

LESSON 2: JEWISH MIGRATION: WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, AND HOW?

Theme/Topic/Big Ideas: Patterns of Jewish migration and the migrant experience.

Summary: In this lesson, students use historical materials to identify Jewish migration patterns, dive into some of the reasons for Jewish migration throughout history, and do an optional creative writing exercise.

Essential Question(s)

- Why do people leave their homes to settle permanently in other areas? What led Jews to migrate to different parts of the world in various time periods? Where have Jews migrated to?

Objective:

In this lesson, students will:

- Learn that Jews migrated to various parts of the world due to causes like economic opportunity, regime change, and oppression/persecution
- Learn about patterns of Jewish migration
- Investigate historical materials
- Recount diverse places Jews live/have lived
- Develop theories based on evidence/research
- Synthesize information in written or creative forms

Time: 50 minutes

Handouts and Visuals Link

Materials and setup

- Primary source packets for 12 migrant profiles
- World map printouts (enough for each pair to have one)
- Large paper or whiteboard to create timeline
- Paper
- Markers and pens
- Family Migration Story KWL chart printouts
- Timeline template (large, for whole class)

Background Information for Educators: An Overview of Jewish Migration

Starting in the beginning of the Common Era, Jews gradually migrated from the Land of Israel to locations around the world for a variety of reasons, including economic opportunity, expulsions, persecution, war, and empire change. In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, trade brought Jews to several locations along the Silk Road (such as Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan) and various port cities in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

Migrations continued throughout history, such as Sephardi Jews moving from Spain and Portugal to the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion in the late 15th century and Ashkenazi Jews moving from Italy to Germany in the Middle Ages (though Jews lived in Germany since the 4th century CE) and to Eastern Europe (Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, etc.) as early as the 13th century CE.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the vast majority of Jews moved from their locations of longtime settlement to other parts of the world. The largest centers of Jewish life just 150 years ago are now home to small Jewish communities, while Israel and the United States, which had tiny Jewish populations prior to the migrations of the 20th century, are major centers of Jewish life.

Introduction/Set Induction: Turn and Talk about Moving Experiences (10 min)

Have students turn and talk to someone near them, discussing:

Do you know anyone who moved from one city to another? One state to another? One country to another? What do you know about their experiences? Encourage them to think beyond their immediate family.

Process/Activities

Return to the group and discuss:

- Have you heard the word migration? Migration is moving from one place to another, often from country to country. Share out from discussions about the experiences of people you know who migrated from one country to another.

Introduction/Set Induction: Turn and Talk about Moving Experiences (10 min)

- What do you know about the history of Jewish migration? Help students identify both positive and negative reasons Jews have moved from place to place.

Share the following information:

The Torah tells several stories of migration, including Abraham moving from Ur to Canaan and the Israelites leaving Egypt for the Promised Land. You may have also heard about more recent migrations: from the late 19th century to the present, Jews from around the world migrated to Palestine (later Israel), the United States, and elsewhere. But these are just a few of the many migrations Jewish communities have made. Today we're going to learn about Jewish migration throughout history. Each group will learn about a different story of migration, and we will compile them into a gallery.

EXPLORE: Migrant Profiles (20 min)

[Handout Link](#)

- Divide class into 3–6 groups (or pairs)
- Divide up the migrant profiles among the groups: each group receives profiles of 2–4 immigrants from different historical eras and geographic regions, including primary sources and historical context.
- In groups, students read about the migrants and complete a worksheet for each one
- Each group uses a marker to trace the journey of their migrants on [this map](#) (you may want to enlarge the one in the resources section, or use a map of your choice), and they should be prepared to mark it on the class timeline. (Though not visible on this map, Curacao is in the Caribbean Sea just above Venezuela.)

DISCUSS: (10 min)

[Handout Link](#)

Each group shares their migrant's experience by posting their map and worksheet on the wall and adding their migrant's journey to the class timeline. Give students time to walk around to look at the wall of maps and worksheets. As they walk, encourage them to take notes about the reasons they left home, and one question they would want to ask if they could talk to this person.

As a class, discuss the following:

What did we learn about these migrants? What led them to leave? Where did they go and why? What guesses can we make about what life was like in their new homes?

REFLECT: Connections to our own family stories (5 min)

[Handout Link](#)

Each of our families also has a story of migration or immigration.

What do you know about your own family's story? What do you want to know? (Each student takes notes on a personal K/W/L chart, available above.)

Reflection/Conclusion: (5 min)

Each student shares one fact they know (K) from their Family Migration K/W/L chart and one question they want to get an answer to (W).

[Handout Link](#)

CONNECT:

For homework: with your family, you will fill out an online form about your ancestors' migrations (alternatively, if you prefer to streamline family conversations, you can have students do this in Lesson 7). The information you submit will populate an interactive map that will give us an overview of our community's ancestors' migrations, languages, and names!

And, while you're with your family, revisit the list of "Ws" in your K/W/L chart. Ask a family member if they can share with you some of the things you didn't know but want to find out about your family migration story. Take notes in the chart. (You'll revisit this chart and the "Ws" in Lesson 8 when you plan for and conduct a more detailed interview with a family member.)

Optional Extension: Imagined Writing (10 min)

Imagine you are one of the Jewish migrants you learned about. Imagining what life was like in your new home, write a letter to a loved one back home or a diary entry, explaining your reasons for leaving and describing your daily life in your new home.

Select students to read one or two sentences aloud to the class, and compile the writing in a packet or post on the classroom walls to be perused during subsequent classes.

Optional Extension: Family Visits

Does a student in your class have a family member with a migration story to share? Invite them to join your classroom community to tell their story in person.