

Lesson Plan

The Rise and Fall of Jews in the Ottoman Empire

[Link to video](#)

Materials Needed

- Device to show Unpacked video
- The [article](#) "The Sephardic Exodus to the Ottoman Empire."
- Chart paper and markers

Set Induction / Hook

Learners should think about how, in the long march of Jewish history, Jews as individuals and communities have accomplished much, and often after many hundreds of years fled when their country's rulers turned on them. These include great communities such as in late Medieval Spain, which ended as the Catholic rulers gave the order of convert or be expelled, when Nazi Germany destroyed its highly successful Jewish community along with that of most of Europe and, of course, how in the 20th century, Jews after centuries in former Ottoman lands faced violence and fled for Israel, America and France. Today, beyond their sad ending, we think of the successes, personalities and products; great poetry, religious works, schools of thought, crafts and more of these times and places.

While it is difficult to imagine such a fate for Jews in contemporary democracies, we can compare those worlds with our own unique point in Jewish history.

Lesson Objective

- The learner will dive deep into the history of a Jewish community in a former Ottoman land whose Jewish community thrived into the 20th century.
- The learner will research the unique aspects of that community.
- The learner will consider the unique aspects of their own Jewish community.
- The learner will compare and contrast the Ottoman community with their own community, noting how they believe the latter will be remembered in many hundreds of years.

Lesson Activity

- View the Unpacked [video](#) "The Rise and Fall of Jews in the Ottoman Empire."

- Groups will be assigned a country or region in the Ottoman Empire and research the history of its Jews. They will note the years of the community's best period, communal leaders (religious or other) and additional characteristics of the community (Ex: In Yemen many men were praised as metalwork craftsmen).
- Discuss within the group the unique characteristics of their own community today, thinking of how people hundreds of years into the future might describe it.
- Create a presentation on the similarities and differences of the two communities, including characteristics of today's community that will "go down in history" as defining and positive traits. In the presentation, talk about what – if any – were differences within the group regarding today's community and its most important aspects.

Assessment / Check for Understanding

- In pairing student groups with another group (or putting students into pairs of members from different groups) students should be able to articulate what was unique and defining about the community they researched.
- Review the hook for this lesson. In an exit ticket, students should be able to express in a few sentences how they would characterize their own community for a future historian.