

Dear Student,

You are about to embark on an exciting journey! You will visit countries far away, and travel to times far in the past. You will meet new people and learn about the challenges that they faced.

The history of the Jewish people is about the many struggles they encountered throughout the ages. You will find that time and again, the challenges faced by Jews throughout history are the same challenges that we face today.

Despite these hardships, our nation continues on. Our history is rich in tradition and moral values, and has greatly contributed to society. You will also see that although the world has changed, the role of the Jewish people has not changed all that much.

I hope that you will be proud to be part of such a wonderful history! Remember that the next chapter of Jewish history will be written by...

You!

Hatzlacha!

Introduction

WHY SHOULD WE LEARN JEWISH HISTORY?

The following is a quote from the סדור הקדמה of the סדור גלות: regarding the survival of כלל ישראל in our י"עב"ץ

...חַי וְכַפֵּשִׁי, כִּי בְּהִתְבוֹנְנִי בְּנִפְלְאוֹת
אֱלֹהִים, גָּדְלוֹ אֶצְלִי יוֹתֵר מִכָּל נִסִּים
וְנִפְלְאוֹת שֶׁעָשָׂה הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ
לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבַמִּדְבָּר וּבְאֶרֶץ
יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְכָל מֵה שֶׁאֵרַךְ הַגָּלוּת
יוֹתֵר נִתְאַמֶּת הַיָּסוּד יוֹתֵר, וְנוֹדֵעַ
מֵעֲשֵׂה תִקְפוֹ וְגִבּוֹרָתוֹ...

Translation: ...I swear by my life, that when I think of these wonders, it's more to me than all the miracles that Hashem did to our fathers in Mitzrayim, in the midbar, and in Eretz Yisroel. **And as the golus gets longer, so is the miracle truer. And His ability and strength becomes known...**

And the *goyim* notice us too...

Mark Twain wrote an essay about the Jews. As a matter of fact, he called it-

"Concerning the Jews..."

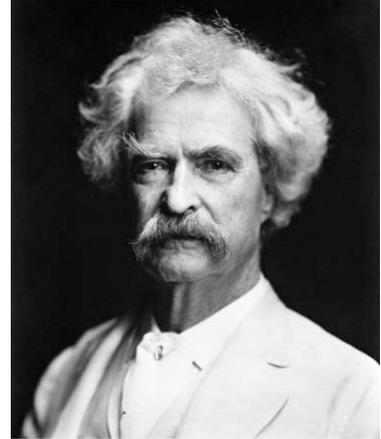
*"The Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Persian, rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream stuff and passed away. The Greek and the Roman followed, made a vast noise and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up, held their torch high for a time, but it burned out and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. **The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence¹, no infirmities² of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal, but the Jew. All other forces pass, but he remains.***

What is the secret of his immortality³?"

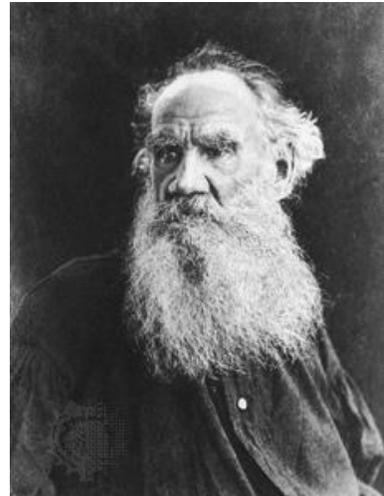
Mark Twain ended his essay with a question. Leo Tolstoy provides an answer.

(Just a bit of background on Leo Tolstoy: Tolstoy is considered by many to be the greatest novelist of all time. He lived in Russia in the 1800's and was admired by the "modern" world as a writer and as a great thinker.) He wrote the following:

*"The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter, nor torture of thousands of years could destroy, he whom neither fire, nor sword, nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth; **he who was the first to produce the oracle⁴ of G-d, he who has been for so long the guardian of prophecy and who transmitted it to the rest of the world. Such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself.**"*



Mark Twain



Leo Tolstoy

¹ **Decadence:** decline or decay

² **Infirmities:** lack of strength

³ **Immortality:** eternal life

⁴ **Oracle:** source of wisdom

*Conservative pundit*⁵
Glenn Beck during his
keynote address titled
"Restoring Courage"
near the Kosel in
Yerushalayim, August 24,
2011:

In Israel, there is more
courage in one square
mile than in all of Europe.
In Israel, there is more
courage in one soldier
than in the combined and
cold hearts of every
bureaucrat⁶ at the United
Nations. No country is
perfect. But it tries, and it
is courageous. Today, the
world needs courage
more than ever.



Glenn Beck in Yerushalayim

Everything we know about human rights and real civilization came from this place, this land. Whether you live by 613 commandments, 10 commandments, or one sweet Golden Rule, it all started here. It all started here - the throne of G-d.

When the world turns its back on Israel and the Jewish people, the world turns its back on human rights. **Without the Jewish people, humanity would never know that every single individual life has dignity, that every single life is sacred. That G-d names every star and knows every soul.** That was G-d's message to Abraham. That was G-d's message to Moses. That is the message of the Jewish people to the world **and by their very *existence* they teach it to us, every single day.**

Look at the last sentence again.
What does this say about who we
are?!

⁵ **Pundit:** political commentator

⁶ **Bureaucrat:** government official

*The following is a letter that was written in 1973 during the oil embargo in response to a bumper sticker that said: “**JEWS GO HOME! WE DON’T WANT JEWS- WE WANT OIL!**” This letter was printed in a small newspaper in Colorado and within a few days it was printed in 250 newspapers across the United States.*

”JEWS GO HOME”

“Well, this is nothing new. Never in the past have you ever taken this gentle suggestion to move on.

But, Heaven forbid, suppose just this once you thought that this expression of a few sick people, actually expressed the conviction of all the people in this wonderful land of ours and all of you started to pack your bags and leave for parts unknown.

However, just before you go, would you do me a favor?

Would you leave your formula for the Salk and the Sabin Vaccine with me before you depart? You wouldn’t be so heartless as to let my children contract polio?

And, would you please leave your knack⁷ for government and politics, science and technology, and literature, and good food, and fun and love, good films, and plays, music, dance, and all those things so useful and enjoyable, and would you please leave with me the secret of your drive to succeed? Please?

And please, have pity on us, show us the secret of how to develop more such geniuses as Einstein, Freud, Nostradamus, Steinmetz, Spinoza and oh so many others who have helped us all. After all, we owe you for the Atomic Bomb, most of our rocket research and perhaps the fact that we are alive today, instead of looking up from our chains and from our graves to see an ageing, happy Hitler drive by slowly in one of our Cadillacs.

On your way out, Jews, will you do me just one more favor?

Will you please drive by my house and pick me up also? I’m just not sure I could live too well in a land where you were not around to give us as much as you have given us. If you ever have to leave, love goes with you, democracy goes with you, everything my buddies and I fought for in World War II goes with you. **G-d goes with you too.**

Just pull up in front of my house, slow down and honk, because, so help me, I’m going with you too.

Yours sincerely,

William Aiken.”

⁷ **Knack:** ability or skill

