

**Karen E. H. Skinazi, Ph.D., Professor of Modern Literature and Culture and
Director of the Louchheim School for Judaic Studies**

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In the 1990s, when I graduated university, it was common to give graduands Dr. Seuss's *Oh the Places You'll Go*. We gave copies in English and Hebrew. It was fun and funny. But today the book I want to give out is Rachel Goldberg-Polin's *When We See You Again*. It is devastating, but also a portrait of faith and resilience, and as Hebrew Union College graduates, I know you can appreciate both.

I want to impart two lessons I learned from this book about the impact you can make on the world.

First, by sharing wisdom, you can be a force for good. Almost half a year after Goldberg-Polin's son Hersh was killed, brought home, and was buried, another hostage, Or Levy, was released after 491 days in captivity. One of his first questions was about Hersh. Hersh, this American boy ten years younger, had saved him. When Or encountered Hersh in the tunnels, he was struggling physically and psychologically. But Hersh, an avid reader, shared the wisdom of Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl: "Those who have a 'why' to live can bear with almost any 'how.'" Or had a why: his young son. Thanks to Hersh, he bore the how.

Second, you may never know the impact you have. Goldberg-Polin tells another story, not about her son, but about her father-in-law, Stanton, a doctor. One day in the early '80s, Stanton found a hospital visitor lying on the floor in anaphylactic shock. He called for an epipen, and a nurse ran in with a two-pack; using one, Stanton saved the man's life. Three days later, while Stanton was hosting Shabbat lunch, a teenager with a peanut allergy accidentally ate a peanut butter cookie and also went into anaphylactic

shock. Back then, people didn't carry epipens routinely. But because of the earlier incident, Stanton happened to have the second epipen in his pocket.

As Goldberg-Polin points out, the hospital visitor likely never knew his own brush with death helped save someone else. To her, this story is “proof of how cool God is.” To me, it's about the countless ways we affect the people around us, knowingly and unknowingly.

You will all go places—oh the places you'll go, “אם יוצאים מגיים למקומות נפלאים”—as the Hebrew version goes—and I wish for you that wherever you go, your impact on the world, intentional and unintentional, is for the good.

Behatzlacha!

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Karen E. H. Skinazi, Professor of Modern Jewish Literature and Culture

Director of the Louchheim School for Judaic Studies, Hebrew Union College

The Louchheim School for Judaic Studies serves as the undergraduate program in Jewish Studies for the University of Southern California.

Author of [Women of Valor: Orthodox Jewish Troll Fighters, Crime Writers, and Rock Stars in Contemporary Literature and Culture](#)

Recent book chapter: “[Beyond Israel/Palestine: Jewish–Muslim Relations in Film](#)” in *The Oxford Handbook of Judaism and Film*.

Recent academic article: “[Reading Jewish and Muslim Women: Literature and/as Interfaith Work](#)” in *Jewish Culture and History*.

Recent academic article: “[Rejecting the Collective: ‘Unorthodox’ and the Problem of Individualist Feminism](#)” in *Jewish Film and New Media*.