Life in the East End

At the turn of the 1900s the Jewish population in London had settled around Spitalfields, Whitechapel, Aldgate and Mile End, living in densely populated dwellings.

"I remember how poor we were there was no indoor toilet it was a block of flats, and we had to share a landing, had to share a sink and a toilet and it, it was horrible, circumstances weren't nice at all but… that's how we managed'
(Sara)

"…we never had a bathroom, and every Friday I used to go up and have a hot bath. They used to wash me…I can remember great big fire, was no central heating, with a fire guard, with these towels, I can remember the towels were a bit rough, and used to wrap me round in these towels…"
(Rhoda)

Nurses from the London Jewish Hospital, Stepney Green c.1930.

Many children went to the Jewish Free School founded in 1732. The school expaned throughout the 19th Century as the population grew. An aim of the school was to provide a Jewish education for the young Jewish immigrants.
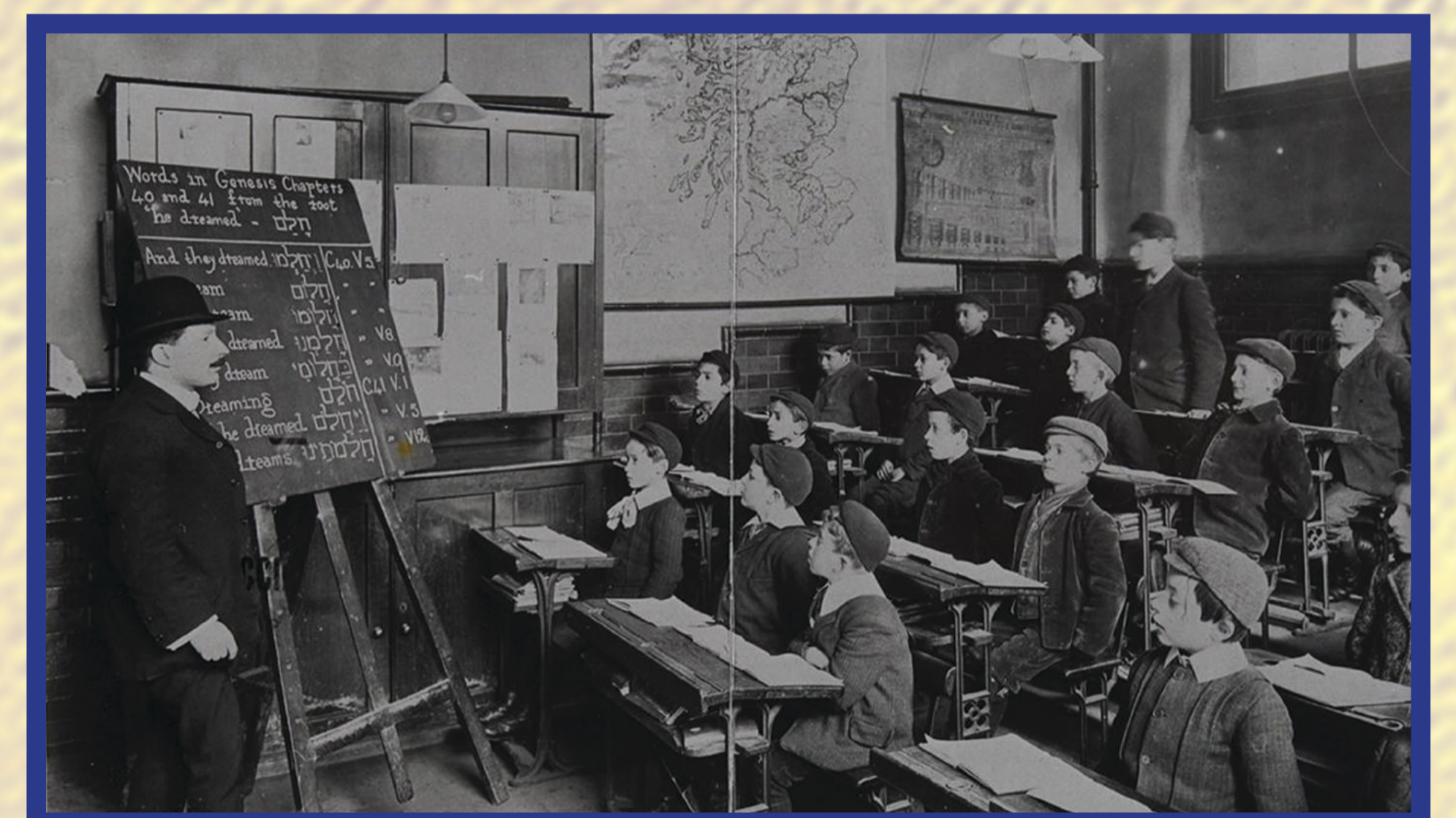

Class in the Jewish Free School, 1908.
Courtesy of the Jewish Museum.

"I went on to the Jewish Free School where Doctor Bernstein was the Headmaster…I remember the school was very, very large, very big and the entrance was in Bell Lane, just off of Wynford Street…I remember that there seemed to be thousands and thousands of boys, and there literally were…I actually learnt my Bar Mitzvah there, you know? It was all part of the… curriculum was to learn Hebrew"
(Willie)

Grodzinsky and Sons in Whitechapel, c.1920.
Courtesy of the Jewish Museum.

Jewish Soldiers made a siignficant contribution to the First World War. Jewish Soldiers c.1914.

Synagogues were on every corner:

"There were synagogues, little synagogues every single corner…you could walk the whole length of one road and pass about six little synagogues"
(Rhoda)

Philpot Street Green Synagogue in Poplar on Yom Kippur c.1940