

**Lost Jewish Communities HIS 161**  
**American Jewish University Campus in Israel**  
**Young Judaea Year Course**

**”For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land.”**  
**Ezekiel 36:24**

The call to return to Zion is as ancient as the prophets of 2,000 years ago. Up until today, there have been Jews who have heeded the call to return.

In this course we will explore the intriguing subject of exile and return. What does it mean to live in exile? What happens when you return from exile and go ‘home’ to a place you have never lived in? What do you hold on to? What do you let go of?

We will be visiting with several groups, all of whom have had the experience of exile and return as part of their history. Each of whom have adapted and coped with the trauma of exile and the trauma of return in different ways. Groups such as Beta Israel from Ethiopia, Cochini Jews from India, the Jews of Kaifeng , the Bnei Menashe from Manipur, Chassidic sects from Eastern Europe.

We will come to understand the lives, experiences and dreams of these communities by learning about the history, rituals, legends and collective and personal stories of their members. We will emphasize the role of imagination in their survival and in the incorporation of the remnants of Israel into the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Of course, from these stories will emerge the question of what it is to see oneself as part of the Jewish people and what it is to be an Israeli in addition to or separate from being a Jew.

\*This course is primarily a siyyur course during which we will be traveling by local or chartered busses to our destination. It is IMPERATIVE that you be ON TIME. Times of the class will vary from week to week. Please check with Susan Yammer.

#### Course Requirements

1. Attendance and participation (25%)

A major factor in determining your grade in this course is attendance. Since the course meets only once a week and because most classes are siyyurim to unique sites, it is imperative that you attend each and every session. There is no way to ‘make-up’ for a missed session and therefore, your grade will be deducted for a missed session, regardless of the reason for your absence\*.

*\*Except for Serious illness. This must be documented by a physician, confirmed by*

*Jerusalem Section staff and reviewed by the Director of Education.*

2. Readings Review (25%)

Each week you will be given reading assignments. From these, you will have to choose 3 to formally review. You will receive a worksheet outlining the format and content of these reviews. They are due at various points during the term.

3. Final essay (25%)

A final essay will be given in order to assess your integration of the material presented in the course. In addition, you will be asked to reflect on what you have experienced and how it speaks to your own notion of being a Jew.

4. Weekly quizzes (25%) Each week there will be a quiz based on the previous lesson and the current week's reading assignment.

Additional Student Responsibilities:

- Specific class dates will be provided by the Director of Education. It is your responsibility to know when class takes place and if any changes are made to the schedule.
- You will be told before leaving Beit Ar-El if a religious site requires special clothing or behavior.
- You are **NOT** permitted to use electronic devices in class (phones, music players, computers, etc.) *UNLESS* written permission is given for students with special learning needs. If you bring these devices with you on the bus, they must not appear when others are speaking or when visiting sites.
- You must arrive at every class on time and with appropriate materials—source book, notebook and pen. In addition, you must remember to bring your bus pass, food, water a hat and safe/comfortable clothing/shoes.
- Madrichim and occasionally a guard will accompany us on field visits. It is very important to know where they are at all times, listen carefully to their instructions and treat them with respect.

## **Class Meetings:**

**1.**

**Introduction: Exile, Return, and who is a Jew? Who is a Jew? Defining the Right of Return; Jewish identity Who are the “Lost Jewish Communities”? (The Exile)**

**Site: Beit Ar El**

**Reading: “How I Happened To Discover the Bnai Menashe” in Primack, Karen  
*Jews In Places You Never Heard Of***

**2.**

**The Benai Menashe from Manipur**

**Site: Kiryat Arba**

**Reading: “Ethiopian Jews: Obscure Beginnings”**

**3.**

**Guest Speaker from the Ethiopian Community, Kasahun**

**Site: Beit Ar El, Jerusalem**

**Reading: “Cochini Jews” Barbara C. Johnson**

**4.**

**The Jews of Cochin, India**

**Site: Moshav Nevatim, Ha Darom**

**Reading: “ The Jews of Gush Katif” Selected Newspaper Articles**

**5.**

**The Jews Of Gush Katif**

**Site: Kibbutz Ein Tzurim**

**Reading: “The Jews of Kaifeng” Rami Tal, “Spain, High Holy Days Among the Spanish Marrano”, Primac, Karen, *Jews In Places You Never Heard Of***

**6.**

**Jews of Kaifeng, China**

**Meeting with Jin Jin**

**The Anusim From South America**

**Meeting with Rosita and her family**

**Site: Beit Ar El, Jerusalem**

**Reading: “The Golden Tradition”, Lucy Davidowitz**

**7.**

**Jew from Belz: Chassidim**

**Belz Synagogue, Text Study**

**Site: Belz Synagogue, Jerusalem**

**Katamon, Jerusalem**

**Reading: “About the Tribes” in Rav Avichayil, The Tribes of Israel; the Lost and the Dispersed”**

**8.**

**Hadassah Youth Village**

**Site: Meir Shefaya, Zichron Yaakov**

**Reading : “The Lost Jews of Peru”, Shavei Israel**

**9.**

**Visit to the Jews of Peru in Israel**

**10.**

**Offices of Shavei Yisrael, Michael Fruend; founder and director**

**Site: The Great Synagoge, Jerusalem**

**11.**

**In Class Final**

### **Recommended Bibliography**

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Aviahail, Eliahu Rabbi, **The Tribes of Israel: the Lost and the Dispersed** (Jerusalem: Agudat Amishav, 1990)

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Finguerman, Ariel and Elana Shap, “**In Israel, Karaites keep their faith**”, *JTA*, 9/14/03

Huddleston, Lee Elridge, **Origins of the American Indians: European Concepts, 1492 – 1729** (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, Univ. of Texas, 1967)

Jospe, Raphael and Wagner, Stanley M, **Great Schisms in Jewish History** (NY: Ktav Pub House, NY, 1981)

Kaplan, Steven, **The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century** (New York: New York Universtiy Press, 1992)

Katz, Nathan and Ellen S. Goldberg, **The Last Jews of Cochín: Jewish Identity in Hindu India** (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993)

Livneh, Neri, “**Coming Home**”, *Ha'aretz*, 7/18/02

Parfitt, Tudor, **Journey to the Vanished City** (London: Phoenix, 1997)

Partiff, Tudor, **The Thirteenth Gate: Travels Among the Lost Tribes of Israel** (Bethesda, MD: Adler& Adler Publishers Inc, 1987)

Primack, Karen, **Jews in Places You Never Thought Of** (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing, 1998)

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Ross, Dan, **Acts of Faith: A Journey to the Fringes of Jewish Identity** (New York: Schocken Books, 1984)

Segal, Ariel, **Jews of the Amazon: Self-Exile in the Earthly Paradise** (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999)

Steinberg, Jessica, “**‘Lost Tribe’ Émigrés From India Adjust to Life After Making Aliyah**”, *JTA*, 12/23/02

Weil, Shalva, **Beyond the Sambatyon: The Myth of the Ten Lost Tribes** (Tel Aviv:

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Hatefutsot, The Nahum Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, 1991)