

Episode 4: The Crucible of Europe

1) Jewish Continuity/The Karaites - Timeline 765

This feature offers a narration about a Jewish schismatic sect, the Karaites, showing the widespread nature of this non-rabbinic form of Judaism through history. Some good examples of how they differed from “normative” Judaism are offered. Then, five buttons take users to voiceover readings of pro-and anti-Karaite polemics, including ones from no less than Saadiah Gaon and Maimonides. Then, three documents preserve some examples of Talmudic writing.

2) A Golden Age of Hebrew Poetry - Timeline 900

This beautiful grouping of multimedia discusses the Arabic influence on a renewed Jewish interest in Hebrew and its employment in secular arts. Three examples are provided of the tens of thousands of beautiful Hebrew poems of the golden age, including ones by the greats: ibn Nagrela, ibn Gabirol, and Yehudah HaLevi. A couple of documents are offered: one that discusses the study of philosophy, and the other, a lusty poem which must be read to be believed!

3) Jewish Life (in Northern Europe) - Timeline 950

The origins, development and distinctiveness of Ashkenazic life are presented in this feature. Then, five buttons take users to passages about the protections offered by Christian monarchs; rabbinic scholarship (including Rashi); weddings and Bar Mitzvahs; and Jewish occupations and self-governance. Documents provide examples of *responsa* literature concerning everyday issues like *kashrut*, weddings and the Jewish status of forced converts to Christianity.

4) Jewish Prosperity/Origins of Yiddish - Timeline 95

This segment focuses on the rich origins of Yiddish, and discusses how understanding the development of the language can help one to understand the development of European Judaism. Then there are four panels that let users explore Hebrew, German, Slavic and Romance language influences in Yiddish, with multiple audio examples of each.

5) Maimonides/Writing of Maimonides - Timeline 1135

This wonderful segment provides an overview of the life and work of Maimonides, also known as Rambam. Then, users can follow four buttons to audios of his writings, one of which is a beautiful rendition of the hymn "Yigdal," based on his "13 Attributes of Faith." Others include a *responsum* and excerpts from his greatest works, the Mishnah Torah and the Guide for the Perplexed. Then, three documents set forth more of his copious output in law and philosophy.

6) Hostility Towards Jews/The Jewish Badge/Anti-Jewish Stereotypes - Timeline 1200

The multimedia button here takes users to a discussion of the distinctive garb that Jews were forced to wear for over four centuries. Then, several panels with chilling illustrations present the horrific stereotypes of Jews in this era. Five historical documents provide texts of the debasement of Jews and conflict between Jews and the Church.

7) Forced Conversions/A Family Saga - Timeline 1391

One multimedia button takes users to a discussion of the traumatic events of 1391 for Spanish Jewry, when hundreds of thousands of Jews became forced converts, were immolated, or fled. Emerging from these pogroms were decimated Jewish communities, and "New Christians," many of whom were Marranos (secret Jews). From there, users are offered four sound buttons which provide narrations of contemporary reports of the horrors.

The other multimedia presentation is unusual: a family tree spanning five generations of a Sephardic family, with voiceovers users can choose about key members. Documents from important writers discuss martyrdom during the pogroms and a jaundiced view of willing converts.

Episode 5: Search for Deliverance

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) 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.

4) 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.

5) 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.

6) 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.

7) 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.

8) 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.

9) 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.

10) 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.

11) 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.”

12) 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.

13) 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.

14) 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.

15) 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.

16) 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.

17) 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.

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.

Episode 6: Roads from the Ghetto

1) Shtetl Life and Culture - Timeline 1800

This lovely multimedia presentation depicts the materials, music and practices of 19th century shtetl culture. It shows how shtetl culture blended Jewish tradition with surrounding folk-life. It also stresses that the objective was not isolation from Christians, but rather insulation from Christianity. Then, six panels offer insights into shtetl life in the areas of folktales, synagogue architecture, clothing, food, music and ritual objects. Then, two historical documents present a Yizkorbuch (destroyed-community memoir) entry on making a living, and a woman's memoir on religion in the Pale of Settlement.

2) Jewish Emancipation - Timeline 1800

This presentation begins with a panel showing Napoleon as the benefactor of Jews, and describes how French egalitarian ideals spread across the continent of Europe. The segment balances the spread of emancipation with the slower progress in eliminating social discrimination. A wonderful map shows the spread of equality, and emphasizes that emancipation did not extend into Russia and parts of the Muslim world. An explorable graphic lets users point to the various countries of Europe to see the history of emancipation in each. Finally, three historical documents describe the Napoleonic impact on Jews residing in Padua (Italy), Prussia and Germany.

3) Innovation in Judaism/Jewish Choral Music/Oranienburgstrasse Synagogue (Germany) - Timeline 1820

An opening panel describes how the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) spawned the Reform movement in Germany. Then, a button takes users to a discussion of new musical forms in the Reform synagogue, including mixed choirs, organ music, and a fusion of European and traditional Jewish styles. Then, listen to a stirring rendition of "Ma Tov." Another button takes users to a discussion and explorable graphic of an 1866 Berlin synagogue. In the graphic, users can tour both the exterior and interior of the synagogue. Don't miss either one! Then, five historical documents present the tensions with modernity in both Reform and neo-Orthodox German Judaism, featuring writings by Heinrich Heine (on his baptism) and Samson Raphael Hirsch.

4) Czar Nicholas I/Conscription of Jews into the Czarist Army - Timeline 1825

This narrated segment describes Nicholas I's assault on the structures of Jewish life. Of great interest is the button that takes users to information about his program of Jewish conscription into the Czarist army, including a sad song about a conscript. Then, two historical documents provide the 1827 conscription statute, and a heart-breaking tale of Jewish bounty hunters for the Czar.

5) Literary Renaissance (Eastern Europe) - Timeline 1870

This wonderful narration describes Jewish wrestling with the choice of Hebrew or Yiddish as a creative language, perhaps exemplified best in the contrast between Sholom Aleikhem (Yiddish) and Chaim Nachman Bialik (Hebrew). In a group portrait, users can click to learn more about these literary giants. Then, five historical documents provide further information and examples of the Yiddish/Hebrew division, and the ambivalence of "modern" life in the Pale of Settlement.

6) End of the Old Order/Jewish Community enters the 20th Cent. (Salonika) - Timeline 1875

The opening panel describes how the beginning of the 20th century heralded the end of great empires, including those of Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottomans. Then, a button takes users to a presentation on Salonika, where over forty percent of the population was Jewish, and the whole town closed down on Shabbat. Four frames show how Salonika was transformed in this era by French influence, the Balkan Wars, and the Great Fire of 1917. Then, a historical document describes minority rights in Poland after World War I.

7) Anti-Semitism/Anti-Semitic Images - Timeline 1879

An opening panel describes the evolution of anti-Semitism toward racial grounds. Then, a button takes users to four panels depicting aspects of the "new" anti-Semitism, including populist politics, stereotypes, conspiracy myths, and the image of the Ostjude (Eastern-European Jew). Then, three historical documents provide sadly familiar examples of both leftist and rightist/racist anti-Semitism of the period.

8) Zionism (1897-1948) - Timeline 1897

This multimedia presentation describes how the early Zionist movement was a combination of many factions, united in their zeal to overcome the crisis of the diaspora through the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Next, a set of buttons provides further information about the major factions: practical versus political Zionism, cultural Zionism, socialist Zionism, religious Zionism, general Zionism, and revisionist Zionism. Then, three historical documents provide Herzl's call for a homeland, a religious Zionist manifesto, and A. D. Gordon's socialist labor vision.

9) The Jewish Labor Bund/The Bund and Yiddish Culture - Timeline 1897

This presentation offers insights into "The General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland and Russia," a radical anti-Czarist Jewish socialist organization commonly known as the Bund. The segment explores the deportation of Jewish insurrectionists associated with the Bund and their use of study groups to spread their fusion of Jewish autonomy and workers' revolt. The presentation also explores how their participation in the 1905 Russian Revolt dispersed them across Europe. The much-hoped-for Revolution of February, 1917 resulted in their being banned (with other parties) by the Bolsheviks in 1920, when they re-formed in Poland. A button takes users to a description of the Bund's impact on Yiddish Culture, including a stirring recording of their anthem, *Di Shvue*. Then, users will find historical documents, including one by Vladamir Medem, a Bund leader who describes how the Bund represented a merger of Jewish and "class" identities, as well as others showing how Socialist anti-Semitism drove many Jews to the Bund, and another that describes the gender equality of the Bund.

Note: On the timeline, many of historical documents included in the various multimedia presentations are separately indicated. Remember also to search the index to find out more on any topic from the Concise Encyclopedia Judaica, the maps, and Abba Eban, guide to the video series.