

Philip Rubenstein | Great Jewish Moments at the Movies, Part 1

Hello again everyone, and welcome to Great Jewish Moments at the Movies, take one. This is the first of two parts, and the second one is scheduled for early September. I just have to say right at the outset, I mean, this has been a complete labour of love to prepare for this. I was a kid growing up in the 1970s in the UK and it was always a small thrill to hear a word or phrase in Yiddish, or a wry Jewish reference in a movie, and you felt that the director or the writer had just given a small gift and it was just for us, and it wasn't to be shared with everyone else. So this has been a real pleasure to prepare for, and really this is just an excuse for me just to put together some movie clips that I enjoy and I hope you'll enjoy. And we've got in store comedy, we've got music, dance, drama, melodrama, so hopefully some real variety. There's no chronological order to these clips. We're going to jump around a bit in terms of time, but they are loosely linked by theme.

And today, the theme that unites all of the clips is Jewish identity on screen. So this is not an objective list of the greatest movie clips ever, it's a purely personal selection. You may not agree with some of the clips I'm showing. I'm sure you'll have better ones. And to be honest, half the fun is going to be deciding what you would've shown if it was your choice. And just before we get started, just last thing, I have included some Woody Allen in the selection, and my view is whatever issues attach to his personal life, Woody Allen is and remains one of the most important Jewish filmmakers, which is why he's in there. So let's get started. Kick off your shoes, grab a bag of pretzels, crack open the Kiddush wine, and let's enjoy.

We start with a simcha. Simcha, as you know, is the Hebrew word for a celebration like a wedding or bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah. But it literally means joy, spiritual joy. And this simcha is the wedding of Tevye's eldest daughter, Tzeitel, to Motel in "Fiddler on the Roof". They smash the glass and the guests begin to dance. In the Hasidic world, dance is one of the most potent roots to worship of God. Dance is seen as something that lifts the spirit, that purifies the soul and unites the community. And the famous bottle dance that we're about to see is, it's actually not, it's not actually a traditional Hasidic dance. It was the creation of Fiddler's choreographer, Jerome Robbins, who by the way was born Jerome Rabinowitz. And Robbins reportedly was at an Orthodox Jewish celebration, and he saw a man just spontaneously entertaining the crowd by placing a bottle on his head and tottering around pretending he was drunk. And this tickled the imagination of Robbins, and he decided to elaborate on it, and this is what he created.

– [Judi] Phil, you haven't shared your screen.

– Oh, I'm sorry. Okay. Whoops.

- [Judi] That's okay, take your time.

- Okay, let me try that again. Technology fail on my part. Right, let's try this. Okay, better? Here we go. Is that right? Here we go.

(A video clip of the 1971 film "Fiddler on the Roof")

(Soft music plays, Hasidic men dancing)

(Hands clapping)

(Fingers snapping)

(Music crescendos)

- [Dancers] Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey! Hey, hey,
hey, hey, hey! Hey! Hey! Hey, hey,
hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey!

(Crowd cheering)

There we go, "Fiddler on the Roof". I thought we'd get off to a good lively start.

For as long as there have been moving pictures, there have been Jews behind the picture. And yet, while Jews had a disproportionate role in shaping Hollywood, certainly in the early years, Jewish content was deliberately muted on screen. The moguls, of course, recognised that the bulk of their audiences were Christian. And so, obviously, they picked their subjects accordingly. But there were always exceptions and some directors, some screenwriters, some actors couldn't help but slowly insert some Yiddish writing into their films. "Taxi" is a 1932 Warner Brothers movie. It was directed by Roy Del Ruth, and it starred a young James Cagney. It's the movie that features Cagney's famous line: "You dirty yellow-bellied rat!" And Jimmy Cagney grew up in an Irish-Jewish neighbourhood on the Lower East Side. So he was surrounded by the rhythms and the cadences of Yiddish. Here he is in a truly delightful scene from "Taxi" 1932. And this starts with an agitated immigrant who's trying to make himself understood to a bemused Irish cop. And all he wants to do is get to Ellis Island.

(A video clip from the 1932 film "Taxi")

- A dentist! (yells in Yiddish)

- [Police officer] Hey, what are you trying to do, kid me? All that I can understand is Ellis Island, Ellis Island, Ellis Island. What about Ellis Island?

- (Matt speaks in Yiddish)
- (Immigrant speaks in Yiddish)
- (Matt speaks in Yiddish)
- (Immigrant speaks in Yiddish)
- (Matt speaks in Yiddish)
- Nolan, what part of Ireland did your folks come from?
- (chuckles) Delancey Street, thank you.

I love that last line. It's vintage Cagney and it's done in such a cheeky way. It's a wonderful performance. One critic who, one Jewish critic who saw the movie and who was versed in Yiddish, said that Cagney spoke Yiddish in that movie with a flawless Litvak accent. But apparently he could also turn on a Galitzianer accent as well. Cagney, I mean there's a story that he used Yiddish in the first meeting he ever had with the four Warner Brothers. The story is that during the initial contract negotiation, the Warners were speaking to each other in mamaloshen so that they could work out how to outmanoeuvre him. And it was to their absolute horror and shock that they heard him reply to them in perfect Yiddish. So I don't know if it's true, but it's a lovely story.

The deployment of Yiddish words or phrases in movies becomes a favourite trick of later Hollywood directors and writers. In the film "Ishtar", which was made in the 1980s, it was written and directed by Elaine May, and it stars... It stars Dustin Hoffman and Warren Beatty. I have to say, and I hope you're not a fan, but it's a completely forgettable film apart from this one scene where Hoffman tries to teach his buddy how to say the word "schmuck".

(A video clip from the 1987 film "Ishtar")

- What a smuck I was.
- Schmuck. It's not smuck, it's schmuck.
- Smuck.
- Schmuck.
- Sss-muck.
- Say shh.

- Shh.
- [Chuck] Now say muck.
- Muck.
- Now say shh and muck together, real fast.
- Smuck.
- [Chuck] Closer.
- You really know the lingo.

While the Jewish influence in early Hollywood was mainly, of course, behind the camera, there was still plenty of action in front of the camera. Fania Borach was born in New York in 1891, and before she was 20 years old, she had changed the name Fania to Fanny, and Borach became Brice. Barbra Streisand, of course, would later immortalise the legendary New York Jewish comedienne in the movie "Funny Girl", which of course is now showing, has been revived on Broadway. And it's a film which, among other terms, Streisand gives a comic rendition of the swan in "Swan Lake". And the comedy of the scene is the contrast between the grace and beauty of the way the swan moves with the earthiness of Brice's Yiddish dialect and humor. So here is Fanny Brice in a movie from 1930, "Be Yourself". And she's showing us how it's done as she dances and she sings to the song "It's Gorgeous to be Graceful".

(A video clip of the 1930 film "Be Yourself")

(Fanny Brice dancing and singing)

- The one consuming passion of my life ♪ ♪
 Is not to play a fiddle or a pipe ♪ ♪
 I want to be a dancer ♪ ♪
 My spirit sets me free ♪ ♪
 And [indistinct] gracefully ♪ ♪
 I long to be so slender and so sleek ♪ ♪
 To show my limb to him, and him,
 and him ♪ ♪
 My dress is a cocoon ♪ ♪
 If I don't breathe I'll swoon ♪ ♪
 Oh, I can't get the darn thing off
 too soon ♪
 Now take it off. No I won't, yes I
 will, no I won't. ♪
 Oh, it's gorgeous to be graceful ♪ ♪
 To fleet, and flock, and fly ♪ ♪
 To make like this and make like

that ♪ ♪
And let the evening breeze go by ♪ ♪
In public I'm Venetian ♪ ♪
But Grecian on the sly ♪ ♪
I bought myself a basket ♪ ♪
It makes me so appealing ♪ ♪
When I dance in my basket ♪ ♪
I show a lot of feeling ♪ ♪
Oh, it's gorgeous to be graceful ♪ ♪
Oh kids, you seen a face full ♪ ♪
It's gorgeous to be graceful ♪ ♪
And to fleet, and flock, and fly ♪

(Audience applauds)

That's Fanny Brice. I mean, she was funny but, you know, you could see, when she chose to, she could herself dance with absolute grace. And her Yiddish dialect is fantastic. Although, in real life, Fanny Brice apparently could hardly speak one word of Yiddish.

So, as times changed, Hollywood changed. And the degree to which Jewish themes became explorable in the movies underwent an enormous shift following World War II and, of course, the Shoah. In the late 1940s, there were the so-called message movies, which among other areas exposed the ills of antisemitism. Movies such as "Gentleman's Agreement" and "Crossfire". And in the 1960s, we start to see a new generation of filmmakers who burst on the scene. People like Mike Nichols and Elaine May, Woody Allen, and of course Mel Brooks. Most of them are born and grow up in the US and so they are more comfortable to explore their Jewishness on-screen.

This is a scene from "Sleeper". So this is Woody Allen's fourth movie, and it's one of his classic early comedies. I don't need to summarise the plot because Woody Allen's character, Miles Monroe, does this himself when he explains his predicament to Diane Keaton's character, and this is what he says: "I'm a clarinet player in 1973, I go into hospital for a lousy operation, I wake up 200 years later and I'm Flash Gordon." So I think that's all you need to know. And, I mean, this is a scene where Miles is taken to a futuristic tailor shop and we get an inkling of what's coming when we see the sign on the door.

(A video clip from the 1973 film "Sleeper")

- Anybody here? I have a new citizen to be outfitted.
- [Robot 1] What do you want, jackets? We got jackets. You want trousers, we got trousers. This is a good time, believe me. We're having a big sale, tremendous.

Positively the lowest prices. Maybe
you need a nice double-knit?
Incidentally, I'm stuck with three
pieces corduroy.

- Something simple.
- [Robot 1] We got simple, we got complicated.
Why do you worry?
- [Robot 2] Who put away that shipment
downstairs?
- [Robot 1] Why do you bother me? I got a
customer.
- [Robot 2] You know what the hell you're
doing? That was all velvet!
- [Robot 1] So it's velvet? Leave me alone,
I got a customer!
- [Robot 2] Why do we need so much velvet?
- [Robot 1] What?
- [Robot 2] When did we come to velvet?
- [Robot 1] I'll talk to you later!
- Look, I'm in a little bit of a rush here,
if it's okay?
- [Robot 2] Talk to me now. You know what
your mistakes are costing me?
- [Robot 1] Drop dead! You want to drop
dead? Okay, step against the screen.

(Miles stands against screen that calculates his
measurements. A jacket slides out of a chute)

(Miles tries on jacket)

- This is terrible.
- [Robot 1] Okay, okay, we'll take it in.

That's "Sleeper". So, 10 points if you can identify the voices of the
two robot tailors. Okay, five points each. So you might get the second

one. The second one is the more famous. That was Jackie Mason. But I would be very impressed for anyone who got the full 10 points because the first tailor is Myron Cohen. "Sleeper", I mean I'm sure most people watching have seen "Sleeper". It's a very funny film and it's also a thoughtful film. But it's not really, it's not really a Jewish film.

Hollywood's first big Jewish film was, of course, the first ever talkie, "The Jazz Singer". And it was made in 1927, it was produced by Darryl Zanuck, and it starred Al Jolson. It's a film about show business and assimilation. The Jew who is torn between the religious beliefs and practise of his upbringing, and the bright lights and fleshpots of the great big world outside. It's a post-enlightenment image that we all know so well: The Jew, whose nose is against the ghetto wall. In this pivotal scene, Jakie Rabinowitz's father, who's the cantor in the synagogue, is dying in his bed. And Jakie, who's played by Al Jolson, who's been estranged from his family ever since he decided to choose to pursue a career in show business, Jakie now has to choose between fulfilling his dream of performing at the opening night of his first show or taking his father's place at the bimah on the eve of Yom Kippur. He chooses the synagogue and he sings Kol Nidre. And I think this is still one of the most moving scenes in the history of cinema.

(A video clip from the 1927 film "The Jazz Singer")

(Singing in Aramaic and Hebrew)

The push and pull of assimilation is dramatised again and again by Hollywood. And this starts in the twenties and thirties in the way that movies depict assimilation. And of course it still, it's a live issue in the 1920s and 1930s for immigrants and the children of immigrants. When David O. Selznick was made head of production at RKO in 1931, he decided to commission a movie called "Symphony of Six Million". "Symphony of Six Million" came out in 1932, a year later. And the name of the film, of course it doesn't refer to the Shoah which was a number of years later. The name of the film refers to what was then the population of New York City. Selznick wanted the film to serve as a mirror to Jewish life, both for immigrants and their assimilated children. It's the story of Felix Klauber, who's a brilliant young doctor from a tight-knit, Jewish family on the Lower East Side. Klauber starts life as an idealist and he builds a clinic to serve the poor and destitute of the Lower East Side. But after a few years, he abandons the clinic and instead upgrades to Park Avenue, where he opens a practise for the affluent and the well-to-do. His childhood sweetheart, Jessica, who's played here by Irene Dunne, walks into Felix's new practise and she's shocked by how far he seems to have come from his early principles. Listen to the music, because it was composed and arranged by Max Steiner and he deliberately grounds it in Jewish idiom. Notice what's playing in the background when we

start this clip.

(A video clip from the 1932 film "Symphony of Six Million")

- You wish to see the doctor?
- Yes.
- Have you an appointment?
- No.
- Well, I... Miss Spencer.
- [Miss Spencer] Yes?
- I'd like to see Dr. Klauber.
- The doctor's very busy just now.
- But if you give him my name I'm sure
he'll see me.
- He never sees anyone except by
appointment.
- But, this is different.
- Well, I'm sorry but I couldn't possibly...
- Okay, Doc. See you next week. He's a king,
huh?
- Yes, he is. You're next, Mrs Warrington.
Hello? Oh, Mrs Darwin. Well, I wondered
if you could send us a check... Just a
moment! Just a moment! Look here young
lady, you can't come breaking in here
like this.
- It's quite all right, Miss Spencer. It's all
right. Hello, Jessica.
- I'm sorry to break in this way.
- Oh, I'm glad you did.
- It's not easy getting in to see the great Dr.
Klauber.

- Oh, well it's, it's just the system. You know, Jessica. Now that you're here, won't you sit down?
- You've changed, Felix.
- Have I? Oh, I don't know that I have.
- You've given up the clinic.
- Well, no I haven't really.
- You've forgotten the ghetto. All your fine promises.
- I'm trying to do the best I can. These people here need me too.
- Don't you realise anyone can take care of them.
- See, what's troubling you, Jessica?
- The million dollar hands of Dr. Felix Klauber. Success, fame. What does it all amount to? These aren't the hands of the real Dr. Klauber. That's a picture in a magazine. They're trained, they're expert, they're deft. But where's the inspiration that once made them great? You've sold your birthright for a mess of pottage after all, haven't you, Felix?

"Sold your birthright for a mess of pottage". Obviously a biblical reference to the story of Jacob and Esau. "Symphony of Six Million" is a good film, and it's an interesting film, but it's not a great film. It's told in the 1930s style of melodrama. And, for me, the film that really captures the human pain of the immigration experience and the terrible difficulties in navigating a new life, that film was made 40 years later. "Hester Street" is a masterpiece of a film. It was made by Joan Micklin Silver, it was her first feature film, and the scene we're about to see is where Gitl, who is played touchingly by Carol Kane, is about to arrive in America. Gitl is nervous as to what she'll find. Her husband, Yankel, has already been in the US for a while. And, I mean, this is of course one of the problems with immigration. That people come, families come at different times, and so some people get assimilated and integrated quicker than others. And the film dramatises the terrible tensions that arise as a result. So, in this scene, Jake, as he now is, he's restyled himself as Jake, he's no longer Yankel, he comes to meet Gitl and their son at Ellis Island, and we play witness to the awkwardness of their reunion. Jake,

embarrassed by her appearance, while Gitl barely recognizes how he's changed.

(A video clip from the 1975 film "Hester Street")

(Jake walks through a large crowd at Ellis Island, sees Gitl)

– [Gitl] Yankel! Yankel! Yankel!

It's a touching scene, but the tension's already there, and as the film unfolds the tension only increases between the couple, and hair becomes their battleground. We saw how shocked Gitl was when she saw that Yankel had shaved off his beard, and there are a couple of scenes in the movie which are painful to watch where Yankel, now Jake, forces Gitl to remove her sheitel so that she can fit into society. As I say it is a truly wonderful film, and if you've never seen it, I urge you to do so. And if you haven't seen it for many years, please go see it again because you'll fall in love with it all over again. The desire to assimilate and be accepted into the mainstream is of course a great target for comedy.

And we're now going to see a clip from "Young Frankenstein". This is the first Mel Brooks clip. And Mel Brooks is having fun here with the idea that Jews will slightly change the pronunciation of their name if they think it will soften their ethnicity. So, I mean, he's well aware of the joke on himself, by the way, because of course Mel Brooks began life as Melvin Kaminsky. In this scene, Gene Wilder, who features in so many of Mel Brooks's great films, Gene Wilder plays Dr. Frankenstein. Or is it steen? And he's met at the train station by Igor, who is played by the one and only Marty Feldman.

(A video clip from the 1974 film "Young Frankenstein")

– [Igor] Dr. Frankenstein.

– Frankenstein.

– You're putting me on.

– No, it's pronounced Frankenstein.

– Do you also say Froderick?

– No, Frederick.

– Well why isn't it Froderick Frankenstein?

– It isn't, it's Frederick Frankenstein.

- I see.
- You must be Igor.
- No, it's pronounced I-gor.
- But they told me it was Igor.
- Well, they were wrong then, weren't they?
- You were sent by Herr Falkstein, weren't you?
- Yes, my grandfather used to work for your grandfather.
- (laughs) How nice.
- Of course the rates have gone up.
- Of course, of course. I'm sure we'll get along splendidly. Oh, sorry, I...
You know, I don't mean to embarrass you but I'm a rather brilliant surgeon. Perhaps I could help you with that hump?
- What hump?
- Let's go.

So "Young Frankenstein". The immigrant experience presented Jews with choices. No one wanted to stay in poverty, but to lift yourself out, you have choices, you can stay within the community, you can leave the community. And there's also the question as to what you're willing to sacrifice, what you'll trade off.

This next film is one of my favourites. It's "Once Upon a Time in America", which was conceived and directed by Sergio Leone and produced by Arnon Milchan, who's an Israeli producer, prolific, prolific Hollywood producer. And again, just a wonderful film. A group of kids grow up together on the Lower East Side and one of them is Deborah and she dreams of fame as an actress. Deborah is the object of adoration of a character who I think has got one of the best names ever in movies, Noodles Aaronson. And as an adult Noodles is played by Robert De Niro. But here he is as a young man, and he's decided that his path out of the ghetto is going to be as a gangster. So it's Pesach, it's the Passover Festival, and there's a custom in many communities to read from the Shir HaShirim on Passover. That's The Song of Songs which is the love poem that's traditionally associated with King Solomon. This is the most tender scene of the movie, and

it's where the young Deborah reads her own version of Shir HaShirim to Noodles. And she does it in such a way as to express both her love for him, but also her disdain of his choices.

(A video clip from the 1984 film "Once Upon a Time in America")

- What are you doing?
- Give me a drink.
- We're closed. Nice people don't drink
on Pesach, they go to the synagogue.
- So what are you doing here?
- Somebody's got to keep an eye on the
place. There are a lot of little
thieves out there. One of them could
get into your house.
- Especially if you leave the door open.
- You can pray here too. Here or in the
synagogue, to God it's the same
difference. Come over here and sit down.
- My beloved is white and ruddy. His skin's as
the most fine gold. His cheeks are as a
bed of spices, even though he hasn't washed
since last December. His eyes are as the eyes
of doves. His body is as bright ivory. His
legs are as pillars of marble, and pants so
dirty they stand by themselves. He is
altogether lovable, but he'll always be a
two-bit punk so he'll never be my beloved,
what a shame.

For those of you who are movie buffs, you might recognise Deborah's played by Jennifer Connelly here. This was her debut movie role.

In films that were made from the 1980s onwards, we start to see more of a growing interest in what it actually means to be Jewish. Again, I mean, even though Woody Allen's films are not predominantly about the Jewish experience, they often have scenes that explore it. And this is a scene from "Hannah and Her Sisters", which was made in 1986. Woody Allen's character, Mickey, is disillusioned with life, and so he figures that the answer is to join another religion. And then he naively approaches his parents, asking for their blessing. So let's see how that works out.

(A video clip from the 1986 film "Hannah and Her Sisters")

- Now, why do you think that you would like to convert to Catholicism?
- Well because, you know, I've got to have something to believe in, otherwise life is just meaningless.
- I understand, but why did you make the decision to choose the Catholic faith?
- Well, you know, first of all because it's a very beautiful religion and it's, it's a strong religion. It's very well-structured. You know, I'm talking now, incidentally, about the, the against school prayer, pro-abortion, anti-nuclear wing.
- [Priest] So at the moment you don't believe in God?
- No, and I, I want to, you know, I'm willing to do anything I'll, you know, I'll dye Easter eggs if it works. I, I need some evidence. I got to have some proof. You know what, if I can't believe in God, then I don't think life is worth living.
- It means making a very big leap.
- Yes, well can, can you help me?
- [Mickey's mother] (sobs) What!? Oh my Father!
- I don't understand, I thought you would be happy.
- [Mickey's father] How can we be happy?
- Because I never thought of God in my life. Now I'm giving it serious thought.
- [Mickey's father] But Catholicism? Why not your own people?
- Because I got off to a wrong foot with my own thing, you know? But, but, but, but I needed dramatic change in my life.

- [Mickey's father] You're going to believe in Jesus Christ?
- I know it sounds funny, but I'm going to try.
- [Mickey's father] But why? We raised you as a Jew!
- So? Just 'cause I was born that way. You know, I'm old enough to make a mature decision.
- [Mickey's father] But, why Jesus Christ? Why, for instance, shouldn't you become a Buddhist?
- A Bu- that's totally alien to me. Look you're getting on in years, right? Aren't you afraid of dying?
- [Mickey's father] Why should I be afraid?
- 'Cause you won't exist!
- [Mickey's father] So?
- That thought doesn't terrify you?
- [Mickey's father] Who thinks about such nonsense? Now I'm alive. When I'm dead, I'll be dead.
- I don't understand, aren't you frightened?
- [Mickey's father] Of what? I'll be unconscious.
- Yeah I know, but never to exist again.
- [Mickey's father] How do you know?
- Well it certainly doesn't look promising.
- [Mickey's father] Who knows what'll be?
I'll either be unconscious or I won't. If not, I'll deal with it then.
I'm not going to worry now about what's going to be when I'm unconscious.
- Mom, come out!

- [Mickey's mother] Of course there's a God, you idiot. You don't believe in God?
- But if there's a God then why, why is there so much evil in the world? Just on a simplistic level why, why were there Nazis?
- [Mickey's mother] Tell him, Max.
- [Mickey's father] How the hell do I know why there were Nazis? I don't know how the can opener works.

It's a brilliantly comic scene, but Allen has a serious point there. His parents are deeply, deeply culturally Jewish. But when the character of Mickey pushes them as to why he shouldn't change religion, they struggle to give him any real kind of an answer.

A movie that I think really tries to go to the heart of what it means to be Jewish is "The Chosen". "The Chosen" was based on the 1967 book by Chaim Potok of the same name, and the film is set in the aftermath of World War II. It's driven by two relationships. The first one is a friendship between Danny, the Haredi boy, and as we can see from the still here, Reuven, who's his Modern Orthodox counterpart. And the other relationship is a son-father relationship between Danny and his father, the rebbe of the community, who's played by Rod Steiger. But the centre of the film, as I say, is this question as to what it means to be Jewish and what it means to be a Jew. Early in the film, Danny offers his own version of an answer. Danny is an illui, so he's possessed of a dazzling intellect, and he espouses a view of Judaism which places intellect above all else. And I'm going to play this clip, but apologies in advance for the Spanish subtitles, which we can probably do without.

(A video clip from the 1981 film "The Chosen")

- What do you dream about, Reuven?
- I dream about a lot of stuff.
- Do you remember any of your dreams?
- Yeah, sometimes. I had a very, I had a very funny dream the other night. I dreamt there was this king and he was dancing around my bed and he was dressed up in a clown suit.
- Do you know the Hebrew for king?

- Of course: Melech.
- And for clown or fool?
- Lemech.
- The word for king, melech, begins with an M and then an L, whereas the word for fool, lemech, begins with the L and then the M.
- So what?
- In Hebrew, the word for intellect is moch. Begins with an M. And the word for heart, the seed of passion?
- Lev.
- Lev, that's correct. Begins with an L. So, as you see Reuven, if you put the M in front of the L, the head in front of the heart, then you're a king. But if you put the L in front of the M, the heart in front of the head, then you're a fool.

Towards the end of the movie, Reuven and Danny receive a summons to meet the rebbe. So Danny, as we saw, early in the movie, is very much of a mind that the intellect rules everything. And Danny goes on something of a journey during the movie. By now, Danny has discovered the city library, and without his father's knowledge, or so he thinks, Danny has become enthralled with the secular subject of psychology. So the two boys have been summoned by the rebbe, and they're not sure what to expect, and the rebbe invites them to sit down.

(Another video clip from "The Chosen")

- Reuven, I'm going to tell you something. When my Daniel was four years old, I saw him, he had a book. He didn't read the book, he swallowed it. He swallowed it like one would swallow food, you know? And then he, he came to me and then he told me this story that was in the book. This story was about a man whose life was filled with, with suffering and with pain. But that didn't, it didn't move Daniel.

You know Daniel, Daniel was happy. He was happy because he realised for the first time in his life what a memory he had. Master of the universe, I cried, what have you done to me? You give me a mind like this for a son. A heart I need for a son. A soul, I need for a son. Compassion and mercy I need for my son. And above all, the strength to carry pain. That I need for my son. How was I to do this? I mean...that was the question. How was I to...to teach him? How was I going to be able to do this to the son that I love, and not lose the love of my son? When Danny was young, I used to hold him close. We used to laugh together, we used to play together, we used to whisper secrets to each other. We played. Then as he became older and he became indifferent to people less brilliant than he thought he was, I saw what I had to do. I had to teach my Daniel that way. Through the wisdom and the pain of silence. As my father did to me. I was forced to push him away from me. He became very frightened, he became bewildered. But slowly he began to understand that other people are alone in this world too. Other people are suffering, other people are, are carrying pain. And then, in this silence we had between us, gradually... his self-pride, his feeling of... superiority, his... indifference began to... to fade away. And he learned through the wisdom... and the pain of silence that a mind without a heart is nothing.

"A mind without a heart is nothing." The rebbe hasn't quite finished his speech and he ends with these words: "You see, now I'm not afraid. I have no fear because my Daniel is a Tzadik, he's a righteous man and the world needs a righteous man."

We started today with a scene from "Fiddler on the Roof", a moment of joy in a film largely about loss, insecurity, and persecution. And so I think it's fitting that we end with a scene of persecution, but one that's performed in the most joyous, the most outrageous way imaginable. Interviewed on "60 Minutes" in 2001, Mel Brooks told the interviewer, Mike Wallace that, quote: "I think there's a lot of anger

and antisemitism way down deep beneath all the quick Jewish jokes that I do." His humor has always had a serious purpose, and he was asked in the same interview about the way he represents Adolph Hitler. And he said, "You have to bring him down with ridicule because if you stand on a soapbox and you match him with rhetoric, you're just as bad as he is. But if you can make people laugh at him then you're one up on him." So here he is doing much the same thing for another deeply dark period in Jewish history, the Spanish Inquisition. We begin with a corny, vaudeville joke about Torquemada, then segue into a song and dance routine featuring tortured rabbis, tap dancing monks, and swimming nuns. And there's a thrilling climax as a giant menorah rises from the water in a scene that would put Busby Berkeley to shame.

So I make no apologies for showing all seven glorious minutes of "The Spanish Inquisition", and thank you everyone for listening, and for those of you who are still here afterwards, we'll take some questions. So please sit back and just enjoy.

(A video clip from the 1981 film "The History of the World, Part One")

– Heed! Now enters His Holiness, Torquemada,
the Grand Inquisitor of the Spanish
Inquisition. Torquemada, do not employ
him for compassion. Torquemada, do not
beg him for forgiveness. Torquemada,
do not ask him for mercy. Let's face
it, you can't Torquemada anything!

– Let all those who wish to confess their evil
ways and to accept and embrace the
true church convert now or forever
burn in hell, for now begins the
Inquisition!

(Torquemada and monks dancing)

– ♪ The Inquisition ♪ ♪ Let's begin ♪ ♪
The Inquisition ♪ ♪ Look out, sin ♪ ♪
We have a mission to convert the Jews ♪ ♪
Jew ja Jew ja Jew ja Jews ♪ ♪
We're going to teach them ♪ ♪
Wrong from right ♪ ♪
We're going to to help them ♪ ♪
See the light ♪ ♪
And make an offer that they can't refuse ♪ ♪
That the Jews just can't refuse ♪ ♪
Confess ♪ ♪ Confess, confess ♪ ♪
Don't be boring ♪ ♪ Say yes ♪ ♪
Say yes, say yes ♪ ♪ Don't be dull ♪ ♪
A fact ♪ ♪ You're ignoring ♪ ♪

It's better to lose your skullcap than
your skull ♪ ♪
Oy oy gevalt ♪ ♪ The Inquisition ♪ ♪
What a show ♪ ♪ The Inquisition ♪ ♪
Here we go. ♪ ♪ We know you're wishin'
that we'd go away ♪ ♪
But the Inquisition's here and it's
here to stay ♪ ♪
The Inquisition, oh boy ♪ ♪
The Inquisition, what a joy ♪ ♪
The Inquisition, oy oy ♪ ♪
I was sitting in a temple ♪ ♪
I was minding my own business ♪ ♪
I was listening to a lovely Hebrew mass ♪ ♪
Then these papus persons plunge in ♪ ♪
And they throw me in a dungeon ♪ ♪
And they shove a red hot poker up my ass ♪ ♪
Is that considerate? ♪ ♪
Is that polite? ♪ ♪
And not a tube of Preparation H in sight ♪ ♪
I'm sittin', flickin' chickens ♪ ♪
And I'm lookin' through the pickins' ♪ ♪
And suddenly these guys bring down my balls ♪ ♪
I didn't even know them ♪ ♪
And they grabbed me by the scrotum ♪ ♪
And they started playing ping pong with my
balls ♪ ♪
Oy, the agony ♪ ♪
Ooh, the shame ♪ ♪
They make my privates public for a game ♪ ♪
The Inquisition ♪ ♪
What a show ♪ ♪
The Inquisition ♪ ♪
Here we go ♪ ♪
We know you're wishin' that we'd go away ♪ ♪
But the Inquisition's here and it's here to ♪ ♪
Hey Torquemada, what do you say? ♪ ♪
I just got back from the auto-da-fé ♪ ♪
Auto-da-fé? ♪ ♪
What's an auto-da-fé? ♪ ♪
It's what you oughtn't to do but you do
anyway ♪ ♪
Skit skat voodely vat tootin de day ♪ ♪
Will you convert? ♪ ♪ No, no, no, no ♪ ♪
Will you confess? ♪ ♪ No, no, no, no ♪ ♪
Will you revert? ♪ ♪ No, no, no, no ♪ ♪
Will you say yes? ♪ ♪ No, no, no, no ♪ ♪
Now I ask in a nice way, I said pretty
please ♪ ♪
I bent their ears, now I'll work on

their knees! ♪ ♪

(Prisoner screams)

Hey, Torquemada, walk this way ♪ ♪
We got a little game that you might want
to play ♪ ♪ So pull that handle,
try your luck ♪ ♪
Who knows, Torque, you might win a buck? ♪

- [Torquemada] All right!

- Put it in the car.

- In the car.

- In the car. ♪ How we doing? ♪ ♪
Any converts today? ♪ ♪ Not a one ♪ ♪
Nay, nay, nay ♪ ♪
We've flattened their fingers ♪ ♪
We've branded their buns ♪ ♪
Nothing is working! ♪ ♪
Send in the nuns! ♪

(Bells chiming)

- Aah!

- [Prisoner] Oy!

(Choir singing)

(Torquemada and monks dancing)

- ♪ The Inquisition ♪ ♪
What a show ♪ ♪ The Inquisition ♪ ♪
Here we go ♪ ♪
We know you're wishin' that we'd
go away ♪ ♪
So, c'mon you Muslims and you
Jews ♪ ♪
We got big news for all of yous ♪ ♪
You better change your point of views
today ♪ ♪
'Cause the Inquisition's here ♪ ♪
And it's here to ♪ ♪ Stay! ♪

- Okay?

- [Judi] Oh, I had a good giggle as well, Phil.

- [Wendy] Thank you so much, Phil. That was absolutely brilliant. Outstanding!

- You've got to love Mel Brooks, haven't you?

- [Wendy] Yeah, it's incredible. The whole presentation was incredible.

- Well, you know, I just love the fact that he's there, smiling at the camera, and he's actually repeating the refrain "The Inquisition's here to stay."

- [Wendy] Quite shocking actually.

- Shall we have a quick look at-

- [Wendy] Yes, thank you very, very much. Thank you.

Q & A and Comments

- So we've got some lovely comments here.

Jonathan Matthews says, "As a boy I adored "The Three Stooges", I had no idea they were Jewish until I asked my mother why Larry greeted Moe as lantzman."

That's great.

And Clive Overlander says, "Please get a copy of "How to Shoot a Jewish Western". It's really worth a look."

Will do, thank you very much for that, Clive.

Amanda says her father went to New York City on business and brought back all the Myron Cohen records as CDs, absolutely wonderful treasure trove.

Well, I hope you got your five points there, Amanda.

And Michael Lowenstein says, or is it it stein says, "Thanks for the Jolson singing Kol Nidre. The only time we see a photo of "The Jazz Singer" is Jolson in blackface."

It's very, very true.

And just one more. "I really understand your euphoria at seeing Jewish topics in the movies. When my family immigrated to Canada from England in the 1950s, I remember the pleasure of hearing Jewishisms in the

movies, including dying Jewish soldiers saying the Shema as they passed away. I think one of the movies was "Iwo Jima".

That's from David Sefton.

So thank you everyone. As I say, take two will be in early September. And I hope everyone enjoys the lighter month of August when I know Wendy and Trudy have lined up some real goodies over the course of the next month. So bye bye everyone.