



Centropa
Survival in Sarajevo
Let All Who are Hungry Come and Eat
Two lessons about Jewish community and values

The Bosnian-Serb siege of Sarajevo, from spring 1993 until winter 1996, was the longest in modern history. With electricity, water and food supplies cut off and only sporadically supplied, with 11,541 citizens shot by snipers or killed by mortars, Sarajevans had to depend on each other.

In a faded, turn-of-the-century synagogue, a group of Holocaust survivors and their offspring created La Benevolencija, the Jewish humanitarian aid agency. Who worked there? Jews and Muslims, Serbian Orthodox and Catholic Croats--all those who never believed one ethnic group was superior to another. After all, Jews had lived alongside *all* their neighbors since they were welcomed in Sarajevo in the 16th century.

This story of how they paid their neighbors back provides an opportunity for your students to discuss the nature of community and Jewish values as exemplified in the Tanakh, Talmud and other rabbinic texts.

These two back-to-back lessons challenge students to explore Jewish values and their own Jewish identities in a global world. You do not need to know the very complicated details of the Bosnian conflict, or the history of the Jews in the Balkans, in order to teach them. At the same time, you can refer to the fact sheet with basic background information and links to maps and other sources for reference.

We hope you will use the [web site](#) we have created as a resource for these lessons and for our exhibit, *Survival in Sarajevo: Jews, Muslims, Croats and Serbs Working Together During the Bosnian War, 1993-1995*. There you will find the multimedia film that tells the Survival in Sarajevo story, Edward Serotta's moving photographs from Sarajevo during the war, and links to resources (maps, history overviews) that will help you tell the story.

The film and exhibition are based on the book by Edward Serotta, *Survival in Sarajevo: Jews, Bosnia, and the Lessons of the Past*, published in 1994 and now out of print [but available through abebooks.com](#). The exhibit has been created by [Centropa](#), and underwritten by [JDC](#) (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and The Milton and Roslyn Wolf Foundation.

These lessons are designed for grades 6-12 and can be adjusted to fit the needs of your particular class so feel free to contact Centropa's US Education Director, Lauren Granite, for suggestions of how to adapt them: granite@centropa.org.

Survival in Sarajevo Two Lessons

Enduring Understandings:

- Jewish tradition teaches us to care for our neighbors and put community needs before individual needs.
- Identifying with a religious, ethnic or national group does not mean that you need to reject others because of their religious, ethnic or national affiliation.
- Sephardic Jews have lived in the Balkans since the expulsion from Spain.

Essential Questions:

- How did Jews get to the Balkans?
- Who are the Sephardim?
- What is the definition of community?
- What Jewish ethics and values did the people of La Benevolencija exhibit and what can we learn from them?

Overview of Lessons

Activity	Supplies Needed	Time
Lesson 1: Let all who are hungry...		
Part I: Set Induction Discussion: What is community?	None	10 mins
Part II: Film Watch film, discuss	Optional: projector to show map of Balkans	20 mins
Part III: Jewish Values Applying Jewish values to the Survival in Sarajevo story	Copies of Jewish quotes Other supplies based on activity: Option 1: paper, pens, tape Option 2: computer, Internet access for student discussions (FB, Collaborize Classroom) Option 3: nothing but the quotes	30 mins
Lesson 2: "I'm nothing. I'm a human"		
Part I: Reading book excerpts Remind students of story, read and discuss excerpts from the book, Survival in Sarajevo	Handout of excerpts from the book Survival in Sarajevo (attached)	20 mins
Part II: A prayer for the world/collage	Supplies for making collages: paper, poster board, glue, markers, etc; also, the Jewish quotes, printouts of photos from the Survival in Sarajevo web site, students' personal photos (see assignment), images, etc.	40 mins

Class #1: Let All Who are Hungry Come and Eat

I. Set Induction (10 mins)

Think/Pair/Share: Basing this definition on your own life experiences, how do you define community? As you think of your answer, consider:

- How do you determine who is part of your community? People from the same background? Same religion? Same interests? People who live near you or go to school with you?
- Is there anyone you would exclude from your community? Explain.

Students discuss the above questions with the person next to them (2 mins), then the class discusses them together. Here are two follow-up questions for the teacher to pose to the entire class during the open discussion:

- What responsibility do you have towards your community? Explain.
- What responsibility do you have towards those you don't consider part of your community? Explain.

II. "Let All Who are Hungry Come and Eat" (20 mins)

- a. Watch the film, *Survival in Sarajevo*, which can be found at <http://centropastudent.org/?typ=sprache&fLang=ENG&movID=44&nID=78&q=m>. We recommend teachers download the film to a computer or disk to avoid technical problems in class. The film runs for 12 minutes.

After viewing the film, teacher asks and answers these questions(see teacher fact sheet for answers and links to maps):

- Do the students have any questions about the film that need answering?
- Where is Sarajevo?
- Who are the Sephardim?
- How did the Sephardim get to the Balkans?

III. Exploring Jewish Values Through the Survival in Sarajevo Story (30 mins)

After making sure the students understand the historical points from the above questions, the teacher asks:

- How would you describe the behavior of the people in this story towards each other?
- What Jewish values did the people in this story exhibit towards one another?

Teacher lists student answers on the board. Then, the teacher hands out the list of values from the Jewish tradition (attached).

Each student will choose two quotes from the list they think most illustrate the themes of the film, and teachers can choose one of the three activity options using the quotes listed below.

The teacher writes the following questions on the board so students can refer to them as they do one of the below activities (the entire class must do one option).

- i. What does this quote mean?
- ii. Why does this quote most reflect the values in the story?

Option 1: Post all of the quotes around the classroom, with blank paper just below the quote. Students walk around the room and choose two quotes they think most reflect the values in the story. Below each quote they choose, on the blank paper, they write their answers to the questions the teacher has written on the board.

Option 2: Students post their quotes on Collaborize Classroom (www.collaborizeclassroom.com) or Facebook (closed group), answering the questions on the board and responding to at least one other student's post.

Option 3: Teacher hands out the sheet with Jewish quotes. In pairs, students choose the two quotes that they think best represent the story's values and answer the above questions. Go around the class and each pair presents to the group their choices and answers to the questions.

Once students have done one of the above activities, discuss as a class the students' answers and then ask these questions:

- Describe an example from your life of someone living out the value in each quote you've chosen. What did they do?
- How does the value you chose help make a community, help make a community stronger?

Note: Teachers may want to send an email with the film link to those students who were absent for this first class session, asking them to watch it at home before the next class. Another option is for those who were absent to watch the film in the next class while the others begin their collages.

Class #2: “I’m nothing. I’m a human.”

In this class, students will read two excerpts from Edward Serotta’s book, *Survival in Sarajevo*, about the boys they saw in the film and explore what it means to identify as a Jew in a global world.

Part I: Friendship in a time of war (20 minutes)

Remind students about the story, perhaps asking students to recount what they remember and filling in the gaps. The most important point to highlight is that the Bosnian war was one of ethnic rivalries and conflict; students need this information in order to understand the first excerpt below. See the teacher fact sheet for background information.

Excerpt 1: “Only Deny doesn’t call me names.”

Read this excerpt from the book, *Survival in Sarajevo*, and discuss the below questions as a group. This story challenges us to reflect on how we think about people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds:

“When war broke out, walks in the surrounding hills were impossible, and with no electricity the computer and television set stood idle. Haris Karalich found himself busier than ever with jobs from various aid agencies, and Denis [his 10 year old son], with his school now closed, often drifted through the ruined city alone. Radoslav [his friend] too felt the isolation and alienation war brings. ‘All my old friends left Sarajevo, and the other children started calling me names, dirty Serb, dirty Chetnik, all because my mother’s Serb and my dad half-Serb. Even a real good friend of mine, a Muslim boy, won’t speak to me anymore. Only Deny doesn’t call me names,’ he said.

‘Well, I don’t care who’s a Muslim, a Serb, a Croat,’ Denis muttered. ‘People who care about such things are sick.’ The boys grew closer together than ever.”

Questions to discuss:

- Why do people of different religions and ethnic groups hate and fight each other? Why would children call Radoslav those names?
- Do you think you would be able to remain friends with someone if your parents were telling you bad things about the religion or ethnic group they belonged to?
 - Explain the challenges of doing that.
 - How would your parents’ disapproval affect your life?
 - How would this be different if you lived in a society where people were fighting over ethnic differences (versus living where you live now, in a peaceful society)? Explain.

Excerpt 2: “I’m nothing. I’m a human.”

Also from the book *Survival in Sarajevo*, this poignant excerpt raises the question of whether we need to give up our religious and ethnic identities as Jews in order to be part of humanity. Read the excerpt out loud, as a group, then discuss the questions below.

Background to the excerpt: At the end of the *Survival in Sarajevo* film you met Denis, a 10-year-old boy who traveled first by bus from Sarajevo to Croatia and then to Israel. He was traveling

with his friend Radoslav Bozovich (called Rasho) and Natalia Bosovich, Rasho's mother, who intended to adopt Denis and raise him in Israel.

As a minor, Denis could not immigrate to Israel without a parent, and Natalia had not yet formally adopted him. Since Denis was a Muslim, Israel would not accept him under the law of return.¹ The law of return states that any Jew [someone whose mother is Jewish] or person with a Jewish grandparent can immigrate to Israel to become a citizen. The following excerpt describes what happened on their way to make aliyah as a family, according to Edward Serotta, author of the book *Survival in Sarajevo*. Read it and discuss the questions that follow.

"Just after 10:30 on Sunday morning the doors of the bus opened in front of the Biokovko Hotel in Makarska [Croatia].

Radoslav, Natalia, and Denis dragged their bags up to the Jewish Agency desk. An Israeli representative listened to their story, rolled his eyes and took them to Tuvya Raviv, the tireless traveler who was helping everyone he could come to Israel.

Raviv scanned the papers and said to [Edward Serotta], "Am I to understand that this boy has no adoption papers from Mrs. Bozovich? And she wants to bring him to Israel unattended by his parents?" He scratched his head and shook it from side to side. "And Denis, you're Muslim, right?"

'I'm nothing,' Denis said. 'I'm a human.'

Questions for the group to answer in response to this excerpt:

- Why do you think Denis said this?
- How do you identify yourself? As a part of a particular group (religious, ethnic, political), or (as Denis does) as a "citizen of the world" or "global citizen," or a combination? Explain your answer.
- What are the challenges and benefits of each choice (i.e., identifying with a group, or seeing yourself as a generic "human")?
- How do we create a world where people can maintain their religious and ethnic identities but they see each other as human first? Explain and support your answer.

Part II: A prayer for the world.

As a final, reflective assignment, each student will create a collage that identifies what s/he thinks is the main lesson to be learned from this story and a prayer for the world based on that story. The collage can include:

- a. Quotes from the list used in the first class session, or other quotes from the Torah, Talmud or other Jewish texts.
- b. Photos from the film that visually depict the lessons learned. Print out photographs from the web site: http://upload.centropa.org/upload/centropa-sarajevo/Centropa.org_Sarajevo/Sarajevo_home.html (click where it says "the photographs," and when you click on the photo under each section title you will see

¹ Denis, who had been injured by a mortar shell explosion in Sarajevo, made it into Israel with Rasho's family thanks to Tuvya Raviv. How? After the above took place, Serotta writes, "Next to a blank spot near Denis's name, [Raviv] said to me quietly as he wrote, "It was, I believe, a Jewish grandmother the boy had, right?"

a series of photographs taken by Edward Serotta, used in the making of the film; you may print them).

- c. Students' personal photographs reflecting the values and lessons learned from the story, or photographs from their school, synagogue or community. This could show students doing volunteer work, or a mitzvah day activity, for example.
- d. In their own words, or taken from the siddur, write prayers or wishes for the future – for their own community, for another specific community, or for humanity in general – based on what they learned.
- e. Action words or phrases illustrating what it means to take responsibility within a community. Some might include: voting, helping neighbors, feeding the poor, helping the sick, etc. These should be action-oriented verbs/phrases.
- f. Name one thing *you* can do to reach out to someone of a different ethnic or religious background – like Denis did to Rasha – to make a difference.

Students can present their collages to the class and discuss what the story meant to them, the lesson they'd like everyone to learn from it, and the prayer they have for the world.

Recommended follow-up: The teacher types up and compiles the “prayers” into a small booklet and gives one to each student, or uses them when the class participates in tefilah at the synagogue.

Recommended follow-up: Line the synagogue or school hallway with the collages. They are sure to generate lots of discussion!