

Soviet Jewry - Kit III: Holocaust & Israel

Contributed by: Enid L. Wurtman's Soviet Jewry Archives on the History of the Zionist Movement from the Soviet Union

Introduction

By reading sources, both political and personal, students will recognize the importance of the Holocaust in the story of Russian Jews, as well as the establishment of the State of Israel. During the Holocaust, over 6 million innocent Jews were killed. The silence of the Western World lasted throughout. With the State of Israel created just a few years after the war, many people felt this was a chance to write a new chapter in Jewish history; a chapter where Jewish people are brought to their homeland, advocated for and provided a place where they could live freely and practice their religion as they pleased. For Jews around the world, helping to free the Soviet Jews felt like a second chance.

Objectives

- To introduce students to Russian history from the Revolution until 1967.
- To recognize the importance of the Holocaust and how this affected the plight of Soviet Jews even after so many were killed.
- To understand that the establishment of the State of Israel created a haven for Jews around the world who needed refuge.

Big Ideas	Jews are responsible for one another (solidarity).
	You can make a difference.
Content	To relate to the historical events that led to freedom for Soviet Jews.
	To explain the Jewish values that led Jewish people around the world to fight for Soviet Jewish rights.
Meaning	To reflect on your obligation to help (Jewish/all) people in need.
	To reflect on the power of a common (Jewish) voice.

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials: Source sheet

Background:

Between 1949-1953 there was still a lot of anti-semitism in Russia and after Israel's establishment, Russia no longer supported the State. The relationship deteriorated quickly as the Soviet Union sided with Egypt during the Sinai Campaign. This continued and in 1967, the Soviet Union encouraged Egypt to take aggressive action against Israel. At the end of the Six Day War, the Soviet Union severed all diplomatic relations with Israel.

Procedure

Part I: Read passage 1 & 2 on the source sheet

Guided Discussion:

- What do the two passages have in common?
- What were the outcomes for each of these girls?

Part II: The Importance of the State of Israel

1. Begin by playing the following recording, and note that when the United Nations voted on whether to support the establishment of the State of Israel, both the Soviet Union and the United States voted Yes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NU3H-VsyJ28>

2. Explain that whenever a new country is established, diplomatic relations are also established between the two countries. This also involved assigning ambassadors to each country. Golda Meir was assigned to be the first Israeli ambassador to Moscow. (She later went on to become Prime Minister of Israel.) She visited Moscow on Rosh Hashanah in 1948.

3. Read Passage #3 on the source sheet

4. Guided Discussion:

- Why did so many people come to the synagogue that day?
- What did Meir realize they were communicating to her, even without words?
- How did this experience affect her?
- Do you think she was able to convey her feelings to them? What is the significance of the one sentence she said to them?