

Lesson Plan – Vered haim Sharabi

Lesson Topic: The Journey of Bulgarian Jews: From the Expulsion from Spain to Life in Bulgaria Before, During, and After the Holocaust.

Lesson Duration: 90 minutes

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will learn about the background of Jewish migration to Bulgaria following the expulsion from Spain.
- Students will understand the complexities of the Holocaust period in Bulgaria, distinguishing between the rescue of Jews from "Old Bulgaria" and the fate of Jews in occupied territories.
- Students will explore the lives of Bulgarian Jews before, during, and after the Holocaust through personal testimonies.
- Students will be able to describe aspects of the culture, traditions, and daily life of Bulgarian Jews.



Figure 1 - My grandparents in Dupnitsa on the right

Lesson Plan:

Part A: Introduction and Background (15 minutes)

1. Introduction (5 minutes):

- Ask students what they know about Bulgarian Jewry. Have they heard about their rescue during the Holocaust?
- Explain that the lesson will explore the long and complex history of Bulgarian Jews, from their arrival after the Spanish expulsion to the present day.

2. The Expulsion from Spain and Jewish Migration to Bulgaria (10 minutes):

- Screen the first video: [El Otro Camino - 1492](#)
- After watching, discuss the impact of the Spanish expulsion on Jewish communities and their migration to various Balkan regions, including Bulgaria.
- Emphasize the contributions of Sephardic Jews to Bulgarian culture and economy, as well as the development of Sephardic Jewish communities in Bulgaria.

Part B: Bulgarian Jews During the Holocaust (30 minutes)

1. The Complexity of the Holocaust in Bulgaria (10 minutes):

- Explain to students the story of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews during the Holocaust: almost all Jews from "Old Bulgaria" were saved, while thousands from occupied territories were deported to their deaths.

- Present the statistic: 48,000 Jews lived in Bulgaria before the Holocaust, and nearly all survived by the end of World War II.
- Highlight the difference between the fate of Jews in Bulgaria itself and those in Greek and Yugoslavian territories under Bulgarian occupation.

2. Video on the Holocaust in Bulgaria (15 minutes):

- Screen the second video: [History of Bulgarian Jewry During the Holocaust](#)
- After watching, discuss:
 - The factors that led to the rescue of Bulgarian Jews (public pressure, opposition from the Orthodox Church, actions of public figures).
 - The decree against the Jews of Sofia and their forced labor under harsh conditions.
 - The significance of this story as an example of civic resistance.

3. Brief Discussion (5 minutes):

- Ask students: What can we learn from the story of Bulgarian Jews during the Holocaust about the power of civic resistance and solidarity?

Part C: Daily Life, Culture, and Tradition Through a Personal Testimony (30 minutes)

My parents are of Bulgarian descent. My father's family lived in Sofia, and my mother's family in Dupnitsa. Sabat Pilosof was my grandfather's brother, and I used his testimony.

1. Introducing Sabat Pilosof (5 minutes):

Introduce Sabat Pilosof and his connection to your family . Explain that the next video provides a glimpse into the lives of Bulgarian Jews through his eyes.

2. Sabat Pilosof's Testimony (20 minutes):

- Read the interview with Sabat Pilosof: [Sabat Pilosof Biography](#)
- Guide students to focus on:
 - Life in Dupnitsa before the Holocaust: What can be learned about daily life, neighbors, work.
 - The traditions and customs observed in the community.
 - The impact of the Holocaust on his life and the community.
 - Life in Bulgaria after the Holocaust.

3. Discussion and Reflection (5 minutes):

- Ask students:
 - Which details from Sabat Pilosof's testimony impressed them the most?

- What did they learn about the culture and traditions of Bulgarian Jews through the interview?
- How was life in Bulgaria after the Holocaust?

Part D: Conclusion and Application (15 minutes)

1. Summary (10 minutes):

- Recap the main topics of the lesson: the background of Jewish migration, the complexities of the Holocaust in Bulgaria, and life before, during, and after the Holocaust as revealed through testimonies.
- Emphasize the importance of preserving Holocaust survivors' stories and the historical lessons to be learned.

2. Application (5 minutes):

- Ask students to reflect on how the story of Bulgarian Jews teaches us about the importance of tolerance, resistance to evil, and human solidarity.