

Baltimore's Jewish Neighborhoods Case Study: Park Heights Avenue

Note to Teachers:

This outreach kit is intended to bring a piece of the museum into your classroom. A unique aspect of the museum experience is its ability to convey history through the objects and documents in its collection. Students have the opportunity to become engaged in the stories behind the objects, as well as the period in history from which they come. In this kit, you will find reproductions of photographs from the collections of the Jewish Museum of Maryland. By examining these materials, students will learn how to interpret primary source materials. There are also suggested classroom activities for engaging students in thinking about contemporary issues facing Baltimore's Jewish community.

The kit has several main objectives:

- To provide historical context for students regarding the pattern of settlement of Baltimore's Jewish community.

- To encourage students to think about the various factors that make a neighborhood attractive for residents and to get them involved in making their community a better place.

- To foster discussion among students about Park Heights Avenue's diverse demographics.

- To encourage students to think about how neighborhoods change over time.

- To teach students how to interpret primary source materials.

The kit is organized into different sections. The three lesson plans enclosed provide suggested activities for engaging students in hands-on learning. They are supplemented with materials including background information on historical Jewish neighborhoods, a glossary, and reference material on the various synagogues, educational, recreational, and social service organizations located on Park Heights Avenue. Photographic reproductions are used in conjunction with one of the lesson plans. A power point presentation with slides of neighborhood buildings and an area map have also been included. Student resource sheets are also provided to assist with lesson plan facilitation.

We hope that you will find this kit engaging and enjoyable. The education staff welcomes your comments and evaluation of this kit. Please feel free to contact us with any questions or suggestions.

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Lesson Plan #1

Neighborhood Walking Tour

Introduction

Park Heights Avenue is a diverse neighborhood serving a variety of constituencies. The Jewish community has invested significant resources in maintaining the area as a stable neighborhood. Walking (or driving) in a northern direction along Park Heights Avenue from Northern Parkway to Slade Avenue offers an opportunity to discuss the many different educational, religious, and social service agencies that call Park Heights Avenue home.

Educational Objectives

- To encourage students to think about the importance of synagogues, schools, and recreational and social service agencies to Jewish communal life and the vitality of a neighborhood.
- To engage students in discussion about the neighborhood's diversity and what can be done to foster dialogue between residents of different backgrounds.
- To teach students about the history of various organizations along Park Heights Avenue as a means of understanding the historical roots of Baltimore's Jewish community.

Materials

- Background information – Teacher Resource Sheets #1, #2, #3
- Teacher Resource Sheet #4 – Walking Tour Discussion Questions
- Neighborhood Walking Tour power point presentation (see enclosed CD)

Preparation

Prior to going on a neighborhood walking tour, review with your students the information on Teacher Resource Sheets #1, 2, and 3 and have them think about the various types of institutions that are central to the Jewish community located along Park Heights Avenue.

Neighborhood Walking Tour

Take your students on a neighborhood tour. Begin your tour at Northern Parkway and drive (or walk) north. Using teacher resource sheets #2, and 3 point out different buildings along the way. Give students the chance to examine buildings and use the discussion questions as guidelines for getting them to think about what makes a neighborhood Jewish and the efforts involved in creating a stable area.

As an alternate activity, we have included a power point presentation with slides of the various buildings explored via the discussion questions. Using these slides, conduct a virtual tour of the neighborhood with your students.

Lesson Plan #2

Synagogue Exploration: A Study of Photographs

Introduction:

Many of the synagogues located on Park Heights Avenue have their roots in other neighborhoods. Some trace their origins back several generations to the 19th century. Several synagogues reflect mergers between two or more congregations. In this lesson, students will have the opportunity to reflect on how synagogues and neighborhoods change over time as they explore the evolution of two congregations by comparing and contrasting photographs of these synagogues at different times and from previous locations.

Educational Objectives:

- To encourage students to think about the importance of synagogues to Jewish communal life and the vitality of a neighborhood.
- To teach students about the complex histories of many of Baltimore's Jewish congregations, by focusing on two congregations.
- To encourage students to use critical thinking skills as they examine photographs of different synagogues and compare and contrast the photos.

Materials:

- Teacher Resource Sheet #2 – Park Heights Synagogues
- Photo #1 - B'nai Jacob, 743 W. Baltimore Street (JMM 1987.137.071)
- Photo #2 - B'nai Jacob, 2006 Christian Street (JMM 1993.085.003)
- Photo #3 - B'nai Jacob, 6605 Liberty Road (JMM 1987.137.023)
- Photo #4 - Shaarei Zion, 3459 Park Heights Avenue (JMM 1987.137.038)
- Photo #5 - Shaarei Zion, 6602 Park Heights Avenue (JMM 1987.173.016)
- Student Resource Sheets #1-5 (note that each sheet corresponds to a different photo)

Lesson Plan Preparation:

Make photocopies of photographs and student resource sheets so that they can be distributed to groups of students.

Background Information:

B'nai Jacob Sha'arei Zion is an Orthodox synagogue located at 6602 Park Heights Avenue. The synagogue comprises two distinct congregations – B'nai Jacob and Sha'arei Zion – which came together in a merger in 1999. Of the two congregations, B'nai Jacob is the older and was established in 1883 in a building in west Baltimore. It occupied several downtown locations until 1957, when the congregation decided to move to the suburbs in Randallstown on Liberty Road. Another move took place in 1984, when the congregation built a new building on Seven Mile Lane off of Park Heights Avenue.

Sha'arei Zion dates back to 1919. The congregation's first home was at 3454 Park Heights Avenue. At the time it was built, it was the first synagogue to be built north of Eutaw Place. Its first permanent building at 3459 Parks Heights, near Hilldale Avenue, was built in 1926. John Freund designed the building. In 1964 (45 years after it was founded), the synagogue built a new building at 6602 Park Heights. The congregation continued worshipping in its old building in lower Park Heights Avenue until 1966, when it was purchased by the Good Shepard Baptist Church. This building is still standing.

Photograph Exploration

Begin the lesson by discussing with students the importance of synagogues to Jewish communal life. Ask them to think if they have noticed that synagogues are clustered in specific areas and if so, why that is. Have them list the many services that synagogues provide to congregants (possible answers include worship services, Hebrew school classes, adult education classes, social events, social services for congregants).

Now have students focus on the Park Heights Avenue neighborhood. Ask them to name as many synagogues as they can think of in the neighborhood. Why do they think that there are so many synagogues in the area? How do some of the synagogues differentiate themselves from one another? Have them think about how different congregations might attract various segments of the community. Use Teacher Resource Sheet #2 as a guide for this exercise.

Now tell students that they will have the opportunity to learn about the history of one specific synagogue on Park Heights Avenue. B'nai Jacob Sha'arei Zion has been selected as a case study because of its unique history as a merger between two congregations, each of which has moved several times.

Divide students into groups of 4-5 students each. Distribute copies of photographs depicting either B'nai Jacob (photos #1-3) or Shaarei Zion (photos #4-5) to each group. Have students answer the questions on the attached Student Resource Sheets that correspond to the different photos. Give students approximately twenty minutes to answer questions. Once each group has completed the assignment, have each group share their answers with the rest of the class.

Lesson Plan #3

Park Heights: Neighborhood Mapping

Introduction:

A neighborhood is many things; it is a place where people live, work, study, shop, eat, participate in recreational activities, and worship. In this lesson, students will learn about the various elements that create a neighborhood where people want to live. They will also discuss the factors that make the neighborhoods surrounding Park Heights Avenue unique. By creating models of many of the buildings located in the area, and placing their models on a neighborhood map, students will have the opportunity to look at how the neighborhood has been developed in a strategic way to meet the needs of its diverse residents.

Objectives:

- To encourage students to think about neighborhood planning and the elements that make a place attractive for residents.
- To foster discussion among students about the diversity of Park Heights Avenue and how different neighborhood features accommodate the various groups that live there.
- To teach students map reading skills as they re-create a map of Park Heights Avenue.
- To encourage students to think about how they can affect change in the neighborhoods where they live and/or go to school.

Materials:

- Teacher Resource Sheet #1 - Historical Neighborhoods
- Teacher Resource Sheet #2 – Park Heights Synagogues
- Teacher Resource Sheet #3 – Park Heights Social Service, Recreational, and Educational Organizations
- Teacher Resource Sheet #5 - Glossary
- Flip chart and marker
- Map of Upper Park Heights (provided)
- Cardboard boxes (assorted shapes and sizes)
- Art supplies for decorating boxes (glue, scissors, construction paper, tissue paper, markers)
- Utility knife (for teacher use only to cut windows and doors into boxes)

Optional Lesson Preparation:

If you are interested in providing historical background with your students about the pattern of Jewish settlement in Baltimore, review with your students the information on Teacher Resource Sheet #1. Ask students to think about the factors that might have influenced where members of the Jewish community have chosen to live, and why Jews – past and present – tend to live in neighborhoods with a high proportion of other Jewish residents. It is interesting to note that, while at one time Jews were restricted from living in certain neighborhoods due to discriminatory housing covenants, today Jews are free to

live anywhere and yet, in many cases, still choose to live in areas with a high concentration of Jews.

Neighborhood Mapping:

Ask students to reflect on what elements are needed to make a successful neighborhood. Have students list the different kinds of things that people do in a neighborhood (live, study, work, shop, eat, and worship are a few possibilities). Record student answers on the flip chart. On a separate sheet of paper, ask students what kinds of institutions and businesses are essential to a neighborhood (possible answers include residential homes, hospitals, schools, grocery stores). Next ask students to think about what kinds of things make a neighborhood a place where people want to live (possible answers include houses of worship, restaurants, libraries, parks and other recreational venues, shopping malls). Keep track of responses on a third sheet of paper. Finally, have students consider the neighborhoods surrounding Park Heights Avenue. Ask students to identify specific institutions and businesses located in these neighborhoods that correspond to the various types of places that they have listed. On a fourth sheet of paper, keep a list of the various buildings that students identify. (For a list of some of the buildings on Park Heights Avenue and their addresses, refer to Teacher Resource Sheets #2 and #3)

Once students have created a list of the various kinds of buildings located in the vicinity of Park Heights Avenue, students will now create a physical map of the neighborhood. Spread the neighborhood map on the floor, and have students gather around it. Ask students to identify the place on the map where different buildings are located and place a post-it note as a corresponding placeholder on the map.

Students will now create neighborhood buildings, using cardboard boxes and assorted art supplies. Ask students to select one type of building or business to create based on their list on the fourth page of the flipchart. Try to make sure that there is an even distribution so that there is a minimum of one building representing each type of institution (i.e. one school, one house, one restaurant, one synagogue, etc.) As they complete their projects, they should place them at the proper place on the map.

Once the neighborhood map is complete with cardboard buildings, have students discuss the physical layout of the neighborhood. Do they notice patterns where different types of buildings are located? For example, where are most of the businesses? Houses? Synagogues? Schools? It is interesting to note that most business development in the neighborhood has been restricted to Reisterstown Road, while most residences, synagogues, and schools are on Park Heights Avenue and its adjacent streets. Ask students to think about why this might be. What are the advantages to having a commercial district separate from the residential area? What would the impact be on Park Heights Avenue if restaurants and shops opened next to houses and synagogues?

Now have students think about recreational opportunities for neighborhood residents. Have they identified any institutions that provide these types of activities? The JCC is one example. What about parks and green spaces? Can they locate places where residents can hang out? Why is it desirable for neighborhoods to have parks? Ask

students whether or not they think there are enough parks in close proximity for neighborhood residents.

Upon concluding this exercise, ask students to think about how the neighborhood layout is beneficial to the many different ethnic and religious groups that call Park Heights Avenue home. One of the things that makes Park Heights Avenue so unique is its diversity. Current demographic statistics indicate that most residents (nearly 50%) are African American. Jews comprise approximately 40% of its population. The remaining 10% represents new immigrants from Central/South America and Russia (the majority of which are Jewish). Within these ethnic/religious/racial demographic categories, there is even more diversity. The Jewish community, for example, includes a large number of Orthodox families, as well as senior citizens who live in some of the apartment buildings and assisted living facilities along Park Heights Avenue.

It can be challenging to create a neighborhood that is suitable to such a large mix of people. Have students reflect on the many different groups of people who live in the area and how the various businesses, institutions, and other neighborhood features cater to specific groups. One example of a neighborhood feature not mentioned in the mapping exercise is the *eruv* that surrounds the streets of Park Heights that makes the neighborhood attractive for Orthodox Jews. (A definition of an *eruv* can be found in the Glossary – Teacher Resource Sheet #5). What are some other neighborhood features (kosher restaurants, synagogues in walking distance, etc.) that are important to this community? Ask students to think about the needs of other groups and find examples of businesses or institutions that cater to their needs.

One last factor to discuss with students is how residents can get involved in neighborhood planning. There are many forums that bring people together to discuss common issues of concern. There are several neighborhood associations within Park Heights Avenue where residents meet regularly to discuss topics such as new development in the neighborhoods, safety, and school improvement, to name a few. CHAI (Comprehensive Housing Aid Assistance) is an agency whose mission is to help maintain Park Heights Avenue as a stable neighborhood through many means. Ask students to think about how neighborhood residents can band together to tackle important issues. As a concluding exercise, have students reflect on an issue of concern in the neighborhood where they live or go to school and have them think about venues where they can raise their concerns.

Optional Follow-Up: Into Your Neighborhood

If your students live outside of Park Heights Avenue, encourage them to make comparisons with what they have they learned and the communities that they call home. Ask students to do the same exercises as discussed in the previous lesson but apply to their neighborhoods. Do they notice any similarities? Differences?

If your school is located in a different neighborhood, create a map of the school's neighborhood using a sheet of butcher paper. Draw a street grid on the paper and have students identify nearby homes, businesses, houses of worship, and parks in relationship to the school. Again, have students consider many of the same issues that were discussed in the previous lesson plan.

Teacher Resource Sheet #1

Historical Jewish Neighborhoods

While today's Jewish community in Baltimore resides in many areas of the city and county, its population is centered in several major areas, including Pikesville, Owings Mills, and Upper Park Heights Avenue. By looking at other historical neighborhoods where Jews have lived, we can discern distinct patterns of migration that explain these patterns of settlement.

Baltimore's Earliest Jewish Neighborhoods: 1820-1870

The earliest Jewish community in Baltimore was established by German speaking Jews from Central Europe who immigrated to the US for a variety of economic, social and political reasons. After arriving in Baltimore, they found their way to several neighborhoods including Fells Point, South Baltimore, and East Baltimore where they established homes, businesses, schools, and synagogues. Many started out working as peddlers, selling goods from packs on their backs to outlying rural communities and then opened stores, warehouses, and factories.

East Baltimore: 1820-1960

East Baltimore was one of Baltimore's first distinctly Jewish communities. Its earliest settlers were German Jews who built Maryland's first synagogue – what is now known as the Lloyd Street Synagogue – in 1845. By the 1880s, most of these Jews who had originally settled in East Baltimore moved to a more fashionable neighborhood, a reflection of their newfound wealth and prosperity. They were followed by a large influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who left their homelands in order to escape widespread antisemitism. Beginning in the 1880s, East Baltimore became home to a thriving Jewish community. The neighborhood was bounded by the Jones Falls River in the west, Patterson Park in the east, Orleans Street to the north, and Eastern Avenue to the south. Jewish-owned businesses including tailor shops, kosher delicatessens, grocery stores, and bakeries lined Baltimore and Lombard Streets, along with social service and educational organizations and synagogues. One of East Baltimore's most famous institutions was its Saturday night market known as the Yiddish Market. Even though the neighborhood began to decline in the 1940s with the building of large public housing complexes, many Jews continued to do their shopping on Lombard Street through the 1960s.

Eutaw Place: 1870-1960

As the German Jews prospered, they moved out of East Baltimore and migrated northwest to Eutaw Place and the neighborhoods surrounding Madison and North Avenues. With its landscaped median strip, fountains, and monuments, Eutaw Place was developed in the 1850s as a street that would rival the grand boulevards in other cities. The German Jews who lived there established a distinct enclave – reflecting their upper class economic status – that included a literary and social club, monumental synagogues, and enormous mansions staffed by servants. By the early 20th century, the neighborhood grew to encompass the streets along Lake Drive and Reservoir Hill. The central attraction of the neighborhood was Druid Hill Park. By

the 1930s, the elegance of the neighborhood began to fade, and by the 1960s most Jews had moved out.

Forest Park: 1920-1960

By the mid-20th century, most Eastern European Jews, like the German immigrants before them, vacated East Baltimore. Many moved to the suburbs of Forest Park, where affordable duplex houses and open green spaces could be found. Beth Tfiloh congregation built a synagogue on Garrison Avenue in 1921 that functioned as a neighborhood center. The neighborhood changed substantially in 1960 when most Jews moved out.

Lower Park Heights Avenue: 1920-1970

Jewish settlement along Park Heights Avenue began in the 1920s. Through the 1960s, the area encompassed the whole stretch of Park Heights, from Park Circle in the south to Cold Spring Lane in the north. The neighborhood's population was predominantly Jewish in its heyday in the 1930s, when the streets surrounding Lower Park Heights Avenue were filled with Jewish-owned businesses, movie theaters, and restaurants. The street became an artery from which other Jewish neighborhoods developed. The migration of the Jewish community followed Park Heights Avenue in a northwest direction and was prompted by the expansion of the streetcar line, which facilitated an easy downtown commute. The streets surrounding Park Heights Avenue were attractive to recent Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who were eager to move out of more crowded city neighborhoods.

The 1960s brought new changes to Lower Park Heights Avenue. Many of its residents moved out to the newly formed suburbs. Moving out of the city was seen as a sign of prosperity. Whereas, in 1960, there were eleven synagogues in the neighborhood, by 1968, only one remained. By 1970, the neighborhood changed dramatically as most Jews moved out and were replaced, predominantly, by African Americans.

Upper Park Heights Avenue (north of Northern Parkway)

While Lower Park Heights Avenue lost most signs of Jewish life by 1970, the streets surrounding Upper Park Heights Avenue (bounded by Northern Parkway on the south and Slade Avenue on the north) continues to house a vibrant Jewish community. Baltimore's Orthodox community has played a major role in the neighborhood's continued viability, and there are more than twenty Orthodox synagogues along this stretch of Park Heights Avenue. The oldest synagogue in the neighborhood dates to 1926, when Shearith Israel built a suburban branch of its Eutaw Place building. Other Jewish communal and social service organizations, such as the Jewish Community Center, the Center for Jewish Education, Jewish Vocational Services, and CHAI, are also located on Park Heights Avenue, a symbol of the Jewish community's commitment to neighborhood stability in the twenty-first century.

Park Heights Synagogues

The abundance of synagogues on Park Heights Avenue is one of the neighborhood's most distinguishing features and marks it as a center of Jewish life. While congregations in the area represent all three major denominations of Judaism, most are Orthodox. The following is not meant to be a comprehensive listing of all synagogues, but rather is intended to demonstrate the variety of congregational life.

Agudath Israel Congregation of Baltimore (6200 Park Heights Avenue)

The congregation moved to its present site in 1982. Following a Lithuanian liturgical tradition, Agudath Israel has the highest attendance of any of the synagogues on Park Heights Avenue and offers several daily *minyans* at different times to accommodate a variety of schedules. The synagogue also houses a mikvah for pots and dishes. Agudath Israel is affiliated with Agudath Israel of America.

Ahavas Yisroel Tzemach Tzedek Congregation (6811 Park Heights Avenue)

Formerly known as Ahavat Yisroel Tzemach Tzedek, the congregation was founded in 1987 by Rabbi Feldman, who had previously served as the spiritual leader of Shearith Israel. The congregation's name comes from the fifth Chabad Lubavich Rabbi. The congregation follows a *nusach Ashkenazi*, as most of its members are Ashkenazi, but it also incorporates some Hassidic elements as well. The congregation built a new facility that opened in 2002.

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation (7401 Park Heights Avenue)

Chartered in 1830, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation is Maryland's oldest congregation. Its first permanent home, the Lloyd Street Synagogue (1845), is still standing. The congregation was established by German speaking immigrants from Central Europe who settled in East Baltimore. The Park Heights Avenue site, built in 1951, is Baltimore Hebrew's third home. The building was designed by architect Percival Goodman. Baltimore Hebrew Congregation is a Reform synagogue that includes a pre-school and k-8th grade day school.

Beit Edmund Safra Congregation (3615 Seven Mile Lane)

Formerly known as Netzach Yisroel, the congregation was established as a Sephardic minyan in 1992. The congregation moved into B'nai Jacob's former home in 1999. Its members trace their roots to Iran, Iraq, Israel, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia.

Beth Abraham Anshe Sphard (6208 Wallis Avenue)

The synagogue was established in 1946 by followers of Rabbi Avraham Hertzberg (in whose memory it is named). Rabbi Hertzberg was revered as a father figure by many Holocaust survivors who joined the congregation in the 1940s and 50s. Its first location was in Forest Park. The congregation follows a *nusach sefard* that has its roots in 18th century European Hasidism.

Beth Jacob (5713 Park Heights Avenue at Manhattan Avenue)

Beth Jacob, a Modern Orthodox congregation, was founded in 1938. After worshipping at several temporary locations on Park Heights Avenue, the congregation moved into its present location in 1951. The congregation expanded its building in 1965 to include additional seating for members. The synagogue includes a Hebrew school.

B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion (6602 Park Heights Avenue)

Chartered in 1919, Shaarei Zion built its first synagogue in Lower Park Heights at 3451 Park Heights Avenue and marked the first congregational move north of Eutaw Place and Reservoir Hill. In 1964 the congregation dedicated a new building at 6602 Park Heights. In 1999, Shaarei Zion merged with B'nai Jacob which was established in 1883.

Beth Isaac-Adath Israel Congregation (4398 Crest Heights Road)

Beth Isaac Congregation (1923) merged with Adath Israel (1914) in 1948. The congregation is composed largely of Russian new Americans who settled in Baltimore beginning in the 1970s, and the synagogue also functions as a community center. When the synagogue nearly closed in 1996, its Russian congregants campaigned for it to remain open. Part of the synagogue's mission is to provide a link between its Russian congregants and the larger Baltimore Jewish community.

Ohr Hamizrach (6813 Park Heights Avenue)

This Sephardic-Iranian congregation was established in 1983 and moved to its present site in 1993.

Shearith Israel (5813 Park Heights Avenue)

The congregation, which claims to be the oldest continuously operating Orthodox congregation in Baltimore, was established in 1851 by Rabbi Abraham Rice, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation's first rabbi (and the first ordained rabbi to serve in an American synagogue). Initially, many of its congregants were from German speaking countries who chose to maintain their Orthodox traditions. It is popularly known as the "Glen Avenue Shul." In 1879, the Shearith Israel congregation merged with Shevet Achim (founded in 1862). This building dates to 1925 and was originally intended to serve as a suburban branch of the downtown synagogue which was located on McCullough Street near Eutaw Place.

Temple Oheb Shalom (7310 Park Heights Avenue)

Established in 1853, Oheb Shalom is one of Baltimore's oldest congregations. Although it is a Reform congregation, the congregation's first rabbi, Benjamin Szold (Henrietta Szold's father), was known as one of the founders of Conservative Judaism. Its location on Park Heights Avenue is its third home following a move from South Baltimore to Eutaw Place in 1892. The Park Heights Avenue synagogue was dedicated in 1960 and was designed by renowned German Bauhaus architect, Walter Gropius. The synagogue has recently undergone extensive renovations that included the addition of a day care center and pre-school.

Tiferes Yisroel-Bais Dovid (6201 Park Heights Avenue)

Known as “Rabbi Goldberger’s Synagogue,” Tiferes Yisroel was established in 1986 and moved to its present site in 1994. The congregation follows a *nusach Sefard*, or Chassidic liturgical tradition, and singing during services is emphasized. Many of Tiferes Yisroel’s congregants are *ba’al teshuva*, having recently embraced an Orthodox lifestyle. The congregation’s name means “Glory of Israel.”

**Park Heights Avenue:
Social Service / Recreational / Educational Organizations**

The Baltimore Hebrew University (5800 Park Heights Avenue)

The Baltimore Hebrew University was founded in 1919 to train teachers to work in the Baltimore Jewish educational system. Students enrolled in BHU can obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees in Jewish education, history and Judaics. The University also houses the Darrell D. Friedman Institute for Professional Development at the Weinberg Center, which awards graduate degrees to students in Jewish communal services.

Center for Jewish Education (5708 Park Heights Avenue)

As a part of its recent renovations, the JCC now also houses the Center for Jewish Education, which coordinates a variety of educational initiatives and serves as the community resource for Jewish educational programs. Through its resource center that houses an extensive lending library of curricular guides and videos and through its professional development workshops, the CJE is dedicated to providing vital support to congregational and day school educators.

CHAI – Comprehensive Housing Assistance, Inc. (5721 Park Heights Avenue)

CHAI promotes stable communities for Jewish residents and their neighbors in Northwest Baltimore by encouraging investment in neighborhood properties and public spaces and by promoting neighborhood beautification projects. CHAI staff work with the various neighborhood association groups, businesses, and individual homeowners to ensure that any development in the Park Heights corridor fits community needs.

Jewish Community Center (5700 Park Heights Avenue)

The Jewish Community Center was built on this site in 1952. It is one of two JCCs in the Baltimore area, and there is a larger campus in Owings Mills that offers more programming for families and young professionals. The JCC traces its roots to both the Young Men=s Hebrew Association that opened downtown in 1930 on West Monument Street and East Baltimore’s Jewish Educational Alliance that began in 1909. In 2004 it celebrates its 150th anniversary. In the beginning, the centers were established to teach immigrants English and assist them with finding jobs and starting businesses.

Today, the JCC serves a large segment of the Jewish population and crosses denominational divisions. Amenities include a health club, pre-school and day care center, art gallery, and auditorium. The JCC offers an array of classes for adults, children, and families, and also offer special programs for new Americans, senior citizens, teens, and individuals with disabilities.

Jewish Family Services (5750 Park Heights Avenue)

The Greenstein building next to the JCC houses the Baltimore Jewish Council and Jewish Family Services, an agency that provides social services for the entire Jewish community. JFS traces its origins to 1856 and the establishment of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Baltimore. Among its many services, JFS provides assistance for children, adults, seniors, immigrants, and individuals with disabilities.

Yeshivat Rambam (6300 Park Heights Avenue)

Yeshivat Rambam's building served as the former home of Har Sinai, Baltimore's oldest Reform congregation that was founded in 1842. Har Sinai has moved several times; it built this building in 1859, and in 2002 moved to a newly constructed synagogue in Owings Mills. The building was designed by architects Meyer and Ayers.

Yeshivat Rambam, an Orthodox co-ed day school, was established in 1991 with 50 students in grades k-3 and grew out of a desire for an Orthodox school modeled on Yeshiva Day Schools in other communities. The school combines Judaics with secular studies. In 2001, its first class of seniors graduated.

Teacher Resource Sheet #4

Park Heights Avenue Walking Tour

Begin at Northern Parkway heading south:

- Beth Jacob (5713 Park Heights Avenue at Manhattan Avenue)
 - What does the synagogue building resemble?
 - Beth Jacob is a modern Orthodox synagogue. What does this mean? (For a discussion of the various denominations of Judaism, see Teacher Resource Sheet #7 – The Denominations of Judaism.)

- Jewish Community Center (5700 Park Heights Avenue)
 - Of all the services that the JCC offers, what do you think are the most important?
 - Have you or anyone in your family used the JCC in the past year? If so, for what reasons?
 - Why do you think that the community maintains two JCCs? What does this tell you about the community's investment in Park Heights Avenue? What do you think the neighborhood would be like without the JCC?

- The Greenstein Building (Jewish Family Services, Baltimore Jewish Council) (5750 Park Heights Avenue)
 - JFS is dedicated to providing social services to members of the Jewish community. Why is important for the Jewish community to have its own social service agency? What are some important services that the JFS provides?
 - Among its many services, the Baltimore Jewish Council works to persuade legislators in Annapolis to vote in favor of bills that are important to the Jewish community. What are some issues of concern for the Jewish community?

- The Baltimore Hebrew University (5800 Park Heights Avenue)
 - Why is important that there be a Hebrew University in Baltimore? What kinds of classes can students take here that they could not take at other area colleges and universities?
 - How can you tell by looking at the building that it serves the Jewish community?

- CHAI (5721 Park Heights Avenue)
 - CHAI promotes neighborhood stability along Park Heights Avenue. Why do you think it is important for the Jewish community to work towards this goal? What are some things that can be done to make a neighborhood attractive for a diverse group of residents?

- Weinberg Park (5833 Park Heights Avenue)
 - Weinberg Park is a residential house for senior citizens. Do you think it's important for the Jewish community to maintain its own facilities for seniors? Do you know of any others in Baltimore?

--Why do you think that Park Heights Avenue has so many senior residents? What makes the neighborhood attractive for older people?

- Shearith Israel (5813 Park Heights Avenue)

--How does Shearith Israel's building look different from other neighborhood synagogues? Why do you think that synagogues look so different from one another?

---Are there any features on the outside of the building that tell you it's a synagogue?

- Chanukah House (6211 Park Heights Avenue)

--This is a privately owned home that is known for its lavish decoration during Chanukah (as well as other Jewish and secular holidays). Does your family make a point of driving past the Chanukah House each year during Chanukah? If so, why?

--Do you think it is important that there is a destination for Jewish families during Chanukah as opposed to touring houses that are decorated for Christmas? Does your family decorate your house for Chanukah or other Jewish holidays?

- Yeshivat Ramban (6300 Park Heights Avenue)

--Before Yeshivat Ramban opened a school in this building, Har Sinai worshipped here. Why do you think Har Sinai moved from this location to Owings Mills? What does that tell us about its congregants?

--Do you think it was important for the building to remain a Jewish organization? Why or why not?

- Northwestern High School

--Do you know anyone who goes to school here?

--Do you think it is important for the students at Northwestern to know about the history of Baltimore's Jewish community and the community's connection to Park Heights Avenue? Why or why not?

--Is it also important for the Jewish community to know about the history of the African American contributions to Park Heights?

--What are some ways to foster dialogue between the different groups of people that live along Park Heights Avenue?

- B'nai Jacob Shaarei Zion (6602 Park Heights Avenue)

(This synagogue is featured prominently in lesson plan #2)

- Temple Oheb Shalom (7310 Park Heights Avenue)

--This is Temple Oheb Shalom's third location. Why do you think the synagogue has moved so many times? What does this tell us about its congregants?

--The congregation recently opened a day care center and pre-school. What does this tell us about the community role of a synagogue? Do you think it's important for a synagogue to be more than just a place where people come to worship? What are some other community services that synagogues provide?

- Baltimore Hebrew Congregation (7401 Park Heights Avenue)
--This is Baltimore Hebrew's third home. Its first home in East Baltimore was Baltimore's first synagogue and can still be visited (today it's known as the Lloyd Street Synagogue). Why do you think it's important to preserve Baltimore Hebrew's first building? Does it surprise you that this congregation has such deep roots? How do you think the congregation has changed over the years?

Glossary

- Ashkenzi** The medieval Hebrew name for Germany. *Ashknenazim* (pl.) are Jews who can trace their origins to Central and Eastern Europe where Yiddish was the common language.
- Ba'al Teshuvah** Someone who chooses to return to a traditional (or Orthodox) Jewish lifestyle.
- Eruv** A symbolic enclosure that serves as an expansion of the “private domain” into public areas. An *eruv* allows individuals to engage in some activities that are normally prohibited on Sabbath such as carrying keys and prayer books and pushing baby strollers. Established in 1981, the *eruv* surrounding Park Heights Avenue is 16 miles in length. Its boundaries are the Jones Falls Expressway (east), the Beltway (north), Reisterstown Road (west), and to Northern Parkway (south). An *eruv* consists of a fence created by upright utility poles and trees connected together at that top by a taut wire. The *eruv* is inspected weekly prior to the beginning of Sabbath on Friday evening. There is a hotline number that people can call to inquire about its status. In the event that the wire or poles are knocked down during a storm, the *eruv* becomes non-functional until it can be repaired.
- Kaputas** Long black coat worn by Orthodox men
- Lubavich** Chasidic sect (see What is Chasidism?)
- Mikveh** A ritual bath for purification and rededication. A mikveh is a modern custom based in antiquity.
- Minyan** Prayer service consisting of ten adults or more (ten is the minimum number needed for public worship).
- Nusach** Liturgical tradition. (*Nusach Sephardi* refers to an alternative European liturgy developed by Chasidim)
- Sephardi** A Hebrew term meaning “Spanish” used to describe a Jew of Spanish or Portuguese descent; also applies to Jews from Mediterranean countries.
- Shtreimel** Traditional Eastern European black hat still worn by Orthodox men
- Shul** Yiddish word for synagogue

What is Chasidism?

Chasidism is a religious movement that originated in the mid 18th century in Eastern Europe in what is now Poland and Lithuania. Under the leadership of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, Chasidism represented a break with traditional Judaism. By the early 19th century, a variety of Chasidic sects had formed, each one pledging allegiance to different rabbinic leaders. Chasidism spread to the US during the mass migration of Eastern European Jews in the 1880s-1920s. With the arrival in 1940 in the US of Rabbi Joseph Isaac Schneersohn and his successor Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneersohn, the Lubavich movement – one of the largest Chasidic sects – took root in the US.

The leaders of Chasidic movements are believed to have mystical powers that can bring their followers closer to G-d. Prayer rituals differ from traditional Orthodoxy and are characterized by loud singing, swaying, clapping, and dancing. Joy is an important part of the Chasidic service as an expression of piety and congregational cohesion. Prayer rituals are based on a Sephardi tradition, but combine other rites as well.

Lubavitch Chasidism, most commonly presented through its organizational arm Chabad, is one of the better known groups within Chasidism (although there are others). It is an international movement with headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. Chabad-Lubavitch operates an extensive outreach effort to encourage Jews to return to traditional practices. It has well established centers in many countries that were former republics of the Soviet Union, and has played a large role in the re-emergence of Jewish life in these countries, after decades of antisemitic repression.

The Denominations of Judaism

Orthodox Judaism: The term “Orthodox Judaism” did not come into common use until the 19th century. Up to that point, there were no other Jewish denominations. Today, Orthodox Judaism views itself as the continuation of the beliefs and practices handed down from biblical times at Mount Sinai, and codified throughout the generations. It views the Torah, or the Hebrew Bible, and the Oral Law, known as the Talmud, as the exact word of God, with neither human intervention nor influence. As practical questions to modern life arise, Orthodoxy deals with them through the reasoning of rabbis. Within the Orthodox movement, there are many sub-groups. *Chasidic* Jews, for example, isolate themselves from secular society as much as possible. On the other end of the spectrum, Modern Orthodox Jews integrate themselves within the larger society and provide their children with a secular education alongside religious study.

Reform Judaism: Reform Judaism began as a movement in Western Europe following the French Revolution in 1789. It was only then that Jews were permitted to live outside of confined Jewish areas (called ghettos), to attend public schools, and to practice any profession. At this time reforms were added to the traditional practice of Judaism in some synagogues. Reforms included shortening the liturgy, delivering sermons in the local language, and adding choral singing and organ music to the service. Several German congregations instituted other changes as well, such as mixed seating between men and women and shortening the observance of certain holidays. Many German Jews imported Reform Judaism to America when they immigrated to the United States in the mid-1800’s. Today, Reform Jews practice varying levels of observance. Within the Reform movement, women can be ordained to serve as rabbis. Since the 1930’s, there has been a movement within some Reform congregations to bring back some traditional observances.

Conservative Judaism: Conservative Judaism arose as a religious response to the changing times of the 19th century. The movement originated in the United States and Europe as a way of bridging Reform and Orthodox Judaism. Basic tenets of Conservative Judaism include a positive attitude towards modern culture, an acceptance of the modern interpretation of sacred texts, and a belief in the value of certain aspects of traditional Jewish practice. Like Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism believes in the evolving nature of the religion according to the needs of Jews in modern times. Unlike Reform Jews, however, Conservatives believe in a stricter adherence to the laws of kashrut (dietary laws), observance of Shabbat, and use of the Hebrew language in service. Like Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism believes that the laws of the Torah and Talmud are of divine origin. However, in contrast to Orthodoxy, Conservative Jews accept the possibility of human intervention.

Reconstructionist Judaism: Reconstructionist Judaism is the most recent branch of Judaism. It emerged in 1922 under the leadership of Mordecai Menahem Kaplan. Kaplan advocated that all Jews share a common history, language, religion, social organization, standards of conduct, and spiritual/social ideals. In this view, Jewish ritual is not seen as law, but rather as a means to assist with group identity, survival, and spiritual growth. Today, Reconstructionist Judaism defines itself as a part of the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people. Each generation of Judaism reshapes religion according to its time, and in recognition of the diversity of Jewish practice.

Student Resource Sheet #2

- Photo #2 – B'nai Jacob, 2006 Christian Street

This photograph shows B'nai Jacob's second home where the congregation moved in 1908.

- 1) Describe what the building looks like? What are its main architectural features?
- 2) Does the building look like it would hold a lot of people? Why or why not?
- 3) Is this building located in a city neighborhood or in a suburb? How can you tell?
- 4) What are some differences between this building and the one from 1883? Do you think the congregation was larger or smaller in 1908? How can you tell?

Student Resource Sheet #4

- Photo #3 – B'nai Jacob, Liberty Road

In 1957, B'nai Jacob moved to this building on Liberty Road.

- 1) Is this synagogue located in the city or suburbs? How can you tell?
- 2) How is this building different from the other two you looked at?
- 3) Why do you think that the congregation moved to Liberty Road? What does that tell us about its congregants? In 1957, where was the majority of the Jewish community living?

Student Resource Sheet #4

- Photo #4 – Shaarei Zion, 3459 Park Heights Avenue

This was Shaarei Zion's first permanent location in lower Park Heights Avenue

- 1) Does this building look like any other synagogues you have seen before? What are its main architectural features?

- 2) At the time that this synagogue was built, it was the first to be located north of Druid Hill Park. What does this tell us about the Jewish community at the time?

Student Resource Sheet #5

- Photo #5 – Shaarei Zion, 6602 Park Heights Avenue

Shaarei Zion moved to this location in 1964

- 1) Have you seen this building before? Where?
- 2) What are some of the differences between this building and Shaarei Zion's first home?
- 3) Which building looks more like what you think a synagogue should look like? Why?
- 4) Why do you think Shaarei Zion moved farther north on Park Heights Avenue?