

Activities

Activity 1

*Brief Overview of Jewish history and the History of Modern Israel
through Film and Timelines*

Preparation:

Estimated Time: one-half class period • **Materials:** Internet access and video projector

Background: Steven Spielberg’s Jewish Film Archive is an extraordinary resource with some online videos that bring alive the history of Jews and the rebirth of Israel. The introduction to his archive gives an excellent overview of the themes discussed in this unit.

Activity:

Show the 15-minute introductory video from the Spielberg Jewish Film Archive available at w3.castup.net/jfa/filmsscreen.asp?ai=148&ar=CMID23331. Also download and print out the StandWithUs timeline at www.standwithuscampus.com/signs/timeline2.indd.pdf.

Discussion: Have a general class discussion addressing the following questions:

1. What were your reactions to the film? What insights did it give you about Jewish history and the founding of modern Israel?
2. What are your reactions to the timeline? What did you learn from it? How did it fit in with Spielberg’s film?
3. What themes and facts on page 3 of *Israel 101* did you see in the film and on the timeline?
4. What topics in the Spielberg Film Archive or on the timeline would you like to pursue further?
5. How did Spielberg’s film portray the Jewish connection to the land and the Zionist movement? How does the timeline add to what you learned from the film?
6. How useful is film footage as a historical source? What do you learn from film that you cannot learn from written documents? How can you be misled by films?
7. How useful is a timeline? How does it help you understand the history of modern Israel?

Wrap-up: Spielberg’s film and the timeline encapsulate the main themes of this unit and the highlights of the reestablishment of Israel: the Jews’ ancient history in the land, how they preserved their cultural identity over the centuries, the birth of the Zionist movement, international support for reestablishing the Jewish state, and its actual founding.

Note to teachers: One of the best films about the reestablishment of Israel is the Israel Broadcasting Association’s “Pillar of Fire.” The seven-part series has excellent documentary footage and is very balanced. It is much longer than the Spielberg video, but if you have time, you may want to show it. Many college libraries have it. It can also be purchased from Amazon at www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_ss_gw/103-8534874-0527858?url=search-alias%3Ddvd&field-keywords=%22Pillar+of+Fire%22&x=16&y=13.