

Lesson Plan I: Jews Brought Chocolate to the World

About this Lesson:

- This material may be used to supplement units about Jewish history, the expulsion from Spain, Sephardim, Jews in the Colonial Period in North America, Jews in commerce, Jewish food or other. This could extend over two sessions.
- For Grades 5 and above. Please feel free to adapt and modify to suit your needs.
- This lesson accompanies sections of *On the Chocolate Trail*, Introduction (What are Cacao, Cocoa and Chocolate?); Chapter 1: “Did Jews Introduce Chocolate to France?”; and, Chapter 3: “Jews Dip into Chocolate in the American Colonial Period.”

Objectives for the students:

By the end of the lesson my students will be able to:

- State two facts about the role of Jews in the chocolate trade in Europe
- Explain the term: Sephardim
- Name Aaron Lopez as a major Jewish trader of Newport, R.I.

Lesson:

Set Induction: (approximately 5-10 minutes)

My opening will be:

What is this? (slides or photos) referring to early chocolate beverage making items: a chocolate grinding stone (metate), cocoa tree, cocoa beans and cocoa pods. Images may be found at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

Planned activities to make the lesson work:

1. Discuss the expulsion from Spain in 1492 (approximately 15 minutes)
 - Jews descended from those from Spain are called Sephardim
 - Until the Spanish discovery of the New World, chocolate was known only to people living in Central America where it grows on trees with pods containing beans/seeds that are used for chocolate making.
 - Distribute and review the [map of Sephardic Diaspora and Chocolate](#) showing where Sephardim settled. They remained connected to each other through family and business. Trace these paths on the map with green markers or crayons
2. Jews and chocolate connections (approximately 15 minutes)
 - Jews were known to have special chocolate beverage making skills in several places including: Bayonne, France; Martinique; London, England; Amsterdam, Holland;

Newport and New York, America. Tell stories from Chapter 1 and keep in mind that at this time chocolate was only a drink.

3. Use the maps again (approximately 5 minutes)
 - Track these chocolate centers on the map, using brown markers or crayons to circle those. Notice the connection between the chocolate trail and the Sephardi dispersion trail. Discuss.
4. Read a short excerpt about Aaron Lopez chocolate and his other enterprises in Colonial Newport, Rhode Island (Chapter 3). Also note the connection, even then, of chocolate to *Tzedakah* and Pesach. (approximately 10 minutes)
5. Summarize the learnings about Sephardim, the role of Jews in helping to spread chocolate throughout Europe and North America, the life of Aaron Lopez as a Jewish leader who was involved in the chocolate business. (approximately 5-10 minutes)

Closure:

Distribute chocolate that approximates the texture and taste of chocolate of this seventeenth century period, either [American Heritage Chocolate](#) or [Taza Chocolate](#) or a Mexican chocolate, or the closest example of chocolate of that period available. Or make a Mexican style hot chocolate for tasting by the class.

Materials and Supplies

- Copies of *On the Chocolate Trail*
- Slide pack/photos/board/url or video: Cacao tree, pods, beans, grinding stone for chocolate making
- Green and brown markers/crayon and copies of [map of Sephardic Diaspora and Chocolate](#)
- Chocolate samples reminiscent of chocolate from this period, which was mostly intended for drinking, from: American Heritage Chocolate or Taza Chocolate or a Mexican chocolate. Or, perhaps a Mexican hot chocolate.
- See Glossary, p. 223, in *On the Chocolate Trail*.

For further reading and research:

- Miriam Freund, *Jewish Merchants in Colonial America* (New York City: Behrman House, 1939.)
- Morris Aaron Gutstein, *Aaron Lopez and Judah Touro: A Refugee and a Son of a Refugee*. (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1939.)
- Lloyd Alexander, *The Flagship Hope: Aaron Lopez* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960.)

