

Do Ideas Matter?



Timely Torah, January 15th 2023

Letters Flying Free

1. TB, Avoda Zara 18a

תנו רבנן כשחלה רבי יוסי בן קיסמא הלך רבי חנינא בן תרדיון לבקרו אמר לו חנינא אחי (אחי) אי אתה יודע שאומה זו מן השמים המליכה שהחריבה את ביתו ושרפה את היכלו והרגה את חסידיו ואבדה את טוביו ועדיין היא קיימת ואני שמעתי עליך שאתה יושב ועוסק בתורה [ומקהיל קהלות ברבים] וספר מונח לך בחיקך

§ **The Sages taught:** When Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma fell ill, Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon went to visit him. Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma said to him: Ḥanina my brother, do you not know that this nation has been given reign by a decree from Heaven? The proof is that Rome has destroyed God's Temple, and burned His Sanctuary, and killed His pious ones, and destroyed His best ones, and it still exists. Evidently, all of this is by Divine decree. And yet I heard about you that you sit and engage in Torah study, and convene assemblies in public, and have a Torah scroll placed in your lap, thereby demonstrating complete disregard for the decrees issued by the Romans.

אמר לו מן השמים ירחמו אמר לו אני אומר לך דברים של מעם ואתה אומר לי מן השמים ירחמו תמה אני אם לא ישרפו אותך ואת ספר תורה באש אמר לו רבי מה אני לחיי העולם הבא

Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon said to him: Heaven will have mercy and protect me. Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma said to him: I am saying reasonable matters to you, and you say to me: Heaven will have mercy? I wonder if the Romans will not burn both you and your Torah scroll by fire. Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon said to him: My teacher, what will become of me? Am I destined for life in the World-to-Come?

אמר לו כלום מעשה בא לידך אמר לו מעות של פורים נתחלפו לי במעות של צדקה וחלקתים לעניים אמר לו אם
כן מחלקך יהי חלקי ומגורלך יהי גורלי

Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma **said to him: Did any special incident occur to you** which might serve as an indication? Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon **said to him: I confused** my own **coins** that I needed **for** the festivities of **Purim with coins of charity, and I distributed them all to the poor** at my own expense. Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma **said to him: If that is so, may my portion be of your portion, and may my lot be of your lot.**

אמרו לא היו ימים מועטים עד שנפטר רבי יוסי בן קיסמא והלכו כל גדולי רומי לקברו והספידוהו הספר גדול
ובחזרתו מצאוהו לרבי חנינא בן תרדיון שהיה יושב ועוסק בתורה ומקהיל קהלות ברבים וס"ת מונח לו בחיקו

The Sages **said: Not even a few days passed before Rabbi Yosei ben Kisma died** of his illness, **and all of the Roman notables went to bury him, and they eulogized him with a great eulogy. And upon their return, they found Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon, who was sitting and engaging in Torah study and convening assemblies in public, with a Torah scroll placed in his lap.**

הביאוהו וכרכוהו בס"ת והקיפוהו בחבילי זמורות והציתו בהן את האור והביאו ספוגין של צמר ושראום במים
והניחום על לבו כדי שלא תצא נשמתו מהרה אמרה לו בתו אבא אראך בכך אמר לה אילמלי אני נשרפתי לבדי
היה הרבר קשה לי עכשיו שאני נשרף וס"ת עמי מי שמבקש עלבונה של ס"ת הוא יבקש עלבוני

They brought him to be sentenced, and wrapped him in the Torah scroll, and encircled him with bundles of branches, and they set fire to it. And they brought tufts of wool and soaked them in water, and placed them on his heart, so that his soul should not leave his body quickly, but he would die slowly and painfully. His daughter said to him: Father, must I see you like this? Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon said to her: If I alone were being burned, it would be difficult for me, but now that I am burning along with a Torah scroll, He who will seek retribution for the insult accorded to the Torah scroll will also seek retribution for the insult accorded to me.

אמרו לו תלמידיו רבי מה אתה רואה אמר להן גליון נשרפין ואותיות פורחות אף אתה פתח פיך ותכנס בך האש
אמר להן מוטב שיטלנה מי שנתנה ואל יחבל הוא בעצמו

His students said to him: Our teacher, what do you see? Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon said to them: I see the parchment burning, but its letters are flying to the heavens. They said to him: You too should open your mouth and the fire will enter you, and you will die quickly. Rabbi Ḥanina ben Teradyon said to them: It is preferable that He who gave me my soul should take it away, and one should not harm oneself to speed his death.

Reformation and Luther

2. Martin Luther and the 95 Theses, OCT 29, 2009

He wrote the “Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences,” also known as “The 95 Theses,” a list of questions and propositions for debate. Popular legend has it that on October 31, 1517 Luther defiantly nailed a copy of his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church.

Martin Luther is one of the most influential figures in Western history. His writings were responsible for fractionalizing the Catholic Church and sparking the Protestant Reformation. His central teachings, that the Bible is the central source of religious authority and that salvation is reached through faith and not deeds, shaped the core of Protestantism.



Mein Kampf



3. Livescience, How 'Mein Kampf' Changed the World, By Heather Whipps, published September 01, 2008¹

Aside from the Bible, few books over time have stirred up such controversy as one composed from the cell of a German prison.

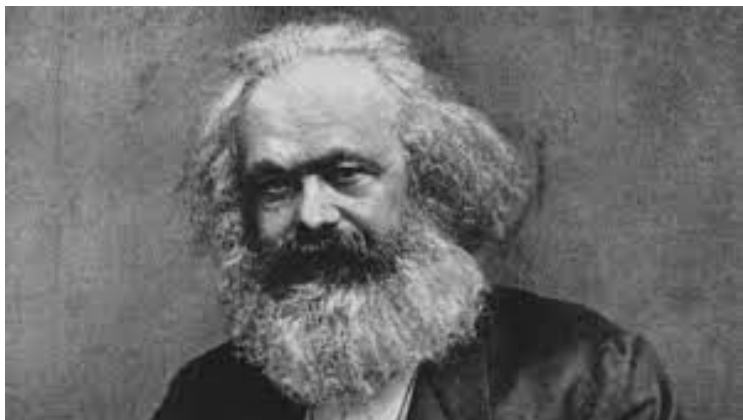
It is a poorly-written mess, according to literary critics, but the ideas contained within Adolf Hitler's 1925 tome "Mein Kampf" (or My Struggle) sadly would resonate well beyond the book's quality of prose.

Mein Kampf was the manifesto from which all of Hitler's atrocities stemmed, a tinderbox of a book that may have disappeared from the annals of history had the author not actually gone on to carry out the ideas presented in his tirade against all things non-German.

¹ <https://www.livescience.com/2821-mein-kampf-changed-world.html>

Karl Marx

4. BBC News, What is Marx's Das Kapital?, By Brian Wheeler, 7 May 2017



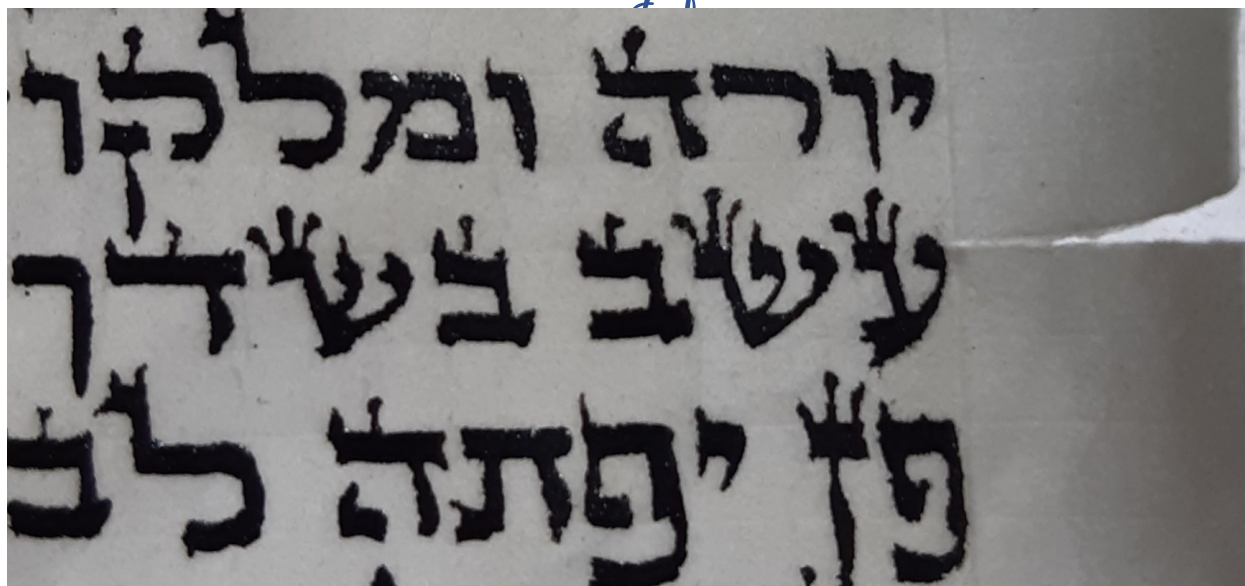
Marx published the first volume of Das Kapital in 1867, by which time he had settled in London with his family, and was being financially supported by Friedrich Engels, the rich son of a cotton mill owner.

He continued to refine the ideas set out in the first volume for the rest of his life, although the next two volumes would not appear in print until after his death.

The ideas contained in Das Kapital would go on to inspire revolutions in Russia, China and many other

countries around the world in the 20th Century, as ruling elites were overthrown and private property seized on behalf of the workers.

The Theory of Ideas



5. TB Menachos 29a

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב לא נצרכה אלא לקוצה של יוד והא נמי פשיטא אלא לכאידך דרב יהודה אמר רב דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב כל אות שאין גויל מוקף לה מארבע רוחותיה פסולה **Rav Yehuda** says that **Rav** says: It was necessary to state that **only** to teach that even the absence of **the thorn**, i.e., the small stroke, of a letter **yod** prevents fulfillment of the mitzva. The Gemara asks: **But** isn't **this also obvious**, since the letter is not formed properly? **Rather**, it is necessary according to another statement that **Rav Yehuda** says that **Rav** says, as **Rav Yehuda** says that **Rav** says: Any letter that is not **encircled with blank parchment on all four of its sides**, i.e., where its ink connects to

the letter above it, below it, preceding it, or succeeding it, is **unfit**. When the mishna makes reference to one letter preventing fulfillment of the mitzva, it is referring to a letter that touches an adjacent letter.

Shulchan Aruch OC 32:31

צריך להניח חלק למעלה כדי גגה של למ"ד]: הגה שיהיו גם הם מוקפים גויל] [תשובת מהרי"ל סי' קל"ד וב"ש [ולמטה כשיעור כ"ף ונו"ן פשוטה ובתחילתן וסופן אין צריך להניח כלל: הגה מיהו נהגו הסופרים להניח קצת בתחלה וסוף [אגור רוקח] וצריך להניח בין כל תיבה ותיבה כמלא אות וכן בין השיטים כמלא שיטה ובין כל אות כמלא חוט השערה כמו בספר תורה וכמו שיתבאר בטור י"ד גם צריך להניח מעט חלק בין פסוק לפסוק:

6. Shulchan Aruch OC 690:9

היתה כתובה תרגום או בלשון אחרת מלשוננו העכו"ם לא יצא ידי חובתו בקריאתה אלא המכיר אותו הלשון בלבד אבל אם היתה כתובה עברי וקראה ארמי לארמי לא יצא שנמצא זה קורא ע"פ וכיון שלא יצא הקורא ידי חובתו לא יצא השומע ממנו: הגה אבל אין לחוש באיזה כתב כתובה [ב"י]:

7. Kaf Hachaim, ad loc.

(דנ) שם הגה. אבל אין לחוש באיזה כתב כתובה. ומגילה הכתובה בכתב האומות אין מדקדקין בה שיהיו האותיות מוקפות גויל שלא הצריכו זה אלא בכתב הקודש. הריטב"א. מ"ב בב"ה:

8. Likkutei Torah, Shir Hashirim 36

כי ענין לימוד התורה אף שכבר יודע ההלכה מצוה לעסוק בה כדי להמשיך אור א"ס ב"ה שיהיה גילוי אור א"ס למטה ולא יהיה הלבוש מסתיר כלל (ועמ"ש סד"ה כי תשמע בקול) וגילוי זה הוא וימינו תחבקני כאדם החובק את חברו ואינו מניחו ליפרד כו' ועמ"ש מענין וימינו תחבקני בד"ה ביום השמע"צ ונקרא כחותם על לבך מרצועות דתליין על ליבא כי הנה התפילין הם אותיות הכתובים על הקלף וצריך להיות מוקף גויל מד' רוחותיו כי האותיות הם בחי' העלאת הנפש בהשגתה. אבל הקלף הוא למעלה מן האותיות כי הוא הנושא וסובל את האותיות והנה קלף זה הוא העור שממנו הרצועות הכל הוא רק בי' עור בהמה טהורה והרצועות הנמשכות מן הקלף הנה הם תליין על ליבא להיות גילוי האהבה בלב להיות וימינו תחבקני.

The Evolution of Prayer

9. Mishna Torah, Hilchos Tefillah 1:1-4

מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה לְהַתְפַּלֵּל בְּכָל יוֹם שְׁנַאמַר (שְׁמוֹת כג כה) (וְעַבְדְּתֶם אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם). מִפִּי הַשְּׁמוּעָה לְמִדּוֹ שְׁעִבּוּדָה זֶה הִיא תְּפִלָּה שְׁנַאמַר (דְּבָרִים יא יג) (וְלִעְבְּדוֹ בְּכָל לְבַבְכֶם) אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים אִי זֶה הִיא עֲבֹדָה שְׁפֵלָה זֶה תְּפִלָּה. וְאִין מְנַיֵן תְּפִלּוֹת מִן הַתּוֹרָה. וְאִין מְשַׁנֵּה תְּפִלָּה הַזֹּאת מִן הַתּוֹרָה. וְאִין לְתְּפִלָּה זְמַן קָבֹועַ מִן הַתּוֹרָה :

It is a positive Torah commandment to pray every day, as [Exodus 23:25] states: "You shall serve God, your Lord." Tradition teaches us that this service is prayer, as [Deuteronomy 11:13] states: "And serve Him with all your heart" and our Sages said: Which is the service of the heart? This is prayer.

The number of prayers is not prescribed in the Torah, nor does it prescribe a specific formula for prayer. Also, according to Torah law, there are no fixed times for prayers.

אם היה רגיל מרבה בתהנה ובקשה ואם היה ערל שפתים מדבר כפי יכלתו ובכל עת שירצה. וכן מנין התפלות כל אחד כפי יכלתו. יש מתפלל פעם אחת ביום. ויש מתפללין פעמים הרבה. והכל יהיו מתפללין נכח המקדש בכל מקום שיהיה. וכן היה הדבר תמיד ממשה רבנו ועד עזרא :

A person who was eloquent would offer many prayers and requests. [Conversely,] a person who was inarticulate would speak as well as he could and whenever he desired. Similarly, the number of prayers was dependent on each person's ability. Some would pray once daily; others, several times. Everyone would pray facing the Holy Temple, wherever he might be. This was the ongoing practice from [the time of] Moshe Rabbenu until Ezra.

בין שגלו ישראל בימי נבוכדנצר הרשע נתערבו בפרס ויוון ושאר האמות ונולדו להם בנים פארצות הגוים ואותן הבנים נתבלבלו שפתם והיתה שפת כל אחד ואחד מערבת מלשונות הרבה ובין שיהיה מדבר אינו יכול לדבר כל צרכו בלשון אחת אלא בשבוש שונאמר (נחמיה יג כד) ("ובניהם הצי מדבר אשדודית" וגו' (נחמיה יג כד) ("ואינם מכירים לדבר יהודית ובלשון עם ועם"). ומפני זה כשהיה אחד מהן מתפלל תקצר לשונו לשאל הפציו או להגיד שבח הקדוש ברוך הוא בלשון הקדש עד שיערכו עמה לשונות אחרות. ובין שראה עזרא ובית דינו כך עמדו ותקנו להם שמונה עשרה ברכות על הסדר. שלש ראשונות שבה לה' ושלש אחרונות הודיה. ואמצעיות יש בהן שאלת כל הדברים שהן כמו אבות לכל הפציו איש ואיש ולצרכי הצבור כלן, כדי שיהיו ערוכות כפי הכל וילמדו אותן ותהיה תפלת אלו העלגים תפלה שלמה בתפלת בעלי הלשון הצחה. ומפני ענין זה תקנו כל הברכות והתפלות מסדרות כפי כל ישראל כדי שיהא ענין כל ברכה ערוך כפי העלג :

When Israel was exiled in the time of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, they became interspersed in Persia and Greece and other nations. Children were born to them in these foreign countries and those children's language was confused.

The speech of each and every one was a concoction of many tongues. No one was able to express himself coherently in any one language, but rather in a mixture [of languages], as [Nehemiah 13:24] states: "And their children spoke half in Ashdodit and did not know how to speak the Jewish language. Rather, [they would speak] according to the language of various other peoples."

Consequently, when someone would pray, he would be limited in his ability to request his needs or to praise the Holy One, blessed be He, in Hebrew, unless other languages were mixed in with it. When Ezra and his court saw this, they established eighteen blessings in sequence.

The first three [blessings] are praises of God and the last three are thanksgiving. The intermediate [blessings] contain requests for all those things that serve as general categories for the desires of each and every person and the needs of the whole community.

Thus, the prayers could be set in the mouths of everyone. They could learn them quickly and the prayers of those unable to express themselves would be as complete as the prayers of the most eloquent. It was because of this matter that they established all the blessings and prayers so that they would be ordered in the mouths of all Israel, so that each blessing would be set in the mouth of each person unable to express himself.



10. The Sages Vol. 1, Rabbi Binyamin Lau, p. 10-11

The enactment of prayers and blessings

The renewal of life in the land of Israel spurred the leadership to actualize the teachings of the prophets as part of the religious reform. This required the enactment of edicts, decrees, and customs. The most well-known of these dealt with the institutionalization of religious life:

The Men of the Great Assembly enacted blessings and prayers, sanctifications and *Havdalot*, for Israel. (*Berakhot* 33a)

This sentence from the Talmud embodies a wealth of material concerning the activities of the Men of the Great Assembly. The single phrase “blessings and prayers” encompasses almost the entirety of our religious world. Can a person be religious without reciting blessings and prayers? Our daily routine is almost inconceivable in their absence, since one’s entire daily connection to God is summed up in these two words, “blessings” and “prayers.” Without a blessing or a prayer we have no stable meeting point with God, and are left only with spontaneous overtures at times of grace, of joy or, heaven forbid, of crisis. The Men of the Great Assembly understood that the life of simple people far from the Temple – a rural farmer perhaps – had no spiritual dimension or possibility of touching the holy. They saw that only by formalizing the relationship between the individual and his Creator would all people have access to their inner spiritual lives. Prayer and blessings introduced a framework of basic religious consciousness into the religious world of the layman. This was a revolution that called upon every Jew to participate actively in the service of God, rather than simply to rely on the knowledge that sacrifices were being offered in the Temple on his behalf.

Education

11. Devarim 6:7

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיכֶם וְדַבַּרְתֶּם בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּכֶם בְּבֵיתְכֶם וּבְלִקְחֵיכֶם בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְּכֶם וּבְקוּמְכֶם:

Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.

Moshe's Speech of Freedom

12. Shmos 12:26-27

וְהָיָה כִּי־יִאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מָה הָעִבְדָּה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם:

And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?'

וְאָמַרְתֶּם זָבַח־פֶּסַח הוּא לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר פָּסַח עַל־בְּתֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנִגְפוֹ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־בְּתֵינֻוּ הִצִּיל וַיִּקַּד הָעָם בְּיִשְׁתַּחֲוֹוֹ:

you shall say, 'It is the passover sacrifice to יהוה, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when smiting the Egyptians, but saved our houses.' Those assembled then bowed low in homage.

13. Shmos 13:8

וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם:

And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what [יהוה](#) did for me when I went free from Egypt.'

14. Shmos 13:14

וְהָיָה כִּי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךְ בְּנֶגַע מָחַר לֵאמֹר מַה־זֹּאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:

And when, in time to come, a child of yours asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?' you shall reply, 'It was with a mighty hand that [יהוה](#) brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage.

15. The Far Horizon, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, BO • 5774, 5781

It is one of the most counter-intuitive acts in the history of leadership. Moses did not speak about today or tomorrow. He spoke about the distant future and the duty of parents to educate their children. He even hinted – as Jewish tradition understood – that we should encourage our children to ask questions, so that the handing on of the Jewish heritage would be not a matter of rote learning but of active dialogue between parents and children.

... Judaism became the religion whose heroes were teachers and whose passion was study and the life of the mind. The Mesopotamians built ziggurats. The Egyptians built pyramids. The Greeks built the Parthenon. The Romans built the Coliseum. Jews built schools. That is why they alone, of all the civilisations of the ancient world are still alive and strong, still continuing their ancestors' vocation, their heritage intact and undiminished.



16. Talmud Bavli, Kesubos 62b

כי הא דרב רחומי הוה שכיח קמיה דרבא במחוזא, הוה רגיל דהוה אתי לביתיה כל מעלי יומא דכיפורי. יומא חד משכתיא שמעתא, הוה מסכיא דביתהו השתא אתי השתא אתי, לא אתא, חלש דעתה אחית דמעטא מעינה, הוה יתיב באיגרא, אפחית איגרא מתותיה ונח נפשיה.

This is as it is related about Rav Reḥumi, who would commonly study before Rava in Meḥoza: He was accustomed to come back to his home every year on the eve of Yom Kippur. One day he was particularly engrossed in the halakha he was studying, and so he remained in the study hall and did not go home. His wife was expecting him that day and continually said to herself: Now he is coming, now he is coming. But in the end, he did not come. She was distressed by this and a tear fell from her eye. At that exact moment, Rav Reḥumi was sitting on the roof. The roof collapsed under him and he died.

17. Talmud Bavli, Bava Basra 21a

ברם זכור אותו האיש לטוב ויהושע בן גמלא שמו, שאלמלא הוא נשתכח תורה מישראל; שבתחלה, מי שיש לו אב - מלמדו תורה, מי שאין לו אב - לא היה למד תורה התקינו שיהו מושיבין מלמדי תינוקות בירושלים.....; ועדיין מי שיש לו אב - היה מעלו ומלמדו, מי שאין לו אב - לא היה עולה ולמד, התקינו שיהו מושיבין בכל פלך ופלך; ומכניסין אותן כבן ט"ז כבן י"ז, ומי שהיה רבו כועס עליו - מבעיט בו ויצא, עד שבא יהושע בן גמלא ותיקן, שיהו מושיבין מלמדי תינוקות בכל מדינה ומדינה ובכל עיר ועיר, ומכניסין אותן כבן שש כבן שבע

Verily the name of that man is to be blessed, to wit Joshua ben Gamala, for but for him the Torah would have been forgotten from Israel. For at first if a child had a father, his father taught him, and if he had no father he did not learn at all.They then made an ordinance that teachers of children should be appointed in Jerusalem.Even so, however, if a child had a father, the father would take him up to Jerusalem and have him taught there, and if not, he would not go up to learn there. They therefore ordained that teachers should be appointed In each prefecture, and that boys should enter school at the age of sixteen or seventeen. [They did so] and if the teacher punished them they used to rebel and leave the school. At length Joshua b. Gamala came and ordained that teachers of young children should be appointed in each district and each town and that children should enter school at the age of six or seven.

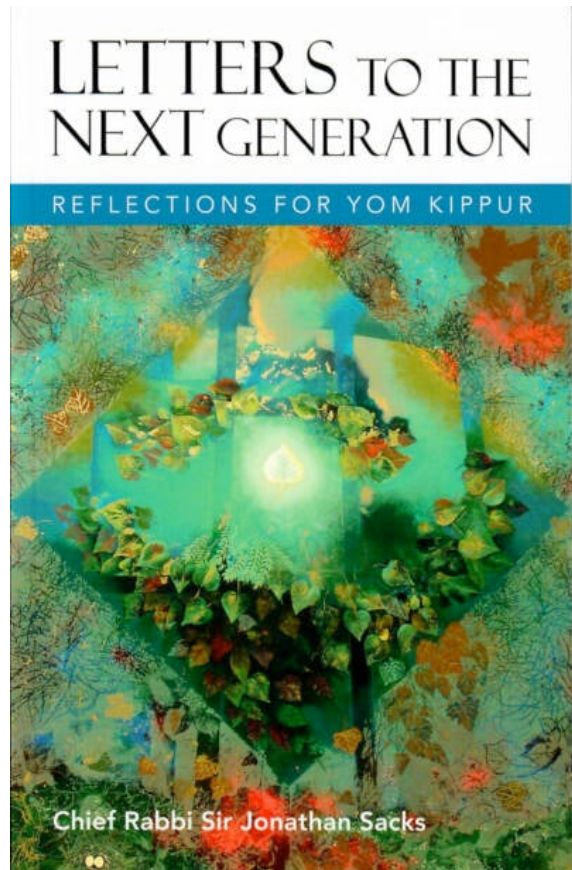
18. Letters to the Next Generation, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

But they are more than that. For Jews, education is not just what we know. It's *who we are*. No people ever cared for education more. Our ancestors were the first to make education a religious command, and the first to create a compulsory universal system of schooling – eighteen centuries before Britain. The rabbis valued study as higher even than prayer. Almost 2,000 years ago, Josephus wrote: “Should anyone of our nation be asked about our laws, he will repeat them as readily as his own name. The result of our thorough education in our laws from the very dawn of intelligence is that they are, as it were, engraved on our souls.”

The Egyptians built pyramids, the Greeks built temples, the Romans built amphitheatres. Jews built schools. They knew that to defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilisation you need education. So Jews became the

people whose heroes were teachers, whose citadels were schools, and whose passion was study and the life of the mind. How can we deprive our children of that heritage?

Can you really be educated without knowing Shakespeare or Mozart or Michelangelo or the basic principles of physics, economics or politics? Can you be an educated Jew without at least a basic familiarity with Tanakh and Talmud, the classic Torah commentaries, the poetry of Judah Halevi, the philosophy of Maimonides, and the history of the Jewish people? Jews in Eastern Europe used to say, “To be an *apikores* (heretic) is understandable, but to be an *am ha'aretz* (ignoramus) is unforgivable”.



Did the Jews fight back?

19. THE BIELSKI PARTISANS²

After the Germans killed their parents and two brothers in the Nowogrodek ghetto in December 1941, three surviving brothers of the Bielski family—[Tuvia](#) (1906–1987), [Asael](#) (1908–1945), and [Zus](#) (1910–1995)—established a partisan group. Initially, the Bielski brothers attempted only to save their own lives and those of their family members. They fled to the nearby Żabiedovo and Perelaz forests, where they formed the nucleus of a



² <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-bielski-partisans>

partisan detachment consisting at first of about 30 family members and friends.

The family members chose former Zionist activist Tuvia Bielski, a Polish Army veteran and a charismatic leader, to command the group. His brother Asael became his deputy, while Zus was placed in charge of reconnaissance. A fourth and much younger brother, Aharon (1927-) was part of the group as well.

The Bielskis had been a Jewish farming family in the nearby village of Stankiewicze, and the brothers knew the region well. Their familiarity with its geography, customs, and people helped them elude the German authorities and their Belorussian auxiliaries. With the help of non-Jewish Belorussian friends, they were able to acquire guns. The Bielski partisans later supplemented these arms with captured German weapons, Soviet weapons, and equipment supplied by Soviet partisans.

Mission and Growth of the Bielski Group

Tuvia Bielski saw his principal mission as saving the lives of his fellow Jews. The Bielskis encouraged Jews in nearby Lida, Nowogrodek, Minsk, Iwie, Mir, Baranowicze, and other ghettos to escape and join them in the forest. Bielski frequently sent guides into the ghettos to escort people to the forest. In late 1942, a special mission saved over a hundred Jews from the Iwie ghetto just as the Germans planned to liquidate it. Bielski scouts constantly searched the roads for Jewish escapees in need of protection. Many Jews hiding in the forests in smaller family groups joined the Bielski group. Jewish partisans serving in Soviet partisan organizations also fell in with the Bielskis in an attempt to escape antisemitism in their units. The stream of Jewish survivors increased the size of the Bielski group to more than 300 people by the end of 1942.

Moving to the Naliboki Forest

Until the summer of 1943, the group led a nomadic existence in the forest. In August 1943, however, the Germans began a massive manhunt directed against Russian, Polish, and Jewish partisans in the region. They deployed more than 20,000 military personnel and SS and police officials. Moreover, they offered a reward of 100,000 Reichmarks for information leading to Tuvia Bielski's capture. The Bielski group, which had increased to approximately 700 Jews, was especially vulnerable to discovery by the German patrols. The group feared in part that the local peasants from whom they obtained food might betray them. As a result, the Bielski group moved in December 1943 to what became a permanent base in the Naliboki Forest, a swampy, scarcely accessible region on the right bank of the Niemen River, east of Lida and northeast of Nowogrodek.





22. Israel's Army's Code of Conduct

IDF soldiers will not use their weapons and force to harm human beings who are not combatants or prisoners of war, and will do all in their power to avoid causing harm to their lives, bodies, dignity and property.

23. Ethics of the Israel Defense Forces, Stand with Us³

Today, militaries are supposed to be constrained by the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) or International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which exist in large part to protect civilians during times of war. IHL requires armed forces to act only to achieve legitimate military objectives, to distinguish between civilians and combatants, and to avoid causing disproportionate damage to civilians who may be near a legitimate military target.

Despite often being forced to engage in urban warfare against terrorist groups that hide behind civilians and fire rockets from densely populated areas, the IDF has met and often exceeded the highest standards of LOAC/IHL. [Merriam, John J. and Schmitt, Michael N., Israeli Targeting: A Legal Appraisal (April 20, 2015). 68:4 Naval War College Review 15-33 (Autumn 2015). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2596836>] When it suspects civilians are near a military target, the IDF warns them to evacuate with phone calls, text messages, leaflets, and other means. It also aborts many operations to avoid harming innocent people. Indeed, the IDF's tactics often go beyond what is required by the Geneva Conventions. ["Treaties, States Parties and Commentaries." Additional Protocol (I) to the Geneva Conventions, 1977 - 51 - Protection of the civilian population. January 8, 1977. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/470-750065>]

In a 2015 report about the IDF, military leaders from other liberal democracies, "expressed strong concerns that the actions and practices of the IDF to prevent collateral damage were so extensive... that they would curtail the effectiveness of our own militaries, were they to become constraining norms of warfare enacted in... law." [High Level Military Group, AN ASSESSMENT OF THE 2014 GAZA CONFLICT, Friends of Israel Initiative. October 2015. Pg. 72. <http://www.high-level-military-group.org/pdf/hlmg-assessment-2014-gaza-conflict.pdf>]

³ <https://www.standwithus.com/factsheets-idf-ethics>