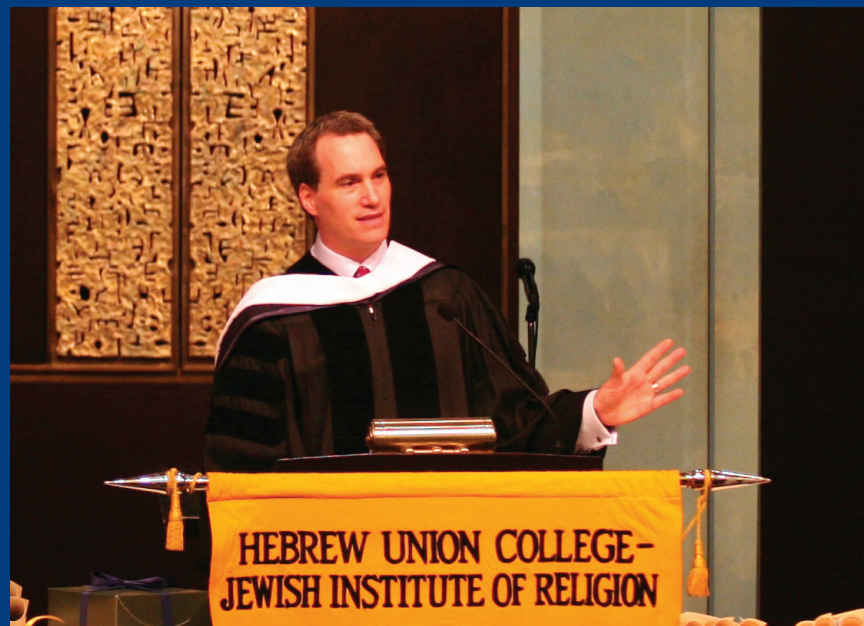


HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-
JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
CLASS OF 2009
COMMENCEMENT GRADUATION
ADDRESS BY DOV SEIDMAN
APRIL 30, 2009 NEW YORK



Founded in 1875, HUC-JIR is the nation's oldest institution of higher Jewish education and the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. Founder and CEO of LRN and author of "*HOW: Why HOW We Do Anything Means Everything...in Business (and in Life)*" Dov Seidman presented the commencement address to the Class of 2009 and was honored with the Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa.

OPENING REMARKS BY RABBI DAVID ELLENSON

It is with great sense of pleasure that I introduce our speaker today, who I will now refer to as Dr. Seidman. Dov Seidman is an extraordinary individual in every way. The fact that he has agreed to come here today to speak to you, our graduates, is a fulfillment of a goal for me in many ways. I have had a dream that Dov would accept this invitation and come to us here in New York to speak on this occasion.

I first met Dov a number of years ago when I was his teacher through the Wexner Heritage Foundation. I found him then and I find him now an extraordinary individual. He is a person who grew up both in California and Israel. He is an individual, who received his bachelor's and master's degrees from UCLA in philosophy. He also received a master's degree in ethical philosophy from Oxford University and his law degree from the Harvard Law School.

Dov has had an extraordinary career by every measure that we could possibly conceive. He established LRN back in the early 1990s. But what he has done that is most significant is that he's been able to fuse his passion for morality and for ethics with the very essence of this *yiddishe soul* that beats deep within him.

Through the work of his company LRN and his book "HOW," he has reached more than 25 million people and

corporations throughout the world. I'm sure you're going to hear in a moment precisely his message and what it is that we hope to do: How do we take the values and teachings of our tradition and make them manifest in the world? How we can use our values to help repair the world that we know is all too shattered?

I had the privilege of performing the wedding of Dov and his lovely and intelligent wife Maria. He is the best of friends. But more than that he's a significant individual whose work on "HOW" has guided me in so many ways in these days.

One of the messages that Dov Seidman teaches is that, "it's not only *what* you do that matters, but that perhaps even more significantly, *how* you do it," and it's how we go about accomplishing the goals and meeting the tasks and the challenges of the day that ultimately confronts us all.

Dov has been my guide and mentor. He is my friend. And today he is not only an alumnus of the Hebrew Union College, but he is our teacher, who will instruct all of us.

I now invite my friend, a gifted scholar, and a person who has helped transform the corporate world Dov Seidman to this podium to address you on this Graduation Day...

Rabbi Ellenson, faculty, administration, parents, friends, alumni recipients of honorary degrees, and, above all, graduates of the Class of 2009. Thank you for giving me the honor of appearing here today.

Rabbi Homolka, I admire you for your progressive vision of Judaism and for your moral courage in realizing it. I feel a special connection to your work, as my father was a Holocaust survivor.

Rabbi Thal, we are grateful for your lifetime of service to the Reform Movement. Barbara Friedman, Norman Cohen, Arron Panken and Shirley Idelson, this fine institution of Jewish learning has been greatly enhanced by your extraordinary leadership.

One of my life's great privileges is to be a student of Rabbi Ellenson. Among the valuable lessons I have learned from Rabbi Ellenson is the expression from the Mishnah -- "Aseh L'Cha Rav, U'K'nei Lecha Chaver" -- "Make for yourself a rabbi and acquire for yourself a friend." David, I'm honored to call you my rabbi and blessed to call you a dear friend.

As I look out, I can only imagine what some of you must be thinking... In the midst of this great economic crisis -- one that was caused to a significant degree by the morally reckless behavior of business people, particularly of CEOs -- they brought in a CEO from L.A. of all places to talk to us about moral values?

This irony is not lost on me. But by the end of my speech, I hope you come to see that this CEO and the HUC graduates who fill this beautiful sanctuary have more in common than you might first think.

As Rabbi Ellenson mentioned, I have received a few academic degrees from institutions I greatly respect. But none mean as much to me as this degree from this great institution. This one encompasses my life journey and represents my beliefs, passions, and identity.

As I stand here on this Bimah, I can't help but think about my parents, who were both Zionists. Israel, where I spent 10 years as a child. My bar mitzvah at the Wailing Wall. This tradition has nourished me. It is who I am. It inspires me.

Standing here, I also find myself thinking of the great teachers who blessed my life and ignited in me a passion for learning that has made this day possible. I share this at the outset to remind each of you, as teachers, of the power you possess to influence the lives of your students.

That being said, if any of my high school teachers could see me now, they would surely be surprised. I graduated high school with two A's: one in Phys Ed the other in Auto Shop. I got a 970 on the SAT. I took it again and my score increased dramatically to 980.

"By the end of my speech, I hope you come to see that this CEO and the HUC graduates who fill this beautiful sanctuary have more in common than you might first think."

It turned out that I had dyslexia. Somehow I talked my way into UCLA. I was accepted very late and because all the other classes were full, and I found myself taking Remedial English and Philosophy.

I fell in love with Philosophy. With my professors' encouragement, Philosophy helped me overcome dyslexia. Unable to read hundreds of pages, Philosophy rewarded me for the careful consideration of one idea and my disability transformed into a strength.

Philosophy is also at the heart of my company, LRN. Since long BE -- Before Enron -- we have been applying philosophy to the rough-and-tumble world of business. Just as you are "Marbitzey Torah" -- Democratizers of the Torah -- or in the Applied Theology Business, we are in

the Applied Ethics Business.

Your jobs as rabbis, cantors, and teachers will be to take the teachings and values of the Jewish tradition and make them live in the lives of people. We teach millions of employees how to 'do the right thing' and leaders to inspire principled performance in business. So as you can see, my business is an extension of Philosophy. I like to think of myself as a Philosopher in a suit. Come to think of it, a Jewish Philosopher in a suit.

"[The financial crisis] refocuses our attention on what, I believe, is a central question in our lives: How do we create real and sustainable value for ourselves and for others?"

Don't worry, I'm not about to turn this into a Philosophy lecture. Instead, I am going to draw from my own experience in business to talk about the kind of leadership we need in the world today.

Coming to New York, I can't help but think about the financial crisis. This city has had a financial Katrina. And while New York is the epicenter, the reverberations are everywhere, painfully affecting the lives of people who await your comfort. It also refocuses our attention on what, I believe, is a central question in our lives: How do we create real and sustainable value for ourselves and for others?

For me, as I am sure for you, this question touches the deepest existential relationships I have. I am so proud to be joined today by my wife Maria, a Russian immigrant, my mother-in-law Vicky, and my sister-in-law Michele. It is especially meaningful that my siblings Ari and Goldee are here with me.

There are two other people I wish could be here today. One is my mother, Sydelle, Zichrona L'vracha, in Hebrew Tova, who was by any standard a force of nature whose devotion to her

children and whose love for the State of Israel knew no bounds. Her presence is palpable for me in this sanctuary. The other is my beautiful son who is just one and a half years old. He is named after my mother. His name is Lev Tov.

I learned as a kid that names mean a lot. My brother Ari and I got into the Jerusalem Zoo for free because we were named after animals: Ari the lion and Dov the bear.

In Russian, Lev means lion. In Hebrew, as most of you know, Lev means heart. Tov, of course, means good. We hope that Lev Tov will grow up to be lion-hearted — that he will roam confidently through the world. And of course we hope and pray that he will be good-hearted.

In Judaism there is deeper meaning to my son's name, Lev Tov.

Some of you may know the story from Pirkei Avot in which Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai asked his disciples, "What is the good path to which a person should cleave?" One student says, "A Good eye." The second: "A good friend." The third: "A good neighbor." The fourth: "The outcome of a deed." Finally, his student Rabbi Elazar says: "Lev tov – a good heart," to which Rabban Yochanan responds: "I prefer the words of Elazar, for his words include all of your words." If you have Lev Tov, a good heart, the rest is commentary.

Judaism is about Shem Tov, having a good name. I believe we gave our son a good name. But, it is not enough to have a good name. He has to earn his good name.

As the CEO of an ethics company that operates in a world of unprecedented transparency, I know my son faces a difficult challenge. My son has to earn a good name in a world where everything he says and does on Facebook or MySpace will be easily and forever accessible by others. And wherever he goes, his name will arrive before he gets there.

In this world, earning a good name is not so much about *What* we do, but rather about *How* we do it. *How* we behave. *How* we lead. And *How* a rabbi or cantor or an educator engage their congregation, their students, or persons in need.

“Now more than ever, people need Inspirational Leadership from You. ”

This idea of *How* is a Jewish idea. The Talmud testifies to that. For three years, it is said, there was a dispute between Beit Hillel, the followers of Rabbi Hillel, and Beit Shammai, the followers of Rabbi Shammai. Both argued that their ideas were in agreement with Halacha, Jewish law. Then came a Bat Kol, or heavenly voice, which said. “Eilu v’eilu divre Elohim Chayim hem.” “These and these” – meaning both of their words – “were the words of the living God.” However, the Talmud ruled that the law is in agreement with the house of Hillel.

Yet, if both got their words right, what entitled Beit Hillel to have the law fixed according to its rulings? The reason, the Talmud states, was that its rabbis were kindly and modest; they studied the rulings of Shammai as well as their own. They were even so humble as to mention Shammai’s teachings first.

It was not *What* Hillel said that inspired the Jewish tradition to view him as an exemplar of human conduct. Rather it is *How* he behaved and *How* treated others. He was an Inspirational Leader.

Now more than ever, people need Inspirational Leadership from You.

What do I mean by Inspirational Leadership?

Across America this month, graduation speakers will talk about Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela or Abraham Joshua Heschel as they urge graduates to go out into

the world and make a difference. I admire all of those leaders, but I want to tell you about a leader who has changed the way I think about leadership. His name is Krazy George Henderson.

Back in 1981, in the stands of the sold-out Oakland Coliseum, Krazy George had a vision. He was a professional cheerleader, a manic Robin Williams character with an Albert Einstein hairdo, banging on a drum, doing the usual chants like “Here we go Oakland ... here we go.” On this October afternoon, his beloved A’s were in the playoffs against the New York Yankees, and he imagined the crowd rising in a giant wave of connected human energy. Krazy George invented the Human Wave.

The Human Wave is an extraordinary act. Masses of people from different walks of life. Soccer moms with their kids. Rowdy bleacher bums. Executives in luxury box seats. Coming together with a common goal: to help the home team win.

The Wave is a metaphor for what a diverse group of people can accomplish when they share a vision and values.

As Jewish leaders, we want to make waves from the Bimah, in the classroom, in a counseling situation, in a hospital, and in Sunday school. Think of how a rabbi can inspire a congregation to engage in Tikkun Olam by repairing a house in an impoverished neighborhood, making waves not only in the Jewish community but beyond. Think of how a teacher can lead a class discussion about the meaning of “Tzedakah” that spills out into the hallway, and then into the homes of the students and out to the broader world. Think of how a cantor can begin with a single note and inspire a congregation in a sanctuary as big as this one, not just to sing along, but to connect with one another, to form community.

What can we learn from how Krazy George was able to create a wave so powerful that even those who came to root for the Yankees stood up

with the A's?

He focused on How he connected with those around him. He shared his vision with passion and conviction so that others could believe in it and make it their own.

What Krazy George understood is that human waves are not about exercising power over people. They are about generating power through people.

I'm sure the football fans here remember the Super Bowl in 2007 when Tom Coughlin led the New York Giants to an improbable victory. What you might not know is that Tom Coughlin tapped into the power of Inspirational Leadership.

Despite an impressive, 12-year record, critics attacked his inability to connect and unite players. They referred to him as an "autocratic tyrant" and a "distant, dictatorial figure." He was nearly fired. So, he changed his leadership habits.

Rather than screaming louder at players, Coughlin sought to forge meaningful connections with them. Instead of making his team run until they became sick, he instituted a player "leadership council." He regularly huddled with the players to gauge their concerns and to learn about their families and lives away from football.

While Coughlin's goal, to win the Super Bowl, remained the same, he changed How he went about it. Coughlin enlisted his players in shared beliefs about being champions and in values that would guide How they work together.

An old dog not only learned a new trick, he had the courage to transform himself, and he transformed his team in the process.

While Tom Coughlin is Irish, his approach was rather Jewish.

In this regard, there is a Hassidic tale that says that "one should observe How a master ties his

shoes." The lesson being that no behavior is insignificant.

As Leaders in a Tradition that proclaims that every single person is created B'tzelem Elohim – in the image of God – and therefore possessed of infinite dignity . . . YOU, more than anyone, must remind people that every act and deed possesses the power to profoundly impact others.

The CEO of Beth Israel Hospital, Paul Levy, understood this when he recently asked his staff for input in the face of impending layoffs. Reflecting on the hospital's mission to provide excellent care, he asked them to consider not only whether they could do this without housekeepers and food service people, but if they should.

The result?

His email box filled up with suggestions from employees about how to save money. The heads of 13 medical departments donated 350,000 dollars to avoid layoffs. Levy has been praised for his leadership. But he recently wrote that such praise misses the point: "Our staff are the heroes . . . if they did not have the values . . . nothing I could do would matter." Through How he connected with his colleagues, Levy inspired them to tap into their values which, in turn, resulted in an inspired solution.

So why am I telling you these stories about Inspirational Leadership? Today, to tomorrow's Jewish leaders? What do these three inspirational leaders understand?

"What Krazy George understood is that human waves are not about exercising power *over* people. They are about generating power *through* people."

They understand that the source of their power to influence others is shifting.

Throughout most of human history, the sources of power were finite. In the land-based economy of the middle ages, the more land people owned, the more rent they could charge. In the capital-based economy spawned by the industrial age, the more capital people had, the more interest they could charge. Money talked. The same is true for oil and minerals. In these zero-sum economies, people accumulated and hoarded the sources of power to force their will upon those who had less. And we developed leadership habits – such as command-and-control, divide-and-conquer – which worked well enough ... for a time.

No more! In today's knowledge economy, the sources of power – information and ideas – are infinite. Google gives them away for free. Since we can't hoard information, old leadership habits are becoming less effective. Leadership habits are shifting from command-and-control to connect-and-collaborate, from exerting power over people, to generating waves through them.

As the source of power is shifting, leaders are also coming to understand that How they guide behavior must shift with it.

There are three ways to generate human connection and conduct: you can Coerce, Motivate, or Inspire. Coercion: Get me the memo by 5 O'Clock. My way or the highway. "Just get it done, I don't care How." Motivation: "If you get it done, you'll get a bigger bonus." Coercive or Motivational leaders use external objects, carrots and sticks, to efficiently get performance OUT of people and connection with them, and to otherwise get people to play by a set of rules.

In our now power-through world, we are discovering the limits of carrots and sticks and learning that we can't write enough rules to get the behaviors we want. If the only reason I work at a company is for a paycheck, I'll leave when I'm offered a bigger one. If the only reason I buy from one company is their price, then I'll switch my loyalty if someone else sells it for less.

Motivation turns out to be an expensive way to propel behavior, particularly in a recession when there are fewer carrots to go around.

That leads me to the third and, I believe, most powerful form of human influence: Inspiration. The first two letters in "Inspiration" are 'IN' signifying that the conduct is intrinsic. Whereas coercion and motivation happens to you, inspiration happens in you. An inspired person is guided by their own beliefs, in pursuit of a vision they believe is worthy of their dedication, and in fidelity to values they deem to be fundamental.

Values are at the root of Inspiration. Values are efficient: a handful help us navigate infinite situations better than any rule book. They are timeless: giving us strength to be consistent even though the pressures of life tell us to be situational. They are enduring: inspiring us to be principled however inconvenient, unpopular or dangerous that might be. Values elevate us to act beyond what we can do, to embrace what we should do.

"Inspirational Leaders are mindful of the Paradox of Hedonism, the philosophical idea that if you pursue happiness directly it eludes you. But if you passionately pursue a higher, more meaningful purpose, you can achieve happiness."

What so many are just coming to understand, our 3000-year Tradition has always recognized ...The infinite power of values: "Devarim she Yotzim min Halev, Nichnasim el Halev" or "words that come from the heart, enter the heart of another."

Either by dint of necessity or foresight, Jewish leaders and Institutions have sought a self-sustaining way to generate elevated and enlightened conduct. To enter the hearts of others. To inspire waves across generations.

Since 1875, this special institution has been doing just that. But I understand that this great

legacy is being challenged as HUC confronts the harsh realities forcing the College to restructure in order to fulfill its mission.

How fortunate we are at this critical time that – among us – is an exemplar of Inspirational Leadership. His name is Rabbi David Ellenson who in the image of Hillel can root us in our deepest values. I have spoken with Rabbi Ellenson and read his communications to the HUC community about a common path forward.

Let me share what one student wrote in response reflecting, what I believe, are the sentiments of students, staff, and alumni: “I want to thank you for the way in which the College has been transparent in communicating about its decisions. I have come to view HUC as the model of what it means to face our challenge with integrity and compassion, reflecting the Jewish values that I aspire to emulate. I, for one, am grateful for this model of leadership – a model more remarkable and memorable than any that I could learn in the classroom.”

David, you have entered our hearts by affirming the crucial role this institution plays in the life of Jewish people and humanity. You have connected us to the values that inform what it means to stand in a line of Jewish history and inspire our future generations.

David, paying you this tribute today makes the honor that you have bestowed upon me all the more meaningful. I am grateful for your Inspirational Leadership.

As I conclude, please indulge a final insight.

Inspirational Leaders are mindful of the Paradox of Hedonism, the philosophical idea that if you pursue happiness directly it eludes you. But if you passionately pursue a higher, more meaningful purpose, you can achieve happiness. I have learned from my work that there is a corollary to the Paradox of Hedonism. I call it The Paradox of Success – that you cannot achieve

Success by pursuing it directly. What Inspirational Leaders understand is that real and sustainable value can only be achieved when you pursue something greater than yourself, that makes a difference in the lives of others. The word I use for this is Significance.

HUC is an institution whose mission is quintessentially about Significance. Indeed, a rare institution: it both pursues and purveys significance. Each of you is graduating today because you have authentically and honorably dedicated yourselves to the Pursuit of Significance. You are now heading into the world as recognized heirs of our Tradition and as Jewish leaders not only with the opportunity but, more importantly, the responsibility to be Purveyors of Significance.

“Each of you is graduating today because you have authentically and honorably dedicated yourselves to the Pursuit of Significance. ”

In this mission, at this critical time, I am honored to be one of you and an alumnus as of today of the Hebrew Union College.

My hope is that each of you becomes in your own way a Crazy George. You are uniquely qualified to make waves.

It’s not just the synagogues and schools that need you. The Jewish Community needs you. Right now, the world needs you.

Your passion. Your energy. Your Jewish values. Your Inspirational Leadership.

May all of you go forth to inspire Significance.

Mazel Tov on this very special occasion.