



## LESSON PLAN: Displaced Persons' Camps After the Holocaust

### INTRODUCTION

Through texts and visual testimony, students investigate how postwar antisemitism, barriers to repatriation, and difficult conditions in DP camps rendered many Jewish people “liberated but not free.” Students also analyze testimony and images from DP camps to understand the choices Jewish people made to rebuild their lives despite all they had suffered and lost.

### PART 1: FOLLOWING LIBERATION, WHAT OBSTACLES TO TRUE FREEDOM DID HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS ENCOUNTER?

*Post the supporting question above for students as you begin this part of the lesson.*

**1** The phrase, “liberated but not free” is posted. In pairs, students discuss the meaning of this phrase as it relates to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. They create a concept map or simple list of ways in which they think survivors were not truly free in the aftermath of liberation. Pairs share their ideas with the class.

**2** Students consider that one obstacle to freedom following liberation was the continuation of widespread antisemitism. They view the testimonies of individuals who discuss the 1946 Kielce Pogrom, which resulted in the murder of 42 Jews in Poland: **Rachel Huber (bio)** and **Malwina Moses (bio)**. As they watch the clips, students take notes on the *Testimony Reflections* handout<sup>1</sup>.

**3** After viewing the testimony clips, students journal and/or participate in a whole group discussion in response to some of the following questions:

- What is a pogrom? Why were Jewish people targeted by pogroms after World War II (as they had been before the war)?
- Why was the Kielce Pogrom a “terrible shock” to Rachel Huber and the others with her on the wagon?

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<sup>1</sup> In July 1946, a resident of Kielce, Poland filed a police report that his son had been kidnapped by Jews, but had managed to escape. The boy said the Jews wanted to use his blood for a religious ritual. The claim was false, but the subsequent police investigation led to a massive outbreak of violence against the Jewish community in Kielce. 42 Jews were murdered in the pogrom, and some 80 others were wounded.

In the months following the Holocaust, pogroms were perpetrated against Jews in several other towns in Poland as a result of blood libels – false allegations that Jews murder Christians, especially children, to use their blood for ritual purposes (see Unit 2: Antisemitism for additional background).

The Kielce pogrom triggered the flight of tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors from Poland. Comprehending the deeply rooted antisemitism in Poland, many survivors realized they could not build a future in their homeland.

Following the Kielce pogrom, an investigation was opened and some 40 rioters stood trial. Nine of them were sentenced to death on July 10, 1947 and executed the following day.

- What was the reaction among many Poles to Jewish survivors who returned home?
- Why did Malwina Moses' family live in a big city after the war rather than their hometown?
- What feelings do Rachel and Malwina express about facing violence in their birth countries after surviving the Holocaust?
- Did Jewish people have a home to return to after the war? Explain.

## PART 2: HOW DID JEWISH SURVIVORS BEGIN TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES IN DISPLACED PERSONS' CAMPS?

*Post the supporting question above for students as you begin this part of the lesson.*

**4** In pairs or small groups, students read the ***Displaced Persons*** handout and answer the accompanying questions. They review their responses as a whole group. The class discusses how factors including postwar antisemitism, barriers to immigration and repatriation, and difficult conditions in DP camps contributed to the feeling of “liberated but not free” for many Jewish survivors.

**5** Students view testimony of Jewish survivors who experienced displaced persons' camps: **Malka Baran (bio)** and **Daniel Geslewitz (bio)**. As they watch the clips, students take notes on the ***Testimony Reflections*** handout, focusing especially on actions and feelings that demonstrate a “return to life” despite the hardships of the DP camps<sup>2</sup>.

**6** After viewing the testimony clips, students journal and/or participate in a whole group discussion in response to some of the following questions:

- What does Malka Baran say “brought her back” and returned her to “normal life”?
- What stood out to you about Malka's work with children? What feeling did you get hearing her description?
- Why do you think so many weddings took place and new families formed in such difficult conditions?
- Daniel Geslewitz says, “We felt like human beings again” and Malka says, “It was a wonderful period.” What do you think most contributed to this “return to life”?
- How was the atmosphere in the DP camps, as described by Malka and Daniel, different from what you had imagined?

**7** The ***Displaced Persons' Camp Images*** are placed at different stations or displayed in different parts of the room. A sheet of chart paper with the questions below is positioned next to each. In small groups, students rotate and observe at least four images. They add their ideas to the corresponding charts<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Students may also benefit from viewing the Video Toolbox, “[The Return To Life in the DP Camps](#)” [7:44], which provides an in-depth overview of the social, cultural, and educational lives survivors created in the DP camps.

<sup>3</sup> The images included here demonstrate the contrast between the horrendous conditions survivors faced upon liberation and the amazing choice they made to come back to life. Theirs is a story of resilience.

### DP Camp Image Observation

What part of life does the image reflect (e.g., culture, community, education, family, leisure, etc.)	How does the image reflect a “return to life”? What details do you notice?	What questions do you have after viewing the image?

**8** Students take a “gallery walk” and review the image reflections noted by their peers. The class then gathers and the handout *DP Camp Images – Explanation* is either distributed or projected. Students review the handout and discuss the questions below, as well as their general insights in response to the activity.

- How do the images demonstrate a “return to life”?
- What choices did survivors make to rebuild their lives?

**9** As a summative task, students choose one of the characteristics from the list below and identify a person or image from the lesson that most reflects the characteristic. On an index card, students describe their reasoning, using evidence from lesson sources. In pairs, students share their reflections. As time allows, students form new pairs and continue sharing. The index cards can be collected to check for understanding of lesson concepts.

**ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 90 MINUTES**