

Crash Course in Jewish History 4

Abridged Outline

I. RECAP.

II. ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS IMPACT

A. Political upheaval throughout Europe affected the Jews as Europeans interested in 'the Jewish question'

- Questions were raised regarding whether the Jews should be extended the rights of citizenship?
- General suggestions for the emancipation of the Jews:
 - Integration would be made possible if Jews were 'made presentable' (i.e. assimilate)
 - Jews had to cast off Judaism to be acceptable
 - Refusal of any integration or acceptance of Jews
 - All three solutions (integration, acceptance without religion and refusal) suggest the belief that there was something wrong with the Jews

B. The effect of revolution

- The American Revolution
 - In 1776 there were approximately 2,000 Jews in the North American colonies
 - Haym Salomon - Revolutionary War hero who helped finance the war
- The French Revolution and Napoleon
 - The French National Assembly passed a bill allowing Jews to become citizens (1791), but in doing so the community would lose its relative autonomy
 - Many of the new rights were rescinded during the Reign of Terror
 - Napoleon Bonaparte seized control of France (1799)
 - Napoleon formed "Sanhedrin" whose charge it was to establish that Jewish law would not prevent Jews from being loyal French citizens (1806)

III. Emancipation

A. Jews sporadically given citizenship in different European countries, but anti-Semitism did not decrease, as had been hoped

German army's invasion of the Soviet Union. The Einsatzgruppen shot all Jews in an occupied town or city and buried them in mass graves.

- The most well-known of such mass graves is Babi Yar, the site at which almost all of Kiev's 100,000 Jews were exterminated by firing squad.

- The so-called "Final Solution," to systematically exterminate the Jews by gassing them in death camps, became official Nazi policy in early 1942.

- Not all the occupied countries did as the Nazis wished. There were some notable exceptions, such as Denmark, that secretly shipped out its Jews to neutral countries. The Danish King Christian X went so far as to don a yellow star to show solidarity with his Jewish subjects. Bulgaria also refused to send the Jews to Germany and saved its 50,000 Jews from certain death.

- In most of Eastern Europe, however, the local populations participated quite enthusiastically in the killing of Jews. For them, this was just another gigantic pogrom.

- Indeed, the Jews were very much alone. There were no major protests, even when the outside world was well aware of the Nazi barbarism.

- The Vatican was silent and Catholic priests did not protest. There is an interesting book by James Carol called *Constantine's Sword*, in which he points out that the Catholic Church never excommunicated Hitler. The Pope issued an automatic ban of excommunication on anyone who would join the Communist party. But there was never any excommunication of those who joined the Nazi party. That means one could still have salvation and grace within the church, still participate in Catholic services and communion, no matter what butchery one committed...Adolf Hitler himself was an Austrian Catholic, and he was never excommunicated.

F. For those who are unfamiliar with the horror that was Nazi Europe – the Germans sought out and systematically destroyed any Jews (as well as Gypsies, homosexuals and various other groups

B. Both Jews and non-Jews had mixed reactions to Jewish emancipation

C. Jewish reactions to emancipation (*Haskala* in Hebrew)

- People assimilated totally, and many even underwent baptism
- Adapted Judaism to the spirit of the time
 - Samuel Holdheim (1806-1860), one of the early founders of the Reform movement
 - The Hamburg Temple was the first congregation to have a bell tower and an organ, to move the celebration of Shabbat to Sunday, to deliver sermons in German, and to remove all references in prayer to Zion, Jerusalem and the Messiah
 - *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Society for Study of the Science of Judaism
 - Moses Mendelssohn
- Self-imposed isolation from the outside world
 - Chatam Sofer
- Adapted acceptable parts of the secular world into the Jewish religious world
 - Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Germany 1808 - 1888)
 - Promoted teaching children science, literature, the arts and culture, and that rabbis get advanced secular educations, all the while not compromising in their observance of Torah

D. Eastern Europe was still a bastion of anti-Semitism

- Russian government confined Jews to the Pale of Settlement (Western region of the Russian Empire)
- There were frequent pogroms and many anti-Semitic decrees
 - Jewish boys, starting at age 7 or 8, were impressed into (forced to serve in) the Russian army for 25 years

IV. THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A. Increased immigration to the land of Israel

B. *Shtadlanim* - politically influential Jews

- The Rothschilds
- Sir Moses Montefiore

C. Development of the “Modern Orthodox” movement in Germany

- Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch taught *Torah with Derech Eretz*, Torah and living within the general society (Literally: the Way of the land)

D. Development of the Mussar movement emphasizing ethical behavior

- Rabbi Israel Salanter(1810-1883)

E. Mass emigration to the United States from Eastern Europe

- By 1903 there were about 2 million in the United States

F. Jewish achievements in the United States

- Economically
 - Lazarus Straus (R.H. Macy's & Abraham and Straus)
 - Julius Rosenwald (Sears Roebuck & Co)
 - Levi Straus (Levi's Jeans)
- Law and Government
 - Judah P. Benjamin
 - Louis Brandeis

G. The Reform movement was very successful in America

- Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900)
 - Union of American Hebrew Congregations was established in 1873
 - Hebrew Union College, the seminary for Reform rabbis, opened in 1875
- Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874—1949) founded the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York
- Rabbi Sabato Marais (1823-1897) helped begin the Jewish Theological Seminary as a reaction to the Reform movement's extreme alterations...J.T.S. would later become the foundation of the Conservative Movement.

H. Jews in the Middle East

- The Sephardi (Middle Eastern/North African) Jews, on the whole, remained very traditional and observant of the commandments
- What anti-Semitism there was, was often the result of nationalism rather than religion
- Sephardim had their own languages: Judeo-Arabic and Ladino, a mixture of Spanish and Hebrew
- Damascus Affair (1840)
 - Blood libel in Syria concerning the murder of a French monk, during the inquest of which, more than 60 children were seized and held under dire conditions
 - International response, generated by the involvement of Sir Moses Montifiore and Adolphe Cremieux of France and the Pasha Mohammad Ali to rescind the convictions

I. There was a rise in Jewish nationalism

- Focus on Yiddish as a culture

J. Three turn of the century incidents of French anti-Semitism

- The Panama Canal Project -- Jewish investors blamed for failure
- The Rothschilds make a “hostile takeover” of the Vatican Bank after it fails due to corruption
- The Dreyfus Affair:
 - Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was framed and convicted of spying for the Germans, and sent to Devils Island
 - The conviction was based on forgeries and a cover-up conspiracy
 - The Dreyfus conviction set off anti-Semitic riots
 - Dreyfus was found guilty at a second trial but was pardoned by the president of the Republic ten days later
- Theodore Herzl, a reporter at the Dreyfus trial, realized that Jews, no matter how assimilated, Jews would never be accepted in the Christian world and so proposed that the Jews needed a state of their own (the beginning of political-Zionism)
 - First Zionist Congress took place in 1897

V. THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A. Zionism caught on throughout Europe and many Jews prepared to go to Israel

- Conditions in Israel were difficult: malaria, poverty, Arabs killing Jews, a corrupt Ottoman Turk government, and little industry or agriculture
- Opposition to Zionism came from assimilationists (like the Reform movement) who were not interested in forming a separate country, also opposition from some religious leaders who felt that the Zionists were anti-Torah
- Proposal for Jewish state in Uganda vetoed at Sixth Zionist Congress (1903)

B. Development of Jewish Community in the United States

- By 1924, there would be 4 million Jews in the United States
 - Vast majority of Jewish immigrants went to the Lower East Side of Manhattan
 - Immigrant families lived in tenements and worked in sweatshops
 - Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire (1911)
- Many Jews forsook traditional life in America because it was difficult to be observant (lack of family support, kosher food, jobs, etc.) or because they came with the desire

to shed the “bonds” of the old world

- Dr. Solomon Schechter transformed the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Conservative synagogues into a united movement
 - Reconstructionist Judaism broke off from the Conservative movement in 1968 under the leadership of Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan
- Development of Yeshiva University
- Significant numbers Jewish immigrants were also involved Communism and the American Labor movement

C. Jewish life in Russia

- The infamous *Protocols of the Elders Zion* published in 1905
 - *The Protocols* were a proven forgery written by a Russian Secret Service Agent
- Many Jews were attracted to Communism and Socialism
- Beilis Trial, a blood libel (1911), set off a wave of anti-Semitism

D. Influential Jews who lived during and after the war

- Rabbi Israel Meyer Kagen (1838-1933), Chofetz Chaim, codified Jewish law and raised Jewish consciousness against speaking evil
- Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik (1853-1918), the Brisker Rav, revolutionized the study of Torah
- Development of Daf Yomi
- Sarah Schneirer (1883-1938) began the first organized system of education for Jewish girls

VI. WORLD WAR I

A. The First World War

- In late June 1914, Serbian national assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo. On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Hungary, but the war took on far greater magnitude on August 1 when Germany declared war on Russia on August 1 (which happened to be the 9th of Av 5674)
 - Jews fought on all sides and lived in the heart of the battle zone

B. The Russian Revolution

- Even though many Jews supported the Communists, Communism is, by nature, anti-religious and thus many Jews found themselves caught between the Communist movement and family and friends

C. Britain took control of Palestine from the Ottoman Empire

- Jewish Legion helped the British oust the Turks from Palestine
 - Nili spy network
 - Jews joined the British army to help fight
- The Balfour Declaration of 1917 stated England's support for a Jewish state
 - The official League of Nations Mandate came in 1922
- British turned pro-Arab when they realized they needed Arab oil...Palestine became a twice promised land
 - Britain began limiting Jewish immigration. Jews reacted by forming two different defense organizations, the *Irgun Tzvai Leumi*, the National Military Organization (fought the British and the Arabs) and the *Haganah*, the underground military organization of the Jews (tried to work with the British)

D. Arab riot in Hebron (1929) claimed the lives of 67 Jews

- Jews fled. It was the first time that the city was without a Jewish population for hundreds of years

E. Development of religious Zionism: *Mizrachi* Movement, the religious Zionist organization (which developed the well-known youth movement, *Bnei Akivah*)

F. Arab revolts claimed 500 Jewish lives between 1936 and 1939