



RABBI KEN SPIRO

WORLD HISTORIAN WITH HUMOR AND HEART

Rabbi Ken Spiro's quick-paced, humorous style catches and keeps an audience's interest; his ability to explain deep concepts clearly makes an impact that lasts long after his presentations.

Rabbi Spiro is a Senior Lecturer and Researcher for Aish HaTorah, Jerusalem. He is also a licensed tour guide from the Israel Ministry of Tourism.

Rabbi Spiro graduated from Vassar College with a BA in Russian Language and Literature, and did graduate studies at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow. He has an MA in History from the Vermont College of Norwich University, and Rabbinic Ordination from Yeshiva Aish HaTorah in Jerusalem.

He has appeared on numerous radio and television programs, including B.B.C. Radio and TV, The National Geographic Channel, The Discovery Channel, The History Channel, Channel 4 England, and Arutz Sheva-Israel National Radio. He is the author of *WorldPerfect – The Jewish Impact on Civilization* (HCI books); *Crash Course in Jewish History* (Targum Press); and *Destiny – Why a Tiny Nation Plays Such a Huge Role in History* (Geffen Publishing House).

Born and raised in the U.S., Rabbi Spiro has lived in Israel since 1982. He served in a combat infantry unit in the IDF. A father of five children, he currently lives in Jerusalem.

Defying History's Logic

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The first prime minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion once quipped, "In Israel, in order to be a realist, you must believe in miracles." Ben Gurion was far from being religious, but he knew his Jewish history. As the first leader of a Jewish state in two thousand years and with his profound understanding of both the Bible and four thousand years of Jewish history, he saw something that is hiding in plain sight: The survival and flourishing of the Jews violates all the laws of reason. From the beginning to the present, it is full of contradictory, seemingly impossible, and even miraculous events. There should be no Jewish people and no Jewish state. They are objectively inexplicable without a belief in a higher power involved in guiding human affairs.

Twice in ancient history Jews were exiled from their homeland and were scattered to foreign lands. They suffered slavery, dispersion, forced conversion, execution, ethnic cleansing, and antisemitism – the most persistent, irrational, and violent hatred in history. This should have finished them off long ago. Not only did they survive, they outlasted all the oppressors, enemies, and empires that tried to destroy them: the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Spanish, Ottomans, Nazis, and the Soviet Union.

If their survival weren't miraculous enough, the impact of Jews and Jewish ideas in such a hostile environment is even more inexplicable. Outstanding Jewish personalities such as Einstein and Freud have transformed the world. The 0.2% of the population that is Jewish has won 22% of all the Nobel Prizes since 1901!

For 2,000 years, from the birth of Abraham to the birth of Christianity, the Hebrews were the only people who believed in one God and one absolute standard of morality. Against all odds and millennia of hostility, ethical monotheism transformed the world spiritually, morally, and politically. The Jews' dauntless idea of one God became the foundation for Christianity, Islam, and modern liberal democracy.

In 1948, three years after one-third of world Jewry had been murdered in the Holocaust, this miniscule remnant returned and re-established a state in its ancestral homeland. This was unprecedented. Born in a desert wasteland, with no natural resources, Israel was surrounded by hostile nations who attacked it the moment it was born. For more than 75 years, it has been trapped in an endless cycle of war, terrorism, and existential threats. Yet it has prospered to become the home of half the Jews in the world. Israel, the modern nation, is the most supernatural "cherry" on the "miraculous cake" of Jewish history.

Perhaps Alexander Hamilton said it best:

"Progress of the Jews... from their earliest history to the present time has been and is entirely out of the ordinary course of human affairs. Is it not then a fair conclusion that the cause also is an extraordinary one – in other words, that it is the effect of some great providential plan?"