

## JEWISH PRIDE SEMINAR

The objective of this innovative three part workshop is to provide participants with a greater understanding of why they feel proud about their Jewishness and to inspire them to take one concrete step to translate their feeling of Jewish pride into action.

**Required Equipment/Materials:** Video Machine, Copy of the Jewish Pride Video, Leader's Booklet (you are holding it), Easel with large writing pad or whiteboard or blackboard, color marking pens

**Three Parts:** The three part workshop is based on a trigger film which comes with this seminar pack. The three parts are:

### **Part 1: Renewal**

This theme of this section is "Old and New"-that which is old is still very new and relevant.

### **Highlights of the video: Part 1**

- A. Shabbos observance by the rabbi in the movie The Frisco Kid (set in the 1850's), where he refuses to ride on Shabbos despite being pursued by a Posse- is mirrored by the stand taken in 2001 by Basketball star, Tamir Goodman, who was nationally acclaimed in the secular media for standing by his principles by refusing to play Division 1 Basketball on Sshabbos.
- B. Hatikvah sung on the Hagannah Dhip in 1947 is "updated" by Orthodox rock stars Evon and Jarron (they are among the top 40) playing a rock version of Hatikvah. (Their brother is an Orthodox rabbi in Baltimore)

- C. The Rambam was a philosopher, physician to the Sultan of Egypt and a statesman in the 12<sup>th</sup> century while Senator Joe Lieberman, was chosen to run for Vice President-while maintaining his Orthodox observance.
- D. The Disputation between the Ramban and Pablo Christiani highlights the Jewish view of personal responsibility for one's actions- no one can be your "savior"-you have to do it yourself. Are you willing to take responsibility form your spirituality?
- E. British Telecom ran a series of ads with a famous Jewish British actress playing a Jewish Mother. The ads are shown here. The relevance is this: Is your Jewishness motivated by good old fashioned Jewish Mother's guilt? i.e. it makes my mother happy....or do you have a positive pro-active reason to be involved in Jewish life?

Following the playing of this Part 1 it is suggested that the rabbi/leader should open the discussion section as follows:

1. Let us write on an easel some of your thoughts and impressions about the significance of the World Trade Center attacks. What are the values of America that were "attacked" on 9-11? In other words: What does America stand for-that the terrorists attacked? Allow the participants to state some good old American values and write them on the easel/board: For example:

Freedom of thought, religion, speech  
Justice  
Equality  
Sanctity of Life  
Rule of Law

Equal Opportunity-a person can go from rags to riches-the American dream-based on merit and deeds-and not based on the “old boys” network (protects it-although it does open certain doors).

2. Now we all know that the media has said the 9-11 is the “Day the World Changed Forever”. In what way has the world changed-or has it gone back to “business as usual-with just a bit more security at the airport?
3. In what way has your life changed due to 9-11? What changes have you implemented since 9-11?
4. Read the Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln-See next page

## The Gettysburg Address

On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln rose to dedicate the Soldier's National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania where four months earlier thousands of Northern and Southern Soldiers fell. He told the country that if it could sustain the will to fight the Union would ultimately triumph.

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent anew nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or nay nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives so that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. **It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain,** that this nation, under G-d, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

5. Abraham Lincoln speaks about the people dying in vain unless we, the survivors do something to remember them. Is this true about 9-11? Will their deaths be in vain unless we, the survivors, friends, relatives and community...do something practical and concrete to

change the world and ourselves-as a result of their tragic deaths?

The key point here is that feeling emotional about an event-is meaningless unless you translate that feeling into action. Unless America and Americans do something concrete and proactive to change the community and our lives for the better in the aftermath of 9-11...then the victims will have died in vain.

This is the purpose of history-to learn from it and to improve society. As the Torah states in Dvarim 32:7

*Remember the days of old,  
Understand the years of generation  
after generation.  
Ask your father and he will relate it to  
you,  
Your elders and they will tell you.*

6. Let us write on the board/easel some Jewish values that were touched upon in the video: Particularly the values that make you feel proud to be a Jew:

For example: Tamir Goodman taking a stand for his faith and being lauded and admired for it by the national media. Who was more inspired by his stand: the national media or the Jewish community?

Evan and Jarron-Orthodox Jewish rock stars-who have “made it” ,in the real world-and have maintained their faith and practice.

Senator Joe Lieberman who is respected for his moral stand and has made it to the top of the political ladder-even though he is a practicing Jew.

Main Point: It seems that Judaism is not a bar/restriction to success in the secular world.

7. If we have established that values and feelings like Pride in American values-are meaningless unless acted upon, let us apply that principle to pride in our Jewishness. What are we proud about being Jewish? Write their responses on the easel:

Here are some potential answers: It is strongly recommended that the leader visit [aish.com](http://aish.com) and read the WorldPerfect presentation online in preparing to lead this discussion.

**-Family values**-we have close knit families. And family is the building block of society where a child learns the values that take him through life. Jews burst into freedom from the context of the family sitting together in their homes around the Korban Pesach. The family members had to be pre-designated as to who would join in the feast. That is perhaps why we are so family oriented: everyone in the family is pre-designated as a vital member of the family unit. Our Passover Seder is the ultimate family experience where the traditions of our origins are transmitted to the next generation. The Shabbat table is a weekly recreation of this national birth where the family gathers and reconnects with itself-and cements its relationships. We reinforce this idea in our nursery and kindergarten classes-every week a 3 or 4 year old child is chosen to be the Abba and someone is chosen to be the Imma and

someone to be the yeled or yaldah and we re-enact the Shabbat table experience. We thus begin training our children in the art of cherishing the family experience at the earliest and most impressionable age.

**-Social Justice-**Jews are at the forefront of social causes. The source of this idea is in the Torah: “You shall not see the donkey of your brother or his ox falling on the road and hide yourself from them; you shall surely stand them up with him.” Dvarim 22:4 You shall not pervert the judgment of a convert or orphan and you shall not take the garment of a widow as a pledge. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and Hashem, your G-d redeemed you there; therefore I command you to do this thing. Dvarim 24:17-18

**-Ethical Monotheism-**we brought to the world the idea of one G-d and therefore one standard of moral behavior for all of mankind. Read the introduction to Paul Johnson’s History of the Jews (reproduced on the next page of this guide).

**-Jewish Literacy-**the emphasis on education as a key to self development. The Rambam states in Mishneh Torah: Hilchos Talmud Torah: 2:1  
Appoint teachers for children in every country, province and city. In any city which does not have teachers excommunicate the people until they hire teachers for the children. If they don’t, destroy that city because the world exists only because of the breath of children studying. You know the old joke: Mr And Mrs Jack Horowitz are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Dr Steven Horowitz.



The pursuit of knowledge, not merely for monetary gain, but for its own sake, has long been ingrained in the Jewish psyche.

**-Tradition-**gives us a connection to the past.

8. You can tell the Chofetz Chaim's story of a group of youths who were hiking on a survival course –without a map. They came to a crossroads where the signpost with the direction signs-which had fallen down. They were stuck-and the sun was setting, They didn't know which way to go. After an hour one of the scouts picked up the fallen signpost and said: "I don't know where to go from here, but I do, know the name of the town I just came from" .... And he proceeded to put up the sign post and pointed the sign with the name Jasper-the name of the town they just came from-in the direction of Jasper. And with that they were able to re-orient themselves and knew where to go from there.

Nimshal: If you know where you have come from, then you know where to go. History is crucial in order to learn from our mistakes and to progress.

9. However, we are ambivalent about history: on the one hand we love nostalgia-the fifties, old signs, antiques, the jitterbug, black and white films...it is a yearning for simplicity of the good old days. On the other hand, we discard old computers, old ideas and we retire our senior citizens mandatorily-because they are no longer "useful, cool and with it". We love history but we hate it. Why? We want progress-we ant to get ahead.

10. Conclude by planting the seed in their minds that Jewish values-are part of history-but are still very relevant in modern times.

Family values-in an age of high juvenile delinquency, high divorce rate and lack of self esteem-we need family values to stabilize our lives. Shabbat and Jewish traditions give the family a focus for unity and a rallying point for stability. Literacy was seen in the Middle Ages as the jurisdiction of then Clergy-not the masses. But the Torah says: And you shall teach your children diligently...

Social Justice: From the time that the Israelites crossed the sea into freedom from oppression and slavery-Judaism and Jews have stood at the vanguard of social justice issues. i.e. Marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Alabama

Israel sent boats to pick up the Vietnamese boat people

Israel sent plane loads of food to Russia in the 90's to help the starving during the wheat famine.

**Ethical Monotheism: Quote from Drs. H. Frankfort, John Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen and William Irwin in a 1946 lecture sponsored by the University of Chicago:**

Ancient Israel's greatest achievement, so apparent that mention of it is almost trite, was monotheism. It was an achievement that transformed subsequent history...one may raise the question whether any other single contribution from whatever source since human culture emerged from the stone ages has had the far-reaching effect upon history that Israel, in this regard has exerted, both through the mediums of Christianity and Islam and directly through the world of Jewish thinkers themselves.

**Mark Twain, 1899:**

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.

**British Cardinal Manning:**

The imperishable people, which, with an inextinguishable life and immutable traditions, and faith in G-d and in the laws of G-d, scattered as it is, all over the world, passed through the fires unscathed, trampled into the dust and yet never combining with the dust into which it is trampled, lives still, a witness and a warning to us all.

**Heinrich Heine, 1830**

The Jews can easily take comfort in the fact that they still possess the Torah; although they lost Jerusalem, the Holy Temple, the Ark of the Covenant and the golden vessels of King Solomon's Temple, still the loss of these is insignificant when compared to the Torah-this eternal treasure house of the Jewish spirit, that they have saved.

With the Torah they establish their rights of citizenship wherever they go; from this book they cannot be expelled.

Here they are beyond all the ridicule they have suffered; here, they are strong and powerful.

**Leo Nikolaievitch Tolstoy, 1891**

**What is a Jew?**

The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter, nor torture of thousands of years could destroy, he who neither fire nor sword nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth, he was the first to produce the oracles of G-d, he has for so long been the guardian of prophecy, and who transmitted it to the rest of the world- such a nation cannot be destroyed.

**Professor Nicholas Bardyaev, London 1936**

Scientific criticism applied to traditional Biblical history can neither discredit the universal role played by the Jews nor offer a satisfactory explanation of their mysterious destiny.

There is a great 8 minute video called Nation which is part of the LOVE and LEGACY video seminar which depicts this quote in action graphics...it is very moving and can be shown here. To obtain a copy contact Rabbi Yisroel Roll at [yisroelhillel@aol.com](mailto:yisroelhillel@aol.com)  
Or call 410-585-1138

11. President Bush in his speech about removing Yassir Arafat as the head of the Palestinians, quoted the Torah in Dvarim

I place before you today, life and death, the blessing and the curse....therefore, choose life”.

The values of Judaism are being espoused by the leader of the free world.

In the video, the Ramban, in his famous debate-disputation with a Jewish meshumad/apostate-Pablo Christiani said that Free Will-is the foundation of life. We cannot rely on a savior...we need to save and redeem ourselves....

This is the greatest gift of G-d to the world: the gift of Free Will. We have the option of building or destroying our world. And G-d has empowered us by urging us to:

*Choose Life.*

## **Part 2: Rebirth**

**Highlights of the video:** The video describes the establishment of the State of Israel, the magic of Jerusalem and the Six Day War. Terrorist attacks which sought to undermine Israel are depicted including: Munich Olympics massacre, Entebbe, and the Intifada.

## **Part 3: Redemption**

### **Highlights of the Video:**

The rise and fall of communism is depicted and is contrasted with a brief interview with Leon Trotsky's great grandson- who is an observant Jew living in Israel. Natan Scharansky's walk to freedom in 1986 is followed by Operation Solomon- the airlift bringing Ethiopian Jews to Israel and some Ethiopian students learning at Gush Etzion. Interviews with young couples contemplating intermarriage are contrasted with scenes of those who do stand up for their Jewishness.

The video ends with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and a story of the Jews of Lublin who sang: “We shall outlive them”.

**Discussion:** Following the video ask the following:

1. Tevye the Milkman in Fiddler on the Roof said: “We are the Chosen People-but can’t He choose someone else for a change?”

What have we been chosen for? It appears that we have been chosen for suffering:

Churban Habayis, Persecution during the Middle Ages, Crusades, Spanish Inquisition, Pogroms, Holocaust.

Is there any meaning to this suffering?

Wouldn’t it make sense for Jews to walk away from Judaism after all this suffering?

Example: In Poland today there are many Jews whom refuse to acknowledge their Jewishness saying that if they survived the war-there is no need to remain Jewish. On their deathbeds, many of these old Polish Jews admit to their children that they are Jewish. Therefore there has been a mini resurgence of Jewish life in Poland whereby many middle aged Poles are now re-affirming their Jewishness.

2. Are there any examples from secular world history of a person or a group of people fighting for a cause while knowing that they would be persecuted, hated and even killed?

Ask for examples: ie

- Lech Walesa started Solidarity-the Polish trade union movement in the 1980’s

- Nelson Mandela stood against apartheid in South Africa in the 1960's, was jailed for over 20 years and then became President of South Africa

-Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1959 and sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott and fuelled the Black Civil Rights Movement

-Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in Major League Baseball in 1947

-Chinese Students staged a sit in Tianamen Square in Beijing protesting against Chinese political oppression which led to a massacre of students

-The Greenpeace movement protests against environmental destruction

-Bob Geldoff motivated rock stars in the 1980's to group together and raise millions for starving people in Africa

These people believed passionately in a cause and an ideal and promoted it against conventional wisdom-and changed the world.

3. Lets look at the source of the ideals and values that these people were fighting for:

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Lech Walesa was fighting for employment rights. What is the original source for a demand for employment rights?

Vayikra: 19:13

**You shall not cheat your fellow and you shall not rob; a worker's wage shall not remain with you overnight until morning.**

In Horeb, Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch states that: Any wages for work done must not be withheld by the employer beyond the time for payment, whether it be a day laborer, payment for hired animals or tools or the wages of a craftsman when his task is completed.

The Shulchan Aruch in Choshen Mishpat 339 states: He who withholds a worker's salary is like taking his life".

These laws appear to be the foundation for modern day employment and union rights.

## **RACISM**

The cases highlighted by Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks and Jackie Robinson speak to the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the individual which are Jewish concepts.

The Torah states: **And G-d created Man in His image, in the image of G-d Created He them, male and female He created them.” Breishis 1:27**

This is a declaration that all of mankind has a G-d given dignity which must be respected.

Every man has this gift from G-d. Respect for the sanctity of life is a Divine imperative, not merely a social construct.

It follows from this that all men are equal and must be treated equally before the law as the Torah states:

**Justice, Justice shall you pursue.** Dvarim 16:20

**You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. You shall not favor the poor nor honor the mighty, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.** Vayikra 19:15



Every man is required to be treated fairly and justly notwithstanding race, gender or financial status as a Divine imperative.

Problem (if it arises:) What about slavery in then Torah?  
Isn't oppression? Three answers:

1. Slavery was used for a bankrupt to sell himself to the Court in order to pay of his creditors with the value of his work-it was not indentured slavery for its own sake.
2. Slavery was not forever-it was for six years only
3. The master had to treat the slave fairly and with utmost dignity as the Talmud says: He who acquires a slave acquires for himself a master. The master had to give the slave exactly what he had-if the master had a pillow, the slave had to be given one as well. If the master ate steak, the slave had to be given steal as well.

## **POLITICAL OPPRESSION**

The student protest at Tianamen Square is an example of a grass roots revolt against the tyranny of government.

The king in Judaism was never above the law. He was required to carry a Torah scroll with him wherever he went as the torah states:

And when the king sits on the throne of his kingdom he will write a copy of the Torah and it will be with him and he will read from it all the days of his life. So he will learn to fear his Lord, his G-d, and keep all the words of his Torah and do its statutes.

Dvarim 17:18-19

Furthermore, a king is not permitted to maintain a standing army as the Torah states:

Only he (the King) shall not have too many horses for himself, so that he will not return the people to Egypt in order to increase horses....” Dvarim 17:16

If the country had to go to war the king would mobilize his reserve forces.

This law precludes the king from creating a personal police force or secret police like the NKVD, KGB or CIA which can be used to oppress the people.

Furthermore, when Israel was a sovereign nation following Jewish law in Israel from the time of the First Temple (1000 BCE) until the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE)

There was a system of checks and balances:

Executive Branch: King

Religious Branch: High Priest

Judicial Branch: Sanhedrin

All of these branches were bound by the overriding

Legislative branch: the Torah which provided the framework and constitution for the nation.

The Exodus from Egypt has been seen as a Universal symbol of freedom from oppression. Thomas Jefferson wanted to use the Exodus as a motif for the Constitution. The Blacks wanted to use it as a symbol for their quest for civil rights. The symbol of Moses leading the Israelites to freedom has been a symbol, the world over, of man's quest for freedom for tyranny.

**ENVIRONMENTALISM**

The Greenpeace movement has as its goal the protection of the environment.

The obligation to preserve the earth was established by G-d in the Garden of Eden:

**G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it.**

This is the Divine requirement not to pollute, or destroy the environment.

Even the law of Shabbat observance-of leaving the world in its original state once per week can be seen as a law of environmental protection whereby man is not permitted unlimited rights to cultivate and draw from the bounty of the land. So too the law of Shmitta can be seen as a requirement to leave the land in its original state once in seven years to allow it to replenish its nutrients (of course the main point of Shmitta is to show that it is Hashem's land, not ours, but the environmental aspect is a byproduct of the law).

## **CHARITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Bob Geldoff attempted to bring together the talents of rock stars to raise consciousness and money for the starving in Africa.

The Torah states: **Do not stand by your neighbor's blood** Vayikra 19:16

This is a G-d given commandment to be proactive when it comes to social justice. It is a crime to be passive, which is unique amongst legal systems as the Torah states:

**Love your neighbor as yourself** Vayikra 19:18

The most oft repeated verse in the Torah is Ahavtem es Hager:Love the Stranger. While it is natural for the

dominant culture and dominant people to be wary and to mistrust strangers in their midst, the Torah speaks out against that inclination by demanding that the nation accept and in fact love the stranger and treat him as an equal.

Jewish law mandates how much charity a person must give (based on the tithe system in the Torah) by requiring portions of one's field (livelihood) must be given to the poor.

The concept of Tikun Olam-fixing up our portion of the world-is the Torah's way of requiring us to focus on our obligations as opposed to our rights. Modern democracies are rights based whereas Judaism is an obligations based society. The word mitzvah does not mean good deed. It means: obligation.

4. Modern people who fought for freedom and justice against conventional wisdom –and succeeded-have the Torah as their guide, precedent and inspiration. The Torah creates a framework for the protection of the rights of the “underdog”,- the slave, the widow, the orphan, the stranger- it is a system which protects those with less power and who could be victimized as a result.

5. Does history make the man or does the man make history? In Jewish History there have been great leaders who have changed Jewish history. For example:

**Don Isaac Abarbanel:** A Talmudic scholar, he rose to the position of Finance Minister in the Court of King Ferdinand and Isabella in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in Spain. He helped finance their wars against the Moslems. He was an international diplomat and financial genius and negotiated treaties between European powers. He offered Ferdinand

and Isabella the sum of 30,000 golden ducats to annul the order expelling the Jews from Spain. In 1492 when the Jews were expelled from Spain, the King gave Don Isaac a dispensation from the expulsion order. He chose to leave Spain with his brothers and led them as they walked en masse across the Spanish border. He arrived in Italy and worked there for the King of Naples.

**Rabbi Joseph Joselman Loanz of Rosheim** used his influence to intercede with government authorities to prevent hostile action against legislation against Jewish community. From 1524-1526 he saved German Jewish communities from being destroyed during the Peasant Wars by bribing the battling peasants. He delayed the expulsion of the Jews from Saxony, and was a victor in a religious debate held before German Protestant princes in Frankfurt. In 1544 he obtained a guarantee from Charles V against false charges of ritual murder. In 1546 he obtained a decree from Charles V that his soldiers would receive the death penalty for molesting Jews.

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**Donna Gracia Nasi**, known as the Grand Widow of Constantinople, used her power and influence to allow Marranos to escape the Inquisition, and financed their building new lives in different countries. Together with her powerful nephew, a Marrano Don Joseph Nasi she supported Jewish schools and Talmudic scholars and financed the publishing of the Shulchan Aruch by founding a Hebrew printing press. She ransomed many Jews who had been captured by pirates.

**Menashe ben Israel**: Born a Marrano in Portugal he escaped the Inquisition and moved to Amsterdam where he could return to the public practice of Judaism. He became a rabbi, established the first Hebrew printing press in

Amsterdam and wrote scholarly works on philosophy, faith and mysticism. In 1655 he convinced Oliver Cromwell to allow the Jews to return to England, having been expelled from England in 1290. He convinced Cromwell that it was important for the Christian religion that Jews be allowed to return to England. With permission granted for Jewish settlement, twenty Marrano families openly declared their Judaism and with a Sefer Torah sent from Amsterdam opened a synagogue on Creechurch Lane in London.

6. The real hero of Jewish history is the ordinary individual who rises to the occasion and makes a difference in the lives of his community. During the fateful terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 the members of Hatzala-a Jewish medical response organization in New York were the first to arrive on the scene. They helped people escape from the building and treated hundreds of injured survivors. 300 Hatzala medics arrived at the scene minutes after 9 AM on 9-11. All survived.

There is famous story of the Angel of 9-11, named Abe-an Orthodox Jew who stayed with a quadriplegic co-worker because he could not leave under his own steam. He stayed with him on the 27<sup>th</sup> floor when he could have saved himself. Both Abe and his non Jewish quadriplegic friend perished. This is the story of Jewish history-an individual who stands for the principles and values of his faith-and puts his life on the line for those values.

