

**Bulgaria in the Holocaust**  
**Tzipora Ross**  
**Ramaz Day School, New York City**

**Type of School:** Modern Orthodox Yeshiva Day School, United States

**Course:** Jewish History

**Lesson Category:** Holocaust

**Grade level:** 8<sup>th</sup> grade

**Academic level:** Regular

**Academic time needed:** One 35 minute lesson

**Summary:**

In studying rescue, the students learn about individual rescuers (mainly in Eastern Europe) and the challenges they faced. They also compare rescue on a national context, contrasting the Jewish experience in Denmark with that of most Jews in Poland, trying to determine the foundation for most Danish Jews' survival of the Holocaust, compared to those of Poland. The part of the lesson about Bulgaria stems from a reading the students have completed in advance, which mentions rescue in Bulgaria, Le Chambon (France), and Denmark. As our school has a sizable Sephardic population, it is appropriate to discuss the Sephardic experience during the Holocaust.

**Background Lesson Information**

**Context for Lesson:**

This lesson is the second of two lessons on rescue during the Holocaust. The Holocaust unit takes place within the context of a year-long Jewish history course.

**Enduring Understanding:**

- Sephardic Jews were targeted and killed en masse in the Holocaust.

**Goals/Objectives:**

1. To be able to describe life of Bulgarian Jews and their integration into non-Jewish society.
2. To be able to explain how life changed for Bulgarian Jews after the Holocaust.
3. To debate the validity of Bulgarian Jewish rescue.

**Resources Needed:**

- Article about rescue of Jews in various countries.
- Map of Nazi controlled Europe highlighting Denmark and Bulgaria:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Europe\\_under\\_Nazi\\_domination.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_under_Nazi_domination.png)
- Centropa film: Matilda Albuhaire,  
<http://www.centropastudent.org/?typ=subtitel&fLang=ENG&movID=26&nID=78&q=m>

Background skills/knowledge:

Students should have a basic knowledge of the experience of Jews in Poland and Denmark during the Holocaust, including the difference between antisemitism in Eastern Europe and Western Europe and how that played out in how Jews were treated in different parts of Europe.

**The Lesson**

Pedagogy:

- Reading article and discussing article, applying knowledge from previous lessons, map reading, watching a film and discussion, application of knowledge and reflection on what students have learned.

Body of Lesson:

- I. Motivation: Based on the reading assignment, list three ways a **community** (not an individual) could protect its Jews. Hook when they walk into class. They've read the article, this is to get them start writing immediately.
  
- II. Show map of Nazi controlled Europe, highlighting Bulgaria and Denmark. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Europe\\_under\\_Nazi\\_domination.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_under_Nazi_domination.png) - Where is Poland on this map? Notice Bulgaria very far to the Southeast. Show where Denmark is. The main point: geography plays a role in people's options for escape during the Holocaust; if you're in Bulgaria, you can escape by the sea or mountains of Turkey. If you're in Poland there's nowhere to go, certainly by 1942.
  
- III. Discussion of Jewish community in Bulgaria (lecture).
  - a. What does "Sephardi" mean?
  - b. Where did Sephardim originate?
  - c. Where do Sephardim come from today?
  - d. How did they end up in these countries? Discussion of Spanish Expulsion and tolerant countries (Holland, Ottoman Empire)

Give the questions in advance with a note sheet, given the time in the class, allows them to focus on film.
  
- IV. Viewing of Centropa film, with questions to answer (hand them out ahead of time):
  - a. How did Matilda's family integrate with non-Jewish society?
  - b. What antisemitism did they experience during the Holocaust?
  - c. Why weren't Matilda and her father deported?
  - d. How did Jewish life change after the war?
  
- V. Concluding activity:
  - a. Write a thoughtful paragraph about the following:

Based on our discussions of Bulgaria and Denmark, how would you evaluate the Bulgarian government's decisions about deporting Jews? Consider the external pressure from Germany in your answer.