From Golah to Geulah

by

Julie Weiss

From Golah to Geulah is a classroom tested, complete and effective core curriculum for teaching the Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel from the perspective of the armed Jewish Resistance. The original manuscript includes topic outlines, text, recommended visual aids, suggested oral presentations by students in class and research projects.
( It is recommended for grades 8th through high school)

From Golah to Geulah

Section A

: The Jewish plight in the first half of the twentieth century Europe is explored through the three progressive stages of destruction of European Jewry under the Nazi regime. Accounts of armed Jewish resistance in each stage give the students the basis to refute a prevalent perception that Jews were led to their death like sheep to slaughter

The three stages are:

(1) Anti-Jewish legislation and effects;
(2) Relocation of Jews into ghettos and deportations;
(3) Concentration and extermination camps.

1. Pre Nazi Germany and the Rise of the Third Reich

Students should possess the following information:

- W.W.I. and the Treaty of Versailles
- The role of the Jews in the Weimar Republic.
- Nationalist Socialist German Worker’s Party-25 point plan.
- Stormtroopers; Brownshirts
- Collapse of the German economy and its aftermath.
- Putsch.
- The Organization of inner workings of Party.
- Hitler’s Mein Kampf.
- The rise of the Nazi party
- first victories in Reichstag.

(2)-Subsequent victories and plans for the coalition government.

- Legislation and effects: emergency decree, protective custody boycott and its impact on the Jewish population.
  – The Aryan law.
- The Gestapo.

Part 1 - Anti-Jewish Legislation and Effects
As a result of anti-Jewish legislation and violence, by 1935, 75,000 Jews had left Germany. Of the Jewish population that remained, a large number had lost their means of income by boycott, decree or local anti-Semitic pressure. On September 15, 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were enacted. The law of Reich Citizenship declared that citizenship could only belong to a national of German or kindred blood. The law of The Protection of German Blood and German Honor proscribed marriages between Jews and Germans, and all marriages that had already taken place in defiance of such law were null and void. Sexual relations between Germans and Jews were also prohibited. The Nuremberg Laws made it clear that Jews were to be totally disenfranchised from German life. Having lost their citizenship, they had no equality under the law. Any move against the Jews had legal backing. Jewish businesses were quickly appropriated and the Ministry of the Interior issued laws placing restrictions on Jews in trade and industry. Schools incorporated in their daily curriculum racial concepts and their application in daily life

Organized anti-semitic activities became part of the emerging Aryan self expression. On September 7, 1936, a 25% tax was placed on all Jewish wealth. On November 29, liberalism and democracy were officially denounced as Jewish concepts, and democratic governments as being essentially established and controlled by Jews. Following Germany’s annexation of Austria in March, 1938, the Austrian Jews found themselves overnight deprived of all civil rights - owning property, employment, exercising their profession, the right to enter restaurants, cafes, public baths and parks. Just like in Germany, Jews were beaten, tortured and publicly humiliated. Many committed suicide. Thousands tried to emigrate to neighboring countries but found their doors closed to refugees. The refugee problem was discussed during the July, 1938 conference sponsored by F.D.R. in Evian, France. Driven by overwhelming self interest, the participating nations tightened their immigration laws, severely restricting their quotas, rendering the Jews unable to escape the Nazi annihilation machine. The Wannsee Conference held on January 20, 1942, organized and formalized the final solution to the Jewish problem. All Jews were to be resettled and exterminated, including Jews living in neutral countries and unoccupied territories. Eleven million Jews were targeted for extermination. Jews not disposed of were to be used as slave laborers until their death. The conference addressed the following issues: how to deal with each geographical target area, type of solution, possibilities, preparing the non-Jewish population to accept the destruction of the Jewish population, building camps in remote rural areas, setting up railway systems for transportation of Jews to their death.

Jewish Resistance in Germany Between 1937 - 1942.

The Herbert Baum Group
This segment is designed to shed light on the valiant struggle of an underground Jewish resistance cell operating in Berlin, Germany, in the heart of the Third Reich. Founded in 1937 by Herbert Baum and his wife Marianne, the cell comprised of approximately 28 members, mostly in their late teens. By early 1941, the group’s focus shifted from cultural, social and legal attempts to appeal to the Nazi government and rectify the injustice perpetrated against the Jews, to an ideology of self help and resistance. Consequently, the group concentrated on activities designed to weaken Germany from within. The activities included : - seeking contact with German resistance groups -- producing and distributing political leaflets - - ideological and political education - - prevention of deportation and mutual help -- reaching out and helping foreign slave laborers in the Siemens factory .In active opposition to the policies of the Third Reich, the Baum Group was instrumental in reprinting and disseminating a German underground pamphlet issuing a call to “organize the revolutionary mass struggle against the Fascist and Imperialist war”. The group evolved into a vocal political and militant unit of active resistance to the Nazi regime.
The tragic end of the Baum Group came in 1942 as a result of its attempt to sabotage the anti-Soviet exhibit (organized by Goebbels in Berlin) by setting it on fire. Four days after the incident, the core of the group’s leadership was arrested by the Gestapo. Soon after, many other key members were apprehended. The Gestapo records attest that the accused did not express regret for their actions, nor ask for mercy. Although tortured by the Gestapo, Herbert Baum died without betraying his comrades’ identities.

The Herbert Baum resistance unit will be remembered as a group of courageous young men and women determined to fight back against all odds, in one of the darkest and desperate hours in our nation’s history.

(Exploring the resistance of the Jews of Italy, Belgium and France is highly recommended, if time permits it in the school curriculum. This type of exploration should follow after the students are familiar with the state of the Jews in these countries prior to and during the Nazi occupation.)

Part 2 The Jewish Underground and Armed Jewish Resistance in the Ghetto

This unit explores the underground movement and armed Jewish resistance in the following small ghettos: Lachwa, Tuczyn and Czestochowa.

Among large ghettos, Warsaw, Minsk and Vilna are explored in the unit. In each case, students should learn about the geography, topography and size of the city or town in which the ghetto was located and the number of Jews interred in it. This information will enable the students to compare the ghettos with regard to the state of the Jewish population in them, the rise of the resistance movements and the success or failure in their fight against the Nazis. The following is a proposed list of topics to be addressed in each ghetto: leadership; structure; funding; the role of the Judenrat; goals; activities; deportations; revolt; partisan warfare in the forest. Additional recommended reading should include fragments from the book by J. Tennenbaum entitled: “Underground”, The Story of the Peoples’ Revolt in the Towns of Slonin, Nieswiez, Nowogrodek, Mir, Pilica and Bedzin.

Part 3 Deportation From Ghetto to Extermination Camps

This unit involves reading a testimony entitled “...And You Shall Tell Your Sons - Memories of Another Time - by #55108” written by Laura Zilberstein Gross. The document vividly describes the deportation of the author, her family and other Jews from a Nazi occupied town in Hungary to Auschwitz in the spring of 1944.

The selection at the railway station after arrival to Auschwitz is also described. Accounts of life in Auschwitz, transfer to slave labor camp and liberation are included as well.

Part 4 Armed Jewish Resistance in Extermination Camps

This unit explores Jewish underground activities and armed Jewish resistance in three extermination camps: Auschwitz, Sobibor and Treblinka. The students learn about the location of the sites, size of the transports of victims, their arrival and selection, method of extermination and more. The infertile soil in which the underground grew into armed Jewish resistance is also explored as well as information about leadership, structure, goals and resistance activities of the Jewish underground. This will enable the students to compare the extermination camps with regard to organization and the type of revolt possible in each of these three camps.
Section B: The Jewish plight in the post Holocaust Europe and Palestine is explored from the perspective of armed Jewish resistance, culminating with the rise of Israel.

Part 5 The Bricha Movement

The student learn about the meaning of the term, the inception of the movement, its leadership and purpose and the various factions that the movement comprised of. They learn that this illegal immigration system served survivors of the Holocaust, helping them to reach the shores of Palestine and enter the land of Israel despite the severe restrictions imposed by the British Mandate.

Part 6 The Yishuv

This unit presents an overview of the state of the Yishuv, (the Jewish population in Palestine) from the he end of the Ottoman rule over the land in 1917. The unit explores life in the British occupied Palestine and the conflicting interests between the Arab and Jewish population at the time. Britain’s interests and the political role Britain exercised in the land until the declaration of the State of Israel in May, 1948, are also part of this segment.

The Jewish Underground and armed Jewish Resistance in Palestine.

The following resistance movements are presented in the curriculum:

- Haganah: Students learn about the organization and goals the Hagana and its policy of restraint(havlag). We look at British relations with Haganah; Haganah members who served in the British war effort against the Nazis; the saison; its anti-British activities; Black Saturday; Haganah and illegal immigration; Finally, Haganah became the I.D.F., the Defense Force of the State of Israel.

- Irgun Zvai Leumi: (I.Z.L.) Students learn about the initial organization and goals of this underground unit; I.Z.L. reaction to the British White Paper; the I.Z.L, during World War II; its anti-British activities.

- Lochamei Cherut Israel: the Stern Gang; the movement after the murder of Avraham (Yair) Stern; organization and goals; its anti British activities.

From Golah to Geula ends on a high note, with the declaration of the State of Israel. Some schools who adopted this curriculum are considering taking their 8th graders on a trip to Israel. The trip is designed to take the students to visit various sights in Israel that became familiar to the students through the context of this curriculum, and culminate the visit by touring an Israeli military installation. The purpose of this trip is to show that the Jewish people are entering the new millenium as a strong nation, capable of self-defense, thus making sure that history does not repeat itself.