

# ON THE KRAKOW MEZUZAH TRAIL

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS



**YAD VASHEM**  
Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority  
P.O.B. 3477 Jerusalem, Israel

**גדות בלגיה**  
A Page of Testimony

1953 ז'צום אנדענק פון אומקום און גבורה — יד־ושם, תשי"ג  
שטעלט פֿעסט אין פֿארנאָף נומ' 2:

ו'ן יד־ושם איז איינזאמלען אין היימלאנד דעם אנדענק פֿון אלע יידן, וואס האבן זיך מוסר נפש געווען, געקעמפט און זיך אנטקעגנגעשטעלט דעם נאצי־אויסגעלפער, און זיי אלעמען, די קהילות, די ארגאניזאציעס און אינסטיטוציעס, רוב געווארן צוליב ווער אנגעהערקייט צום יידישן פֿאלק — שטעלן א דענקמאל. (געזעץ־בוך נומ' 132, י"ז אלול תשי"ג, 28.8.1953)

THE MARTYRS' AND HEROES' REMEMBRANCE LAW, 5713—1953 determines in article No. 2 that —  
The task of YAD VASHEM is to gather into the homeland material regarding all those members of the Jewish people who laid down their lives, who fought and rebelled against the Nazi enemy and his collaborators, and to perpetuate their memory and that of the communities, organisations, and institutions which were destroyed because they were Jewish.

Family name \* **WASSERBERG**  
First Name (maiden name) **PAULINA**  
Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_



**HUMANITY IN ACTION**

The scenarios were developed as part of the project 'Untold Stories | Forgotten Places of Memory', which Humanity in Action Poland is implementing in cooperation with Humanity in Action Germany and Humanity in Action Netherlands.

The project is funded by the EVZ Foundation and the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF).

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This publication does not represent the opinion of the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation (EVZ) or the Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF). The author bears responsibility for any statements contained herein.

## Project of the Education Agenda NS-Injustice

**Funded by:**



**on the basis of a decision  
of the Bundestag**

# ON THE KRAKOW MEZUZAH TRAIL

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EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

EDUCATIONAL SCENARIO

# On the Krakow Mezuzah Trail. SEARCHING FOR SYMBOLS

## Estimated duration:

45-60 minutes

## Topics covered:

- Jewish culture,
- symbols and their role in Jewish tradition,
- methods of looking for traces of the past in the participants' own city of origin.

## Forms and methods of work:

- moderated discussion,
- working with a movie,
- group work.

## Teaching aids:

- „**On the Krakow Mezuzah Trail**” movie,
- reference texts – excerpts from the book „**About Jews**”,
- multimedia presentation (optional, can be downloaded from the website).

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## Aims:

After the lesson, the participants:

- know basic terms and symbols referring to Jewish culture,
- are able to explain why it is important to know the past in order to better understand social and cultural mechanisms of today,
- are more interested in local and regional history,
- have developed their skills in terms of Human Science, language, researching information and using different sources of information on their own, critical thinking and expressing their own opinion,
- have learned how a historical narrative is shaped,
- have developed their teamworking skills,
- have developed their creative thinking.



## Introduction:

The educator asks the group: “What is a symbol?” (or “What are symbols?”). They write the answers on a blackboard or flipchart. In case of online classes, the Mentimeter app can be used to write down the answers. The educator starts a moderated discussion to sum up the first task, picking the participants who want to speak. The educator can also ask additional questions, e.g. “Are there any symbols that are most important to you?,” “Do you know any symbols that are used by other cultures, religions or social groups?,” “Do you carry any symbols with yourselves?”

At the end of the discussion, the educator asks the participants „Can, and if so, when can symbols/ symbolization become dangerous and why?”.

The educator refers to the Nazis’ giving symbols to Jews (marking shops, giving additional names - Sara and Israel, establishing ghettos and forcing Jews to wear the Star of David symbol on their clothes). You can also refer to examples from your country (in Poland e.g. “numerus clausus”, bench ghetto, March 68 etc., in Germany e.g. Kristallnacht).

Summarizing the discussion, the trainer asks if participants can identify contemporary examples of symbols which are used inappropriately or to harm others.



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## Main Activity:

The educator tells the participants that they will be shown a movie about a symbol which plays an important role in Jewish culture. Before that, they ask what the participants know about Jewish people and Jewish culture. The educator writes the answers on a blackboard or flipchart. In case of online classes, the Mentimeter app can be used to write down the answers..

TIP: During this task, the educator can use the “BINGO!” from HIA Poland’s publication “About Jews” (page 7) in order to check to what extent the participants’ knowledge is based on stereotypes.

Depending on the answers given\*, the educator can ask the participants to explain their answers regarding symbols (e.g. if someone mentions the Star of David) or show them a short multimedia presentation and explain some of the symbols themselves (Star of David, menorah, hamsa).

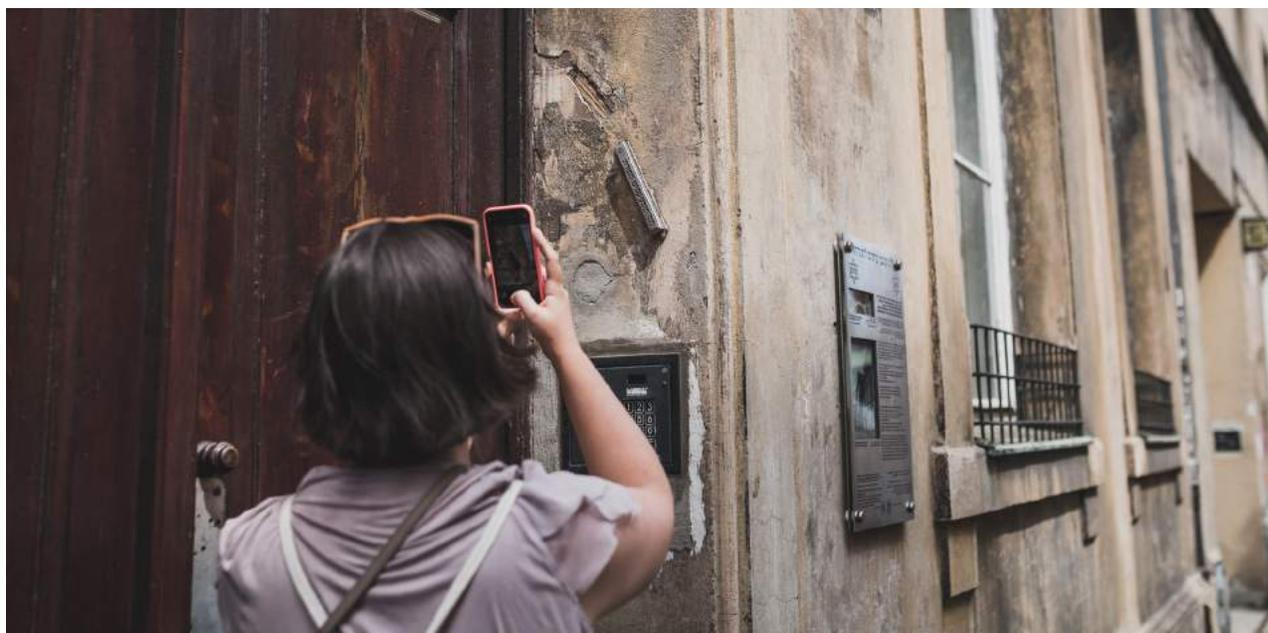
\* If antisemitic statements come up, the educator should react by pointing out how false, distorted and hurtful such statements are. The book “About Jews” can be used as a teaching aid here, especially Chapter 3 “Facts and Myths” and Chapter 5 “What to do about hate and haters?”.

The educator shows the movie **“On the Krakow Mezuzah Trail”** and asks the participants to write down the tips on how to look for symbols and traces of the past.

After watching the movie, the educator asks the participants to explain what a mezuzah is and why it is so important to religious Jewish people.

Then, the educator divides the participants into small groups of 4-5 people and asks them to compare the notes they had taken during the movie. They also ask the participants to discuss and write down their own ideas on where to find traces of the past in their home towns (not necessarily mezuzahs; they may as well be old shop signs, advertisements, inscriptions, forgotten architectural elements etc.) and where to look for information on the history of these traces.

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**Closure:**

In order to summarize the lesson and consolidate the newly acquired knowledge, the participants are asked to solve a quiz about the movie they have just watched (in the same small groups as they completed the task before). The educator moderates this task as a contest. The team that gives the most correct answers wins.\*

\* Ten questions only have one correct answer each. In one question, all answers are correct.

Correct answers:

1.d; 2.c; 3.a; 4.a; 5.b; 6.c; 7.a; 8.b; 9.d; 10.a; 11.a,b,c,d

**Homework:**

On your way home or while walking around take a closer look on your home town. Check what kind of symbols appear on the walls – it can be graffiti or inscriptions. Are they all positive or neutral? Think about what can be done to remove the negative ones. Discuss this in your next lesson or tutoring hour.



# QUIZ – On the Krakow Mezuzah Trail

## 1. What is a mezuzah?

- a. A traditional Jewish dish
- b. A sea animal that lives in Israel
- c. A square box used for prayer by religious Jewish people
- d. A rectangular box that contains a piece of parchment with the prayer “Shema Yisrael”

## 2. What do you call a scribe who copies sacred texts, e.g. for the use in mezuzahs?

- a. A shechita
- b. A sandek
- c. A sofer
- d. A rabbi

## 3. Which letter can be seen on a mezuzah?

- a. Shin
- b. Samech
- c. Yod
- d. Alef

## 4. Where do you put a mezuzah?

- a. On the right side of a doorcase
- b. On the left side of a doorcase
- c. Next to a window
- d. On a shelf

## 5. What was the name of a famous Krakow kabbalist?

- a. Jakub Szapiro
- b. Nathan Spira
- c. Baal Szem Tov
- d. Berek Joselewicz

## 6. How many Jewish people used to live in Krakow before World War II?

- a. About 10,000
- b. About 30,000
- c. About 65,000
- d. About 90,000

## 7. What is the name of the former Jewish district of Krakow?

- a. Kazimierz
- b. Stanisław
- c. Mea Shearim
- d. Beit Yosef

## 8. What was the name of the religious Jewish woman who founded the Bais Yaakov school for religious Jewish girls?

- a. Helena Rubinstein
- b. Sara Schenirer
- c. Sarah Gitel
- d. Janka Goldstein

## 9. What do you call one of the most important symbols of Judaism that is used as an ornament on a barrister shown in the movie?

- a. A menorah
- b. A dreidel
- c. A matzah
- d. A Star of David

## 10. What do you call the sacred book of Judaism that is shown as a symbol on the abovementioned barrister?

- a. The Torah
- b. The Talmud
- c. The Tanakh
- d. The Pirkei Awot

## 11. Where can you find information on former inhabitants of your town, city or region?

- a. In archives
- b. In address books
- c. In the registers of municipal offices, parishes, religious communities
- d. On the Internet, e.g. on websites about genealogy

EDUCATIONAL SCENARIO

# On the Krakow Mezuzah Trail.

## SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLIZATION

### Estimated duration:

90 minutes

### Topics covered:

- Jewish culture,
- symbols and their role in Jewish tradition,
- stereotypes,
- symbolization.

### Forms and methods of work:

- moderated discussion,
- working with a movie,
- working with a website/mobile app,
- group work.

### Teaching aids:

- „**On the Krakow Mezuzah Trail**” movie,
- „**10 STEPS**” website or mobile app.

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### Aims:

After the lesson, the participants:

- know basic terms and symbols referring to Jewish culture,
- are able to explain why it is important to know the past in order to better understand social and cultural mechanisms of today,
- are more interested in local and regional history,
- have developed their skills in terms of Human Science, language, researching information and using different sources of information on their own, critical thinking and expressing their own opinion,
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To sum this task up, the educator might ask: “Why are symbols so important to us?” Each participant may express their individual views.

The educator presents Article 10 (1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (and explains what the document is)

*Article 10 – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion*

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

He/she then asks the participants if, in their opinion, the law described in this article is respected in their country? Do they know any examples of violations to this law? As a conclusion to the discussion, the group may reflect together on what can be done, both in the school community, in the local community, but also more widely, to ensure that this law is respected. The educator can write ideas on the board to create a list of possible actions.

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## Main Activity:

The educator tells the participants that they will be shown a movie about a symbol which plays an important role in Jewish culture. Then, they divide the participants into 3 groups (or a larger number of groups that is divisible by 3, if there are more than 18 participants) and ask them to think about and write down their answers to the question: “Why is the mezuzah an important symbol for Jewish people?”

Moreover, each group is told to carefully listen to and write down information on a specific person:

Group no. 1 (4): Sara Schenirer

Group no. 2 (5): Dora and Paulina Wasserberg

Group no. 3 (6): Rabbi Josef Nechemia Kornitzer

After watching the movie, each group prepares a short bio about the person concerned, based on the information given in the movie and any information they are able to find on the Internet. About 10 minutes later, the groups present the results of their work.



Sara Schenirer



The educator then goes back to the topic of symbols. They point out that the mezuzah was an important symbol to all the people whose bios were presented. However, looking at the places where they used to live and put their most important symbols, no mezuzah can be found any longer. The educator then asks the group the following questions in order to start a discussion:

“How would you feel if a symbol that is important to you was taken away from you?”

“How would you feel if you were forced to wear a symbol against your will, without being asked?”

Then, the educator asks if the participants can think of any situations in history that involved forcing symbols upon individuals or groups. They present the website **10 STEPS – Stage 2 – Szmul Zygielbojm** and encourage the participants to discuss what symbolization is, using the definition given on the website.

Symbolization is the imposition of symbols by force that makes it possible to visually distinguish one group from others. During the Holocaust, Jews were forced to wear different symbols that differed from country to country: a yellow Star of David sewn onto clothing, or, as in occupied Poland, a white armband with a blue Star of David worn on the arm. Classification and symbolization are commonplace. They become dangerous when accompanied by hatred and dehumanization..

### Closure:

Staying in their small groups, the participants design objects inspired by the mezuzah – a small box containing a piece of parchment with a prayer that is important to Jewish people. The objects do not have to convey any religious meaning; they are just meant to be symbols. Then, the groups present their objects one by one.

If there is enough time, the educator can conclude this scenario with the Movie Quiz.

### Food for thought:

Can you name any symbols that are controversial today? Do you know what they mean?

