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Immigration

Eastern European Jews

Approximately two percent of Americans are Jewish, and over two million Jews immigrated from Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1924. The Jews of Eastern Europe had faced anti-Semitism and lived in the Pale of Settlement. Therefore, they tried leaving to America for a better life. When they got there, life was more challenging than they expected it to be.

The main reason Jews left Russia was because of Anti-Semitism. There were discriminatory laws passed against the Jews. For example, the Jews were forced to live in the Pale of Settlement. The Pale of Settlement was an area in south west Russia. Over time, the Pale of Settlement was reduced by 10 percent. An example of this is by 1900 about 5,000,000,000 Jews lived in the Pale of Settlement. Another example is that Jews had to live in all Jewish towns and villages called shtetls. The Jews were not allowed to own their own land. Jews faced violent attacks from Russians called pogroms. The pogrom attacks were because the Russian believed that the Jews helped with the assassination of the tsar leader. Also Russians used violence to pass laws. The laws were called 'temporary' laws. The Jews were not allowed to work as lawyers or in the government. The temporary laws were laws that Russia made to keep Jewish people together. Jews were forbidden to live outside of the Pale of Settlement. The Jews hated the Pale of Settlement and wanted to immigrate somewhere else, somewhere with freedom.

The main reason why Jews wanted to sail to America is because America was seen as the land that has freedom, religious freedom, more job opportunities, and more chances to make money. One reason why Jews came to America is because some unmarried men wanted to find

wealthy wives. Another reason is that married men came with their families to earn a better income to bring their families from Russia. Some men came to earn a better job in America to earn more money. Some Jews came to join family members who already had a business or family. Some women came to America to work and to find a wealthy husband. More reasons why the Jews came to America because they weren't allowed to practice their religion in Russia but they were allowed to practice their religion in America.

Another reason why the Jews immigrated to America is because Jews already set up societies to help other Jews that were already in America. Jewish immigrants also formed organizations to take care of each other. One of the Jewish foundations was called "B'nai B'rith" foundation. Jewish immigrants began other groups including the Henry Street Settlement and the Educational Alliance in New York. In Chicago, they founded the Hull House and the Hebrew Benevolent Society. The Hebrew Aid Society fed immigrants by operating kitchens and gave immigrants free temporary housing if they needed it. They ran shelters to help the immigrants. They immigrated to America to practice their religion because synagogues and Yiddish theaters provided Jewish communities because of immigrant aid societies. An aid society was formed outside Russia to help Jews escape from Russia. The aid societies collected money to help pay the journey to America. The aid societies arranged for Jews in European cities to bring the Russian Jews from the train station to boats which were sailing to America.

In America Jewish immigrants tried to keep their tradition. In America Jews were free to celebrate Jewish holidays such as, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, and Passover. Jews could choose not to keep their traditions or to keep their traditions and can become educated in many different ways like with medicine, science, and entertainment.

Even though Jews had religious freedom, they experienced Anti-Semitism. By 1880, many Eastern European Jews were easily identified by their dark clothes and long beards. They expected to be able to find jobs easily, however they were unable to gain employment with traditional jobs. Some Jews turned to new professions such as entertainment, like Yiddish Theater. Jews were unable to serve on juries or hold public offices. Some Jews became peddlers and would walk around carrying goods or pushing people on carts. Other Jews became clothes makers and worked in small, crowded, and dirty rooms and worked 12 to 15 hours a day. The Jews that worked in factories worked on assembly lines. Employees held strikes and refused to work until their working hours improved. Parents worked hard and saved money so their kids can go to school. They did everything they could to make sure their children's lives will be better than theirs. The Russian Jews saw education as a way to escape the hard conditions. The Jews of Eastern Europe felt pushed out of Europe because of Anti-Semitism, forced moves to the Pale of Settlement, and laws that kept them from getting the jobs they wanted. These Jews felt pulled to America by the promise of religious freedom, job opportunities, and the chance of a better life. Once they were living in America, Eastern European Jews were free to keep their religion or to be less religious and become more American. Unfortunately they did experience Anti-Semitism. By now the Eastern European Jews that are immigrate today, have an easier time and are more successful immigrating to America and getting a better life in America, than the people before them.