

## Wicked 2: For Good

Source Sheet compiled by Rabbi Shari Shamah  
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### Themes to watch for in Wicked 2:

- Conflict and Reconciliation
- Relationships that elevate our life (as related to the song "For Good")
- Good/Evil
- Pursuing justice
- Public opinion and propaganda
- Othering
- Antisemitism



### Can there be reconciliation when two people are truly at odds?

Perhaps Jacob and Esau can be a model for Glinda and Elphaba:

<i>Genesis 33:3-4</i>	<b>בראשית ל"ג:ג-ד'</b>
Jacob himself went on ahead and bowed low to the ground seven times until he was near his brother. Esau ran to greet him. He embraced him and, falling on his neck, he kissed him; and they wept.	וְהוּא עָבַר לִפְנֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָה שִׁבְעַת פְּעָמִים עַד־גֻּשְׁתּוֹ עַד־אָחִיו: וַיָּרֻץ עִשָׂו לִקְרָאתוֹ וַיַּחֲבֹקֵהוּ וַיִּפֹּל עַל־צְוֹאָרוֹ וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ וַיִּבְכוּ:

### Movie Questions

- Remembering that Esau vowed to kill his brother Jacob the last time they were together, how does that change how you read this text?
- Do Jacob and Esau seem to truly unite and reconcile?
- How does one allow oneself to get over past pain and reunite with loved ones and friends?
- Do you think that it is possible for Elphaba and Glinda or Nessa and Elphaba to truly come back together?
- What do you think, lifelong regret if they don't reconcile? Or a life free from heartache because you cut out the toxicity in your life?

### What are the relationships that elevate our lives?

Pirkei Avot offers us an example of how to seek out those who truly make us better:

<i>Pirkei Avot 1:6</i>	<b>פרקי אבות א:ו'</b>
Joshua ben Perahiah and Nittai the Arbelite received [the oral tradition] from them. Joshua ben Perahiah used to say: appoint for yourself a teacher, and acquire for yourself a friend, and judge all humans with the scale weighted in their favor.	יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרִיחִיָּה וְנִיטַי הָאַרְבֵּלִי קִבְּלוּ מֵהֶם. יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן פְּרִיחִיָּה אָמַר, עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רֵב, וּקְנֶה לָךְ חֵבֵר, וְהִיוּ דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת

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### Some of the lyrics:

"I've heard it said  
 That people come into our lives  
 For a reason  
 Bringing something we must learn  
 And we are led to those  
 Who help us most to grow if we let them  
 And we help them in return  
 Well, I don't know if I believe that's true  
 But I know I'm who I am today  
 Because I knew you" (Stephen Schwartz)

### Movie Questions

- What do you think this text means? What does it mean in juxtaposition with the lyrics to For Good?
- What is the difference between a teacher and a friend? Do we need both in our lives?
- What role did Glinda and Elphaba play in one another's lives?
- As they sing For Good, do these words from our tradition resonate?
- Do you have people in your life who have truly made you a better person?

### Good vs Evil

We are taught that each of us is created with good and evil inclinations within:

<i>Talmud Brachot 61a:3</i>	<b>תלמוד ברכות ס"א:ג'</b>
Rav Naḥman bar Rav Ḥisda interpreted homiletically: What is the meaning of that which is written: "Then the Lord God formed [ <i>vayyitzer</i> ] humans" (Genesis 2:7), with a double <i>yod</i> ? This double <i>yod</i> alludes to that fact that the Holy One, Blessed be God, created two inclinations; one a good inclination and one an evil inclination.	דַּרְשׁ רַב נַחֲמָן בַּר רַב חֲסֵדָא: מַאי דְכָתִיב "וַיִּיצֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם" בְּשֵׁנֵי יוֹדִין? — שְׁנֵי יִצְרִים בָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אֶחָד יֵצֶר טוֹב וְאֶחָד יֵצֶר רָע.

### Movie Questions

- *Avot de Rabbi Natan* (16:12) teaches that we are born with the evil inclination, and then we acquire the inclination for good when we are maturing, around 13. Why do you think we have the inclination for evil first?
- Is there a role for both inclinations in our lives?
- Is someone ever truly evil or truly good?
- Glinda and Elphaba are typecast into their roles of good witch and evil witch. Do you think these fit? Is either one wholly good or evil?

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What does our tradition teach us about pursuing justice?

<b>Psalm 34:14</b>	<b>משלי ל"ד:י"ד</b>
Shun evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.	סור מֵרַע וְעֲשֵׂה-טוֹב בִּקְשׁ שְׁלוֹם וְרַדְּפֵהוּ:

### Movie Questions

- We are taught to chase after peace. Is this what Elphaba was doing? Was Glinda?
- How do we seek peace? What does that mean today?
- If Elphaba started out trying to protect the animals and free speech but then turned 'wicked', was her quest still pursuing peace?

### Gaslighting? Propaganda?

<b><i>'Wicked' is a parable about propaganda that evokes the Nazis – The Forward</i></b>
About Wicked, the Forward says, "Wicked is a parable about how propaganda can be leveraged by authority figures, whether against Elphaba or the Jews, and the different forms it can take."

- Do you see this in the movie? Does this play out in society today? Do you see elements of Hitler and his propaganda machine depicted in the Great Oz?
- Are there moments of gaslighting that stand out in the movie, in part 1 or 2?

### Elphaba and Othering

<b><u>The Antisemitic History of Witches - Hey Alma</u></b>
"Indeed, the relationship between the witch archetype and antisemitism has many possible origins, histories, and understandings. However, it appears that medieval <u>Jews and witches</u> did indeed share a common struggle: the struggle of being othered, demonized, and persecuted based on Christian superstition, mythologization, and stereotyping."

### Movie Questions

- Do the actresses who have been chosen to portray Elphaba make a claim to stand up to othering? (Idina Menzel and Cynthia Erivo)
- While we don't have conclusive evidence to say that Idina Menzel was cast as Elphaba because she's Jewish, or that Cynthia Erivo was cast because she brings herself as a queer black person to the role, the fact that they were cast allows those who feel othered to see themselves in the show. It resonates because it isn't about one specific othered group and is broad enough for many people to see themselves represented on screen. It highlights the intersectionality of the oppression of both blacks, Jews, and

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queers throughout history and provides us with role models who stand up for what is good and right. It proves to have a lasting impact because it resonates with so many minority groups.

- Does having a Jewish, black, or queer person playing the role of Elphaba influence your perception as you watch the movie?

**The age-old issue of antisemitism seems to rear its head in Wicked. Do you see it?**

***John Moore, Political allusions lurk beneath glamorous musical.***

There is one line when the Wizard looks at Elphaba and says, ‘The way to bring people together is to find a good enemy’ (Stephanie J Blocke, an actress who played Elphaba in the musical said. “People are calmed when there is only one evil to focus on, and if you can catch it and destroy it, then everybody will be at a sense of peace and calm and goodness.” I think that’s applicable to Hitler, Osama bin Laden and others.

### Movie Questions

- There has been much written about whether Wicked is a parable for antisemitism. What do you think? If it wasn’t directly written in response to antisemitism, does it still have lessons for us today as we grapple with the increase in antisemitism in our world?
- What do you feel/think about this quote that the world needs a good enemy?