

NEWS RELEASE

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National Museum of American Jewish History Announces Joint Program with The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership and Rabbis Without Borders: Sacred Stories

The National Museum of American Jewish History is collaborating with The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (Clal) and its Rabbis Without Borders Program to launch a new initiative, **Sacred Stories: A Living Commentary on the Hebrew Bible and American Jewish History**, debuting the last week of March 2013. **Sacred Stories** is inspired by the parallel quests for greater freedom and human dignity which are the roots of both the Jewish people and the United States of America.

Through weekly written commentaries composed by rabbis from around the nation and with varying backgrounds, **Sacred Stories** will weave together Judaism's foundational sacred text, the Torah, with one of the most successful expressions of freedom in human history—the story of Jewish life in America. It will explore our shared values by linking these two vital and compelling stories through contemporary commentary and 21st century media.

“This partnership between NMAJH and Clal forges a strong connection between the wisdom of our people and the lives we live as Americans today, said NMAJH CEO and *Gwen Goodman Director*, Ivy L. Barsky.

Each commentary will marry the story of an object on view in the Museum's core exhibition with the weekly Torah portion to share teachings with visitors via printouts provided beside the artifact and online at <http://www.nmajh.org/sacredstories/>. The Rabbis will also be writing a select set of commentaries on Jewish and American holidays. These teachings will deepen visitors' engagement with the Museum by connecting the artifacts and themes of the Museum to the ancient Jewish story. The corresponding artifact will be highlighted through physical signage in the exhibition as well as during docent tours.

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This project is designed to bring depth and meaning to contemporary American lives through biblical stories of courage, struggle, journeys, and homecomings; to encourage visitors, Jews, and non-Jews to make the connection between Jewish wisdom and American values; and to help individuals connect their personal stories to bigger Jewish and American narratives.

“Sacred Stories follows in the footsteps of the great rabbinic tradition of Torah commentary. Like our ancestors, on whose shoulders we stand, we are drawing meaning for our lives from our sacred text,” said Museum Board of Trustees Co-Chair, Phil Darivoff.

The launch of **Sacred Stories** coincides with the celebration of Passover—a holiday that celebrates freedom and storytelling, themes that are important to the Museum’s mission and the American Jewish experience. The holiday, the most celebrated among Jews in the United States, is an ideal representation of the rich interplay between the Hebrew Bible and American history. The first commentary, written by Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, is an introduction to the project and the Museum as a whole. Subsequent pieces will link biblical stories to specific artifacts and stories in the Museum’s core exhibition.

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Clal

Founded in 1974, The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (Clal) 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.

NMAJH

The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the 350-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all heritages to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.

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