



The connection between Hellenization and Americanization

Objectives:

1. To examine the two phenomena, compare and critique them
2. To characterize contemporary Israeli culture and attempt to understand our opinion of it.

Course of the activity:

a. Hang up a placard with the following question written on it: “Why did the Maccabees revolt against the Greeks?”

We ask our members to throw in answers that they remember from school, write down all the answers that they say and ensure that in the end the emphasis is on Hellenization, that is to say the silent takeover of control by the Hellenistic culture of the Jewish experience and tradition. There is no need to go into the issue too deeply, however it is important at this stage to give them the basic background of the era and the atmosphere that prevailed amongst the Jewish people (10 mins).

b. We read the story “Double Lives”

It was a morning like any other. Shimon Horekanus got out of his bed and peaked out the window at the town of his birth Skitopolis, that is Bet Shean. He recalled the days of his childhood, when his name was only Shimon, and the town of Bet Shean was a muddled town, it had new houses alongside old hours, and the markets and the shops were dispersed everywhere.



However today everything is well organized, and the town appears as if it had relocated one of the Greek towns to Bet Shean. It had had the best modern architects. There are two main plazas in the shape of a cross. Around them all the work of society and trade takes place. The largest one is the Cardo, where Shimon Horekanus' shop is located. Shimon Horekanus left his home in the direction of his spice shop. This business had been prospering since the occupations by Alexander of Macedon. Today he sells his spices from all corners of the Hellenist kingdom, from India and Persia. While he was walking through the streets of the town, he passed close to the amphitheatre. Shimon Horekanus remembered the war of the gladiators which took place a week ago in the amphitheatre: how exciting the "show" was. The Greek strongman who was well equipped needed half an hour in order to bring down the black slave, who fought like a she-wolf protecting her cubs and her own life. Eventually he reached his shop and started work. It was a prestigious trade. In order to engage in trade in Hellenistic Judea he had to have a good command of the Greek language, although the language of the street was Hebrew. Shimon Horekanus loved his trade mainly due to the fact that he met people from throughout the Hellenist kingdom, and thus he became closer to the advanced Hellenistic culture. With this aspiration, realization of the Hellenist dream, his Jewish-Greek life continued in happiness and prosperity until the eruption of the Maccabee rebellion.



C. Questions

- Which characteristics that were not traditionally Jewish exist in the life of Shimon Horekanus?
- What does he feel about the Hellenist culture? What can he see in it?
- What does he feel about the Jewish culture, it anything? (15 minutes).

d. Hang around the room placards with headings:

- Jewish culture
 - American culture
 - European culture
- Ask the members of the group to walk around and to cut out photographs from magazines, to write and draw on each placard things that are suitable in their opinion, which define the relevant culture. (15 mins)
 - Collect all the placards together and hang up a new one: “Youth culture in Israel” on which the figure of a rounded youth is drawn whereby it is possible to write inside the figure, and next to the various body parts, pursuant to the questions.

e. You ask - what constitutes the youth culture today?

- What does he wear?
- What does he eat when he goes out to enjoy himself?
- Which music does he listen to?
- What are his hobbies?
- Which movies does he like?
- What is his opinion about the society in which he lives?
- What is important to him in life?
- What makes him happy?
- What angers him?

f. Guided questions:

- What do we take from the Jewish culture?
- What from the American culture?
- You said, that eating frogs legs is a characteristic of Israeli youth, from which culture is this custom drawn? (20 mins)



g. Discussion

- How is this youth similar to Shimon Horekanos?
- What is similar as regards the cultural situation in Israel and the cultural situation in Judea prior to the Rebellion of the Maccabees.
- Can you see at present in Israel factors that are similar to the Maccabees in their objection to the introduction of a foreign culture?

h. Divide the group into two groups: one with those objecting to the introduction of a foreign culture and the other in favour of a universal culture. The two groups need to convince each other and attempt to transfer to their team as many members of the second group as possible (20 mins).

i. Summarize the statements of the members, the arguments of both sides and try to reach a joint statement.