

# What Does Patriotism Mean to You?

American Jews and World War I (1917-1918)

Discovering  
American  
Jewish History  
Through  
Objects

## 01 THE LAW AND THE LAND

If the government has the power to enforce laws in its locale, then its laws are law, for the principle is that the law of the land is law.

אם השלטון הזה יש בו כח לעשות חקים בעירו דינו דין  
דקיימא לן דינא דמלוכתא דינא.

Rashba Responsa 1.612

## WHAT I LOVE 08

I love hot dogs, like any other American. I love football like any other American. But I don't love segregation. I don't love riots. I don't love oppression. I don't love gender slander. And I just want to see people have equality that they deserve.

Michael Bennett, NFL defensive end, August 13, 2017

## 02 LET'S ALL BE AMERICANS NOW

— What do you think it meant to "be American now?"

But you'll agree / That, now is the time, / To fall in line. / You swore that you would so be true to your vow, / Let's all be Americans now.

"Let's All Be Americans Now," lyrics and music by Irving Berlin, Edgar Leslie, and George W. Meyer, 1917

## 03 REMEMBER...

We, who came from Europe, came here looking to America as the promised land. I came believing that liberty was a fact. And when we today resent war and resent conscription, it is not that we are foreigners and don't care, it is precisely because we love America and we are opposed to war.

"We Don't Believe in Conscription," speech by Emma Goldman delivered at the Harlem River Casino, New York City, May 18, 1917

## 04 THIS IS THE WAR

— Have you ever made a personal sacrifice for something you believe in?

Remember this is not a war — it is the war. It is the contest of the ages, which we and our allies together can make the last human holocaust, if we be mighty in war and even mightier in the generousities and magnanimities of peace. Your sons have taken up arms not to slay, but to bring the hope of unbroken life to countless generations unborn.

"What are we Fighting For?" radio address by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, November 1918

## ESPIONAGE ACT 07

Whoever... shall willfully make or convey false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies and... shall willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces... or shall willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service... shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both.

Espionage Act of 1917, passed by Congress on June 15, 1917

## DON'T THROW AWAY YOUR SHOT 06

Raise a glass to freedom / Something they can never take away / No matter what they tell you.

"The Story of Tonight," Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton: An American Musical*, 2015

## TWO AMERICAS 05

Very few Americans, and this includes very few Jews, wish to believe that the American Negro situation is as desperate and dangerous as it is. Very few Americans, and very

few Jews, have the courage to recognize that the America of which they dream and boast is not the America in which the Negro lives. It is a country which the Negro has never seen. And this is not merely a matter of bad faith on the part of Americans.

James Baldwin, "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1967



Poster, *United Behind the Service Star*  
Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, 2006.1.1162  
Peter H. Schweitzer Collection of Jewish Americana

— How can you "raise a glass to freedom" in your own life?

# OPEN BOOK

Teacher  
Guide  
7th – 11th  
Grade

## What Does Patriotism Mean to You?

American Jews and World War I (1917-1918)

World War I began in June 1914 when Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, but its causes lay in the conflict between two sets of powers—Germany and Austria-Hungary on the one side and Russia, France, Serbia, and Great Britain on the other—over a complex web of alliances, territorial disputes, nationalism, and economic conflicts.

While historians agree that these factors all contributed to the war, which left seventeen million dead and nearly twenty million wounded, debates continue about how to interpret them as well as actions taken, explicitly or in secret, by the nations involved.

By 1916 the war had brought a level of violence and death unparalleled in modern history. In addition, Germany had rescinded earlier promises not to attack merchant ships in the Atlantic, sinking five in March 1917. The so-called Zimmermann telegram revealed discussions of a possible German-Mexican alliance (which Mexico rejected). These factors, along with President Woodrow Wilson’s call for “a war to end all wars” that would “make the world safe for democracy,” led Congress to vote on April 6, 1917, to declare war on Germany. This was followed by a declaration of war against the Austro-Hungarian Empire on December 7, 1917.

Nearly 250,000 American Jews served in the armed forces; they trained and fought alongside more than 4,000,000 men and women in an army composed of seventeen percent foreign born soldiers. Immigrants, their children, and their grandchildren would read the American and ethnic presses searching for news about the fate of loved ones and hometowns, and they raised unprecedented sums of money to support the victims of war in their homelands. World War I ended in 1918, and the Treaty of Versailles was devised at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Unfortunately, the treaty did not end the nationalist conflicts in Europe, and the Allies’ placing of guilt for the war on “the aggression of Germany and her allies” later served as a rallying point for Nazism.

This lesson explores the meaning of patriotism and how the dramatic events of World War I brought about fundamental changes in American society and politics that reverberated throughout the world and still affect our lives today. The war dramatically reshaped the United States’ role in the world and directly affected everyday Americans, especially hyphenated Americans like Jews. By the end of the war, the financial and cultural leadership of Jewish life had shifted from Europe to the United States, and American Jews had seemingly become one of the most secure Jewish communities in the world.

## **KEY QUESTIONS:**

- Why did the United States enter World War I and how did Americans react?
- How did American Jews and others negotiate questions of patriotism and dissent during World War I?
- How have Americans expressed their patriotism in different, and sometimes conflicting, ways?

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

### **By the end of this unit students will be able to:**

- Apply inquiry-based methods to interpreting museum objects and/or primary sources
- Explore a historical question using critical thinking, text analysis, object interpretation, and discussion
- Explain how responses to World War I reflected differing interpretations of patriotism
- Evaluate how American Jews and other groups responded to accusations of disloyalty during World War I
- Analyze and evaluate a variety of different types of primary sources, including images, documents, and posters
- Make connections between historical debates and present-day controversies

# Suggested Pre-Lesson Activity

**1. Explain that Uncle Sam became a popular icon during World War I and show students the image of him that appeared on the cover of *Leslie's Weekly*.**

**Consider asking the following questions:**

- What purpose do you think this image served? What did Uncle Sam want people to do?
- Ask students to describe Uncle Sam. Why do you think the artist chose to depict him in this way?
- What connections can you make between Uncle Sam's depiction and patriotism? How do you think Uncle Sam would define "patriotism?"
- How do you react to the image? Do you feel inspired to follow Uncle Sam's direction? Why or why not?

**2. Remind students of the context in which Uncle Sam was created and used. Ask them how they think Uncle Sam would be received today.**

- Have they ever seen Uncle Sam in advertisements or cartoons today? Ask students to explain the situations in which he was depicted.
- Can you identify any ways Uncle Sam has been used since the 1910s? Do these different purposes have connections to patriotism? Consider doing a Google Images search of "Uncle Sam" and seeing what results come up.

**3. Ask students: If you had to create a new design for a person representing patriotism, what would that individual look like? What would you have them say?**

**4. Have students create a poster featuring their new personification of patriotism offering instructions on how others can be patriotic. Students should consider the following:**

- What is the name of their patriotic figure?
- What gender should they be? What race? What age? What body language should they convey while giving their instructions?

**5. Have everyone present their posters (this could take place during another class period). Ask students to explain the choices they made when designing their poster and how they defined patriotism. Have students note the similarities and differences among their posters**

# Procedure

**1. Refer to the *OpenBook Overview* and follow the instructions for the “See, Think, Wonder” activity as a class. Consider using the following discussion questions.**

## **See:**

- Who do you see in the image? What are they wearing? What are they holding?
- What texts and symbols do you see on the flags?
- Who do you see in the background?
- What text do you see underneath the image?
- What organizations do you see at the bottom of the poster? What do their logos look like?
- How many religions can you find represented on the poster?

## **Think:**

- Who do you think are the people in the foreground? In the background? What do you think their uniforms signify?
- What message do you think this poster is trying to communicate? Where do you think you would find this poster?

## **Wonder:**

- I wonder what “united behind the service star” means.
- I wonder why all these organizations are working together.
- I wonder what other campaigns or projects these organizations worked on, besides the one highlighted in this poster.

**2. If you haven’t already, divide students into pairs or trios. Distribute one Talmud page to each group and Student Guide to each student.**

**3. Refer to the *OpenBook Overview* and follow the instructions for the *havruta* study.**

**4. Refer to the *OpenBook* Overview and follow the instructions for the Wrap up activity. Consider using the following discussion questions.**

- Can you find two texts that agree with each other? What do you think their authors might say to each other?
- Can you find two texts that disagree with each other? What do you think their authors might say to each other?
- Which text surprised you? Why?
- What verbs and adjectives do the authors use to describe patriotism? How would you categorize those words? Are there any outliers?
- Which authors do you think would be in favor of the Espionage Act (#7)? Which authors do you think could be at risk due to the Espionage Act?
- How do you think Goldman (#3), Rabbi Wise (#4), Baldwin (#5), and Bennett (#8) would react to “Let’s All Be Americans Now” (#2)?
- How do you think various authors would react to Goldman’s statement (#3) and eventual arrest?

**General prompting questions:**

- Do you feel patriotic? Why or why not?
- How do you see patriotism functioning in your everyday life?
- Do you think citizens of a country must be patriotic? Why or why not?

## Suggested Post-Lesson Activity

1. Ask students to recount the different ways patriotism has been defined on the Talmud page.
2. Tell students that they will be looking for more contemporary definitions of patriotism.
3. For homework, students should find at least three descriptions or definitions of patriotism. Students can use newspaper articles, TV shows, podcasts, social media, cartoons, or any other type of media.
4. For each example, have students write a few sentences about how patriotism is depicted or interpreted. Then they should pair each example with the quote from the Talmud page whose interpretation of patriotism is most similar.
5. In the next class period have students report out, sharing with the class what they found and how each example expresses patriotism. Note similarities, differences, patterns, and other themes among the examples found.

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## Object Information

### Poster, *United Behind the Service Star*

“A dollar knows no religion; it works for all” announced the United War Work Campaign when it launched in November 1918. The campaign’s “seven sisters”—including the Jewish Welfare Board, YMCA, Salvation Army, and National Catholic War Council—raised over \$203 million to fund education and entertainment programs for troops. Motivated by shared concerns about temperance and moral hygiene, organizers emphasized their unity. In this poster, symbols representing the different campaign organizers join together behind the “service star” and face the same direction, united in a common goal.



Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History, 2006.1.1162  
Peter H. Schweitzer Collection of Jewish Americana

## Appendix A – Historical Background

America's entrance into World War I brought the country new global prominence and responsibilities. Nearly 250,000 Jews served in the armed forces, alongside hundreds of thousands of other ethnic Americans, an experience that enhanced individual and communal patriotism while exacerbating existing prejudices. Patriotism in immigrant communities took many forms, including enlistment in the armed forces. For the first time, immigrants and first-generation Americans, including Jews, were participating formally in armed conflict on the side of their new homeland and sometimes against their nation of origin. Jews and other immigrant communities sought to quash the suspicion and fear of immigrants through their direct participation in the war, as well as through social service and cultural and philanthropic endeavors.

American Jews experienced World War I as eyewitnesses who understood and reacted to those events both as Americans and as members of an international diaspora community. The war had major implications for Jews, as well as other minority communities, at home and abroad. Jews debated whether, and on what side, America should enter the war, and anguished over the security of their own communities amid growing intolerance of ethnic minorities and accusations that new immigrants would bring Europe's conflicts to America's shores. Immigrants, their children, and their grandchildren would read the American and ethnic presses searching for news about the fate of loved ones and

hometowns, and they raised unprecedented sums of money to support the victims of war in their homelands. For example, Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck & Company and a first-generation American Jew, sought to improve conditions in war-ravaged Europe. Along with Jacob Schiff and Henry Morgenthau Sr. he helped establish the Joint Distribution Committee to provide relief abroad.

The draft took millions of men from their homes, stationed them in training camps across the country, and sent many overseas. It brought men—and the women who chose to serve alongside them—into contact with people whom they had never encountered in their civilian lives. They trained and fought alongside more than 4,000,000 fellow soldiers in an army in which seventeen percent of all soldiers were foreign born. Immigrant communities expressed their patriotism both in the armed forces and on the home front, however, a small but vocal minority chose passivism or lobbied against conscription. These immigrants also faced a political climate of increasing nativism, xenophobia, and suspicion of ethnic Americans, and those who refused to serve or support the country's war aims often faced angry public criticism and pointed questions about their values and loyalties.

Although still segregated by race, the American Expeditionary Force was the first time American military could not be assumed to be virtually all Protestant. The diversity of backgrounds among the men drafted into the American Expeditionary Force meant that many faced challenges beyond those generally associated with military training. Some spoke almost no English when they arrived in camp, and many had only limited familiarity with

American history or culture. Members of religious, ethnic, and racial minorities also had to negotiate how and whether to pray and observe holidays, including the Sabbath, in an often intolerant or ignorant setting. The Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) was created during World War I to recruit Jewish chaplains and support Jewish soldiers in all aspects of their service.

Jewish men and women were changed by their experiences during military service. They learned quickly to adapt to the demands of their officers and to the culture of the military base and their comrades. The military became a vast experiment in fast-paced Americanization, fueled in part by the soldiers themselves and in part by government policies intended to use military service as a tool for promoting assimilation. Soldiers left the service with a new sense of enfranchisement in American society and with profound questions about how they, as Americans, should express or minimize their differences once they returned to civilian life.

Hyphenated Americans balanced the demands of “Americanism” and the desire to be considered American against communal and familial connections to Europe. For all these communities, the war slowed the pace of immigration dramatically as travel became dangerous, but it also increased the number of people who desperately wanted to escape the violence and poverty created by the war. Rescuing friends and family from Europe became more pressing and at the same time more difficult. And, beginning with the Immigration Act of 1917, the American government adopted increasingly strict laws limiting who could enter the country, culminating in the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which imposed strict immigration quotas and

ended a remarkable period of immigration in American history. This legislation, coupled with intolerance of foreigners and rising antisemitism, changed America’s relationship with the world and severely hampered the efforts of Jews to escape Nazi Germany little more than a decade later.

## Appendix B – Supplementary Information for Talmud Page

### 01 THE LAW AND THE LAND

Often known as the Rashba, Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret (1235–1310) is best known for writing thousands of *responsa* (decisions from rabbinic authorities written in response to submitted questions or problems about Jewish life and related topics). He also wrote several books about the Jewish dietary laws and keeping Shabbat, as well as commentaries on the Talmud. His reputation as a Talmud scholar earned him the unofficial title “The Rabbi of Spain,” although he communicated with Jewish communities throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia.

### 02 LET’S ALL BE AMERICANS NOW

Irving Berlin, Edgar Leslie, and George W. Meyer wrote this song in 1917, the year the United States entered World War I. Berlin (1888–1989), a Russian immigrant and son of a cantor, was well known throughout the country for composing a number of popular wartime songs, such as “Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the

Morning.”

The bright and triumphant sound of another Berlin song, “Let’s All Be Americans Now,” encourages its listeners to overcome their differences and unite as a nation during a time of war. The song’s lyrics address ongoing turmoil between England, France, and Germany and acknowledge that American citizens, including recent immigrants from those countries and others, might not agree on whom to support. Nevertheless, the song urges its listeners to put aside those differences and take up arms to fight, invoking Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and George Washington as peaceful leaders who found it necessary to go to war. Ultimately, the song prioritizes unity and defense of the country over differences of opinion and national origin.

### **03 REMEMBER...**

Emma Goldman (1869–1940) moved around Lithuania, Prussia, and Russia before immigrating in 1885 to the United States. Already politically active, Goldman could not tolerate the inequality, injustice, corruption, and poverty she found in her new country. Goldman first settled in Rochester, New York, where she worked in a garment factory, quickly becoming alarmed by the terrible working conditions she and other workers endured. Then, in 1886, a rally in Haymarket Square had a profound effect on her; during this rally in support of an eight-hour work day, seven police officers and four demonstrators were killed, and in its wake eight anarchists were convicted of murder and sentenced to death on little evidence. Goldman’s response was to become an anarchist herself and protest the American government. She soon moved to New York City

and became a frequent speaker and writer in support of improved factory conditions and rights for women.

Goldman was arrested on February 11, 1916, for lecturing and distributing materials about birth control, a violation of the 1873 Comstock Act. She used her trial to stimulate a national discussion on contraception. Found guilty by the jurors and given a choice between paying a fine of one hundred dollars or serving fifteen days in prison, she chose prison. Perhaps unexpectedly, Goldman opposed the women’s suffrage movement because she considered voting as support for a broken and corrupt system that would never produce equality for all.

J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Justice Department’s General Intelligence Division, called Emma Goldman and her partner, Alexander Berkman, “two of the most dangerous anarchists in this country” and recommended their deportation. The duo had just finished serving two years in prison for speaking out against the draft when Hoover had them re-arrested and remanded to Ellis Island. A federal judge rejected Goldman’s claim to citizenship, and on December 12, 1919 she boarded a ship along with Berkman and 247 other Russian-born individuals to depart for exile in Russia.

### **04 THIS IS THE WAR**

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874–1949) was a Reform rabbi, liberal activist, and, unlike most of his Reform colleagues, an early American Zionist leader. Born in Budapest, Wise immigrated as a child to New York, where he earned his Ph.D at Columbia University and

received rabbinical training from private teachers. After leading congregations in New York and Portland, Oregon, he founded the Free Synagogue in New York City in 1907. He became a noted champion for civil rights and social justice, preaching to audiences at Carnegie Hall and serving as an early board member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

In 1898, Wise helped found the Zionist Organization of America. He was also a founder and leader of the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress. The American Jewish Congress, formed in conjunction with prominent American Jews such as US Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis, sought “to represent Jews as a group and not as individuals.”

Later, as part of the American Jewish Congress, Wise was active in protesting Nazi Germany and advocating for German Jews. He organized a mass anti-Nazi protest in Madison Square Garden, calling for an end to antisemitism in Germany and the boycotting of German goods. Wise unsuccessfully urged his friend President Roosevelt to enter the war before the Nazis could implement the Final Solution.

## 05 TWO AMERICAS

Novelist and playwright James Arthur Baldwin (1924–87) was known for his beautiful and biting prose as well as his social commentary. Growing up in a poor household in Harlem, New York, he experienced racial harassment, police brutality, and discrimination based on sexual preference. He spent most of his time taking care of his eight siblings, reading, and writing. Baldwin attended DeWitt Clinton High

School in the Bronx, where he served on the school’s literary magazine with photographer Richard Avedon. Later, in 1964, the two would collaborate on *Nothing Personal*, a photo-and-prose volume that explored the contradictions of American society. Disillusioned with the pervasiveness of racism in the United States, Baldwin moved to France in 1948 and lived there until 1957, when he returned to support the civil rights legislation under debate in Congress. In addition to continuing his writing on various social and political issues, Baldwin associated with prominent African American activists and artists, such as Maya Angelou, Malcom X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Ray Charles as well as other notable novelists, philosophers, and performers.

In 1963, Baldwin published his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, a semiautobiographical work about a teenager growing up on Harlem. Other notable works include *Giovanni’s Room*, *Another Country*, *Notes of A Native Son*, and *Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone*, all of which address issues relating to race, sexuality, and identity.

## 06 DON’T THROW AWAY YOUR SHOT

Lin-Manuel Miranda (b. 1980) is an award-winning composer, lyricist, and actor. His musical *Hamilton*, for which Miranda wrote the book, music, and lyrics, opened on Broadway in 2015 with Miranda originating the title role. Notably, *Hamilton*’s cast comprises mostly actors of color telling the story of America’s (white) founding fathers—focusing on the first treasury secretary, Alexander Hamilton. The musical emphasizes the role of immigrants and immigration around the country’s founding, as well as the presence of dissent and

disagreement within the democratic process.

Alexander Hamilton, Hercules Mulligan, and John Laurens sing “The Story of Tonight” early in Act 1, shortly after Hamilton’s 1772 arrival in New York City from the Caribbean to pursue his education. Soon Hamilton becomes a passionate supporter of the American fight for independence, becoming an aide to George Washington in 1777. The song thematically references “Do You Hear the People Sing?” from *Les Miserables*, which also features a group of revolutionaries singing about their hopes and values before a battle. The song also references John Locke’s writings on natural rights. Locke wrote how certain rights, such as freedom, are inherent in human nature, and while they can be restricted, they cannot be taken away.

## 07 ESPIONAGE ACT

Passed in June 1917, the Espionage Act made it illegal for any person to convey information intended to inhibit the war effort or promote the success of America’s enemies. Anyone found guilty under this law faced a fine of ten thousand dollars and imprisonment for up to twenty years. The 1918 Sedition Act expanded the activities subject to prosecution, making it increasingly perilous for Socialists, pacifists, and other activists to speak out about the war or other issues. Those arrested under the act included Socialist Party of America leader Eugene V. Debs and Jewish anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Following World War I, the U.S. government leveraged the powers given to it by the Espionage and Sedition Acts to crack down on political radicals, especially those of foreign descent.

Over the last century the Espionage Act has been infrequently but notably used in cases against suspected spies, such as Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. However, it continues to be US law and both the Obama and Trump administrations have used the Espionage Act to prosecute those suspected of leaking national security information to foreign governments.

## 08 WHAT I LOVE

Michael Bennett Jr. (b. 1985) is an American football player. Bennett joined his fellow National Football League player Colin Kaepernick in kneeling during the national anthem as a silent protest against police brutality. Bennett eventually emerged as a vocal supporter both of Kaepernick and of other social justice issues.

Bennett has become an activist, philanthropist, leader, and writer. In his most recent book, *Things That Make White People Uncomfortable*, Bennett discusses racism, women’s rights, police brutality, the history of protest, and his belief that athletes should be outspoken against injustice.

# OPEN BOOK

Student  
Guide

## What Does Patriotism Mean to You?

American Jews and World War I (1917-1918)













## NOTES

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2. Can you both love your country and be disappointed in it at the same time? Do you think this is easy or difficult? Why?
3. Do you think it is appropriate for celebrities to use their popularity to voice their opinions? Why or why not?
4. Can you think of other celebrities who have voiced their opinions? What did they say, and how did their fans react? Would you speak out against something you disagreed with, even if it meant risking losing your friends or angering members of your family?

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THE NATION'S CRISIS—IN PHOTOGRAPHS

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FEB 15<sup>th</sup> 1917



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## I WANT YOU