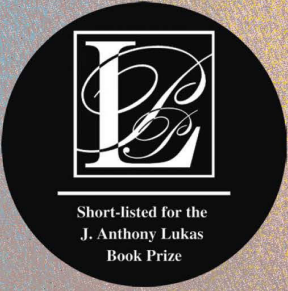


SYNAGOGUE  
READING  
GROUP  
GUIDE



# End Bias

"Jessica Nordell's powerful book is a  
breakthrough." —ADAM GRANT,  
author of *Think Again*

Jessica Nordell

# The of

*A Beginning*

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HOW WE ELIMINATE  
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS  
AND CREATE A  
MORE JUST WORLD

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## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & REFLECTION

### PART 1

## INTRODUCTION & CHAPTER 1: THE CHASE

1. How did reading this section affect your understanding of unconscious bias? Which examples resonated with or surprised you most and why?
2. The author contends that individuals expressing bias are engaging with an expectation, not reality: they see “a person-shaped daydream.” Discuss an instance when you approached someone with expectations that turned out to be incorrect. Can you identify the origins of those expectations? What happened next, and did this affect how you encountered others in the future? What ready-made expectations about Jews have you encountered in your own life?
3. Having read these chapters, do you think contemporary anti-Semitism is unconscious, conscious, or a blend of the two?
4. How might biases against other racial, ethnic, or religious groups show up in Jewish spaces? Where might there be opportunities to combat bias within our communities?

## CHAPTER 2: INSIDE THE BIASED BRAIN

5. In her “yellow shirt” studies, psychologist Rebecca Bigler found that emphasizing categories can increase discrimination. Does this affect your view of the traditional Jewish practice of separating women and men? Why or why not?
6. Given the findings in this chapter, what are the risks and rewards of maintaining a strong group identity as Jews?
7. This chapter describes how stories and media influence our development of stereotypes. Which traditional Jewish stories might contribute to the development of stereotypes about women or other groups? How do you think we should approach these stories?

## CHAPTER 3: HOW MUCH DOES EVERYDAY BIAS MATTER?

8. Were you persuaded by the findings of the NormCorp. simulation? Why or why not? How might these findings apply to other organizations or communities?
9. Nordell describes how the homogeneity of leaders can have far-reaching consequences. How might the fact that the early rabbis were uniformly men have affected Jewish teachings?

### PART 2

## CHAPTER 4: BREAKING THE HABIT

10. The author argues that unconscious biased behavior need not be permanent. Did you find this argument persuasive? Did your position shift as you read the book?
11. Have you noticed yourself becoming more aware of your own unexamined biases while reading this book? Which biases are becoming more noticeable?

## CHAPTER 5: THE MIND, THE HEART, THE MOMENT

12. Which findings from the chapters on policing stood out most to you? Did these chapters change your perspective on police reform? Do you feel more hopeful, less hopeful, or did you have another response entirely?
13. Chronic stress, the author writes, “creates a perfect storm for bias.” Can you think of a time when stress, fatigue, or other impairments led you or someone else to act more biased?
14. In this chapter, we see the way defensiveness can interrupt the potential for change. Have you ever responded with defensiveness around this topic, and if so, what might limit defensiveness in yourself or others?

## CHAPTER 6: THE WATTS JIGSAW

15. Contact theory suggests that specific kinds of meaningful, collaborative connections with others can combat stereotyping. Were you persuaded by the Watts police example? What might contact theory imply for structuring interfaith initiatives? How does the history of the Holocaust support or complicate contact theory?
16. In this chapter, the author suggests that creating more mental categories for others, rather than fewer, can help limit our biases. What do you think of this idea? Does this seem counterintuitive?
17. Connie Rice's approach to police reform grew out of her belief that the law cannot limit all forms of police bias. This idea echoes medieval Jewish scholar Nachmanides, who argued that one can be a "scoundrel within the laws of the Torah." What role do you think the law should play in creating societal change, versus individuals acting of their own accord? Do you see a conflict between focusing on individual versus structural change?

## CHAPTER 7: DESIGNING FOR FLAWED HUMANS

18. Have you witnessed or experienced bias in a healthcare setting? Does this chapter make you think differently about any experiences your or family members have had?
19. In this chapter, removing bias involves changing processes rather than changing people. Are there ways you or your organization might change processes to reduce the possibility of bias? Which processes could be changed?

## CHAPTER 8: DISMANTLING HOMOGENEITY

20. Where have you seen the limitations of homogeneity in your own life, synagogue, or community? What might change if these became more diverse?
21. The MIT mechanical engineering department developed a creative way to increase diversity among its faculty. What might be some creative ways you, your synagogue, or other organization might increase diversity?

## CHAPTER 9: THE ARCHITECTURE OF INCLUSION

22. What ideas from this chapter could be applied to your own synagogue, workplace, or community? Which seem most feasible and why?
23. Gianmarco Monsellato claims that leaders benefit from people who are not like them, because they'll challenge the leaders most, and better decisions come from ideas being scrutinized. Do you agree with this statement? Do you see any limitations to this view?

## CHAPTER 10: UNBREAKING CULTURE & CONCLUSION

24. Social norms can alter how people act: if people learn that a particular behavior is normal and popular, they engage in it more. Do you see social norms around anti-Semitism shifting, and if so, how? What might be an effective approach to combating it?
25. Psychiatrists Chester Pierce and Gail Allen have argued that prejudice against children underlies all other forms of oppression, as it “teaches everyone how to be an oppressor.” What do you think of this argument?
26. Which parts of *The End of Bias: A Beginning* resonated most strongly with you? Were there parts you disagreed with, and if so, why? Which themes resonated most strongly with Jewish values?
27. Did the book lead to any uncomfortable realizations? If you’re willing to share, what did you discover about yourself?
28. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel proclaimed that mere knowledge is “too feeble” to combat injustice. He exhorted Jews to take a “leap of action.” Having read this book, what “leap of action” do you feel ready to take?