

# Dilemmas in Leadership

דילמות במנהיגות



<b>Category of Activity</b>	Shabbat or Yom M'yuchad
<b>Grade Level</b>	8th-11th grades
<b>Time</b>	90 minutes
<b>Method</b>	Large Group Discussion
<b>Size of Group</b>	Eidah
<b>Keywords</b>	Leadership Dilemma Decision Making

## GOALS

1. To enable the campers to become familiar with the decisions of Jewish leaders at moments of crisis in Jewish history.
2. To experience an exercise in decision-making.

## BACKGROUND

One of the most important qualities of a leader is the ability to make decisions.

In this program, we have presented the decisions which Jewish leaders have made in times of crises in Jewish history. During this program we will ask you to try to understand these dilemmas and see if you would make decisions similar to or different from those made by these Jewish leaders if you were in their position. We will then ask you to compare your decisions to the real decisions they made (This program can be a part of Yom M'yuchad program or a Shabbat program).

## PLACE

This activity can take place indoors or outdoors.

### Indoors

1. One large room for the entire Eidah.
2. Six to eight small rooms for small group discussions.

### Outdoors

1. One central meeting area for the entire Eidah.
2. Six to eight area for small group discussions.

## PREPARATION OF SUPPLIES AND RESOURCES

The program leader should prepare enough copies of the biographies for the campers and staff.

## STAFF PREPARATION

1. The program leader should introduce the program several days before the scheduled date.
2. The program leader should review the text materials with the Eidah staff to make sure that everyone is familiar with them. It may be helpful to invite a teacher or other staff member who is familiar with the texts to assist in the preparation.

## SETUP PREPARATION

NONE

## METHODOLOGY AND DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM

1. Prepare the Eidah to be divided into six groups.  
At the Program - Divide the Eidah into six groups of campers, with a discussion leader and additional staff. (10 minutes)
2. Each member of the group should be given pages which include:
  - a. Background information on the leader.
  - b. The dilemma which he/she had to face. (**Attachment Number 1 - Biographies in Leadership**)
3. Each group should read the background information and the dilemma. There should be a discussion on the various aspects of the dilemma. Each group should try to come to a group consensus of an appropriate resolution to the dilemma. (30 minutes)
4. Each group should return to the Eidah forum and two representatives should present their leader, the

dilemma and the group decision. (5 minutes each group - 30 minutes).

5. The leader of the entire activity or one of the small group leaders should present the real decision made by each historical Jewish leader. (**Attachment number 2**) There should be time for discussion of the following questions.

(30 minutes)

Note: conducting this discussion at the Eidah level may be a bit difficult especially if the Eidah numbers over 50. It is possible to return to the small groups, but that would make take up some time.

a. Were you surprised by the historical leader's decision?

b. Do you think that the leader made the right decision at the time?

c. Today, with the perspective of history, do you think that the leader made the right decision?

#### ATTACHMENTS- RESOURCE TEXTS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### **Meir ben Baruch of Rottenberg - HaMaharam**

1215-1293

The time - 1290 The Place - Germany.

#### **Biographical notes**

Meir ben Baruch of Rottenberg was a rabbi and a teacher. He was one of the tosafists, and an authority in matters of Halacha, Jewish Law. He was a major Jewish leader in the community of Ashkenaz. He was a witness to the Paris Dispute and the Burning of the Talmud. As a result of these events, he composed the famous dirge, Shaali S'-rufa B'esh, - My Land Was Consumed by Fire. This dirge is included in the kinot - (poems read on Tisha B'Av, the fast of the Ninth of Av. in the Ashkenaz tradition.) The Maharam lived for 40 years in the city of Rottenberg, but his major influence was felt as far away as France and Italy. In addition, he corresponded with Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet of Barcelona.

#### **Historical background**

In 1286, Rudolf of Germany wanted to institute a new tax on the Jews of Germany. The Jews objected to this tax as they saw it as having a serious impact on their lives. The Maharam decided to leave Germany, but was arrested and imprisoned.

Map of Germany

#### **The Dilemma**

The authorities have arrested the Maharam. They are demanding a very large sum of money as a condition for his release. The Maharam has to decide whether or not to agree that his community should pay the demanded ransom, especially since the authorities have insisted that this be considered a "tax" and not a one-time payment. On the other hand, the Maharam is an old man. Prison conditions can be very harsh. He could be of considerable help to his community as a free man, as opposed to remaining in prison.

#### **The Decision**

##### **Key words**

The Paris Dispute

A trial in Paris where the Jews were accused of plotting against the Christians.

The Burning of the Talmud - As a result of the Paris Dispute, it was decided to punish the Jews by confiscating all copies of the Talmud and burning them in the main square of Paris.

#### **Donna Gracia Nasi Mendes**

1510-1569

The Place - Ancona, Italy

The Time - 1550

##### **Biographical notes**

Donna Gracia Nasi, known also by the names "Gracia Mendes" and "Beatra Da Lunan, was born in Portugal in 1510 to a family of Marranos. She migrated from Portugal to England, to Venice, Italy and Para until she finally settled in Kushta, then the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Donna Gracia successfully managed the many branches of the Mendes family business, which included international trade and banking. In addition, she invested her resources in helping the Jewish community and established yeshivot and synagogues in Salonika and Kushta.

##### **Historical background**

In the year 1555, the Catholic Church conducted a massive round-up of the Portuguese Marranos who

had settled (based on the invitation of previous Popes) in the town of Ankuna, Italy. Many Jews succeeded in escaping the city, but 51 Marranos were arrested and tried. During the months of April - July 1555, 26 Portuguese Marranos were burned at the stake.

### **The Dilemma**

Should help be extended to the Marranos of Ankura by organizing a economic boycott against the town merchants? That is, should the Jews use their economic power in order to stop the persecutions? This is not a simple matter since there is always the danger that new and more serious persecutions will develop here and at new sites. Similarly, the organization of a Jewish international boycott could easily be interpreted as proof of the long-standing accusations concerning the existence of the world-wide conspiracy against the Christians.

Map of Italy

### **The Decision**

#### **Key words**

**Marranos** - Jews pretended to convert to Christianity but continued practicing Judaism in secret. The peaceful Spanish era ended in the middle of the 13th century, with the waning of Muslim domination in the Iberian Peninsula.

Under the Catholic monarchs, Spanish Jews were forced into the lowly position of other European Jews. During the Middle Ages, persecution of Jews in Christian countries was the rule.

Much of this persecution was unleashed by mobs that condemned every Jew as one who had taken part in the martyrdom of Jesus. During the Crusades, thousands of Jews were massacred in the religious fervor of the period. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council of the Roman Catholic Church, convened by Pope Innocent III, proclaimed an official policy of restrictions, similar to the Code of Omar, and ordered all Jews to wear distinctive badges. Throughout Europe, Jews were despised.

In cities they were forced to live in special areas, called ghettos, and not permitted freedom of movement. During the 13th and 14th centuries several European monarchs filled their treasuries by confiscating Jewish property and expelling the owners.

In 1290, King Edward I of England impoverished and expelled the English Jews. King Charles VI of France followed the English example in 1394, virtually ending Jewish history in France until modern times. During the period of the so-called Black Death (14th cent.), massacres of Jews were common throughout Europe, on the charge that Jews had caused the plague by poisoning Christian wells.

In Spain, systematic persecution by the Church resulted in mass conversions by Jews attempting to save their lives. In many cases, such conversions were merely outward; a class of converts called Marranos (Span., "swine") arose, professing Roman Catholicism but adhering to Judaism in secret. The Spanish Inquisition, instituted in 1478, persecuted the Marranos, and in 1492 Spain expelled the Jews. Their expulsion from Portugal followed in 1497.

The exiles from Western Europe found refuge in the eastern part of the continent. Thousands of Spanish Jews migrated to European Turkey, which preserved the Islamic policy of toleration, and Constantinople became the site of the largest Jewish community in Europe during the 16th century.

#### **Rudolf Kasztner**

1906 - 1957

The time - 1944

The place - Hungary

#### **Historical Background**

Rudolf Kasztner was a journalist, lawyer and leader of the Zionist movement in Rumania and Hungary. During World War II, Kasztner was the head of rescue operations in Hungary on behalf of Jewish refugees from Poland and Slovakia.

Kasztner eventually became the chief contact with the Nazis in dealing with the plan called "Blood for Goods" - a plan to exchange war supplies with the Nazis in return for the transfer of Jewish populations to safety.

Kasztner dealt with Adolf Eichmann, architect of the Final Solution for the destruction of the Jews in Europe. The Nazis began the destruction of the Jews of Hungary in 1944. Due to Kasztner's intervention, approximately 1780 Jews were saved from death in the extermination camps and sent by train to Switzerland.

Map of Hungary

#### **The Dilemma**

In Kasztner's deal with the Nazis, it was agreed to allow two trains with 1780 Hungarian and

Transylvanian Jews to leave Nazi-occupied Hungary. Kasztner had to decide: whom to save - children, women, young people or leaders of the community?

### **The Decision**

#### **Key words**

**HOLOCAUST**, (Greek. holo, "whole," and caustos, "burned"), originally a religious rite in which an offering was entirely consumed by fire. In current usage, holocaust refers to any widespread human disaster, but when written Holocaust, its special meaning is the systematic murder of the Jews of Europe by Nazi Germany.

During the 19th century, European Jewry was being emancipated, and, in most European countries, Jews achieved some equality of status with non-Jews. Nonetheless, at times Jews were vilified and harassed by anti-Semitic groups. Indeed, some anti-Semites believed that Jewry was an alien "race" not capable of assimilating into European culture, but they did not formulate any coherent anti-Semitic campaign.

Auschwitz, near Krakow, was the largest death camp. Unlike the others, it utilized quick-working poisonous hydrogen cyanide for the gassings. The victims of Auschwitz came from all over Europe: Norway, France, the Low Countries, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Greece. A large inmate population, Jewish and non-Jewish, was employed by industry; some prisoners were subjected to medical experiments, particularly sterilizations. Although only Jews and Gypsies were gassed routinely, several hundred thousand additional Auschwitz inmates died from starvation, disease, or shooting.

To erase the traces of destruction, large crematories were constructed so that the bodies of the gassed could be incinerated.

In 1944 the camp was photographed by Allied reconnaissance aircraft in search of industrial targets; its factories, but not its gas chambers, were bombed.

### **David Ben Gurion**

1886 - 1973

The time - 1939

The place - British Mandate Palestine.

### **Biographical notes**

The Labor Zionist leader and chairman of the Zionist Executive and Jewish Agency in pre-Independence days, David Ben-Gurion was the first Prime Minister of Israel. In the eyes of many, he was the greatest leader of the Jewish people of all times. Towards the end of the 1930's, Ben Gurion was the chairman of the Mapai political party (Mifleget Poalei Eretz Yisrael - The Israel Workers Party). It was considered to be one of the most important political parties in the Jewish community of Palestine.

### **Historical background**

In May 1939, the British Government published a government policy known as the "White Paper," in which it declared its intention to move in the direction of the establishment of an independent state in the land of Israel - known then as Palestine. This country would be composed of mostly Arabs (two-thirds) and a minority of Jews (one-third). As a result, Jewish immigration to Palestine was to be limited to 75,000 over the next five years and continued upon agreement of the Arab residents. For all practical purposes, the British White Paper denied access to the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. In addition, it basically nullified the principles of the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate in Palestine. At this very time (1939), thousands of Jewish refugees were wandering about the world in a desperate search for refuge. Every port was closed to them. Furthermore, in September 1939, World War II broke out, and thousands and thousands of Jews suddenly found themselves under Nazi occupation rule.

In this war, Great Britain found Nazi Germany the most vicious menace to threaten the Jewish people ever.

Map of Israel

### **The Dilemma**

What is the correct policy for the Jewish Agency?

1. Cooperation with the British government, even though it has an anti-Zionist, anti-immigration policy?
2. Continued struggle against the Mandatory government including armed resistance as long as Britain maintains its anti-immigration policy.

## The Decision

### Key concepts:

#### The White Paper

On the eve of World War II, the British government changed its Palestine policy in an effort to appease the Arab world. The White Paper of May 1939 terminated Britain's commitment to Zionism and provided for the establishment of a Palestinian state within ten years. The Arab majority in Palestine was guaranteed by a clause that provided for the further immigration of 75,000 Jews during the following five years, after which additional entry would depend on Arab consent.

The 1939 the White Paper broke the traditional Anglo-Zionist alliance and provoked many in the Yishuv, the Jewish community of Palestine to violent protest. In May 1942, Zionist leaders meeting at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City demanded a Jewish Democratic Commonwealth-that is, a state-in all of western Palestine as part of the new world order after the war. This "Biltmore Program" marked a radical departure in Zionist policy.

#### The Balfour Declaration

BALFOUR DECLARATION, letter prepared in March 1916 and issued in November 1917, during World War I, by the British statesman Arthur James Balfour, then foreign secretary in the cabinet of Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Specifically, the letter expressed the sympathy of the British government with "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people". The letter committed the British government to making the "best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country".

It has been commonly accepted that the Balfour Declaration was a unilateral undertaking by the British government. The immediate purpose was to win for the Allied cause in World War I the support of Jews and others in the belligerent nations and in neutral countries (such as the U.S.). In long-range terms, the motive behind British policy as set forth in the letter rested on the importance of Palestine as a strategic point on the land and sea routes to India and, above all, as the terminus at the Mediterranean Sea of pipelines from the rich oil-bearing regions of the Middle East. The establishment of a Zionist state under British protection would have given Great Britain possession of that coveted prize, while at the same time apparently implementing the Allied slogan of "self-determination of small nations". The long-range British plan met with success.

In 1922 the declaration was embodied in the League of Nations mandate for Palestine, which set forth terms under which Great Britain was entrusted with the temporary administration of the country in behalf of its Jewish and Arab inhabitants.

## Yitzhak Abarbanel

1437 - 1508

The time - 1492

The Place - Spain.

Biographical notes

Abarbanel was born in Lisbon, Portugal where he served as Minister of Finance to the King of Portugal until he was forced to flee to Spain. From 1487, he served as the official Treasurer to the Kings of Spain. As a young man, Don Yitzhak Abarbanel excelled in Judaic studies as a Talmid Chacham, a scholar in Torah studies. During his lifetime, he wrote commentaries to the Torah and rabbinic texts. In addition, he was well-known as an important philosopher. He used much of his personal wealth to redeem imprisoned Jews from capture.

## Historical background

In January 1492, Christian Spain captured Grenada, the final Moslem stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula. In March, 1492, in the lavish palace of Alhambra in Grenada, the royalty of Spain, Queen Isabelle of Castille and King Ferdinand of Aragonne, signed a decree compelling all the Jews in the kingdom to convert to Christianity or to leave behind all their possessions and depart Spain. This decree was in fact just the finale of a process which began 150 years earlier during which many Jews converted to Christianity, some willingly and others by force.

Others chose to flee Spain as penniless exiles. Yitzhak Abarbanel, together with Avraham Sheinor, tried to convince the royalty of Spain to retract their decree, but were unsuccessful.

Map of Spain

## The Dilemma

Yitzhak Abarbanel has already experienced the fate of the exile, been forced to abandon his property

and flee to a new country. While he succeeded in Spain even more than in Portugal, no one can promise him that he will succeed once again. What should he do?

### **The Decision**

#### **Key concepts:**

Exile - During the Middle Ages, the Christian rulers of Western Europe, for a variety of reasons, were accustomed to exile the Jewish population living under their authority. The first exile was in England in 1292, but the most famous of all was the Spanish Exile in 1492.

#### **Avraham Sheinor**

1412 - 1493

The time - 1492

The Place - Spain

#### **Biographical notes**

Avraham Sheinor was one of the most famous Court Jews to have lived in Spain. He was the chief tax collector of the province of Castille between 1454 - 1474. After 1476, he served as a rabbi and dayan - (Rabbinic judge) for the Jews of Castille and Tax Collector for all of Christian Spain. In 1488, he became the Treasurer of Christian Movement, a position usually forbidden to Jews. Avraham Sheinor helped many Jews. In a letter written in 1487, a Jew from Rome called him "our Leader in the Diaspora". He helped to redeem many Jews held in prison following the capture of the Andolucian provinces.

#### **Historical background**

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#### **The Dilemma**

Abraham Sheinor's dilemma was common to many Jews in his time.

Should he hold on to his Judaism and relinquish his wealth, properties, position and honor and go into exile in a foreign land.

Or

Remain in Spain with his wealth, property, position, and honor at the price of converting to Christianity. In the case of Avraham Sheinor, any decision of his would have an impact and ramifications on many other Jews who saw him as an example.

### **The Decision**

#### **Key concepts:**

Exile - During the Middle Ages, the Christian rulers of Western Europe, for a variety of reasons, were accustomed to exile the Jewish population living under their authority. The first exile was in England in 1292, but the most famous of all was the Spanish Exile in 1492.

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