

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO SEPHARDIC JEWRY**

Sherrie Rosenberg Klein  
Congregation Adath Jeshurun,  
High School

### Grade Level

7-10

### Description of Project:

Several classes of students were involved in this experiential learning project. The author wrote the lesson plans and gathered the necessary resources. She also coordinated the activities of five learning stations, assisted by the classroom teachers of the participating students.

### Teacher's Goals:

The student will become familiar with a general overview of the history of the time period from the Golden Age of Spain to the Expulsion, including the contributions of leading Sephardic personalities. Students also will be introduced to elements of Sephardic culture, specifically, music and food.



*The Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon)*

### Instructional Objectives:

After participating fully in the learning sessions and activities of the unit, students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast Sephardic and Ashkenazic customs in several areas of tradition.
- Identify important Sephardic personalities and list their contributions to Sephardic culture and Judaism.
- Participate in the game, "To Tell the Truth," selecting "real" Sephardic personalities from impostors.
- List the similarities and differences from among a variety of recipes for *charoset* and prepare several versions using authentic ingredients.
- Create a time line of events from the Golden Age of Spain to the Expulsion.
- Identify the countries where Jews settled after the Expulsion and explore questions about their lives in these new communities.
- Discuss an original diary entry by Luis de Torres and debate the theory as to whether Columbus was or was not a Jew/converso.

### Selected Resources:

- Video: "Song of the Sephardi" (SERC #V353)
- Sephardic recipes
- Maps
- Cantor/choir or tapes of Sephardic songs
- Handout materials were taken from *Our Story: The Jews of Sepharad* (SERC #7690), *Encyclopedia Judaica* (available for use in SERC), *CAJE Jewish Education News* (available for use in SERC) and *The Cardinal's Snuffbox* by Kenneth Roseman.

### Sample Learning Activities:

The learning stations included the following activities which also can be used as cooperative learning experiences:

Biographies of Leading Sephardic Jews -- Students, in groups of three, were given biographies of different Sephardic personalities. They were assigned the task of identifying the place and date of birth and death, religious and secular achievements and a quote exemplifying the person's life. Each group chose one student to "be" the personality and then the rest of the group became the panel for a game of "To Tell the Truth." The remainder of the class asked questions and tried to guess the identity of the "real" personality. This activity reinforced the names and the contributions of the Sephardic Jews highlighted.

*The Cardinal's Snuffbox* - This is an experiential book in which decisions have to be made as one proceeds through the chapters. The students, working in small groups and putting themselves in the place of Jews of the period, had to make joint decisions regarding their fate.

### Teacher's Evaluation:

"The students were positive about the program. They enjoyed the experiential type learning and requested more of it. Due to the timing, the material paralleled what they were learning in secular school. The linkage gave validity to the unit. [Seventh and eighth grade students were beginning a history unit on the 500th anniversary of Columbus.]

"The project ran well. Areas of concern to me were 1) movement of students to the various activities, 2) a large group watching a movie "effectively" and 3) how well the teachers would cooperate with this idea. I am fortunate that my peers agreed to help in the capacity of discussion leaders and activity facilitators. While all the planning was done for them, I did meet with individual teachers to discuss the program and assign a learning station. All the teachers enjoyed teaching the unit and felt the project was very worthwhile. Things ran smoothly, thanks to their cooperation.

"The educational part of the project was tremendous. The students came away with the feeling that they learned much about the period and the culture." ■