

# Theodore Bikel

## Quotes

*Art, World, Israel, Play, Song, Giving, Artist, Believe, Doubt, Country, People,  
Causes, Actors, Moving, Voice, Pride, Theatre, Hate, Roles, Audience*

No heirloom of humankind captures the past as do art and language.

~Theodore Bikel

Epistemology is the study of knowledge. By what conduit do we know what we know?

~Theodore Bikel

I am determined to give the Yiddish language a fighting chance to survive.

~Theodore Bikel

I have always striven to raise the voice of hope for a world where hate gives way to respect and oppression to liberation.

~Theodore Bikel

By showing hunger, deprivation, starvation and brutality, as well as endurance and nobility, documentaries inform, prod our memories, even stir us to action. Such films do battle for our very soul.

~Theodore Bikel

I prefer to make common cause with those whose weapons are guitars, banjos, fiddles and words.

~Theodore Bikel

All too often arrogance accompanies strength, and we must never assume that justice is on the side of the strong. The use of power must always be accompanied by moral choice.

~Theodore Bikel

But there is a difference here: When Jewish children are murdered, Arabs celebrate the deed. The death of an Arab child is no cause for celebration in Israel.

~Theodore Bikel

After the advent of the written word, the masses who could not - or were not permitted to - read, were given sermons by the few who could.

~Theodore Bikel

No doubt unity is something to be desired, to be striven for, but it cannot be willed into being by mere declarations.

~Theodore Bikel

I created the role of Captain Von Trapp.

~Theodore Bikel

I am filled with awe that filmmakers have the capacity to stir us and give us back a sense of wonder.

~Theodore Bikel

As an artist I have an even more abiding interest in the compact between the Arts and Government.

~Theodore Bikel

Although I am deeply grateful to a great many people, I forgo the temptation of naming them for fear that I might slight any by omission.

~Theodore Bikel

No movement can afford to be caught in a time warp and exist in a state of suspended animation.

~Theodore Bikel

But, when I toil in the field of Jewish culture which I frequently do, I am indeed a Jewish artist.

~Theodore Bikel

I know for certain of only one commandment, one obligation, that God imposes upon us, and that is to be compassionate toward other human

beings.

~Theodore Bikel

One might have thought the world would stop ascribing moral equivalence between acts of terrorism and acts of punishing terrorism. It has not happened that way.

~Theodore Bikel

I am a universalist, passionately devoted to the cause of equality within the human family.

~Theodore Bikel

What moves me is neither ethnocentric pride nor sectarian arrogance. I make no claim that Jewish culture is superior to other cultures. But it is mine.

~Theodore Bikel

We live in a world of guns, bombs and terror. To conquer hate seems a nigh-impossible task.

~Theodore Bikel

You don't really need modernity in order to exist totally and fully. You need a mixture of modernity and tradition.

~Theodore Bikel

I do not know who there is among us that can claim to know God's purpose and God's intent.

~Theodore Bikel

Despite a large body of work in films, TV, theatre and concerts, I am viewed by many as a Jewish artist. I do not resent the label, except for the fact that I disapprove of labels in general.

~Theodore Bikel

In my world, history comes down to language and art.

~Theodore Bikel

We Jews have a special attachment to the Book. The study of page after page in tomes yellowing with age was obligatory.

~Theodore Bikel

The play is always fresh to me. It's not the audience's fault that I've said the words before.

~Theodore Bikel

Retiring' - within that word is 'tiring,' and I'm not tired. I don't believe in retirement, really.

~Theodore Bikel

I tried for a while to be an agricultural worker and was hopelessly bored. To me it was meaningless. I would stand around in heaps of manure and sings about the beauty of the work I wasn't doing.

~Theodore Bikel

On the stage you're there, it's live. There's a beginning, a middle, an end. When something is funny you hear it right away.

~Theodore Bikel

I am not, and have never been, in favor of boycotting Israel.

~Theodore Bikel

Accents. I'm very good with accents. I'm exceedingly good.

~Theodore Bikel

You learn more from the flops than from the hits.

~Theodore Bikel

'Visiting Mr. Green' is a good play. I enjoy being in it, and I have a

wonderful colleague, Aidan deSalaiz, to work with. Audiences like it a lot. What's not to like?

~Theodore Bikel

When something is moving you get that intake of breath and that stillness from the audience.

~Theodore Bikel

There is no role I cannot play except a midget.

~Theodore Bikel

In my mind the city of Ariel is a thorn in Israel's side and a serious obstacle to peace.

~Theodore Bikel

It's a sad thing to contemplate, but I'm the last surviving cast member of 'The African Queen.'

~Theodore Bikel

You cannot please all of the people all of the time, and that is truer in the arts than anywhere else.

~Theodore Bikel

I do prefer the stage. It's really the granddaddy of them all.

~Theodore Bikel

If I have one vanity wish, it would be to direct. It's the only thing I haven't done yet that I would like to.

~Theodore Bikel

I'm exceedingly proud of being an actor, but I never recommend it to anyone.

~Theodore Bikel

I always sang, I always acted, I always played.

~Theodore Bikel

Having come to live in this age is as though one were to have entered another country. Learn its language or risk being left out.

~Theodore Bikel

For I firmly believe that Jewish life, indeed any communal life, can only be organized according to democratic principles.

~Theodore Bikel

Every actor wants to direct and produce, but I made a conscious decision when I was in college to understand the 'business' of 'show business.'

~Theodore Bikel

Audiences are audiences.

~Theodore Bikel

You can't expect the entire world to come to New York to see you. You have to travel to them.

~Theodore Bikel

I am a Zionist, an ardent supporter of Israel, its defender when I deem Israel to be right and its critic when I deem it to be wrong.

~Theodore Bikel

Throughout my life I have cared as deeply about the songs of all peoples as I have about the rights of all peoples.

~Theodore Bikel

I glory in the fact that a human being has multiple talents and exercises them all with a degree of integrity and artistic proficiency. That's what I do.

~Theodore Bikel

I prefer to choose which traditions to keep and which to let go.

~Theodore Bikel

Right up to the middle of this century all perceptions of the world around us were delivered via the bookshelf or the paper route.

~Theodore Bikel

I remain convinced that I can be a true universalist only when I am a better Jew.

~Theodore Bikel

I am not a specialist but a general practitioner in the world of the arts.

~Theodore Bikel



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