Framing this unit
Mimouna is a festival celebrated by Jews of Moroccan and North African descent on the day after Pesach (in Israel this is the night after the seventh day of Pesach). Participants often dress in traditional Moroccan costumes: a jalabiya for men and a kaftan for women.

Celebrations begin at night and include lavish family gatherings during which mainly sweet treats are served, including a traditional sweet pancake called mufleta. One of the main elements of the holiday is the “open door” hospitality shown to all who want to participate. Participants are welcomed with the traditional blessing of וַתִּשְׁתַּפוּ (eat and enjoy). The following day, many families go out into nature with their families and attend Mimouna events.

The largest Mimouna gathering in Israel, with many thousand of participants, takes place in Sacher Park in Jerusalem. The holiday originated in Morocco in the eighteenth century and was a symbol of the good relations between the Jews and their Muslim neighbours. The name of the holiday, Mimouna, may refer to the original reason for its founding, as it derives from the name Maimon and possibly commemorated the death of the father of Maimonides (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon).

Another suggestion for the origin of the name Mimouna is the word אֶמְעַה, emuna, meaning faith; Mimouna is also known as the festival of faith, continuing on from Pesach, the festival of redemption. According to this belief, participants in Mimouna celebrations express their faith in the coming of redemption.

Group Activity
Mimouna is not very well known among most Jewish communities outside of Israel.

- Have you even celebrated this festival? If so, what was your experience?
- Do you know of any other festivals celebrated by specific Jewish communities?

The holiday of Mimouna centers around the idea of hospitality and interfaith relations.

- What can you do to improve the interfaith relations in your neighborhood?
- How does Jewish tradition regard the value of hospitality?

Read this article for more information.

Discussion
Describe the photograph:

- Who are the people in the picture?
- What are they doing?
- What are their expressions?
- How are they dressed?

This is a photograph of Moroccan Jews celebrating Mimouna.
• What is Mimouna? Read more about it here.
• Who celebrates the festival?
• What is its origin?
• What do people do on this day?

The people in the photograph are dressed in traditional Moroccan clothes. Learn more about Moroccan Jewish dress and culture by exploring some of the Moroccan items from the collection of the Israel Museum here.

Creative Activity
• Host your very own Mimouna party in your school!
  See if you can find traditional Moroccan clothing and make the traditional mufleta pancakes. Use this traditional music playlist and dance away!
• Design an advertising campaign (posters, social media posts, etc.) to raise awareness about Mimouna or any other little known Jewish festivals.

Primary sources in this lesson
Moroccan Jews Celebrating Mimouna