

INTRODUCTION

Structure of the Textbook

The History of the Jewish People: A Story of Tradition and Change, Volume 1, was developed and written by two esteemed scholars, Professors Jonathan D. Sarna and Jonathan B. Krasner. It provides students in grades 5 through 7 with a rich, interactive presentation of history from our earliest ancestors in the Land of Israel to our dispersion in the Diaspora to the Jewish experience in America in the 1880's. Each chapter helps students consider how their lives compare with the lives of our ancestors, how each generation adapts Judaism to its time and place, and how the decisions of our forebears influence our own lives and decisions.

Jewish history comes alive through a dynamic array of famous personalities, diverse source material, clear and concise charts, engaging activities, thought-provoking questions, and exciting graphics, including sixteen maps and more than one hundred full-color historical and contemporary images.

Each chapter of the textbook includes core information that presents the time period and theme of the chapter. The themes relate to how Jews in the period under discussion adapted Judaism to meet the needs and opportunities of their time. Each chapter also includes the features listed below.

The Big Picture: Presents an overview and sets the stage for the chapter theme and content.

Investigate: Poses questions for students to explore as they read.

Key Words and Places: Highlights core words and places that are critical to understanding the chapter.

Map: Helps students place the historic period in geographic context.

Famous Figures: Spotlights a famous person from the historic period.

Then & Now: Encourages students to reflect on what they have learned and compare and contrast the chapter's historical period with our own time.

In addition, throughout each textbook chapter there are a variety of sidebars with engaging enrichments and creative opportunities for student interaction and reflection. For example, in chapter 4, "Rabbinic Judaism," the "Prayer House Plus" activity (page 45) gives students an opportunity to create a flyer describing their synagogue. They are also asked to imagine distributing the flyer in a Judean marketplace and to consider what might be familiar and unfamiliar about their synagogue to a Jew living in that time.

A glossary and detailed index are available at the back of the book.



Structure of the Teaching Guide

This teaching guide is designed to help you enhance and build upon the information and activities that are found in the textbook. It includes a variety of activities that offer students a rich and meaningful learning experience: probing questions that stimulate critical thinking and class discussion, collaborative learning environments, and creative activities for in-class and family participation. In addition, it uses a range of learning modalities, including music, art, role-playing, journaling, and debating. Where appropriate, the teaching guide provides answers to questions in the textbook.

Most important, the suggestions in the teaching guide can be easily adapted to your personal teaching style and to the strengths and interests of your students. To help you succeed, when selecting an activity, consider the many factors that come into play in your class, such as time constraints and students' abilities, interests, experience, and maturity level.

Each chapter in the teaching guide complements a chapter in the textbook and includes the elements listed below.

Core Concepts: A brief summary of the chapter's central, governing ideas.

Learning Objectives: Goals for students to achieve by the end of the chapter.

Chapter Overview: A brief statement about the chapter content.

Teaching Opportunities: Practical suggestions for introducing the chapter as well as teaching tips, activities, and discussion ideas to enrich student learning.

Using This Teaching Guide

Before you begin to teach a textbook chapter, skim or read through the material in the corresponding chapter of this teaching guide so that you can select the activities you want to pursue with your students. Many of the questions posed in the textbook and teaching guide are open-ended and personal in nature and lend themselves to a multitude of appropriate responses. Use these questions to encourage discussion and the sharing of personal ideas, opinions, and experiences.

Remember that it is the relationship your students have with you and their classmates that will largely determine the success of the learning environment. Make it clear that your classroom is a safe space where students will be heard with respect and be guided, not judged. When a student prefers not to share, it is usually best to respect his or her privacy.

Teaching History with Timelines

You can use the chapter timelines as a way of previewing each chapter with your students. Have students read the timeline information and discuss the people, places, and events with which they are familiar and those about which they want to learn more. Before each class you may ask for a volunteer or several volunteers to research information about one or more of the people, places, or events. Students may do their research on the Internet or in the synagogue library, public library, or home library, and then share their findings with the class.

Over the course of the semester or year, you may want to create a timeline with the class based on the timelines in the book. Include events from world history for each time period. If you choose, you can make your timeline modular, using 8½ x 11 sheets of paper, so that it literally grows as you continue to progress through time. Alternatively, you can use a large sheet of butcher-block paper or create a timeline on the computer.

Students can limit their entries to the events listed on the textbook's timeline or they may do research and expand the information. They can embellish the timeline by adding drawings or other graphic images.

Consider assigning each timeline update to a different student or group of students. The student or group may present the class with a quick update at the beginning of the lesson.

Teaching History with Maps

The maps in *The History of the Jewish People* are designed to help students more fully imagine and understand the historic periods they study. Many provide detailed information on the migration of Jews from one area of the world to another and on critical events and changing cultural influences. This teaching guide will help you develop your students' map reading and interpretation skills, including their ability to

- Discuss information presented in the map format.
- Identify recurring elements in maps as well as what is new or similar to prior maps.
- Develop a sense of place based on maps.

Depending on your own comfort level and the interest and knowledge of your students, spend as much or as little time exploring the maps as you like.

Creating a Family Connection

At the end of each chapter in this teaching guide are opportunities to involve families in your students' learning process. You may want to send a note to parents and guardians at the beginning of the school year to introduce them to the family activities to which they will be invited. A sample letter is shown on page 7.



Shalom,

This year our class will study Jewish history using the first volume of *The History of the Jewish People: A Story of Tradition and Change*. This lively and colorful textbook was written by two leading scholars, Professors Jonathan Sarna and Jonathan Krasner. Along with learning the major events and personalities that shaped the lives of our forebears, we will also explore the diverse ways in which the Jewish people have adapted and continue to adapt to changing times and circumstances.

To reinforce what your child has learned and to help your child assimilate this new knowledge, you will be invited periodically to participate in an activity. Your participation will help affirm the importance of your child's religious school studies by linking your family values and traditions to the material we are studying. In some cases, you may want to read the textbook chapter with your child, search the Internet for additional information, or use our synagogue's library to deepen your understanding of the subject.

I hope you will find the activities engaging and enjoyable and that they stimulate meaningful family dialogue and enrich your child's appreciation of Jewish life and tradition.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Wishing you and your students every success.

