

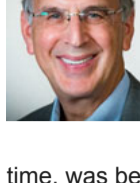
Kenissa Konnections

February 2022

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Message from Rabbi Sid



When Anti-Semitism Strikes Close to Home

On January 15th, not more than five minutes after *shabbat* was out, I got a call from a rabbi in Boston who is an alumnus of my [Clergy Leadership Incubator \(CLI\) rabbinic fellowship program](#). She was in the same cohort as Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker who, at that time, was being held hostage along with several other members of his congregation by a man with a gun and explosives who entered Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, TX, during shabbat morning services.

The assailant was Malik Faisal Akram, age 44, a resident of the United Kingdom who came to Texas where a convicted terrorist named Aafia Siddiqui, a female Pakistani member of Al Qaeda who had killed U.S. servicemen in Afghanistan, was serving an 82-year prison sentence. During the 11-hour siege, Akram's demand was the freedom of Ms. Siddiqui. Thanks to a well-coordinated law enforcement effort led by the FBI and the calm demeanor of Rabbi Charlie, who engaged with the intruder throughout the day, the siege ended with the killing of Akram and the freeing of the remaining three hostages, including Rabbi Charlie, without any bodily harm.

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Our Kenissa Meet-Up will feature the author of each month's "How We Built This" column. This month we will feature Matt Bar, the founder of Bible Raps and co-founder of Rappers and Rabbis. Participants will have the chance to ask questions of Matt. We will reserve some time for introductions and networking.

Date: February 16, 2022

Time: 2:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86491233936?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86491233936?pwd=SDRVVXNyVldEQTdMQkF0RW5LaDJVdz09)

[pwd=SDRVVXNyVldEQTdMQkF0RW5LaDJVdz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86491233936?pwd=SDRVVXNyVldEQTdMQkF0RW5LaDJVdz09)

Meeting ID: 864 9123 3936

Passcode: 203589

Braver Leadership

Dr. Erica Brown



Putting the Jewish in Jewish Leadership

Ideally, leadership is taught from a Jewish perspective for the following five compelling reasons. Please feel free to add your own reasons:

1. We are blessed to have a textual tradition with leadership wisdom spanning thousands of years. From the legendary tales of King David to Talmudic advice and medieval legal treatises, our Jewish scholarly tradition is replete with discussions of leadership.

2. Jumping out of the texts are the chronicles of Jewish history. They demonstrate our ambitious will to survive in the face of persecution and the vicissitudes of everyday living. This proud history of survival was contingent upon effective leadership. Whether we read historical testimonies of medieval rabbis and community leaders or the biographies of early Zionists, we are aware that we must honor the leadership of the past by becoming the Jewish leaders of the future. Jewish historical sensitivity leads us to the conclusion that mastery of leadership is pivotal for tomorrow.

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**Excerpted from [Inspired Jewish Leadership: Practical Approaches to Building Strong Communities](#) (Jewish Lights, 2008) by Dr. Erica Brown. Reprinted by permission of distributor, Turner Publications, from which you can also [buy the book](#).*

Dr. Erica Brown is a prolific author and leading Jewish educator in North America. She is the new Vice Provost for Values and Leadership at Yeshiva University and the director of its Lord Rabbi Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership.

Jewish Megatrends and Responses

Editor's Note: Jacob Feinspan authored this piece in 2016. He continues to lead and grow [Jews United for Justice](#), with staff in Washington D.C., Baltimore and Annapolis. It represents one of the most robust, community-based Jewish social justice organizations in the country.



The fact that Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) exists in the first place, and has grown and succeeded in recent years, is due to the groundswell of Jews who are actively seeking ways to act on their Jewish values to advance justice.

We start from the Jewish community's collective experience of moving from the margins to the mainstream. We know how fragile life is, and want to make sure that everybody in our community has access to the same opportunity that we now have. Then we build from our community organizing roots by meeting people where they are. In Washington that means people who are politically interested, who are incredibly smart, who often have really serious jobs focusing on national issues and who don't have a lot of time. JUFJ enables Jews of all ages to make a real difference on a local level by offering ways to take actions that are Jewishly grounded and that really connect people with their neighborhood and their community. People make time in their lives for JUFJ because we're effective, because of the relationships we have with each other and because there's something that's just more meaningful and powerful about doing this work proudly as Jews.

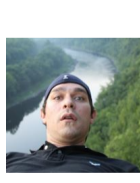
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How We Built This

Editor's Note: Every Kenissa Network member was asked to explain how they launched their new enterprise, a feature we call "How We Built This". We'll feature one organization in each issue.

Rappers and Rabbis

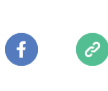
Matt Barr



Back in 2007, with the help of several great Jewish organizations such as Livnot, Present Tense and Pardes, I founded Bible Raps, an organization that uses Hip Hop to teach Torah to otherwise unreachable children and teens. When I started, I was one of only a handful of hardcore Hip Hop pedagogues. Teaching the Bible with rap was startling to many and downright incongruent to a few. I mean, the one is lewd, misogynistic, full of killers and concubines and the other is Hip Hop. Ba-dum-bum-CHING!

Some people even doubted that Hip Hop had legitimate staying power; like disco, a passing craze. Nothing was further from the truth. Spearheaded by superstars like 50 Cent, Lil' Wayne and Drake, Hip Hop dethroned Rock n' Roll in 2018, becoming the most popular music genre in the United States after Rock's 70-year reign. As far as Rap education went, however, the tipping point of zeitgeist proportions was the Broadway Rap musical *Hamilton*. Suddenly, old people understood what I did. "Like Hamilton... but with the Bible."

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