

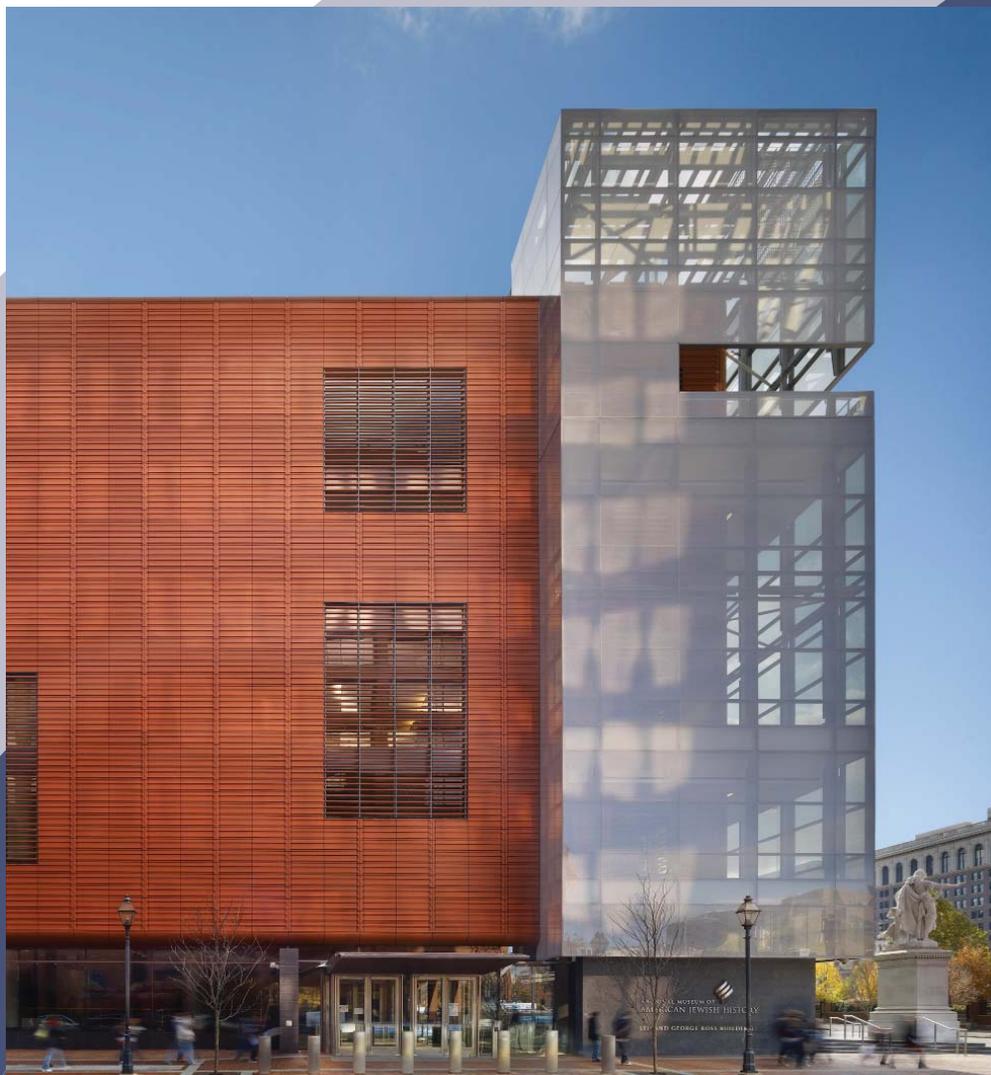
Sacred Stories

A Living Commentary on American Jewish History and the Hebrew Bible

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Find Yourself in Every Generation

By Rabbi Brad Hirschfield



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Sacred Stories **PASSOVER**

What does it mean to be free? There are as many good answers as there are people who choose to answer the question, and none is more important than yours. As you enter the National Museum of American Jewish History you have the opportunity to answer that question for yourself while being inspired by two of the greatest freedom stories ever told.

What does it mean to build a nation which puts freedom and human dignity at the center of everything it does? That is the fundamental question which animated both the founding of this nation and of the Jewish people, and you need not be Jewish or even American, to appreciate the answers, especially as they have come together in the unfolding of American Jewish History. It's a story that belongs to all people who enter this institution, not to mention that the idea that the story belongs to all of us, is as old as the exodus from Egypt recorded in the Hebrew Bible.

We all want to feel liberated to be the people we are meant to be – to see our dreams become reality. . . .

Each year, in a thousands year old tradition, as family and friends gather at the table to celebrate Passover and the first steps taken into freedom by those leaving bondage, people are invited to see themselves as if that journey is their own—that they themselves are slaves leaving Egypt. But is that possible? Can we really see ourselves as “those people”? We can when we realize that “they” are us.

We all want to be free, and we all have tight spots—the literal

translation of the Hebrew word for Egypt—from which we want to escape. We all want to feel liberated to be the people we are meant to be—to see our dreams become reality, and our greatest aspirations for ourselves, our families, our nation and the world fulfilled.



As you wander these halls, see the ongoing story of making dreams come true, behold the daring of leaders who led the way, the bravery of those who persevered in the face of the challenges that inevitably arose, and the beauty of everyday people as they lived their lives in pursuit of freedom, dignity, success and happiness. They are us—wherever we are from, whatever our faith, ethnicity, or pretty much anything else. They are you.

Find yourself in the National Museum of American Jewish History.

Rabbi Brad Hirschfeld, President of CLAL, has been ranked several years in a row in Newsweek as one of America's "50 Most Influential Rabbis," and recognized as one of our nation's top "Preachers & Teachers," by Beliefnet.com.



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About this partnership:

Both the Jewish People and the United States of America are rooted in a quest for greater freedom and human dignity. Inspired by this parallelism, the National Museum of American Jewish History is collaborating with Clal—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership and its Rabbis Without Borders program to launch a new initiative, **Sacred Stories: A Living Commentary on the Hebrew Bible and American Jewish History**.

Sacred Stories weaves together Judaism's foundational sacred text, the Torah, with one of the most successful expression of freedom in human history, the story of Jewish life in America. **Sacred Stories** explores our shared values by linking these two vital and compelling stories through contemporary commentary and 21st century media.

The *Torah* is a central feature of Jewish tradition. Used to refer generally to Jewish wisdom, it also refers specifically to the 5 Books of Moses which makes up the Hebrew Bible. A portion of the Torah text, a *Parsha*, is read on *Shabbat* (Sabbath). The whole Torah is read sequentially over the course of the year. Shabbat is the Jewish day of rest and begins on Friday evenings and ends Saturday night. Many Jews observe Shabbat to emulate God's resting on the seventh day of Creation. The fourth commandment is to keep Shabbat holy which Jews do with festive meals, resting, and learning.



The National Museum of American Jewish History, on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, presents educational programs and experiences that preserve, explore and celebrate the history of Jews in America. Its purpose is to connect Jews more closely to their heritage and to inspire in people of all backgrounds a greater appreciation for the diversity of the American Jewish experience and the freedoms to which Americans aspire.



Clal—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership is a think tank, leadership training institute, and resource center. Bringing Jewish insights to a wide American audience, Clal makes Jewish wisdom an accessible public resource. A leader in religious pluralism, Clal builds bridges across communities to encourage diversity and openness. Linking Jewish texts and tradition with innovative scholarship, Clal promotes Jewish participation in American civic and spiritual life, reinvigorating communities and enhancing leadership development.