

Episode 5: Search for Deliverance

V-1: Refugees and Marranos/Marranos - Timeline 1492

The opening panel of this presentation describes the development of two Sephardic worlds after the Spanish Expulsion: one in Western Europe, and the other speaking Ladino and Arabic in the Mediterranean basin. One segment describes the horror of the expulsion and the migratory patterns of Spanish and Portuguese Jewry. Then, another button takes users to an additional segment describing the Marranos in Spain, whose past Jewish knowledge had atrophied, and who ironically learned much about their heritage from Inquisition texts. Next, five buttons describe aspects of their lives as hidden Jews under the Inquisition, including their belief systems, Jewish education, dietary laws, and sabbath and holiday observances. Finally, three historical documents present haunting testimony to the lives of Jews in this environment.

V-2: Jewish Communities (Ottoman Empire) - Timeline 1500

This segment describes the invitation offered by Ottoman Sultan Bayazid for Sephardic Jews to resettle in Ottoman lands. The talents of these Jews added to the empire, and Ottoman Jewry became the largest Jewish community in the world. The Sephardim settled next to longstanding Jewish communities, and were in turn joined by central European Jews expelled from their homelands in Germany, Austria and Hungary. Although each nationality of Jews maintained separate communal institutions, the Sephardim, with their rich heritage, eventually predominated and Ladino became the lingua franca of Ottoman Jewish communities such as Salonika and Istanbul. Then, six historical documents show correspondence between communities, gentile critiques of the burgeoning Ottoman Jewish communities, and an interesting rabbinic *responsum* on coping with the conflicting customs in the melting-pot Jewish communities.

V-3: Mysticism in Safed/Lekha Dodi - Timeline 1520

This presentation offers insights into the halakhism (religious practice) and mysticism of Safed. Two panels discuss the innovations of Kabbalat Shabbat and the Tikkun Leyl Shavuot. Then, users have a multimedia presentation on the origins of the song Lekha Dodi, complete with four buttons that let users hear four of the thousands of melodies that have been composed for this remarkable song. Each is from a different Jewish-national community; all are sweet. Then, four documents provide the full text of Lekha Dodi, and offer descriptions of the practices in Safed.

V-4: Isaac Luria - Timeline 1567

This feature presents a brief biography of Isaac Luria, explaining his impact on the mystical community of Safed. Then, five panels emphasize his impact on his environment and later Jewish thought, including his innovations, his development of Kabbalah, legends about the man, and his doctrines on intentionality and the soul. Finally, three historical documents illustrate stories about the innovative, wild Luria, and his profound notions of the essence

of the meaning of life.

V-5: Life in Italy/Gallery of Jewish Images - Timeline 1450

This lovely multimedia feature depicts the shifting status of Italian Jews in the late Middle Ages and the beginnings of the Renaissance. A segment describes the combination of Jewish immersion in the arts and sciences of the time, the apparent assimilation of many Jews, and the still-pervasive restrictions to which Jews were subjected. Then, five panels display annotated examples of Jewish objects of the era, including a lockbox and a Chanukiah. Finally, three historical documents describe aspects of Jewish life in the period.

V-6: Protestant Revolt/Christian Hebraism - Timeline 1517

This multimedia presentation describes the Christian Humanists' revived interest in classical texts, including Hebrew texts. Next, three panels depict aspects of this phenomenon in the areas of conversion, Biblicism and mysticism. Then, three documents offer a Christian defense of the Talmud by Reuchlin, and two very different documents by Martin Luther, showing his rather dramatic turn regarding the quality of the Jewish people.

V-7: Counter-Reformation/Ancona Boycott - Timeline 1155

This segment explores how a Jewish community used economic pressures to thwart counter-reformation oppression by the Pope, and how the larger Jewish world reacted. Then, three documents present the violence of the counter-reformation measures aimed at Jews by Rome.

V-8: The Venice Ghetto - Timeline 1516

A brief opening video describes the strange combination of separation and acceptance of the Venetian Jewish community, with a narration of the establishment of this first urban ghetto. Then five panels present material about the synagogues, residents, merchants and traders, medieval Jewish quarters and living arrangements in the ghetto. Two historical documents provide Jewish apologetic literature of the period.

V-9: Scholarship/Jewish Publishing in Italy - Timeline 1450

This presentation begins with a panel describing Jewish activities in translating scientific texts and liturgies into Italian and the polyglot Jewish languages of the era. Stressing that Italy was the center of publishing in the early-16th century, the segment shows Jewish sacred texts that were among the earliest printed books. It then describes how the anti-Semitism of the counter-reformation shut down the Jewish presses and drove the Jewish publishing industry north to Holland. Four historical documents show the intolerance of the times and the Jewish response to it. Of particular interest is the first Hebrew "autobiography," presented as the résumé of a multi-faceted Venetian rabbi, Leone Modena.

V-10: European Empires - Timeline 1500

This wonderful segment with maps describes the Marranos who sought a new life in the New World. It details their search for colonies in the Protestant empires' lands, ending with

the extension of the Catholic Inquisition in 1569. It concludes with some wonderful pictures of New World synagogues. Three historical documents describe continued Inquisition oppression for those Jews unfortunate enough to be swept into the “wrong” imperial lands as a result of the shifting fortunes of Catholic and Protestant countries.

V-11: Images of Ashkenazic and Sephardic Communities (Amsterdam) - Timeline 1590

Here, users are offered two buttons, each leading to five panels about the respective Jewish communities in Amsterdam. The Ashkenazic panels describe a peddler, a wedding, the Great Synagogue and other topics. The Sephardic ones describe a wealthy family, a wedding, a Sephardic sukkah (this can be scanned and contrasted to an Ashkenazi sukkah), merchants, and Amsterdam’s Portuguese synagogue. Then, two documents compare the communities and present an interesting marriage-dowry decree.

V-12: Dissent in Amsterdam/Uriel Da Costa - Timeline 1590

This presentation begins with a panel describing the difficulty of Marranos, two centuries into their “undercover” life, in embracing the Judaism of Amsterdam, which they found odd and disconcerting. A button takes users to a mini-bio video of Uriel Da Costa, who ran afoul of the Jewish authorities there. Then, three panels discuss Da Costa: his life, his excommunication, and his unfortunate end. Finally, three documents introduce Uriel’s nephew, Baruch Spinoza, including the latter’s own writ of excommunication.

V-13: Prague/Images of Jewish Life in Prague - Timeline 1555

This feature describes how Rudolf II, the Holy Roman Emperor, moved his capital to Prague in Bohemia and provided a friendly environment for Jews. His measures brought into power “Court Jews,” who provided much of the capital and commercial connections for his (and other) principalities through the 17th century’s 30-Years War. Then, buttons take users to panels about items and individuals important to this era, including the Maharal of Prague. Finally, five eclectic historical documents describe issues of martyrdom, ethics, and the Maharal and his “Golem.”

V-14: Polish Jewry/Jewish Life in the 16th-17th Centuries/Early Yiddish Lit. - Timeline 1500

The “Jewish Life” button of this presentation takes users to four panels that describe the civic life of Polish Jews, including synagogues, chevrot (societies), kahals (councils) and community yeshivot. The “Early Jewish Literature” button takes users to a segment about the growth of Yiddish as a literary language, ending with four more buttons that give narrated examples of tekhines (lay prayers), tsene-rene (women’s midrash), bovo-bukh (romance literature) and mayse-bukh. Finally, six documents provide further examples of tekhines, some descriptions of Polish Jewish life, a legal charter, and how Ashkenazic halakhic (Jewish law) practices and customs came to differ from Sephardic ones among worldwide Jewry.

V-15: Shabbetai Zevi - Timeline 1665

The opening panel of this feature describes the context of this messianic movement in the kabbalah of Luria and the persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe. Then a segment describes the wildfire of messianic expectation that spread through Europe during this period. Four buttons are offered to show aspects of Shabbetai Zevi's life, the penitential movement that ensued, the hysteria of the messianic movement, and the personality of Nathan of Gaza, Shabbetai's "prophet." Finally, four historical documents present aspects of the Shabbatean movement during Zevi's messianic heyday and in the period that followed his apostasy.

V-16: English Tolerance (1500s - 1700s) - Timeline 1555

This presentation begins with a segment discussing the underground but tolerated existence of Marranos in England, until Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam championed their cause to the revolutionary government of Oliver Cromwell. Although Parliament never passed formal acceptance decrees, after this time Jews were largely accepted as members of British society. Three historical documents present crucial texts on the debate in Britain about the status of Jews.

V-17: Court Jews/Portrait Gallery (Germany) - Timeline 1648

This feature explains how Jews rose to prominence, particularly in supporting the hundreds of petty nobles in the 30-Years War. A segment describes how Jews prospered in providing capital and international mercantile connections in the years that followed. At the end of the presentation, a terrific explorable graphic lets users click around a portrait of the Court Jew, Oppenheimer. (Note: Click on the small arrows that show up in the portrait for yet more insights into the Court Jew phenomenon.) A portrait gallery describes notable Court Jews (including two of the Rothschilds). Finally, four historical documents offer some information on Court Jews, but also feature two excerpts from Gluekl of Hameln, a remarkable woman of the period.

V-18: Early Haskalah (Germany) - Timeline 1770

This presentation opens with a brief biography of Moses Mendelssohn and his early maskilim (enlightened) followers, who lived in two cultural worlds. The segment shows the determination of the maskilim to integrate with the gentile society in which they lived. Then, a choice of five panels, mostly about Mendelssohn, present his and his followers' perspectives on (and works in) religion, language, salons, literature and education. At the end, three historical documents include texts from "Nathan the Jew" by Lessing, and some of Mendelssohn's own writings.