

From the Desk of Rabbi Barry Silver
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To: Governor Ron DeSantis and Florida Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran
From: Rabbi Barry Silver
Date: March 24, 2023
Re: **Request to remove the Bible from Public Schools**
pursuant to the Parental Rights In Education Act.

Dear Governor DeSantis and Commissioner Corcoran:

As the father of this year's Olympic Heights High School Valedictorian, Brandon Silver and the father of the University of Florida Honors College Cancer Researcher, Ari Silver, as Rabbi of Congregation L'Dor Va-Dor and founder of the local chapter of the Temple of Understanding, I am very interested in the Parental Rights in Education Act of 2022.

After listening to your comments when this bill was enacted and reading its provisions, I understand your desire to shield children from books, indoctrination, and inappropriate material that could make them feel uncomfortable or harm their fragile psyches.

Thus, pursuant to the Parental Rights in Education Act, I hereby request that you remove the Bible from all public schools in Florida. The Bible contains graphic accounts of misogyny, rape, incest, bestiality, gender identification, genital mutilation, infanticide, stoning homosexuals, disrespectful children and women who are not virgins upon marriage, child abuse where children's heads are dashed against rocks, genocide, sex trafficking where daughters are sold into slavery and women captured in war are raped and enslaved as war booty, and sodomy which is named for the Biblical city of Sodom.

The abuse of animals, who are wantonly subjected to grisly death and dismemberment in barbaric animal sacrifices, sets a terrible example for our children, many of whom abuse animals and then become desensitized to such cruelty and move on to commit acts of violence against people in the form of bullying and school shooting of their peers.

The most dangerous aspect about the Bible is that it not only condones and depicts graphic violence and inappropriate behavior, but even worse, many people erroneously believe and teach their children to believe that all this cruelty, sexual deviance and immorality is commanded by an infallible God, whose word can't be questioned, whose morality can't be impugned, and whose laws must be obeyed. To put the imprimatur of the State of Florida on such beliefs, compounds the harm and reinforces the harmful indoctrination of our students. Since you have stated that indoctrination of students is

forbidden by the Parental Rights in Education Act, and as history has all too often shown, those who hold a literal belief in the Bible pose a grave danger to themselves and others, there can be no doubt that the Bible leads the list of harmful books that should be banned from Florida schools under the Parental Rights in Education Act.

In case you are not familiar with such harmful passages in the Christian Bible, which includes Jewish Scripture, I attach a small sample of much harmful and offensive content in the Bible. Should you wish to know more about such passages, I would be glad to meet with you or your team and share these passages in the original Hebrew.

In an age of increasing and violent anti-Semitism, I feel *uncomfortable* with Christian Scripture which falsely depicts the Jews as children of the Devil, Christ-killers, betrayers of Jesus, orchestrators of the original and most lethal conspiracy theory where Jews conspire with the greatest power on Earth, the Romans and the Satanic power of the devil to commit the most heinous crime in human history, i.e. deicide. This anti-Semitic trope and original blood libel has contributed to over 2000 years of Jewish persecution, including pogroms, Crusades, Inquisitions, the Holocaust and two synagogue shootings in America. Jews are not only *uncomfortable*, we have been placed in fear for our lives and died by the millions because of such lies. Those societies that persecute Jews always suffer moral and physical collapse, so these lies endanger America itself. In addition, Biblical creationism denies evolution, which is the cornerstone of all modern science.

As a Rabbi who cherishes many Biblical precepts, ideals and spirituality, but also believes that the Bible is of human, not divine origin, written by Jewish ancestors as our first, but not our last or best effort to understand morality, spirituality, science and philosophy, it makes me *uncomfortable* to see Jewish Scripture used, abused and misused to spread hate, intolerance, misogyny, and other evils.

Moreover, the motto "In God We Trust" which vouches for the God of the Bible and seeks to indoctrinate impressionable children to place their blind faith in such a God, rather than in education, should be removed, rather than required in all Florida schools. It is psychologically debilitating to teach children to rely on supernatural beings for which no evidence exists, rather than their own efforts through education, hard work, courage and working together to solve their problems and improve the world. Thus, "In God We Trust" should be replaced with "In education we trust" or perhaps, "In hard work we trust", or some other similar motto. "In God we trust" is pure indoctrination, and as such, runs afoul of the Parental Rights In Education Act. Please remove this motto from Florida schools.

I am sure that you would agree that we should encourage students to show "*the courage to be free*" and all students have the right to be free of religious indoctrination in school.

I look forward to hearing from you and discussing these serious concerns.

Rabbi Barry Silver