

Teacher Reflection – Vered Haim Sharabi

This lesson was especially meaningful because it connected historical events to my own family history. My family is of Bulgarian Jewish descent, and some relatives still live in Bulgaria today. Sharing this personal connection made the topic more authentic for students and increased their curiosity and engagement. Many students expressed interest in learning more because they felt they were hearing not only history, but also part of their teacher's family story.

Students were highly engaged throughout the lesson. They enjoyed watching the Centropa videos and listening to Sabat Pilosof's testimony, which helped them connect with the experiences of Bulgarian Jews on a personal level. During the discussion, students asked thoughtful questions about my family, including whether relatives still live in Bulgaria, why not all family members immigrated to Israel, and whether I remain in contact with them today.

One of the most surprising discoveries for students was learning that the vast majority of Jews living in Bulgaria were saved during the Holocaust, unlike Jewish communities in many other European countries. This led to meaningful conversations about civic resistance, solidarity, and the different experiences of Jewish communities during World War II.

A challenge is that the story of Bulgarian Jewry is not included in the Israeli matriculation (Bagrut) curriculum, and therefore many history teachers focus primarily on the experiences of Polish Jewry and other major European Jewish communities. I believe it is important for students to be exposed to the diverse histories of Jewish communities across Europe, including Bulgarian Jewry, whose story offers unique historical perspectives and important lessons about courage, community action, and cultural preservation.