**Title:** Jews in the Forest – On the Escape Trails to the Land of Israel, 1945

**Short description**

A photograph from 1945 of Jews fleeing Europe for pre-state Israel with the help of the Ha’Bricha movement.

**Detailed description**

This is a photograph of European Jews escaping to pre-State Israel in 1945 with the Ha'Bricha organisation. The photograph shows eight people, presumably Jews, of all different ages, walking uphill in single file in a dense forest. They are all dressed in clothing that looks warm but not necessarily suitable for walking in a forest. Some are carrying suitcases or bags, while others are holding hands to help each other.

From the origin of this photograph collection we know that these are Jews escaping from Nazi-occupied Europe. Throughout World War II, Jews attempted to escape their fate under the Nazis and reach neutral countries such as Spain and Switzerland or countries that had not yet been captured by the Nazis. The borders to these countries were, however, closed to the Jews, and crossings took place clandestinely on foot, across dangerous paths, and often without suitable clothing or equipment.

**​Would You Like to Know More?**

**Ha’Bricha**– Ha’Bricha ( “The Escape” in Hebrew) was an underground network set up in 1944 by the Mossad L’Aliyah Bet (a branch of the Haganah that helped Jews to immigrate illegally to Israel at the time of the British Mandate). Its goal was to help Holocaust survivors and displaced persons reach safety in Israel. Initially Ha’Bricha smuggled thousands of Jews across the Polish borders with Czechoslovakia and Hungary to Prague and Budapest. Later, the organisation helped Holocaust survivors from DP camps immigrate to Israel. Ha’Bricha became the main conduit for Jews immigrating to Israel, assisted by the Jewish Brigade, a Jewish unit of the British Army, and the Haganah, an underground movement set up to fight the British Mandate in pre-state Israel. Between August 1945 and June 1946, over 48,000 Jews left Poland with the help of the Ha’Bricha movement. At least 90,000 more are believed to have left after July 1946. About 150,000 Jews arrived in DP camps with the help of Ha’Bricha.

**Aliyah Bet** <previous document>

**Aliyah**— The Hebrew term “aliyah” refers to the act of moving to the Land of Israel. Jews have made aliyah throughout the course of Jewish history, but the concept of aliyah was revamped in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There were five initial waves of aliyah that began in 1882 and ended when the State of Israel was established in 1948. After 1948, there were major waves of aliyah including Holocaust survivors fleeing post-war Europe and Jews escaping persecution in Arab countries. Within three and a half years, the population of Israel had doubled. In 1949 alone, around 250,000 people arrived in Israel – the largest number of immigrants until today. Many arrived from displaced persons (DP) camps and from British detention camps in Cyprus. The immigrants from Arab countries mostly arrived as part of special operations evacuating communities that were in grave danger, such as Operation Magic Carpet from Yemen (1949–1950) and Operation Ezra and Nehemia from Iraq (1951–1952). Today, Jews make aliyah from countries all over the world with the help of various agencies and organisations.

**Teaching Suggestions**

**​Jewish History**teachers can use this resource when teaching about the aftermath of the Holocaust, World War II, and the plight of the refugees. Teachers can also use this photograph when discussing the Aliyah Bet, Ha’Bricha, and the illegal immigration of Jewish refugees to pre-state Israel.

**General History**teachers can use this when discussing migration and refugees in general and specifically after World War II.

**Photography**teachers can use this when discussing photo-journalism and the importance of photography for documenting history.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

* Who are these people?
* How old are they?
* Where are they going?
* What are they doing?
* What are they carrying?
* Where are they?

**Reading Between the Lines**

* This is a picture of Jews clandestinely crossing the border into safety during or immediately after World War II.  
  What was the situation for Jews in Europe in 1945?
* Why were they crossing the border through mountains and forests?
* What can you see in the photograph that alludes to the fact that these people were escaping?
* How do you think these people were feeling at the time of the photograph?  
  What do you think that they thought about their past? And what about their future?
* The Aliya Bet and the Ha'Bricha movement assisted in the escape of many European Jews.  
  Find out more about these organisations.  
  How did they help?  
  Where were they located?  
  What were the Jews escaping to?
* After escaping from Europe, the Jews wishing to immigrate to Israel faced another obstacle: British Mandate limitations on immigration to Israel.  
  Why did the British limit Jewish immigration to Israel?  
  How did they enforce it?  
  How did the Jews overcome this obstacle?

**Connections**

* Do you know anyone who escaped from Europe during or immediately after the Holocaust?  
  If so, what is their story?  
  If not, have you ever read a story or seen a movie on this topic.  
  What was it about?  
  How did you feel when reading or seeing this story?
* Compare how these people finally arrived in Israel with how people arrive today.
* Are there still Jews who have to make aliyain secret these days?  
  Search for information about Jews in Arab countries.

**Creative Ideas**

* **​**What do you think the people in the photograph were talking about when the photograph was taken? Imagine you are a scriptwriter for a play and write a script for this scene.
* Imagine that Facebook had existed at the time of the Ha'Bricha movement and you are a member of the movement.  
  Create a Facebook page to advertise your activities and invite Jewish refugees to join.

**Target audience:** Junior High, High School, Informal Education, Higher Education

**NLI Links**

[Visual Memory Photograph Collection](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/photos/Pages/photo_portal.aspx)

[Illegal Immigration Ship Parita, 1939](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENG003716873&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=http%3A%2F%2Fweb.nli.org.il%2Fsites%2Fnlis%2Fen%2Feducation%2Fpages%2Fresults.aspx%23%3Fquery%3Dlsr16%2Cexact%2CPrimary+Source%26query%3Dany%2Ccontains%2Caliyah+bet%26institution%3DNNL%26vid%3DEDU_XML_ENG%26loc%3Dlocal%2Cscope%3A(EDU_XML_ENG)%26sortField%3Dlso04%26indx%3D1%26bulkSize%3D8)  
[Protest Against Immigration Restrictions, 1945](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/pages/viewer.aspx?docid=EDU_XML_ENG700092755&presentorid=EDU_XML_ENG&searchurl=http%3A%2F%2Fweb.nli.org.il%2Fsites%2Fnlis%2Fen%2Feducation%2Fpages%2Fresults.aspx%23%3Fquery%3Dlsr16%2Cexact%2CPrimary+Source%26query%3Dany%2Ccontains%2Caliyah+bet%26institution%3DNNL%26vid%3DEDU_XML_ENG%26loc%3Dlocal%2Cscope%3A(EDU_XML_ENG)%26sortField%3Dlso04%26indx%3D1%26bulkSize%3D8)