



# JOSEPH KUSHNER HEBREW ACADEMY

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## RAE KUSHNER YESHIVA HIGH SCHOOL

### SEVENTH GRADERS LEARN THE HISTORY OF COLONIZATION AND MAKE CONNECTIONS TO JEWISH HISTORY

Seventh grade students are studying the history of colonization in the Americas, while making meaningful connections to Jewish history. How is this important to us? What is our history and where were the Jews at this time?

After learning about the first American settlers, the students explored the effect of prejudice and intolerance toward Jews in the Old and New Worlds. Using maps, they followed the Jews from the Spanish Inquisition and the expulsion to Portugal, the Netherlands, and Brazil until the Jews finally landed in New Amsterdam which was part of the Dutch colony, New Netherland. This tied in perfectly with learning the history of the original colony of New York.

Studying about the Plymouth Colony, Pilgrims and the First Thanksgiving is an essential part of this unit, but it's equally important to draw attention to its similarity to our holiday of Sukkot. We learned earlier that the Jews and some Pilgrims may have overlapped in the Netherlands for about ten years. Students looked at a picture of the First Thanksgiving and compared it to our holiday; both celebrated the harvest, both were outside, and both invited guests. We discussed a theory that the Pilgrims may have learned about Sukkot from the time they lived with Jews.

While learning about Rhode Island, we were relieved to learn that it was established as a colony for religious toleration. Doesn't it make sense that the oldest shul in America, the Touro Synagogue, is in Newport?

As part of our curriculum, the students participated in a picture-to-text assignment. Pictures that depict the first Jewish colonists were displayed around the room. Everyone enjoyed going around the room to examine each picture and answer the questions: What is happening in this picture and how is it important to you? Students were highly engaged in writing their answers on the picture, signing their names, and reading how their classmates responded.

