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The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland's
Response Curriculum
Election 2008:
Through Jewish Eyes

Jewish tradition takes a clear stand on our obligations *l'taken olam b'malkhut shaddai* (to repair the world under the power of G-d's rule) and *tzedek, tzedek tirdof* (Justice, justice you are to pursue). In today's modern, democratic societies Jews are afforded unparalleled opportunities to "get involved" and "make a difference." We can become active participants in social agencies, volunteer programs, and political parties.

As Jews move into more active involvement in American society, we are challenged to consider the role our religion plays in our political choices. Some segments of the Jewish community argue that Jewish perspectives and texts should inform, but not dictate, our political and volunteer agendas. Others argue strongly that Jewish tradition must serve as our moral and intellectual compass – pointing us steadfastly toward specific political issues and positions. Regardless of our stance toward the role of religion in politics, all agree that we must become better acquainted with the Jewish perspectives and texts on leadership, good government and political involvement.

This response curriculum is designed to help educators identify and unpack with their students three main concepts within the context of the upcoming general election:

1. Jewish views on leadership
2. Jewish views on good government
3. Jewish activity in the political system

This curriculum is recommended for middle and high school students. Some activities may need to be adapted to better fit your students' needs. In this resource packet you will find:

1. Background Information
2. Text Study & Classroom Activities
3. Resources

Special thanks to The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
and Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland for their input in the Election 2000 Response Curriculum,
upon which this version is based.

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Background Information

Jewish involvement in political life over the centuries, both within and outside of Israel, is well documented. Joseph's rise from lowly servant to Pharaoh's chief advisor is a central narrative in *B'reishit/Genesis*. Every *Purim*, Jews gather in synagogues to proudly read about the exploits of Queen Esther and Mordechai "the Jew" and their rise to prominence in the court of Ahashverosh. We have primary sources that document the political roles played by numerous Spanish Jews throughout the Middle Ages. [e.g. Hasdai ibn Shaprut (Spain 905-75 C.E.), Shmuel ibn Naghrela (933-1055 C.E.) and Isaac Abravenel (Spain 1437-1508 C.E.)] For the most part, though, Jews were closed off from seats of power in lands where the Catholic Church enjoyed political power.

The "Age of Enlightenment" brought new challenges to Jews living in Eastern Europe and the American colonies. In theory, at least, Jews were granted equal rights and equal opportunities. In practice, very few doors were open for Jews interested in taking on active roles in the political process. Age-old suspicions and social barriers changed, but very slowly.

Haym Salomon (1740-1785 C.E.) was the first Jew to hold public office in the American colonies. Despite distrust and anti-Semitic fears, American revolutionary leaders appointed him "Broker to the Office of Finance." Haym Salomon's appointment reflected a significant and noteworthy attitude shift within the ruling elites. His religion was an issue, but his reputation for honesty and resourcefulness swayed his doubters. A barrier was broken.

While it is not our intention to trace the full history of Jewish involvement in the American political system and social issues, it is worthy to note that Jews such as Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Henry Kissinger, and Joseph Lieberman have secured honorable places in our society's struggle to repair the world. It is also noteworthy that Jews make up a higher proportion of the elected officials in the current Congress than their percentage of the population.

In his 1999 article entitled "Jews and Social Justice" (in *Torah at the Center*. NY: UAHC Press, Vol. 3, No. 1), Rabbi David Saperstein suggested three factors that account for Jews' vigorous participation in American political life and the fight for social issues:

- The Prophetic Tradition – Jewish texts are filled with legal and moral injunctions regarding treatment of the poor, the orphan, the widow, the stranger, the worker, etc. (see *Vayikra/Leviticus* 19:1-37)
- Ethical Rationalism – The rise of liberal Judaism with its emphasis on ethics and social action.
- Jewish Self-Interest – The knowledge that helping to build a just society is good for all minority groups. Saperstein calls this strand "*darhei shalom*" ("the ways of peace").

It is the challenge of educators today to take Judaism's rich political tradition and history and make them relevant to our students. The upcoming election is a perfect opportunity to do just that.

Focus #1: Jewish Views on Leadership

Characteristics of a Good Leader:

...You may set, yes, set over you a king...Only he is not to multiply horses for himself...and he is not to multiply wives for himself that his heart not be turned-aside, and silver or gold he is not to multiply for himself to excess. But it shall be when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he is to write himself a copy of this Instruction (the *Torah*) in a document before the presence of Levitical priests. It is to remain beside him. He is to read out of it all the days of his life in order that he may learn to have awe for the Lord his G-d to be careful concerning all the words of this Instruction and these laws to observe them, that his heart not be raised above his brothers that he not turn-aside from what-is-commanded, to the right or to the left. This, in order that he may prolong (his) days over his kingdom...

[*D'varim* (Deuteronomy) 17:15-20 as translated in Fox, E. *The Five Books of Moses*. NY: Schocken Books, 1995.]

You are not to take a bribe,
for a bribe blinds the open-eyed, and twists the words of the righteous.

[*Sh'mot* (Exodus) 23:8]

All who work for the welfare of the public
should do the work for the sake of Heaven...

[*Pirkei Avot* 2:2]

Rabbi Isaac said: Let respect for the congregation be always upon you...

[Babylonian *Talmud Sota*, 40a]

Anyone who is involved in the welfare of the public
it is as if he or she is involved in words of *Torah*.

[Jerusalem *Talmud B'rahot*]

One who is wise, humble, clear-headed, and fearful of sin...
may be made a judge/leader in his/her city.

[*Tosafot Sanhedrin* 7:1]

A gifted leader is one who is capable of touching your heart.

[Potofsky, quoted in *A Treasury of Jewish Quotations*, ed. by Joseph L Baron Aronson, B'nai B'rith, 1985, page 271.]

Who is the leader of all leaders?

One who can make an enemy into one's friend.

[*Avot d'Rabbi Natan*, chapter 23]

When a person is able to take abuse with a smile,
that person is worthy to become a leader.

[Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, quoted in *Exploring Jewish Ethics & Values*, by Ronald Isaacs, KTAV Publishing House, 1999, page 11.]

Activities: Characteristics of a Good Leader

1. Divide students into groups of 3-4 and provide each with a set of quotes and a piece of paper divided into four columns.

- a) Ask each group to read through the quotes and develop a list of adjectives that describe a “good leader.” These should be written in the first column.
- b) Then, ask the groups to brainstorm a list of qualities they would look for in a youth leader (such as president of student council or captain of a sports team). These should be written in the second column.
- c) Provide groups with a variety of newspapers, news magazines, and perhaps website addresses. Ask students to search for adjectives that describe the qualities people are looking for in a government leader (e.g., President). These should be written in the third column.
- d) Finally, ask students to think of one person they all know personally whom they respect as a leader. Have them write the leadership qualities of that person in the fourth column.

NOTE: This activity may be simplified by using instruction (a) and (b) OR (c) OR (d).

Provide students time to analyze the columns in their small groups. Consider such questions as:

- Do any of the qualities in any of the lists surprise students?
- How do the qualities from Jewish tradition compare to the other lists?
- What qualities do students feel are the five most important ones for a leader of the United States government? [NOTE: Groups might share these lists at the end of the discussion.]

2. Ask students to develop a political advertisement based on two or more of the quotations, above. At least one of the texts must be quoted in their campaign.

3. Invite the school president/synagogue president/federation representative to speak with the class about his or her views on Jewish leadership. [NOTE: Share the list of quotations with the guest in advance of his/her visit.]

4. Focus on a Biblical or rabbinic leader who is relevant to your particular curriculum (e.g., Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Deborah, Esther, Judah Maccabee, Yohanan ben Zakkai). Ask students to look at the list of quotes, above, and determine if any of them match the leader on whom the class is focusing. Ask students to do a close reading of the Biblical text to determine the character’s leadership qualities. How do the qualities compare with the quotes, above?

5. Divide students into small groups, giving each one a quote, above. Ask them to survey adults to find out which contemporary or historical leader most exemplifies the particular quote. Have students research the person and create a poster using the quote and the information they discovered.

Characteristics of a Poor Leader:

Once a person is put in charge of a community, even if he be the most worthless, he is regarded as the mightiest of the mighty.

[Babylonian *Talmud Rosh Hashanah* 25b]

There are four kinds of people whom people dislike:

One of them is a communal leader who is arrogant toward his constituents for no good reason.

[Babylonian *Talmud Pesahim* 113b]

G-d weeps over a community leader who is domineering.

[Babylonian *Talmud Hagigah* 5b]

Activities: Characteristics of a Poor Leader

1. Divide students into small groups, giving each one a quote, above. Ask them to survey adults to find out which contemporary or historical leaders most exemplify the particular quote. Have students research one person to discover more of his or her leadership qualities (poor or good). Overall, would the person be classified a poor leader? Why? What could the person have done differently to change the assessment of leadership quality?

2. Ask students to brainstorm other qualities of poor leadership and then determine a quality of good leadership that balances each, either from the quotes on page 3 or from other class ideas. Create a continuum for each of these pairs. Discuss the metaphor of leadership qualities as a continuum, not a black and white situation. What examples can students give that support this concept? That negate it?

3. The image of G-d weeping pushes on the imagination. Ask students to use their talents to illustrate this quote through art, music, drama, or the written word. Encourage students to incorporate pictures or print from current election articles or advertisements, if possible.

Secular Definitions of Leadership and Management:

When getting extraordinary things done in organizations, leaders engage in these Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, encourage the heart.

[Kouzes, James M and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007]

A **leader** is a person who can influence others to be more effective in working to achieve their mutual goals and maintain effective working relationships among members. Individuals may become leaders through a wide variety of activities, such as winning supporters, solving problems, negotiating deals, building coalitions, mending fences among members, uniting rivals, or stirring emotions. Whatever the actions taken, leadership involves social influence.

Leadership is the process through which leaders exert such influence on other group members. By comparison, the root origin of **manage** is a Latin word meaning "hand" and managers are individuals who can "handle" the status quo.

[Johnson, David W. and Roger T. Johnson, *Learning to Lead Teams: Developing Leadership Skills*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company, 1997, page 1:8.]

Activity: General definitions of leadership and management

1. Compare the leader/manager definitions and characteristics with any or all of the following:

- The Jewish quotes of good or poor leadership (above, pages 3-5)
- The leadership qualities of Jewish leaders (contemporary or historical)
- The leadership qualities of governmental leaders (contemporary or historical)

2. Offer a variety of comic strips for students to consider issues of authority. [*Dilbert* and *Doonesbury* are good choices.] Divide students into groups and provide each with some comics, the quote from Kouzes on leadership, the one from Johnson and Johnson on leadership/management, other quotes from this section, and written questions such as:

- What form of authority (leadership or management) is modeled by those “in charge?”
- Which of the Jewish textual quotes might be framed on the office wall of the leaders/managers? Of the employees?
- If the cartoon characters represented a Jewish setting and you were a consultant coming in to give advice to improve the situation, what would you say? [Include 2-3 quotes, above.]

Interrelationship Between a Leader and the Community:

The body follows the head.
[Babylonian *Talmud Eruvin* 41a]

The acts of the leader are the acts of the nation.
If the leader is just, the nation is just.
If the leader is unjust, the nation, too, is unjust and is punished for the sins of the leader.
[*Zohar* ii, 47a]

"This is the generation and those who seek its welfare" (Psalms 24:6)
Rabbi Y'hudah Hanasi and the sages differed about this matter.
According to one opinion,
 the character of a generation is determined by its leader.
According to the other opinion,
 the character of its leader is determined by the generation.
[Babylonian *Talmud Arahin* 17a]

A leader may not be appointed without consulting the community.
[Babylonian *Talmud B'rahot* 55a]

When people do not appreciate a good leader, they get a wicked leader.
[*Sefer Hasidim*, 13c, #225, p. 279.]

Activities: Interrelationship Between a Leader and the Community

1. Focus more closely on the quotation “The body follows the head.” [Babylonian *Talmud Eruvin* 41a] Ask students to brainstorm a list of positive and negative examples that highlight this idea:

- From the Torah
- From Jewish history
- From everyday life

2. Have students create a human figure that expands the idea, “The body follows the head.” What do the hands do? The legs? The torso? Etc.

3. Divide students into small groups to examine the similarities and differences between the top three quotes in this section, above. As a class discuss, then debate, the points of each. Which do students believe are correct?

4. Ask students who believe that, “The character of a generation is determined by its leader” to stand in one corner of the room. And, ask students who believe, “The character of its leader is determined by the generation” to stand in the opposite corner. Give students standing in each of the corners time to talk together to prepare a “case” for their position, including examples. Debate the issue between the students. In your debriefing, ask students if they believe this statement based on their personal life experience and what they observe of today’s leaders? [Students might have an easier time considering this question first in terms of the politics of student government.]

5. Invite in a political, congregational or Jewish community leader to discuss his/her reaction to the quotes about the synergy between leaders and followers.

Focus #2: Jewish Views on Good Government

Respecting the Ruling Government:

Sh’muel said:

The Law of the land is the Law.

[Babylonian *Talmud Gittin* 10b]

Seek the peace of the city to which I exiled you and pray for it to G-d because your well-being depends on its well-being.

[*Yermiyahu/Jeremiah* 29:7]

Let the awe of kingship always be upon you.

[Babylonian *Talmud Zevahim* 102a]

Rabbi Hanina the Deputy High Priest said:

One should pray for the welfare of the kingdom
for were it not for the fear of it
one person would swallow the other alive.

[*Pirke Avot* 3:2]

Just as larger fish swallow up smaller ones, so it is with people:

Were it not for the fear of government,
the stronger would swallow up the weaker.

[Babylonian *Talmud Avodah Zarah* 4a]

Hillel said:

A name made great is a name destroyed.

This teaches that one's name should not come to the attention of the government.

For once a person's name comes to the attention of the government,

the end is that it casts its eye upon him, slays him, and takes away all his wealth.

[*Avot d'Rabbi Natan* 12]

Beware of ruling powers! For they do not befriend a person except for their own needs:

They seem like friends when it is to their own advantage,
but they do not stand by a person when is hard-pressed.

[*Pirke Avot* 2:3]

Shemaya said,

Love labor,

hate [the abuse of] power,

and don't try to become the familiar friend of government.

[*Pirke Avot* 1:10]

Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakanah said,

Anyone who will accept the yoke of the *Torah*,

from that one will be removed the yoke of government

and the yoke of worldly care.

But anyone who rejects the yoke of the *Torah*,

upon that one will be placed the yoke of the government

and the yoke of worldly care."

[*Pirke Avot* 3:5]

Prayer for the Country

This particular prayer is from the Reconstructionist prayerbook; you may wish to choose the version in the prayerbook that your own students use.

Sovereign of the universe, mercifully receive our prayers for our land and its government. Let your blessing pour out in this land and on all officials of this country who are occupied, in good faith, with the public needs. Instruct them from your *Torah's* laws, enable them to understand your principles of justice, so that peace and tranquility, happiness and freedom, might never turn away from our land. Please, WISE ONE, G-d of the life breath of all flesh, waken your spirit within all inhabitants of our land, and plant among the peoples of different nationalities and faiths who dwell here, love and brotherhood, peace and friendship. Uproot from their hearts all hatred and enmity, all jealousy and vying for supremacy. Fulfill their desire to see it become a light to all nations. Therefore, may it be your will that our land should be a blessing to all inhabitants of the globe. Cause to dwell among all peoples friendship and freedom. And soon fulfill the vision of your prophet: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Let them learn no longer ways of war." And let us say: Amen.

[*"Tefilah Lamemshalah,"* in *Kol Haneshamah, Shabbat Vehagim*, Wyncote, PA: The Reconstructionist Press, 1996.]

Activities: Respecting the Ruling Government

1. Some of the quotes (above) about the interplay of citizens and government are pretty harsh. [Know that many of these rabbis lived in difficult times, especially in relation to the Romans 2,000 years ago.] Divide students into small groups, giving each a list of these texts. Ask them to cut the quotes apart, discuss each one, and place each in one of two piles:
 - a) whether they believe the text has validity today, or
 - b) whether the text is not relevant for today.
2. Ask students to research the historical contexts of one of these texts; why would the person quoted have made such a statement based on the political atmosphere? [* NOTE: This activity is most appropriate for a day high school student.]
3. Ask students to research different periods of Jewish history with an eye to the relationship of the Jews to the ruling powers. Consider: Egypt (time of slavery), Babylonian exile, Roman occupation of Judea, Golden Age of Spain, pre-enlightenment ghetto life in Eastern Europe, World War II Germany. In the final section of the report, ask students to compare the Jewish government relations during their researched time period with the sentiments of one quotation, above. [NOTE: If these reports are also presented orally, class discussion could focus on a comparison of life as Jews in the United States today, with the interactions of Jews and government, historically.]
4. Compare prayers for the government from several prayer books. How are they the same? Different? [NOTE: If possible, obtain copies of this prayer from foreign prayer books for comparison, too. The Ratner Media and Technology Center has a couple of prayer books from London that pray for Her Majesty, The Queen of England.]

Goal of Government:

The final purpose of government is not to rule, or bind by fear, not to demand obedience, but on the contrary, to liberate every person from fear so each may live his or her life with the highest security...The true purpose of government is liberty.

[Baruch Spinoza, quoted in *The Word: Jewish Wisdom Through Time*, by Noah Ben Shea, Villard, 1995 page 184.]

Our rabbis taught:

The sons of Noah were given seven commandments:

[The first of which is] to establish a legal system . . .

[Babylonian *Talmud Sanhedrin* 56a]

All the ants jumped on the first one and killed it.

Simeon said:

It is clear that they have no king,

for if they did, they could not have killed *that* ant without royal permission.

[i.e., laws would regulate their behavior toward one another].

[Babylonian *Talmud Hullin* 57b]

If you see in a province

oppressions of the poor and

suppression of right and justice,

don't wonder at the fact.

For one high official is protected by a higher one,

and both of them by still higher ones.

[*Kohelet/Ecclesiastes* 5:7]

The basic axioms of democracy –

human dignity, equality and freedom -

are all as Jewish as the Hebrew language.

[Rifkind, *American Jewish Tercentenary address*, November 14, 1954]

The greatest menace to freedom is an inert people.

[Louis D. Brandeis, quoted in *The Word: Jewish Wisdom Through Time*, by Noah Ben Shea, Villard, 1995, page 187.]

Moses was the author of the great principle that

the governments and religions of nations must be built upon the same basis of truth

as is individual character.

[Isaac Meyer Wise, quoted in *The Word: Jewish Wisdom Through Time*, by Noah Ben Shea, Villard, 1995 page 190.]

Activities: Goals of Government

1. Divide students into small groups, providing each a list of the quotations, above, and a sheet of paper divided into two columns. Ask them to read each quote and create a list of the goals of good government from the texts; write these in the first column. Then, provide students with newspapers, news magazines and (if possible) access to the internet. Ask students to study quotes from various candidates in the articles and write down the goals of good government they discover in the current political scene. Compare the lists. [NOTE: This activity may be done as a cooperative learning “jigsaw,” having one group study the Jewish texts and the other study the newspapers/magazines. Students then share the information they learned with the other group.]
2. Clip out candidate speeches from newspapers or download them from the Internet. Divide students into pairs and ask them to identify speeches or issues that can be linked to the quotations found in this section.
3. Ask students to create collages of one of the quotes, above. Each collage must include the Jewish text, as well as pictures, headlines and quotes from current newspapers or magazines. Any other media are allowed, as well.

Focus #3: Jewish Activity in the Political System

A man once came before the Hazon Ish and explained that he didn't have enough money to pay his taxes and, therefore, would not be allowed to vote in an upcoming election. The Hazon Ish responded: “You should sell your *t'fillin* and pay the taxes. *T'fillin*, you can borrow from another, but the right to vote – you cannot get from someone else.”

[The *Hazon Ish* – Rav Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz]

A fundamental principle of *Yiddishkeit* is *Hakarat Hatov* – recognizing benefits accorded to us and giving expression to our appreciation. Therefore it is incumbent upon each Jewish citizen to participate in the democratic system which affords us the freedoms we enjoy. The most fundamental responsibility incumbent on each individual is to register and vote.

[Rav Moshe Feinstein]

Jewish belief in democracy is based simply on the faith that G-d created man in His image, that all men are His equal children and that each possesses within him a spark of the divine which may not be violated.

[Simon H. Rifkind in *The Word: Jewish Wisdom Through Time*, by Noah Ben Shea, Villard, 1995 page 189 -190.]

For the believing Jew to be reticent about becoming involved in secular issues of Gentile culture is Halakhically inappropriate when it comes to questions of planetary survival. This is so not merely because of the danger posed by the bombs, but also because of our natural partnership in

the earth with all people, regardless of their race or origin. This lesson from the tradition, then, is that the Jew must participate with others at whatever levels necessary - ideological, political, and scientific, to ensure the continuity of the planet.

[Rabbi Joseph Pollack, "Torah and the Megabombs," *Judaism*, Fall, 1973.]

PRESS RELEASE: Rabbi David Saperstein to Give Invocation at Democratic National Convention

Aug. 16, 2008 -- Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, will deliver the invocation at the Democratic National Convention Thursday, August 28, at Denver's INVESCO Field, the night that Sen. Barack Obama is scheduled to accept the Democratic nomination.

"I am deeply honored to have been invited to offer a religious voice at this celebration of American democracy; the opportunity to do so at an evening of such historic significance to our nation is especially meaningful," Saperstein said.

During the Democratic and Republican conventions, as at so many other public events, the invocation serves as an opportunity for religious leaders to raise up in a non-partisan manner the moral challenges facing the country and to pray that the country's leaders have the wisdom and courage to resolve them.

http://rac.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=2949&pge_prg_id=10460

Activities: Jewish Activity in the Political System

1. Have the class prepare a "Jews in Government Fair," similar to a Science Fair. Have each group research a Jewish politician and create a display that details the politician's background, experience, position, and stances on various issues.

2. There are 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 100 in the U.S. Senate. Have students research how many Jews serve in Congress. How does the percentage of Jews in Congress compare to the percentage of Jews in America? Discuss possible reasons for the discrepancy.

- List of Jews in Congress, 2007 (110th Congress) - <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/jewcong110.html>
- Jewish Percentage of Total Population (2006) - <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/usjewpop1.html>

3. The Jewish community has a variety of organizations that influence governmental politics at the local, state and national level. Invite students to research the goals and influences of one of the organizations that carries out this work. Below is a list of some of these groups; you may wish to add others. Consider sending home website addresses so students may use their home computers for this research.

- American Israel Public Affairs Committee – <http://www.aipac.org>
- American Jewish Committee – <http://www.ajc.org>
- American Jewish Congress – <http://www.ajcongress.org>
- Anti-Defamation League – <http://www.adl.org>
- Hadassah – <http://www.hadassah.org>
- Jewish Council for Public Affairs – <http://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org>

- NCJW – <http://www.ncjw.org>
- Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism – <http://www.rac.org>
- United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism – <http://www.uscj.org>
- Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America - <http://www.ou.org>
- United Jewish Communities Washington Action Office – <http://www.ujc.org/wao/index.htm>

4. Historically, Jews have been involved in the various parties in the American political scene, providing leadership, dollars and votes. There are Jewish “arms” to both the key parties: the Jewish Republican Coalition and the National Jewish Democratic Council. Ask students to examine the charts, below, outlining Jewish political identification in the past and present elections. What do they understand? What are they puzzled about? Do they think the exits polls will look similar or different this time around? Why?

Partisan Identification among Jewish Voters

	2000 Presidential Election ¹	2004 Presidential Election ²	2008 Presidential Election ³
Democrat	59%	54%	58%
Republican	9%	16%	15%
Independent	30%	29%	26%
Not sure	2%	2%	2%

¹ 2000 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, American Jewish Committee.

² 2004 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, American Jewish Committee.

³ 2007 Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, American Jewish Committee.

Jewish Votes for President

	1996 Presidential Election ⁴	2000 Presidential Election ⁵	2004 Presidential Election ⁶
Democrat	78% (Clinton)	79% (Gore)	76% (Kerry)
Republican	16% (Dole)	19% (Bush)	24% (Bush)
Green	2% (Nader)	1% (Nader)	< 1% (Nader)
Reform	3% (Perot)	--	--

⁴ <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/elections/natl.exit.poll/>

⁵ http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/2000vote/general/exitpoll_hub.html

⁶ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/jewvote.html>

References on Jewish participation in the political parties and on voting patterns include:

- “Just How Democratic Is the Jewish Population in America Today?” by Frank Newport and Joseph Carroll, *The Gallop Poll*, September 16, 2002.
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/6799/Just-How-Democratic-Jewish-Population-America-Today.aspx>
- “Jewish Vote In Presidential Elections” - Going back to 1916, this site gives statistics for the percent of Jews who voted for each candidate.
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/jewvote.html>
- “Rallying call for Jewish Republicans leaves some angry,” by Ted S. Stratton, *Cleveland Jewish News*, September 18, 2004.
<http://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/articles/2004/09/17/news/local/medved0917.txt>

- “Seeking the Party of the ‘Outs,’” by Ira N. Forman. *MyJewishLearning.com*. http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history_community/Modern/Overview_The_Story_19481980/America/PWPolitics/VotingPatterns.htm
- “Good News for McCain — or Polling Mush?,” by James Besser, July 9th, 2008 <http://jewish-politics-ny.com/tag/jewish-identification/>
- “Religious Intensity Predicts Support for McCain,” By Frank Newport. *Gallup Poll, July 8, 2008*. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/108688/Religious-Intensity-Predicts-Support-McCain.aspx>

5. Ask students to be on the lookout for ads that target the Jewish vote. According to the advertisers, what are the key issues for Jewish voters? What evidence can students bring from the ads? Ask students to create their own ads to reach Jewish voters this election.

6. With students, read the press release on Rabbi David Saperstein’s invocation at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. Using the information from texts in this guide and/or from other research they do, ask students to hypothesize what he, as a religious leader, would plan to say to those deeply involved in the American political system. If using this curriculum guide after the conclusion of the 2008 Democratic Convention, check the Religious Action Center’s website (<http://rac.org>) for his posted speech and compare students’ ideas with his actual remarks.

RESOURCES

*Most items are available from the
Ratner Media & Technology Center of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland.*

BOOKS

Jewish Views on Leadership

Hessel, Carolyn S. ed. *Blessed is the Daughter*. Rockville, MD: Shengold Books, 1999. A collection of biographies of Jewish women who rose to leadership positions in the civil rights movement, law, politics and the rabbinate. A few of these women included are Senator Barbara Boxer, Senator Dianne Feinstein and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg,

Hirshberg, Neomi, et al. *The Power to Lead: the People of the Book, Student Sourcebook*. Boston BJE, 1986.

A course developed for high school students dealing with Jewish leaders in classical texts.

Leiman, Sondra. *America the Jewish Experience*. New York: UAHC Press, 1993. Contains information about important Jewish American leaders. Biographies and photographs are included.

Moline, Rabbi Jack. *Jewish Leadership and Heroism: Eizehu Gibbor*. New York: United Synagogue of America, 1987.

Begins with definitions of traditional Jewish views on leadership. Useful for textual citations.

Nierman, Zvi. *Jews, Judaism and Civic Responsibility*. The Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, 1998. Text and Teacher's Guide.

A civics workbook that explains how and why so many American Jews fulfill their commitment to Judaism through political activism.

Persoff, Menachem. *Bible Journeys: Dreams, Dilemmas and Decisions of Biblical Leaders*. Israel: Department of Jewish Zionist Education, 1999.

This is an excellent leadership manual for middle school and high school students, filled with thought-provoking activities and issues for discussion and leadership development. Leadership skills are demonstrated through famous Biblical figures. Abraham exemplifies the leader as pathfinder. Sarah is the leader as risk taker. Joseph is the leader as dreamer, pioneer, and statesman. Aaron and Moses represent the leader as teacher, intermediary, and popular figurehead. Deborah is the leader as prophet, judge, and warrior. David is the leader as king, poet, and penitent.

Rubin, Susan Goldman. *L'Chaim: To Jewish Life in America!* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2004.

A thoughtful overview of the Jewish experience in America. It contains descriptions of Jewish American leaders such as: Jews that supported the American Revolution: Isaac Touro, Haym Solomon; the philanthropist Julius Rosenwald and Rose Schneiderman the labor union

leader. There is a section “Repair the World” that explains how Jewish Americans became involved in the Civil Rights Movement, because they empathized with the bigotry that African Americans encountered.

Saperstein, Rabbi David. *Jews and Social Justice. Torah at the Center*. UAHC, 1999. Volume 3, No. 1.

The author suggests three factors that explain vigorous Jewish activity in the political system and social issues.

Weiss, Avram. *Spiritual Activism: A Jewish Guide to Leadership and Repairing the World*. Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008.

Jewish Involvement in Politics

Brooks, Philip. *Extraordinary Jewish Americans*. New York: Children’s Press, 1998.
Background information on Jews involved in American politics and social issues.

Feldberg, Michael, Ed. *Blessings of Freedom: Chapters in American Jewish History*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav/American Jewish Historical Society, 2002.

A collection of events and biographies of Jewish politicians that represented the American Jewish experience. Includes biographies of Jewish politicians such as: Judah Benjamin, the attorney general of the Confederate government; August Bondi who fought alongside John Brown against slavery; Meyer London who is one of the few Socialists to serve in Congress. He sponsored legislation that met with defeat but later became an integral element of the New Deal program: minimum wage, unemployment insurance and increased taxes on the wealthy. Simon Bamberger, the Jewish governor of Utah, Ernestine Rose, the first American Jewish feminist, Justice Louis Brandeis.

Feingold, Henry L. *Lest Memory Cease: Finding Meanings in the American Jewish Past. Modern Jewish History*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Essays that examine the special challenges facing American Jews. There is a section titled “Political Culture” that contains three parts: Sources of Jewish Liberalism, the Changing Liberalism of American Jewry and the Jewish Vision of American Liberalism.

Finkelstein, Norman H. *JPS Guide: American Jewish History*. Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 2007.

Written by a highly acclaimed historian, this guide tells the 350-year history of the Jewish people in the United States. Contains feature boxes about famous Jewish Americans including: Abraham Cahan, a labor activist; Lillian Wald who founded the Henry Street Settlement in 1893 also known as the Visiting Nurse Society; Louis Marshall, the founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); Abraham Joshua Heschel a civil rights activist and Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut the 2000 Democratic Party nominee for vice president.

Finkelstein, Norman. *Forged in Freedom: Shaping the Jewish-American Experience*. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2002.

A readable account of American Jewish society today and the events that shaped it. A chapter is devoted to Jews in politics and other chapters to the historical influences on this involvement. For middle school and high school students. Two other books by Finkelstein also touch on Jewish involvement in politics: *Friends Indeed: The Special Relationship of Israel and the United States* and *Heeding the Call: Jewish Voices in America's Civil Rights Struggle*.

Gopin, Rabbi Marc, et al. *Jewish Civics: A Tikkun Olam/World Repair Manual*. Rockville, Maryland: The Washington Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values, 1994.

A curriculum that highlights classical texts that serve as a foundation for Jewish involvement in politics and social issues.

Karp, Abraham J. *A History of the Jews in America*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997. Traces Jewish involvement in American politics, especially pages 341-344.

Vorspan, Albert & Saperstein, David. *Jewish Dimensions of Social Justice: Tough Moral Choices of Our Time*. New York: UAHC, 1998.

This book describes American Jewries pursuit of social justice in issues that dominate the American political agenda.

Walzer, Michael, Editor. *Jewish Political Tradition, Vol.1 (Authority) and Vol. 2 (Membership)*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2003 and 2006.

These are the first volumes of a projected multi-volume set that promises to be the authoritative work on the subject. Contributors are eminent political scientists and philosophers and the subject is treated with scholarly depth and insight. Probably too much for high school students but something that Jewish educators should be familiar with. (Background reading for teachers. Available at the Siegal College Aaron Garber Library, local synagogues, and public libraries.)

Zacks, Gordon. *Defining Moments: Stories of Character, Courage, and Leadership*. New York: Beaufort Books, 2006.

Accounts of world leaders, Jewish and gentile, who used their position to help Jewish people and Israel. Note: the author slants towards a Republican point of view.

WEBSITES

Annual Survey of American Jewish Opinion, 2007
<http://www.ajc.org/site/c.ijITI2PHKoG/b.3642849/>

C-SPAN (Teacher Resources)
<http://www.c-spanclassroom.org/>

Commission on Presidential Debates (full transcripts of the Presidential and Vice Presidential Debates)
<http://www.debates.org>

Jewish Women in Politics. *Jewish Women's Archive*
<http://jwa.org/discover/infocus/politics/>

JTA: Global News Service of the Jewish People (enter "election" in the keyword search)
<http://www.jta.org>

JVibe (enter "election" in the keyword search)
<http://www.jvibe.com>

The League of Women Voters
<http://www.lwv.org>

The New York Times Education Lesson Plans (enter "election" in the keyword search)
<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/index.html?8dpc>

The Pluralism Project
www.pluralism.org

Project Vote Smart
<http://www.vote-smart.org>

Rock the Vote
<http://www.rockthevote.org>

Time for Kids (enter "election" in the keyword search)
<http://www.timeforkids.com>