would Americans during the Revolutionary War compare themselves to the Israelites walking through the Red Sea? Or to the "Children of Israel in the Wilderness," led by G-d?
- Why would "rebellion to tyrants" be "obedience to G-d"? Were America's Founding Fathers suggesting that G-d opposes tyranny? Can you think of any stories from the Hebrew Bible that would support that view?



Proposed design for the Great Seal of the United States included Moses parting the Red Sea.

THE BERGSON GROUP AND THE FIGHT FOR JEWISH SURVIVAL

With ambitions of world domination, Hitler launched World War II by invading Poland in September 1939. This initial invasion led to further successful German victories in its conquest of large parts of Europe and murder and violence against millions. Initially, the world did not take Hitler's ambition for world domination seriously and was skeptical of reports about death camps and the systematic extermination of Jews in Europe. The United States stayed on the sidelines in the early days of the war.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor led to entry of the US into the war and after the death of over 70 million people, the war came to an end with the successful victory of the allied forces on September 2, 1945.

The holocaust was a dark day for the world and for the Jewish people in particular. Many families were wiped out completely and Jews often wonder how this could have happened and why Jewish and non-Jewish people didn't do more to prevent the atrocity of mass murder to happen. During the war, an activist named Hillel Kook, alias Peter Bergson, insisted the United States do more to save the Jews of Europe from annihilation.

Bergson and his supporters argued that the United States should lift its restrictions on immigration, actively assist Jewish refugees fleeing Europe, and prioritize more military actions that would disrupt Hitler's "Final Solution."

In order to raise awareness about the what was happening, the "Bergson Group" organized a dramatic public pageant dedicated to the "two million civilian Jewish dead of Europe." The pageant, titled "We Will Never Die," was first performed in New York City on March 9, 1943, before an audience of 40,000 people.



Nazis selecting prisoners on the platform at the entrance of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp



Pearl Harbor Attack, December 7, 1941

After its initial debut, the pageant toured around the country, attracting the attention, and sympathy, of prominent businessmen, journalists, and political figures. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt reported that the show was “one of the most impressive and moving pageants [she had] ever seen. No one who heard... the story of what had happened at the hands of a ruthless German military will ever forget those haunting words: ‘Remember us.’”

Following the success of “We Will Never Die,” on October 6, 1943, Bergson organized the “Rabbis’ March on Washington.” As part of the event, hundreds of traditionally-dressed rabbis arrived in Washington, D.C., to plead directly to the U.S. government on behalf of the Jews of Europe facing extermination by the Nazis. While they were not granted an audience with President Roosevelt, the rabbis were met on the steps of the U.S. Capitol by Vice President Henry Wallace.

The rabbis’ petition read, “In the name of G-d, Creator of the Universe, Blessed is He. ‘Thou shalt not stand idly by the blood of thy neighbor’ (“I am the Lord” Leviticus 19:16). Children, infants, and elderly men and women are crying out to us for help. Millions have already been slain, sentenced to fire and sword, and tens of thousands have died of starvation! As for us, how can we stand in prayer on the holy day of Yom Kippur, knowing that we haven’t fulfilled our responsibility? So, we have come, brokenhearted, on the eve of our holiest day to entreat you, our honorable President Franklin Roosevelt ... to form a special agency to rescue the remainder of the Jewish nation in Europe.”

Eventually, President Roosevelt established the war Refugee Board which played an important role in saving more than 200,000 Jewish lives.



Bergson Group leaders conferred with Congressional supporters in 1944. L to R; Sen. Guy Gillette, Rep. Will Rogers, Jr., Bergson, Eri Jabotinsky.

Discussion Questions

- What were the main challenges and obstacles that Hillel Kook (Peter Bergson) and his supporters faced when advocating for the United States to take action to save Jewish refugees during World War II?
- How did the public pageant "We Will Never Die" and the subsequent "Rabbis' March on Washington" influence American public opinion and government policy towards the plight of Jews in Europe during the Holocaust?
- In what ways did the War Refugee Board contribute to saving Jewish lives, and what were its most significant actions or successes during its operation?

THE RABBI OF BUCHENWALD: RABBI HERSCHEL SCHACTER'S JOURNEY ON THE FRONTLINES IN WW2

Many American Jews contributed to the WWII effort through various means, with over 500,000 serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Among them was Rabbi Herschel Schacter of the Agudath Sholom synagogue in Stamford, Connecticut. Despite being exempt from service as a full-time clergyman, Schacter enlisted, driven by a sense of duty to his fellow Jews suffering under Nazi rule.



Jewish soldiers of the 329th Infantry at Rosh Hashanah services, somewhere between Beaugency and Orleans, France, in 1944.

Rabbi Schacter's father pleaded for him to stay, but Schacter felt compelled to act, citing Jewish teachings that prohibit standing by while others suffer. He believed that American Jews owed a debt of gratitude to the country that had provided them refuge.

Buchenwald concentration camp bore witness to the horrific massacre of thousands of Jews. When the U.S. Third Army's Sixth Armored Division, including Rabbi Schacter, liberated the camp on April 11, 1945, about 21,000 prisoners remained, including 4,000-5,000 Jews. Rabbi Schacter comforted the survivors, moving from barrack to barrack, proclaiming their freedom.

Rabbi Schacter arranged a Shabbat service in the Kino Halle, a communal building in the camp, attended by over 1,000 survivors. Despite their weakened state, the shared prayers provided solace and a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness.

Rabbi Schacter's efforts at Buchenwald did not stop with the Shabbat service. He took on the immense responsibility of helping the survivors reconnect with their families, a daunting task given the chaotic aftermath of the Holocaust.

He meticulously documented the survivors' names and hometowns, working tirelessly to ensure they could be reunited with any living relatives. His dedication provided a critical link between the liberated prisoners and the outside world, offering them not just spiritual comfort but also practical assistance in rebuilding their shattered lives.

In the years following the war, Rabbi Schacter continued to play a prominent role in Jewish and public affairs. He became a vocal advocate for Holocaust survivors and worked to ensure that their stories were not forgotten. His experiences in Buchenwald shaped his lifelong commitment to human rights and interfaith dialogue. Rabbi Schacter's legacy is a testament to the profound impact one individual can have in times of crisis, serving as a beacon of hope and resilience for future generations.



Rabbi Herschel Schacter (left) conducts the service of the first day of Shavuot for survivors of the Buchenwald concentration camp shortly after their liberation.

Discussion Questions

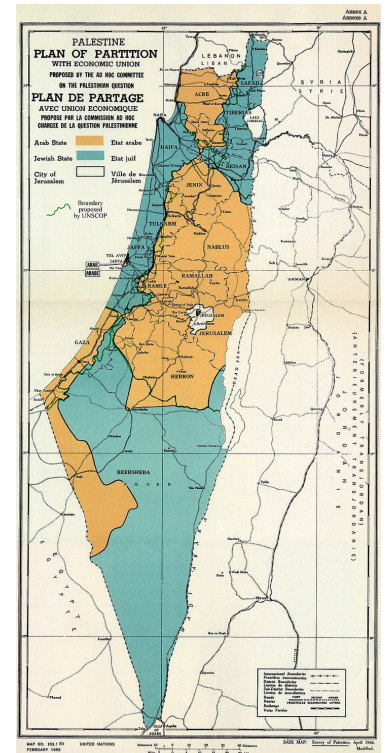
- Rabbi Herschel Schacter chose to enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces during WWII despite being exempt as a full-time clergyman. What motivated him to make this decision, and how does it reflect on his Jewish values?
- After the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp, Rabbi Schacter played a significant role in aiding the survivors. Describe two key actions he took to help them and explain their importance in the context of the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust.

HARRY TRUMAN: THE ENDURING ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL

After the Holocaust, the U.S. played a crucial role in supporting the establishment of Israel, recognizing the need for a Jewish homeland. Initially, President Truman hesitated to back Israel, fearing it would be overwhelmed by Arab forces. By mid-May 1948, the U.S. had no plans to recognize a Jewish state.

In late 1947, the UN voted to divide Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. However, in March 1948, the U.S. proposed placing the territory under UN trusteeship, led by Secretary of State George Marshall. Chaim Weizmann, Israel's future first President, sought Truman's support but was initially rebuffed. Jewish leaders turned to Truman's friend, Eddie Jacobson, who persuaded Truman to meet with Weizmann.

On May 14, 1948, eleven minutes after Israel's declaration of independence, the U.S. officially recognized the new state. The next day, five Arab armies attacked, but Israel survived. Truman's decision reflected his respect for the Jewish people and shared values of liberty, equality, and democracy.



Map of UN Partition Plan



President Harry S. Truman and Dr. Chaim Weizmann meet in front of the White House. President of Israel, Dr. Weizmann, has just presented President Truman with a Torah.

The bond between the U.S. and Israel has deepened, rooted in shared values and strategic interests. Both nations champion democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. Israel, the only democratic country in the Middle East, is a critical U.S. partner. Their collaboration spans various sectors, including agriculture, energy, homeland security, and intelligence, benefiting both nations.

- What were the initial concerns and hesitations of President Truman regarding the recognition of Israel, and how did these concerns influence U.S. policy leading up to Israel's declaration of independence?
- How did the intervention of Eddie Jacobson play a pivotal role in President Truman's eventual support for the establishment of Israel, and what does this incident reveal about the influence of personal relationships in political decision-making?
- In what ways has the bond between the U.S. and Israel evolved since 1948, and how do their shared values and strategic interests continue to shape their partnership in various sectors today?



The signing of Israel's Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv, 1948

THE STATE OF ISRAEL AND AMERICA

The Lord told Abram, "Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's house and go to the land that I will show you." (Exodus 12:1). The Jewish connection to Israel begins around 1876 B.C. when Abraham, the first Jew, entered the land for the first time.

For Jews worldwide, Israel holds profound religious, historical, and cultural significance as their ancestral homeland. Despite millennia of exile, Jews have maintained a longing for this land, expressed in prayers, rituals, and literature.

Jerusalem, the holiest city in Judaism, houses the Western Wall, a remnant of the ancient Temple. Jews worldwide pray facing Jerusalem three times daily, reaffirming their spiritual connection. At Jewish weddings, grooms recite, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning. May my tongue cling to my mouth's roof if I do not keep you in mind, if I do not hold Jerusalem as my greatest joy" (Psalm 137:5-6).

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has been a beacon of Jewish resilience and a refuge for Jews fleeing persecution:

- After WWII, 200,000-250,000 displaced Jews moved to Israel.
- Between the 1960s and 1990s, over 1 million Jews from the former Soviet Union immigrated to Israel.
- Since 1980, over 92,000 Ethiopian Jews have immigrated through Operations Moses and Solomon.
- Approximately 850,000 Jews left or were expelled from Arab countries post-1948.

Israel is the only Jewish state, contrasting with over 120 Christian-majority and around 50 Muslim-majority countries worldwide.



Newly arrived Jewish Ethiopian immigrants landing in Israel on a special flight from Ethiopia on December 3, 2020 in Tel Aviv, Israel.



New immigrants from USA and Canada arrive on a special "Aliyah Flight 2016"

Israel and the Region



Discussion Questions

- How has the historical and spiritual connection to Israel, as described in biblical texts and Jewish traditions, shaped the identity and resilience of the Jewish people throughout millennia of exile?
- What role has Israel played as a refuge for Jews fleeing persecution, and how have significant immigration waves, such as those from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, impacted the demographic and cultural landscape of the country since its establishment in 1948?

THE COLD WAR AND THE SOVIET JEWRY MOVEMENT

Jews often detect negative societal trends early, akin to canaries in a coal mine. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks highlighted antisemitism as an early warning of broader threats to freedom and humanity. Post-World War II, the "Iron Curtain" subjected Jews and others in Eastern Europe to severe Soviet repression, restricting religious practices, cultural expression, education, and emigration.

In response, the global Jewish community, led significantly by American Jews, advocated against Soviet oppression. The Jackson–Vanik amendment (1974) tied U.S.-USSR economic relations to the emigration rights of Jews and other minorities, marking a pivotal moment in human rights advocacy.

For American Jews, this advocacy was both a fight against Soviet injustices and a moral imperative to promote human rights universally. The "Freedom Sunday for Soviet Jews" rally on December 6, 1987, saw over 200,000 participants, including prominent political figures, advocating for Soviet Jewry. Natan Sharansky, a symbol of resilience recently released from Soviet imprisonment, underscored the success of these efforts.

These advocacy efforts, combined with other foreign policy actions, pressured the Soviet Union to implement glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring), leading to increased emigration rates. Between 1989 and 1992, over 400,000 Jews emigrated from the Soviet Union, significantly impacting their new communities, particularly in Israel.



Participants in the Soviet Jewry rally hold signs high as they march through a Washington street Sunday, December 6, 1987. The group is calling for Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to permit unrestricted emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union. (AP Photo/Ira Schwarz)

American political leaders' commitment to justice, combined with Jewish advocacy, demonstrated the power of fighting for human rights globally.

Discussion Questions

- What role did Rabbi Jonathan Sacks attribute to antisemitism in the context of broader societal issues, and how does this perspective relate to the actions taken by American Jews against Soviet oppression?
- How did the Jackson–Vanik amendment influence U.S.-USSR relations and what impact did it have on the emigration rights of Jews and other minorities in the Soviet Union?
- What significance did the "Freedom Sunday for Soviet Jews" rally hold in the broader movement for Soviet Jewry, and how did Natan Sharansky's release symbolize the success of these advocacy efforts?

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY TOGETHER: U.S. AND ISRAEL COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Since October 7, 2023, the news has been filled with stories related to the Israel-Hamas war—the latest front in larger struggle between the democratic world and the forces of totalitarianism and terrorism.

Iran has been labeled by the U.S. as a state sponsor of terrorism, and the autocratic dictatorship of the Ayatollah in Iran has publicly called for "Death to Israel" and "Death to America". Iran has been implicated in many international terrorist incidents, including the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing that killed 241 U.S. service personnel, and is considered the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world. Iran's reach has extended to South America, where it is widely believed to have orchestrated the 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires, Argentina, targeting the Jewish community and killing 85 people. Hezbollah, an Iran-backed organization, is also accused of involvement in this attack. Iran launches cyber attacks targeting US companies and government agencies and is actively seeking a nuclear bomb.

Hezbollah, based in Lebanon and supported by Iran, has been designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and is responsible for numerous attacks, including the aforementioned Beirut bombing, and most recently rocket and drone attacks into Northern Israel. Hamas, which governs the Gaza Strip, is also designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and is known for its attacks against Israeli civilians and the killing of American citizens.



Rescue workers search for survivors and victims in the rubble after a powerful car bomb destroyed the Buenos Aires headquarters of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA)

With the military, financial, media and other support from Iran, the Hezbollah military in Lebanon, and the Hamas terrorist group in Gaza are threatening to eliminate the State of Israel. Hezbollah is estimated to have 100,000 rockets stationed near the border of Israel ready to fire at Israel when given the command. Hamas has fired close to 9,500 rockets at Israel since October 7, 2023.

Israel is the frontline defense against threats from Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas. These threats necessitate constant innovation in Israel's defense capabilities and collaboration with the U.S. to develop advanced technologies. American financial aid not only strengthens Israel's defense but also supports the U.S. economy by procuring American-made munitions and equipment. Additionally, this aid helps Israel develop cutting-edge defense technologies, benefiting U.S. national security and Western defense.

Israel leads in missile defense with its three-tiered system: Iron Dome (short-range), David's Sling (mid-range), and Arrow (long-range). The Iron Beam, an advanced laser defense system, is also being developed in close coordination with the U.S. On April 14, 2024, this defense network successfully intercepted 99% of over 300 missiles launched by Iran, showcasing its effectiveness.

The U.S. and Israel share a close partnership in intelligence, strategic coordination, and military training, enhancing both nations' security. The American Jewish community values this relationship, with many having family and friends in Israel who are on the front lines defending democracy and Western values.



The Israeli Iron Dome missile defense system intercepts rockets fired by Hamas.

Discussion Questions

- How has the partnership between the U.S. and Israel in developing advanced defense technologies, such as the Iron Dome and Iron Beam, impacted both nations' security and economic interests?
- Considering the roles of Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas, how does the strategic importance of Israel as the frontline defense against these threats shape the geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East and influence U.S. foreign policy?

CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE: JEWISH AMERICANS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND POLITICAL FREEDOM

Jewish Americans have made vital contributions to the civil rights movement, exemplifying leadership in civic and social justice arenas. By marching with Dr. King, advocating for equal rights, and backing essential civil rights laws, they have shown a strong dedication to advancing social progress while upholding their cultural heritage.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972)

was a prominent Jewish theologian and civil rights advocate whose efforts against racism in America were deeply intertwined with his spiritual beliefs. Born in Poland and a survivor of Nazi persecution, Heschel emigrated to the United States in 1940. As a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, he spoke out against racial discrimination, emphasizing the sanctity of life and the sinfulness of indifference.



Martin Luther King, Jr. (center) and Abraham Joshua Heschel (2nd from front right), march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, March 21, 1965

Heschel famously walked alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery march, describing it as "praying with his feet." He rallied Jewish support for the civil rights movement, bridging religious and racial divides. Throughout the 1960s, Heschel was a vocal critic of racism, advocating for civil rights legislation and condemning segregation and inequality as affronts to G-d's will. His legacy remains powerful, embodying the potential for religious faith to inspire social change and fostering ongoing dialogues about race, justice, and human rights.

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik (born 1977) is a leading advocate for religious liberty in America. As the chief rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel and a professor at Yeshiva University, he blends scholarship with public advocacy, emphasizing America's role in protecting religious freedom.

Soloveichik has shaped public opinion through his writings and debates, drawing on biblical texts and the Founding Fathers. He has testified before Congress and participated in legal cases defending religious rights, building interfaith bridges to promote mutual respect.



Leader of America's oldest Jewish congregation receives Becket's Canterbury Medal at gala in New York

PIONEERS IN POLITICS: THE POLITICAL STRIDES OF JEWISH AMERICANS

Jewish Americans have significantly shaped American political discourse and policy, from local councils to the highest courts and offices. Notable figures include Joe Lieberman, the first Jewish candidate on a major party presidential ticket, Henry Kissinger, a key architect of foreign policy, and Steve Mnuchin, former Secretary of the Treasury.

Joe Lieberman (1942–2024) was a prominent figure in American politics, making substantial contributions to both legislative development and national security policies. As the United States Senator from Connecticut from 1989 to 2013, Lieberman was known for his centrist views and his ability to bridge bipartisan divides. Notably, he was the first Jewish candidate on a major American party's presidential ticket when he ran as the Democratic nominee for Vice President in 2000 alongside Al Gore.

This historic candidacy not only broke religious barriers in national politics but also underscored his significant influence within his party and his appeal to a broad spectrum of American voters.

Throughout his career, Lieberman was particularly active in the areas of environmental protection, national security, and health care reform. He played a critical role in the development of the Department of Homeland Security following the September 11 attacks, ensuring the legislation to establish the department passed through Congress. This was a cornerstone of the nation's efforts to strengthen security and prevent future attacks.



Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., is seen on stage with Sen. Joe Lieberman during a rally in Downingtown, Pa., Thursday, Oct. 16, 2008.

Eric Cantor is a prominent American politician and lawyer who served as the United States Representative for Virginia's 7th congressional district from 2001 to 2014. A member of the Republican Party, Cantor was the House Majority Leader from 2010 to 2014, becoming the highest-ranking Jewish member in Congress. During his tenure, he was instrumental in shaping fiscal policy, advocating for limited government, and promoting pro-business initiatives. Cantor was known for his conservative stance on economic issues and played a key role in negotiations on budget and debt matters.



House Majority Leader Eric Cantor at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, June 11, 2014.

ECONOMIC ARCHITECTS: JEWISH AMERICAN INNOVATORS AND ENTREPRENEURS

American Jewish entrepreneurs have significantly shaped the U.S. economy, driving advancements in technology, finance, entertainment, and more with innovative leadership and social responsibility.

Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google, revolutionized the internet, making information accessible globally. **Michael Dell** transformed the personal computer industry with a direct-to-consumer model at Dell Technologies. **Sheryl Sandberg**, as COO of Facebook, scaled the social media giant's operations and business model. In entertainment, **Sheldon Adelson** pioneered integrated resort-casinos, reshaping tourism. **Ralph Lauren** defined American style with his iconic fashion brand. **Dr. Leonard Schleifer**'s Regeneron Pharmaceuticals developed groundbreaking treatments, including a COVID-19 therapeutic.

Julius Rosenwald, as the co-owner of Sears and Roebuck, his philanthropic efforts notably built over 5,000 schools for African American communities in the South. **Michael Bloomberg**, founder of Bloomberg LP and former NYC mayor, has impacted public health, environmental sustainability, and gun control through his philanthropic work.

Additionally, **Estee Lauder** revolutionized the cosmetics industry with her namesake brand, emphasizing high-quality skincare and makeup. **Henry Kaufman**, a leading Wall Street economist, greatly influenced financial markets with his economic forecasts and analysis. **Larry Ellison**, co-founder of Oracle Corporation, has been a key figure in developing database software and cloud computing.

These entrepreneurs exemplify visionary leadership, innovation, and ethical practices, contributing to America's economic growth and global technological leadership.



Julius Rosenwald with students from a Rosenwald School. (Courtesy of Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library)



Michael Dell revisits the University of Texas dorm room where he started his company in 1984.

SCHOLARS AND INNOVATORS: JEWISH CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN ACADEMIA

Jewish Americans have been pivotal in advancing U.S. academia, significantly contributing across various disciplines. Despite representing just 0.2% of the global population, **Jewish intellectuals have won 22% of all Nobel Prizes since 1901**, with notable achievements in chemistry, economics, literature, peace, physics, and medicine.

Key figures include **Elie Wiesel**, a Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate whose works and activism have profoundly impacted human rights awareness.

Richard Feynman, a theoretical physicist, significantly advanced quantum mechanics and won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965. Economist **Milton Friedman**, another Nobel laureate, shaped modern economic thought with his strong advocacy for free markets and monetarism.

Jonas Salk, developer of the polio vaccine, chose public health over personal gain by not patenting his vaccine. Neuroscientist Eric Kandel, a Nobel laureate, has been pivotal in understanding memory through his research on brain functions. **Barbara Liskov**, an MIT professor, innovated in computer programming, influencing modern software development significantly.

These scholars' diverse achievements highlight the profound impact of Jewish intellectuals on both American and global academic and intellectual landscapes.



Dr. Jonas Salk (center) and his team of researchers saved countless lives around the world with the development of an effective vaccine for polio.



Elie Wiesel (center), accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

DEFENDERS AND INNOVATORS: JEWISH AMERICANS IN THE MILITARY

Jewish Americans have played a crucial role in the U.S. armed forces, demonstrating valor and strategic acumen across all major conflicts, from World War I to present engagements. They have profoundly influenced military tactics and technology, embodying the spirit of American patriotism and sacrifice.

One notable figure, **Major General Maurice Rose**, rose from a private in the Colorado National Guard to become the highest-ranking Jewish officer in the U.S. Army. Renowned for his leadership in armored warfare during World War II, Rose's tactical innovations significantly advanced U.S. military efforts, particularly in the European Theater where he tragically lost his life in 1945.

Another hero, **William Sawelson**, received the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously for his bravery during World War I when he risked his life to aid a wounded comrade under heavy fire. His actions reflect the extraordinary courage and selflessness of Jewish servicemen.

Corporal Tibor Rubin's story stands out for his exceptional bravery and resilience. A Holocaust survivor, Rubin later served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Despite enduring severe hardships as a prisoner of war, he consistently put the welfare of his fellow soldiers above his own, demonstrating remarkable courage and selflessness. Rubin's valor was eventually recognized with the Medal of Honor.

These individuals, among others, highlight the significant contributions of Jewish Americans to the U.S. military, leaving a lasting impact on its history and continuing to inspire future generations with their dedication and heroism.



Gen. Courtney Hodges, CG, 1st Army, Lt. Gen. J. Lawton Collins, CG, VII Corps, and Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose, CG, 3rd Armored Division, at a Presidential Unit Citation Ceremony, March 1945 (



Tibor Rubin in US Army combat uniform, circa 1949. Photo by Army News Service, retrieved from the Department of Defense.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF JEWISH AMERICANS TO THE FABRIC OF AMERICAN CULTURE

In every arena of culture—art and music, sport and literature, film and television—American Jews have have profoundly influenced the American experience. Here are some of the great figures in recent American history:

- **Isaac Asimov**, a biochemist turned writer, penned over 500 books. His works, particularly in science fiction and popular science, have inspired generations to explore the realms of science and technology, sparking curiosity and innovation.
- **Irving Berlin** arrived in America fleeing Russian persecution and rose to become one of the greatest songwriters in American history. His song "God Bless America" became an unofficial national anthem, deeply influencing American patriotic music during challenging times.
- **Leonard Bernstein**, a legendary composer and conductor, left an indelible mark on American music through his dynamic leadership of the New York Philharmonic and innovative compositions like "West Side Story," which melded classical music with contemporary themes.
- **George and Ira Gershwin** creatively infused jazz into classical compositions, creating groundbreaking music that remains a cornerstone of American music, influencing genres and artists around the world.
- **Sandy Koufax** became an iconic figure not just in baseball but in all of sports when he chose to observe Yom Kippur instead of playing in the World Series, embodying the values of faith and commitment to a global audience.
- **Rabbi Menachem Schneerson**, revered as "the Rebbe," significantly influenced Jewish education and spirituality around the globe through his leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, emphasizing the importance of community and education.
- **Steven Spielberg** has not only entertained millions worldwide with his films but also educated them about significant historical events, most notably through "Schindler's List," which provided a profound insight into the Holocaust.



Before pitching in games 2, 5 & 7 of the 1965 World Series, Sandy Koufax famously chose to sit out the opener on observance of the Jewish High Holy Day of Yom Kippur.

Discussion Questions

- Where was Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel born, and what significant historical event did he survive before emigrating to the United States?
- With which prominent civil rights leader did Rabbi Heschel march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965, and what phrase did he use to describe this experience?
- What position does Rabbi Meir Soloveichik hold, and what is his main area of advocacy in America?
- Who was the first Jewish candidate on a major American party's presidential ticket, and in which year did this historic candidacy take place?
- What was Eric Cantor's role in the U.S. government, and what significant position did he achieve during his tenure?
- Which co-founder of Google is known for revolutionizing the internet, and what impact did this have on global information accessibility?
- What notable achievement is Sandy Koufax remembered for in relation to his faith, and during which major sports event did this occur?

THE JEWISH AMERICAN JOURNEY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST MODERN ANTISEMITISM

The Jewish people have suffered discrimination and antisemitism for centuries. However, in America, for the most part, the Jewish community has enjoyed the freedom to practice its faith freely and enjoyed opportunities to pursue their dreams more than any other country in history. In America, with their freedoms, the Jewish community has made positive contributions to the birth and evolution of America over the last 400 years.



Unfortunately, the safety of openly identifying as Jewish in America has recently become more difficult in certain cities. The recent surfacing of hatred and discrimination can be exemplified by the tragic 2018 Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, the disturbing increase in anti-Semitic incidents across the country on college and high school campuses, including violent attacks and intimidation, and the explosion of Jewish hate on social media.



Like it has over the centuries, the Jewish community is determined to fight back against the recent rise in antisemitism. With solidarity in its community and with old and new friends in the non Jewish community, Jews in America are resolved to combat all forms of antisemitism.

Recent years have seen significant antisemitic violence, highlighted by major incidents such as the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting, in Pittsburgh that resulted in the death of 11 Jews, the Chabad of Poway Synagogue shooting in California, which left one dead and three injured, the hostage-taking at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas and the proliferation of outward hate and intimidation of young Jewish college and high school students on their campuses. At the time of this writing, Jewish students at Columbia University, and others, are afraid to attend in person classes for fear of physical violence.

Surge in Antisemitism: Alarming Trends

Data from the FBI shows that American Jews are more frequently victims of religiously motivated hate crimes than any other religious group. In 2023, FBI Director Christopher Wray noted that although Jews make up only about 2.4% of the U.S. population, they account for around 60% of all religious-based hate crimes. He also highlighted that the Jewish community is targeted by terrorists from various backgrounds.

The Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM) Antisemitism Research Center reported equal numbers of incidents from the far right and far left in 2023, with a significant increase in 2024 from the far left and radical Islamic motivations. The rise in antisemitic attacks intensified notably after the October 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas on Jewish civilians in Israel. CAM tracked 1,644 incidents in the three months following October 7, compared to 575 during the same period in 2022, with increases in harassment, vandalism, physical assaults, and antisemitic rallies. Today, approximately 34 antisemitic incidents occur daily.

On-Campus Antisemitic Incidents

In recent times, the United States has seen a disturbing increase in antisemitic incidents, particularly on college campuses, as anti-Israel demonstrations have spread nationwide. Jewish students and faculty have faced harassment, intimidation, and physical assaults, with protest encampments glorifying violence and calling for the removal of "Zionists" from campuses.

Over 400 significant antisemitic incidents have been reported following the October 7, 2023 massacre, a stark rise from 33 incidents in the same period last year. CAM estimates the actual number of incidents to be much higher due to underreporting.



Anti-Israel supporters demonstrate at Columbia University on Thursday, Oct. 12

In April 2024 alone, CAM recorded 183 incidents of on-campus antisemitism, marking an 815% increase from April 2023. Examples include vandalism, physical attacks, and violent protests, demonstrating the urgent need for concrete measures to combat antisemitism.

"Liberated zones" or encampments, starting at Columbia University and spreading nationwide, have become hotspots for antisemitism. Chants like "We don't want no Zionists here" and "October 7th is about to be every day" have been reported, along with threats and physical violence against Jewish students.

The October 7th massacre and Israel's military response in Gaza have significantly influenced the frequency and severity of antisemitic incidents on U.S. campuses. CAM observed a 188% increase in incidents compared to the same period in 2022 and a 321% increase compared to 2023.

Educational institutions must take decisive action to combat antisemitism and ensure campus environments where all members are safe, respected, and valued.

Global Solidarity: A Unified Response to Antisemitism

On November 14, 2023, nearly 300,000 mainly Jewish Americans gathered to support Israel and combat antisemitism in America. A quarter million more people connected through a live-stream, illustrating a global commitment to solidarity. The rally was the largest American Jewish gathering in history and the most critical since the Free Soviet Jewry rally in 1987.

Many Jewish, Christian, Muslim and political speakers expressed their solidarity with the Jewish people and also recognize the importance of combating antisemitism as part of broader efforts to promote human rights and prevent discrimination in America. The diverse support was a widespread acknowledgment that antisemitism is not only as a Jewish issue but a universal challenge that impacts all of society. Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM) Advisory Board, encapsulated the sentiment of the event: "As long as we stand together and fight together, we will win." The Jewish community in America hope Americans will support their desires to continue to live freely and safely in America.



The "March for Israel", November 2023

The IHRA Definition of Antisemitism

The Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM) and the Jewish community worldwide advocate for adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism. This definition, adopted by 34 member countries including the United States in 2016, includes 11 specific examples of antisemitic actions and statements, addressing both traditional and modern forms of antisemitism.

By detailing specific behaviors and language that qualify as antisemitic, the IHRA definition aims to help policymakers, educators, and the public recognize and combat these prejudices effectively. As of March 2024, 1,231 international institutions and organizations, including 36 U.S. states, have adopted the IHRA definition.

In 2023, the Virginia state legislature passed HB 1606, adopting the IHRA definition. Governor Glenn Youngkin signed the bill on May 8, 2023, highlighting the importance of clearly defining hatred to transform society for the better. This bill was the first recommendation from the Report of the Commission to Combat Antisemitism, established by Governor Youngkin in January 2022.



Governor Youngkin signs bill defining 'antisemitism' in Virginia law

Discussion Questions

- What factors have contributed to the recent surge in antisemitic incidents in the United States, particularly on college campuses?
- How has the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas influenced the frequency and nature of antisemitic incidents in the U.S.?
- Why is the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism considered an important tool in combating antisemitism, and what specific examples does it include to address modern forms of antisemitism?
- What are the implications of the FBI's data showing that Jews, who make up only 2.4% of the U.S. population, account for around 60% of all religious-based hate crimes?
- In light of the reported incidents and data, what measures should educational institutions take to effectively combat antisemitism and ensure the safety and inclusion of Jewish students and faculty?

JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE: CELEBRATING 400 YEARS OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND RESILIENCE

This short course for Jewish American Heritage provided a brief overview of over 400 years of Jewish history in the United States starting before the Revolutionary war until April, 2024. The course was designed to be at testament to the enduring contributions of this small minority group to the development of our country in every stage of America's journey.

Similarly, we hoped to convey the appreciation the Jewish community has to America and will do its part to repay the blessings bestowed upon it. Finally, as antisemitism is rising, we hope the next generation will understand more about their Jewish fellow citizens and appreciate their contributions and vulnerabilities in the country.

Jewish American Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) traces its origins back to 1980 and more recently to 2006 when the U.S. Congress passed a bipartisan resolution urging the President to proclaim an annual observance recognizing the contributions of Jewish Americans to the nation's history and culture.

Responding to this call, like Presidents had done before, President George W. Bush designated May as Jewish American Heritage Month. Since then, successive presidents from both parties have continued this tradition, issuing annual proclamations that underscore the significant and diverse role Jewish Americans have played in shaping America's narrative for over three centuries. This recognition has extended beyond the federal level, with many local governments at the state, county, and municipal levels joining in the observance of JAHM. These jurisdictions have implemented various programs, ceremonies, and activities to honor Jewish heritage.

The Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM) and other organizations have actively encouraged the celebration of JAHM, advocating for increased participation across the country. In May 2023, a noteworthy 135 city mayors and 38 state governors formally acknowledged JAHM.

Introduction to Discussion Questions: As we wrap up our exploration of Jewish American heritage, we will delve into a series of questions designed to deepen our understanding and provoke discussion. These questions will help us reflect on the impacts, challenges, and contributions we've studied. Let's engage in thoughtful dialogue and share our perspectives as we conclude our course.

- **Challenges and Triumphs:** Discuss some of the major challenges Jewish Americans have faced throughout history. How have these challenges shaped their community and their role within the broader American society?
- **Cultural Preservation:** In what ways do Jewish Americans maintain their cultural heritage while also integrating into wider American culture? How do you see this balance playing out in your own community or in prominent public figures?
- **Contemporary Issues:** What are some current issues facing the Jewish American community? How can understanding of historical context help address these issues today?
- **Future Directions:** What future developments or changes do you anticipate for the Jewish American community in the next decades? How might they continue to influence American culture and society at large?
- **Personal Connections and Actions:** Based on what you've learned, what actions might you personally take to promote a deeper understanding of Jewish American heritage in your community or circle?
- **Course Feedback and Suggestions:** What topics or stories within this course did you find most engaging or important? Are there any aspects of Jewish American heritage that you think should be explored more deeply in future courses?



COMBAT
ANTISEMITISM
MOVEMENT

קרן תקווה
TIKVAH