

Lesson 1: Around the Middle Eastern Jewish World

Appendix C - Tradition Cards

Note to Teacher:

Do you want to expand this lesson and learn about other countries?

Assign other Middle Eastern countries to students using these Tradition Cards.

IRAN

COUNTRY NAME: Iran

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? Persian Jews have lived in the area that is now called Iran for 2700 years. These Jews trace their heritage in Iran to the Babylonian Exile of the 6th century BC and have retained their ethnic, linguistic, and religious identity. [7] However, a Library of Congress country study on Iran states that "Over the centuries the Jews of Iran became physically, culturally, and linguistically indistinguishable from the non-Jewish population. The overwhelming majority of Jews speak Persian as their mother language, and a tiny minority, Kurdish." In 2012, Iran's official census reported 8,756 Jewish citizens, a decline from 25,000 in 2009.

JEWISH TRADITIONS FROM THIS COUNTRY-Persian wedding ceremonies have two parts: the first is the "*aghd*," where we witness the bride and groom sign a legal contract. The second part is the wedding reception known as "*Jashn-e-Aroosi*" which traditionally lasts from 3 to 7 days, but many couples are opting to have both parts take place the same day.

The *aghd* ceremony takes place on a beautiful and elaborate spread on the floor or on a raised platform/stage called the "*sofreh aghd*."

JEWISH FOODS- Chelo is a rice dish prepared on shabbat and other Chagim. It includes crispy potatoes!

IMPORTANT PEOPLE: Yedidia Shofet (also spelled Shophet, and often referred to as Hakham Yedidia; November 14, 1908 – June 24, 2005) was the former Chief Rabbi of Iran and the worldwide spiritual leader of Persian Jewry.

LIBYA

COUNTRY NAME: Libya

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? Jews may have arrived in Libya as early as King Solomon's time or around the time of the destruction of the first temple in 586 BCE. Many more Jews arrived here from Palestine around 175 BCE because of the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. During the first century of the Common Era, Libyan Jewish community prospered and some historians say that this Jewish community was one of the biggest in the Diaspora at the time. (From Jewish Communities in Exotic Places by Ken Blady pg. 314)

JEWISH TRADITIONS- In Libya it was the custom to bake matzah daily at home in a clay oven prepared especially for the purpose. They were round and thick, like the Israeli pitta bread but much larger. The women worked incredibly fast without compromising the level of kashrut. It took them no longer than 15 minutes to prepare the dough and bake the matzah. The tradition of baking fresh matzah daily continues in Libyan communities in Israel.

JEWISH FOODS- *Mafrum* is a fried meat and potato dish that is cooked in tomato sauce and served with couscous most often on Shabbat.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE- Guy Zu Aretz, Israeli actor and musician

The Jews of Libya

From: <http://www.or-shalom.org.il/files/Jews%20of%20Libya.pdf>

ALGERIA

COUNTRY NAME: Algeria

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? Jews arrived in Algeria during the first century of the common era. During the expulsion, many Jews from Spain migrated to Algeria.

JEWISH TRADITIONS- Jews in southern Algeria performed a ritual, known as *kittab*, for boys who were beginning their formal education. All the boys, around the age of five, were hennaed and dressed in fine clothing. Their families hosted a feast in their homes, and the boys were honored in the synagogue with a special procession.

JEWISH FOODS- Algeria Jews eat a spicy couscous soup called *Chorba Hara Bi Kesou*

IMPORTANT PEOPLE- Enrico Macias is a singer, songwriter and musician of Algerian Jewish descent.

Jewish Henna Traditions in Algeria

From: <http://www.hennabysienna.com/algeria.html>

Jews in Islamic Countries: Algeria

From: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jews-of-algeria>

The Jewish Palate: The Jews of Algeria

From: <https://www.ipost.com/Food-Index/The-Jewish-Palate-The-Jews-of-Algeria>

EGYPT

COUNTRY NAME: Egypt

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? Jews arrived in Egypt because of famine during the biblical era. Other groups of Jews arrived in Egypt after the expulsion from Spain.

JEWISH TRADITIONS- Before the morning prayer service, *Shacharit*, Egyptian Jews had the tradition of waking up early and going to synagogue early so sing Jewish liturgical songs like "*Yedid Nefesh*" together with the community.

JEWISH FOODS- *Molokheya* is a traditional Egyptian meat stew.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE- Leila Morad (1918-1995) famous Jewish Egyptian musician and singer.

A Timeline of Jews in Egypt

From: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/24/world/middleeast/a-timeline-of-jews-in-egypt.html>

Preserving the Heritage of Egypt's Jews Through Recipes

From: <https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/482613/preserving-the-heritage-of-egypts-jews-through-recipes/>

מנהגי יהדות מצרים

From: <https://www.facebook.com/Egypt147258>

TUNISIA

COUNTRY NAME: Tunisia

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? The Jews of Tunisia trace their roots back to the Babylonian exile of 586 BCE.

JEWISH TRADITIONS- When it is the Parsha of “*Yitro*” there is a special celebration where families each a festive meal and at the end of the meal candies and sweets are passed out to the children.

JEWISH FOODS- *Brik* is a traditional tuna filled pastry popular in the Jewish Tunisian kitchen.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE- Max Azaria is a Tunisian Jewish fashion designer.

IN PICTURES: Tunisia's Ancient Jewish Community

From: <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/the-jews-of-djerba-1.5426614>

ממנהגי יהדות תוניסיה

From: <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/toshba/minhaqim/tu3.htm>

IRAQ

COUNTRY NAME: Iraq

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? Iraq's Jewish history dates about 4,000 years to the birth of the biblical patriarch Abraham in Ur, where there is a shrine and archaeological digs. Long after Abraham left for what was then called Canaan, generations of Jews were sent to exile in Babylon, between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in what is now Iraq.

JEWISH TRADITIONS- During the month of Elul, the caretaker (*shamash*) of the synagogue would go from house to house, waking people up for *Selichot* services.

JEWISH FOODS- *Kubeh*, meat stuffed bulgur wheat and semolina dumplings in soup. Eaten on Friday afternoons before shabbat.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE-Eli Amir, Famous Israeli author of the book about Israel's immigrants "Scapegoat" or Tarnegol Kaparot in Hebrew

In Israel, Iraqi Jews Reflect on Baghdad Heritage

From: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/world/middleeast/in-israel-iraqi-jews-reflect-onbaghdad-heritage.html>

LEBANON

COUNTRY NAME: Lebanon

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? Some Lebanese Jews could claim Sephardi ancestry, others belonged to an ancient Must'arab community predating Islam by 1,000 years.

JEWISH TRADITIONS- Lebanese Jews, like many other Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews, have a seder on Rosh Hashana where they bless different foods to welcome in the new year.

JEWISH FOODS- Ma'amoul is a date and walnut stuffed pastry.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE- Gad Saad is a Jewish Lebanese-Canadian evolutionary behavioral scientist at Concordia University in Montreal Canada.

KURDISTAN

COUNTRY NAME: Kurdistan

HOW DID THE JEWS GET HERE? It is unclear when Jews first settled in Kurdistan because these Jews had an oral tradition and did not write down their history. The first written mention of Jews in Kurdistan is from a traveler named Benjamin of Tudela, who visited the area in the 12th century. The Kurdish Jews have an ancient belief that they are descendants of the 10 tribes that were banished from the Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. (From Jewish Communities in Exotic Places pg 96)

JEWISH TRADITIONS- Saharane is the annual Kurdish Jewish holiday, now celebrated during Sukkot, when the ancient community gathers to sing, dance, eat, and trade stories from the old country in their traditional Aramaic tongue

JEWISH FOODS- *Kadeh* is a traditional, leavened bread filled with cheese and most often eaten on Shavuot.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE- Iztik Kala is a famous Israeli singer who sings in Aramaic, Kurdish and Hebrew

Cultural pride, and unlikely guests, at Kurdish Jewish festival

From: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/pride-and-unlikely-guests-at-kurdish-jewish-festival/>

Displacement of Jews from Arab Countries 1948-2012

	1948	1958¹	1968²	1976³	2001⁴	2005⁵	2012 (est.)
Aden	8,000	800	0	0	0	0	0
Algeria	140,000	130,000	3,000	1,000	0	0	0
Egypt	75,000	40,000	2,500	400	100	100	75
Iraq	135,000	6,000	2,500	350	100	60 ⁶	50
Lebanon	5,000	6,000	3,000	400	100	~50 ⁷	40
Libya	38,000	3,750	500	40	0	0	0
Morocco	265,000	200,000	50,000	18,000	5,700	3,500	3,000
Syria	30,000	5,000	4,000	4,500	100	100	~50
Tunisia	105,000	80,000	10,000	7,000	1,500	1,100	1,000
Yemen	55,000	3,500	500	500	200 ⁸	200	100
TOTAL	856,000⁹	475,050	76,000	32,190	7,800	5,110	4,315