

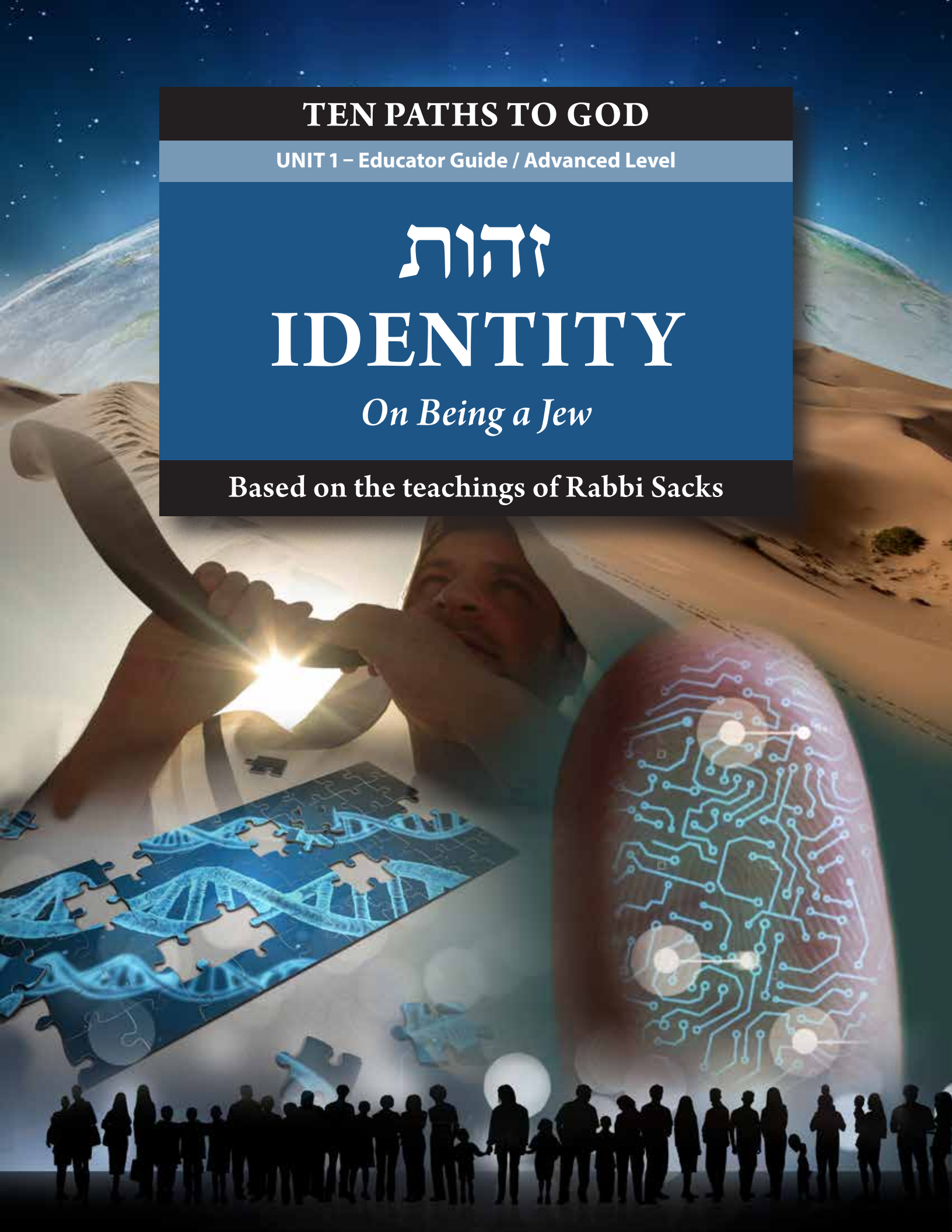
TEN PATHS TO GOD

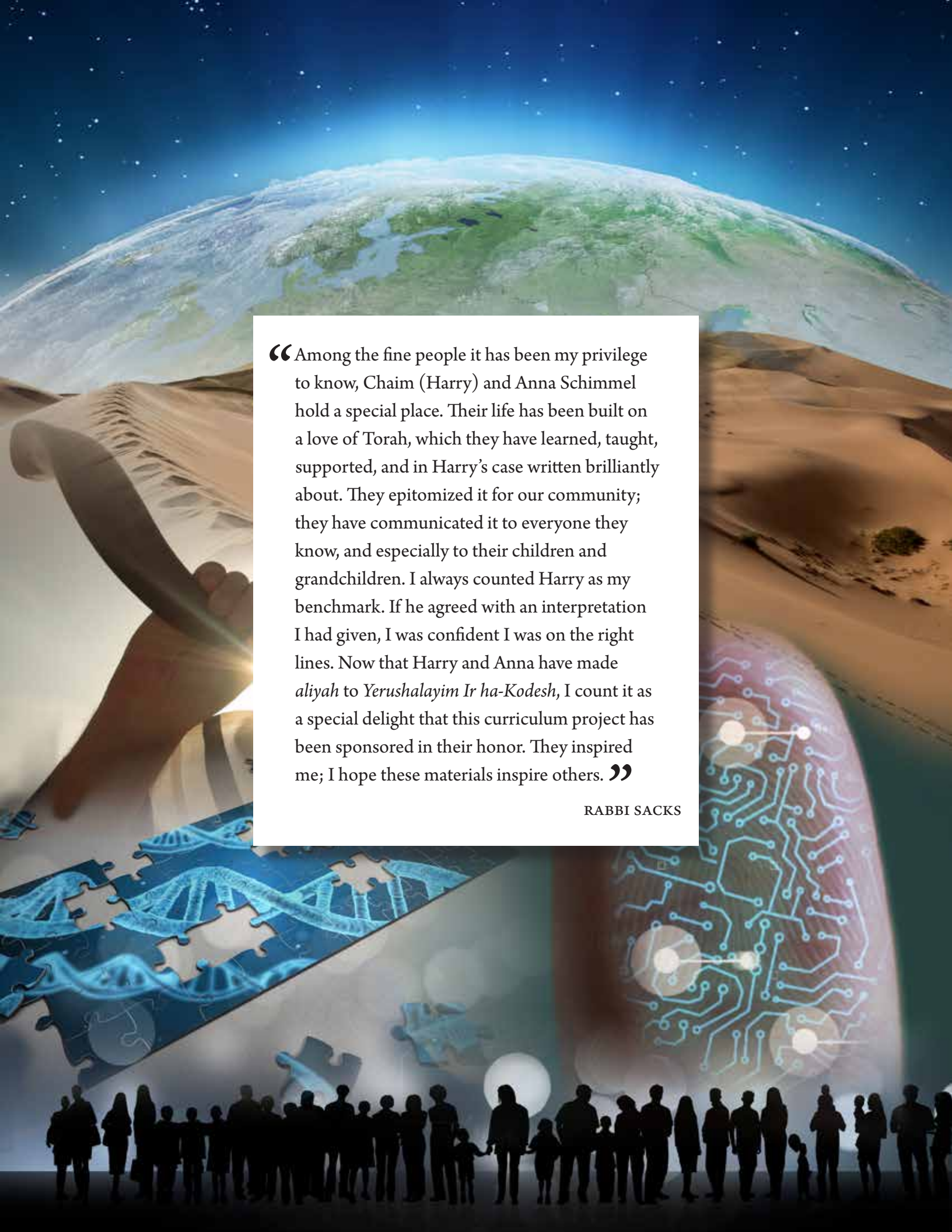
UNIT 1 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

זהות IDENTITY

On Being a Jew

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks





“Among the fine people it has been my privilege to know, Chaim (Harry) and Anna Schimmel hold a special place. Their life has been built on a love of Torah, which they have learned, taught, supported, and in Harry’s case written brilliantly about. They epitomized it for our community; they have communicated it to everyone they know, and especially to their children and grandchildren. I always counted Harry as my benchmark. If he agreed with an interpretation I had given, I was confident I was on the right lines. Now that Harry and Anna have made *aliyah* to *Yerushalayim Ir ha-Kodesh*, I count it as a special delight that this curriculum project has been sponsored in their honor. They inspired me; I hope these materials inspire others. ”

RABBI SACKS

Introduction

Overview: In this unit we will explore the path to God through both our personal Jewish identity and our national Jewish destiny, using texts that Rabbi Sacks has selected. From an awareness that we are part of a special people, with a unique vocation and calling, we can connect to and further develop our relationship with God.

Educational aims for this unit:

- For students to consider the place of their Jewish identity within their overall identity
- For students to consider how they have been shaped by their own past and by exposure to the narrative of our national past
- For students to explore the concepts of:
 - *Am Segula*/chosen people
 - Jewish destiny and national mission
 - The core values of Jewish society
- For students to understand the importance of transmission of Judaism's core concepts

Trigger Activity: Who am I? Arrange your students in two circles of equal numbers; the first an inner circle facing outwards, and then an outer circle facing and paired with students from the inner circle. Instruct the outer circle students to ask the student they are facing the question: "Who are you?" Allow 10 seconds for the inner circle students to answer. Then move the inner circle students one place to the right so that they are paired with a different student. Now instruct them to ask the same question to the outer circle students. Repeat these steps a few times at a rapid pace so that each student has to answer the same question to different students. The students are not allowed to give the same answer twice.

Discussion: Ask the class to raise their hands if they gave the answer "I am a Jew". Then ask for a few suggestions of what that could mean. What does it mean to be a Jew? Keep the answers short.

Watch: The opening video for Unit 1



- **Discussion:** Ask the students for their initial reactions to the video.



First Reading: Read through the text from the video. Highlight each word or phrase that you are unsure of, whether it is the meaning of the language or the meaning of the concept.

■ **Individual text work:** Ask the students to do this next activity on their own.



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It is a strange and moving story. It tells of how a family, then a collection of tribes, then a nation, were summoned to be God's ambassadors on earth. They were charged with building a society unlike any other, based not on wealth and power but on justice and compassion, the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of human life – a society that would honor the world as God's work and the human person as God's image.

That was and is a demanding task, yet Judaism remains a realistic religion. It assumed from the outset that transforming the world would take many generations – hence the importance of handing on our ideals to the next generation. It takes many gifts, many different kinds of talent – hence the importance of Jews as a people. None of us has all the gifts, but each of us has some. We all count; we each have a unique contribution to make. We come before God as a people, each giving something, and each lifted by the contributions of others.

And yes, at times we fail or fall short – hence the importance of *teshuvah*, repentance, apology, forgiveness, re-dedication. Judaism is bigger than any of us, yet it is made by all of us. And though Jews were and are a tiny people, today a mere fifth of a per cent of the population of the world, we have made a contribution to civilization out of all proportion to our numbers.

To be a Jew is to continue the journey our ancestors began, to build a world that honors the image of God in every human being and to be part of a people summoned by God to be His ambassadors down here on earth.

Jonathan Sacks

■ **Frontal teaching:** Ask for a list of words or concepts that students had trouble understanding. Write them on the board. Discuss them briefly to clarify their basic meaning.



Analysis in Chavruta: Now in *chavruta* (pairs), take a look again at the text. Discuss and answer the questions on the terms and phrases that are highlighted for you.

Chavruta text analysis: Pair up the students and ask them to read through the text once more, this time using the questions to guide their discussion. You may wish to ask them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.

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a faith

1. What does the word faith mean?
2. What does Rabbi Sacks mean when he says we are born into a *faith*? Why do you think the word faith is sometimes used to refer to this?
3. Do you feel you have been born into a faith? Do you have free will to choose?

the story of our past

1. When do you think “the story of our past” begins? When does Rabbi Sacks state it begins? Does the “story of our past” have an ending?
2. Do you think it is important to learn about the “story of our past”? Why?
3. Do you learn Jewish history at your school? Do you think Jewish history should be taught by the history department or by the Jewish studies department? Why?

the call of God

1. What do you think Rabbi Sacks means by “the call of God”?
2. What did God “call” on Avraham and Sarah to do or be?
3. Do you think you have a “calling”? Do you think this is God calling you to do or be something?

journey to a land

1. Which land? Why do you think He chose this land?
2. Why do you think God starts Jewish history by asking Avraham to leave his home and travel to an unknown land?
3. How do you think our land is connected to the next few words in the text: “a promise, a destiny, and a vocation”?

a promise, a destiny and a vocation

1. What do the words *promise*, *destiny* and *vocation* mean? Are these words related to each other at all?
2. What do you imagine your destiny is? Can you change your destiny?
3. Have you found your vocation yet? Is a vocation the same as a “calling”?



ambassadors on earth

1. What is the job of an ambassador?
2. How can we be God's ambassadors?
3. Do you think we are doing a good job?

building a society

1. What does the word *society* mean?
2. How do you "build" a society?
3. Where can we as Jews build a society?

justice and compassion, the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of human life

1. What do these words mean? What do they have in common?
2. Are all societies based on these values? Is the society in which you live based on these values?
3. How do you build a society based on these values?

God's work

1. What does Rabbi Sacks mean when he says that the world is "God's work"? Are there people who take a different approach?
2. Can you formulate an argument in support of Rabbi Sacks' approach using proof from the world around us?
3. Do you think this can ever be scientifically proven?

God's image

1. If God does not have a physical form, then how can He have an "image"?
2. What do you think it means to be created in the "image of God"?
3. Which people are created in God's image? Does this impact the way you relate to people?

handing on our ideals to the next generation

1. How do we "hand on our ideals to the next generation"?
2. What ideals have your parents handed on to you?
3. Why is it important to hand on our ideals to the next generation? Why not allow them to come to their own conclusions?



we have made a contribution to civilization out of all proportion to our numbers

1. What contributions have the Jewish people made to civilization?
2. Can you give any examples of Jews that have made a big impact on the world?
3. Why do you think we have made these contributions despite our small number?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your answers. Listen carefully to the perspectives of your classmates. Did anyone take a different approach to the text from you? Does their approach resonate with you?

■ **Frontal teaching:** Facilitate a class discussion on the text based on the students' answers.

The Core Concepts



Exploration of the Core Concepts: Together with your *chavruta* join another pair to form a small *chabura* (study group). Look at the supplementary sources provided below for each of the core concepts highlighted in the text. Your teacher will tell you which core concept to look at first. Make sure you understand it fully, and write down any questions you have.

Explain how the supplementary sources help you understand the core concept they are connected to. Use the questions to guide your discussion and analysis.

Group text analysis: Pair up two or more of the *chavrutot* from the previous section. Allocate each *chabura* one of the core concepts to begin with to make sure they are all covered in preparation for the classroom discussion at the end. If there is time, the students can look at other core concepts when they have finished. Direct them to read through the supplementary sources together and use the questions to guide their discussion. You may tell them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis. Ask them to focus on how the supplementary sources expand our understanding of the core concepts.

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the story of our past

A PEOPLE OF HISTORY



לֵב כִּי שְׁאַל-נָא לַיָּמִים רִאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר-הָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ לְמוֹת-הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם עַל-הָאָרֶץ
וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד-קֶצֶה הַשָּׁמַיִם הִנֵּה כְּדָבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה אוֹ הַנִּשְׁמָע כְּמוֹהוּ: הִשְׁמַע עִם
לִד קוֹל אֱלֹהִים מְדַבֵּר מִתּוֹךְ-הָאֵשׁ כְּאֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַעְתָּ אֹתָהּ וַיַּחֲיוּ: אוֹ הַנִּסָּה אֱלֹהִים לָבוֹא לְקַחַת לָךְ
גּוֹי מִקֶּרֶב גּוֹי בְּמִסַּת בְּאוֹתָתָּהּ וּבְמוֹפְתֶיהָ וּבְמִלְחָמָהּ וּבִיד חֲזָקָהּ וּבְזִרְעוֹ נְטוּיָהּ וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדֹלִים
כָּל אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לָכֶם ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֶיךָ:

Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

Devarim 4:32–34

1. "Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of?" To what is this referring exactly?
2. Do you think it could also be referring to Jewish history in general? In your opinion, is Jewish history unique? Is it miraculous? Does it prove the existence of God?
3. Can Jewish history be a source of faith? Is it a source of faith for you? Why?



a promise

THE CALL

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר לְךָ וְאָנֹכִי
לְךָ גֹּדֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדָּלְהָ שְׁמֹךְ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה: וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מִבְּרַכְיֶיךָ וּמִקֻּלְלֶיךָ אֲדָר וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְּךָ כָּל
מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה:

The Lord said to Avram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all families on earth will be blessed through you.'

Bereishit 12:1–3

1. God made two covenants with Avraham, but this is not one of them. What is the difference between a promise and a covenant?
2. Why do you think God asked Avraham to leave his country, his people and his father's house? Could Avraham not have fulfilled God's plan for him from there?
3. What does it mean to "be a blessing"? How will all the families on earth be blessed through Avraham? Is this a promise or part of the call?

THE WAY OF THE LORD

וְאֶבְרָהִם הָיָה לְךָ גֹּדֹל וְעָצוֹם וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְּךָ כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ: כִּי יִדְעֹתוּ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יַעֲזֶה
אֶת-בָּנָיו וְאֶת-בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הָבִיא ה' עַל-אַבְרָהִם
אֵת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר עָלָיו:

Avraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Avraham what He has promised him.

Bereishit 18:18–19

1. What does it mean to be a "great and powerful nation"? Why is that important? Are we "great and powerful"?
2. Why has Avraham been chosen according to these *pesukim*? Although the translation seems to imply that Avraham was chosen *in order* to instruct his children, the Hebrew text leaves room for the implication that Avraham was chosen because he *naturally* understands the importance of education. Which of these interpretations do you think most accurately describes Avraham, and the Jewish people in general?
3. Is education central to what it means to be a Jew? Can you give examples to support your answer?



DUST AND THE STARS



'I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heaven and the sand on the seashore' (Bereishit 22: 17). Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai explained: This people is compared to dust and to the stars. When it sinks, it sinks to the dust, but when it rises, it rises to the stars.

Talmud Bavli, Megillah 16a

'I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth' (Bereishit 13:16). As the dust of the earth is from one end of the world to the other, so your children will be dispersed from one end of the world to the other. As dust is trodden on by all, so will your children be trodden on by the peoples of the world. As dust outlives all vessels of metal while it endures forever, so all the peoples of the earth will cease to be, while Israel endures forever.

Bereishit Rabbah 41, Lech Lecha

1. According to these sources, is it a blessing or a curse to be compared to the dust of the earth?
2. Dispersed throughout the world; trodden on by other nations; outliving other nations – have these things happened to the Jewish people in their history?
3. Do you think this is simply a description of what has happened in Jewish history, or is it a vision of Jewish destiny (God's plan)?

a destiny and a vocation... to be God's ambassadors on earth

A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS



אֲנִי ה' קְרָאתִיךָ בְּצֶדֶק וְאַחֲזִיק בְּיָדְךָ וְאַצְרֶךָ לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר גּוֹיִם: לִפְקֹחַ עֵינַיִם עֲוֹרוֹת
לְהוֹצִיא מִמַּסְגֵּר אֲסִיר מִבֵּית כְּלָא יֹשְׁבֵי חֹשֶׁךְ:

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the nations, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Yeshayahu 42:6–7

1. What do you think it means to be "a light for the nations"?
2. In your opinion, should the following be taken literally? If not, then what could the text mean?
 - a. "to open eyes that are blind"
 - b. "to free captives from prison"
 - c. "to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness"



3. Do you think the Jewish people are “a light for the nations” today? Can you give examples of how?

LIKE FRAGRANT OIL



‘Your name is like fragrant oil poured out,’ (Shir HaShirim 1:3): As oil brings light to the world, so Israel brings light to the world, as it is said, ‘Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn,’ (Yeshayahu 60:3).

Shir HaShirim Rabbah, 1:3:2

1. *Shir HaShirim* compares the Jewish people to perfume. This *midrash* gives one explanation of what that means. What is it?
2. Why do you think the *midrash* focuses on oil's capacity to bring light? What kind of “light” do the Jewish people bring to the world?
3. How can we bring more light to the world?

THE JEWISH HEART OF THE WORLD



Israel is to the nations as the heart is to the limbs of the body.

Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, The Kuzari 11:36

1. What role does the heart play for the rest of the body? In what way do the Jewish people play that role for the rest of the world?
2. What happens to the rest of the body when the heart isn't healthy or malfunctions? What can that teach us about the Jewish people?
3. Do you believe the Jewish people do play that role in the world? Do you think the nations of the world see that also?

THE ENNOBLEMENT OF THE HUMAN RACE



The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, an almost fanatical love of justice, and the desire for personal independence – these are the features of the Jewish tradition which make me thank my stars that I belong to it.

Albert Einstein, As I See It, p. 103

1. Where in Judaism do you think these values are transmitted?
2. Albert Einstein was not a religious Jew. Nevertheless he received these values from Judaism. How do you think that happened?
3. How do you think these values impacted his work as a scientist?



BIGGER THAN OUR NUMBERS

Each of us Jews knows how thoroughly ordinary he is; yet taken together, we seem caught up in things great and inexplicable . . . The number of Jews in the world is smaller than a small statistical error in the Chinese census. Yet we remain bigger than our numbers. Big things seem to happen around us and to us.

Milton Himmelfarb, *Jews and Gentiles*, p. 141–142

1. We are so very small in terms of the population of the world. Do you think we have made a contribution beyond our small numbers?
2. Can you explain why this is?
3. Big things seem to happen around us and to us.” What does this mean? Can you think of any examples? Can you explain why this is?

LOOKING OUTWARD

We have become altogether too inward-looking, with our horizons largely limited within the ghetto-walls we have erected to separate us from the rest of our people and from the human society beyond . . . Preoccupied with the burning problems of our own survival, we have lost sight with our assignment as a light unto the nations.

Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, *The Timely and the Timeless*, p. 96–97

1. What do you think Rabbi Jakobovits means when he says: “We have become altogether too inward-looking”? Do you agree with him? Can you give examples to prove your point?
2. How does being “outward-looking” allow us to better fulfill “our assignment as a light unto the nations”?
3. How do you suggest we can become more “outward-looking”?



building a society unlike any other

THE COVENANT AT SINAI: A HOLY NATION



אַתֶּם רֹאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאֶשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל-כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים וְאָבֹא אֲתֶכֶם אֵלַי: וְעַתָּה
 אֲסַמְּנוּעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֻגָּה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-לִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ:
 וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבַּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Shemot 19:4–6

1. The term *Am Segula* is often non-literally translated as “chosen people”. Here, however, it is translated as “treasured possession”. Are these two terms connected? Are you comfortable with the notion that we are a “chosen people”? Why?
2. If we are “treasured” by God does that mean we are His favorite, or could He have other “treasured” people who have a different relationship with Him?
3. What do you think it means to be a “kingdom of priests”? What role did the priestly tribe (the tribe of Levi) have in biblical times? How can the Jewish people serve in that role in today's world?

handing on our ideals to the next generation

LOYALTY TO GOD



Devoid of power, splendor, bereft of the brilliant show of human grandeur, Israel was upheld by its faithfulness toward the All-One...

Other states, everywhere, in all the glory of human power and arrogance, disappeared from the face of the earth, while Israel, though devoid of might and splendor, lived on because of its loyalty to God and His Law.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, p. 64

1. What do you think Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch means by “power, splendor... grandeur”?
2. How do you think we survived despite not having these things? Was this more about God, or us, or a combination?
3. What role did our “loyalty to God and His law” play in our survival?



HOPE IN FAILURE



Despair and resignation were unknown to the man of the covenant who found triumph in defeat, hope in failure, and who could not conceal God's Word that was, to paraphrase Jeremiah, deeply implanted in his bones and burning in his heart like an all-consuming fire.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, p. 112

1. How do you think the Jewish people managed to see "triumph in defeat" and "hope in failure" throughout their history?
2. Who "implanted" this hope in our "bones"?
3. How can we make sure it is "implanted" in the "bones" of future generations too?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class. Present your approach to the core concept allocated to you, making reference to the supplementary sources and the answers you came up with to the questions accompanying them.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students' answers.



As a class, consider the following meta-questions (big picture questions):

1. What has God called on the Jewish people to be or do? What is the national mission of the Jewish people?
2. How can we best fulfill this role?
3. How do you think we are doing in this mission?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion in order to arrive at a summary of the core concepts.

The Core Concepts in the Writings of Rabbi Sacks



Analysis in Chavruta: Now you have explored each of the five core concepts through supplementary sources, in your original *chavruta* explore the same core concept as it appears in the writings of Rabbi Sacks. Your teacher will tell you which one to look at. Use the guiding questions to help you analyze and understand what Rabbi Sacks is saying.

Together with your *chavruta* prepare a short presentation on what Rabbi Sacks says about the core concept, to be given to the rest of your class.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a presentation by each *chavruta* on Rabbi Sacks' writings about the core concepts. Make sure each of the core concepts is covered by at least one *chavruta*, so that the class hears a presentation about every concept.

the story of our past



Through the Haggadah more than a hundred generations of Jews have handed on their story to their children. The word *haggadah* means 'to relate, to tell, to expound'. But it comes from a Hebrew root that also means 'to bind, to join, to connect'. By reciting the Haggadah, Jews give their children a sense of connectedness to Jews throughout the world and to the Jewish people through time. It joins them to a past and future, a history and destiny, and makes them characters in its drama. Every other people known to mankind have been united because they lived in the same place, spoke the same language, were part of the same culture. Jews alone, dispersed across continents, speaking different languages and participating in different cultures, have been bound together by a narrative, the Pesach narrative, which they told in the same way on the same night. More than the Haggadah was the story of a people, Jews were the people of a story.

The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah, p. 2

1. Why do you think the ritual of *Leil HaSeder* on Pesach revolves around story telling?
2. Is this just for the sake of the children? Aren't the rest of us a little old for story time?
3. Where else in Judaism do we tell stories of our past?



4. Do we ever tell stories about our future?
5. Rabbi Sacks argues that stories are even more important for the Jewish people than other nations. What is the basis of his argument? Do you agree?

a promise



Long ago, one man and one woman heard a call telling them to leave their land, their birthplace and their father's house and begin a journey. There was nothing conspicuous about them, nothing to suggest that the path on which they were about to embark would eventually change the history of humankind. The man was not a military hero or a miracle worker. He was not a revolutionary or a guru with thousands of followers. He had absolutely nothing in common with the heroes of epic or myth. Yet there can be no doubt that he was the most influential human being who ever lived. Today, 2.2 billion Christians, 1.3 billion Muslims and 13 million Jews – more than half the 6 billion people alive today – claim descent, biological or spiritual, from him. His name was Avraham; the name of the woman, his wife, was Sarah.

What was special, new about Avraham was not so much the God he worshipped. According to the Hebrew bible, Avraham was not the first monotheist. Adam was. What Avraham initiated was the idea of faith as a journey undertaken by a people in search of the Promised Land.

Future Tense, p. 23

1. What promise did God make to Avraham at the beginning of his journey?
2. Has this promise been fulfilled?
3. In addition to God's promise to Avraham, God called upon Avraham and Sarah to fulfill a destiny. What was it?
4. What do you think the "Promised Land" means here? Can you think of more than one possible meaning?
5. Have we reached the "Promised Land"? Do you think we, the descendants of Avraham and Sarah, have reached and fulfilled the destiny that God called on them to fulfill?



a destiny and a vocation... to be God's ambassadors on earth



That is the meaning of 'a holy nation'. The holy, in the bible, simply means God's domain – those points in time and space at which his presence is peculiarly visible. That is what Yeshayahu means when he says of Israel: 'You are My witness – declares the Lord – that I am God' (Yeshayahu 43:10) ... There is no assertion in the Bible that the Israelites are inherently better or more moral than others. Their vocation represents not a privilege but a responsibility. It confers no material advantages, only the religious life itself...

... Israel's role is to be an example: no more, no less. That is how Rambam's son Avraham interprets, in his father's name, the phrase 'a kingdom of priests':

The priest of any congregation is its leader, its most honored individual and the congregation's role-model through whom they learn to follow in the right path. [In calling on Israel to be 'a kingdom of priests' it was as if God said to them], 'Become leaders of the world through keeping my Torah, so that your relationship to [humanity] becomes that of a priest to his congregation, so that the world follows in your path, imitates your deeds and walks in your ways.'

To Heal a Fractured World, p. 65–67



God, the creator of humanity, having made a covenant with all humanity, then turns to one people and commands it to be different *in order to teach humanity the dignity of difference*. Biblical monotheism is not the idea that there is one God and therefore one truth, one faith, one way of life. On the contrary, it is the idea that *unity creates diversity*. That is the non-Platonic miracle of creation. What is real, remarkable and the proper object of our wonder is not the quintessential leaf but the 250,000 different kinds there actually are; not the idea of a bird but the 9,000 species that exist today; not the metalanguage that embraces all others, but the 6,000 languages still spoken throughout the world ... Judaism is about the miracle of unity that creates diversity.

The Dignity of Difference, p. 53



1. According to the first source, how does Rabbi Sacks explain the concept that the Jewish people are a “chosen people”?
2. The Torah (Shemot 19:5–6) describes the Jewish people as an “*Am Segula*” (treasured people) if we become a “kingdom of priests”. What is the connection between these two terms?
3. We know that the priestly tribe, the Levites, were the educators and teachers of the Jewish people. Perhaps this means the Jewish people should be a nation of educators. How and why?
4. Do you think the Jewish people today are a “kingdom of priests” and “a holy nation,” fulfilling the role of being “God’s ambassadors on earth” as Rabbi Sacks has described it? Can you think of examples to illustrate your answer?
5. The “dignity of difference” is the core message of Judaism according to Rabbi Sacks. What do you think he means by that? Where do we see this in the Torah?
6. “Unity creates diversity”. Another way of saying this is we need *unity* not *uniformity*. What is the difference between these two words? How can we achieve unity in the world? How can we have unity and diversity at the same time?



[Our] destiny was to create a society that would honor the proposition that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. It would be a place in which the freedom of some would not lead to the enslavement of others... Judaism is the code of a self-governing society. We tend to forget this, since Jews have lived in dispersion for two thousand years, without the sovereign power to govern themselves, and because modern Israel is a secular state. Judaism is a religion of redemption rather than salvation. It is about the shared spaces of our collective lives, not an interior drama of the soul... because Judaism is also the code of a society, it is also about the social virtues: righteousness (tzedeq/tzedakah), justice (mishpat), loving-kindness (chesed) and compassion (rachamim). These structure the template of biblical law, which covers all aspects of the life of society, its economy, its welfare systems, its education, family life, employer–employee relations, the protection of the environment and so on... None of this was possible without a land...

Judaism is the constitution of a self-governing nation, the architectonics of a society dedicated to the service of God in freedom and dignity. Without a land and state, Judaism is a shadow of itself. In exile, God might still live in the hearts of Jews but not in the public square, in the justice of the courts, the morality of the economy and the humanitarianism of everyday life. Jews have lived in almost every country under the sun. In four thousand years, only in Israel have they been a free, self-governing people. Only in Israel are they able, if they so choose, to construct an agriculture, a medical system, an economic infrastructure in the spirit of the Torah and its concern for freedom, justice and the sanctity of life. Only in Israel can Jews today speak the Hebrew of the Bible as the language of everyday speech. Only there can they live Jewish time within a calendar structured according to the rhythms of the Jewish year. Only in Israel can Jews live Judaism in anything other than an edited edition. In Israel, and only there, Jews can walk where the prophets walked, climb the mountains Avraham climbed, lift their eyes to the hills that David saw, and continue the story their ancestors began.

Future Tense, p. 135–136



1. What would a society look like that was based on the principle that all mankind is created in the image of God?
2. What is the difference between “redemption” and “salvation”? (Clue: redemption is active, salvation is passive.)
3. “Judaism is the constitution of a self-governing nation”. How is Judaism different from some of the other religions in this respect? What is there in Judaism that helps us build a society that other religions do not necessarily have?
4. How does Rabbi Sacks argue that the ultimate fulfillment of this destiny (to build a society based on these values) is to live in a national homeland?
5. Does this mean that the ultimate fulfillment of Judaism can only happen in Israel? Is this what Rabbi Sacks is arguing? Do you agree with this position?



handing on our ideals to the next generation



The secret of Jewish continuity is that no people has ever devoted more of its energies to continuity. The focal point of Jewish life is the transmission of a heritage across the generations. Time and again in the Torah we are drawn to dramas of the next generation. Judaism's focus is its children. Avraham's first words to God are 'What can you give me, if I am without children?' Rachel says: 'Give me children, for without them it is as if I am dead.' To be a Jew is to be a link in the chain of generations. It is to be a child and then a parent, to receive and to hand on. Moshe 'received the Torah at Sinai and handed it on...' and so must we. Judaism is a *religion of continuity*.

Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren?, p. 34



"To defend a land, you need an army. But to defend freedom, you need education. You need families and schools to ensure that your ideals are passed on to the next generation and never lost, or despaired of, or obscured. The citadels of liberty are houses of study. Its heroes are teachers, its passion is education and the life of the mind. Moshe realized that a people achieves immortality not by building temples or mausoleums, but by engraving their values on the hearts of their children, and they on theirs, and so on until the end of time.

A Letter in the Scroll, p. 32–33

1. What does "Jewish continuity" mean?
2. How can we achieve Jewish continuity?
3. Why do you think Jews are obsessed with education?
4. Where would we be without Jewish schools?
5. Do you think our teachers are our heroes?

The Assignment

Frontal teaching: Read through this text with the students, as a conclusion and summary of the ideas we have learned in this unit. Ask for comments and questions.



Final Thoughts: The following text, by Rabbi Sacks, summarizes the lessons and concepts we have been studying in this unit:

REMAKING THE WORLD



For forty centuries, Jews have held tenaciously to the belief that we have been charged with a sacred mission: to sanctify life by being God's ambassadors to a world that has all too often worshipped the multiple forms of what Nietzsche called 'the will to power'. We were called on to write a different story, that tells of the beauty of holiness and the call of compassion: 'to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.'

Judaism has placed at the center of its striving some of the most healing of all sacred imperatives: the importance of love and loyalty; marriage and the sacred bonds between husband and wife, parent and child; education and the life of the mind; justice, equity and the rule of law; compassion, charity and human dignity; the bonds of belonging and community; memory, history and imperishable hope. We seek God not just in the remote heavens or the innermost recesses of the soul but in ordinary life, with its pleasures and pains, fears and hopes, conflicts and consolations. Judaism believes not in abandoning earth for the sake of heaven, but in bringing fragments of heaven down to earth in simple deeds and celebrations.

For that is where God is found. Not in wealth, power, fame, success, or any other of the myriad substitutes for life, still less in violence and terror, but in life itself: living, breathing (*neshamah*, the Hebrew word for soul, means 'breathing'), loving, giving, caring, praying, praising, giving thanks, defeating tragedy in the name of hope, and death in the name of life.

Our task is to be true to our faith and a blessing to others: a blessing to others because we are true to our faith. To be a Jew is to bring redemption, one day at a time, one act at a time. Every mitzvah, every kind word or deed, every act of sharing what we have with others, brings the Divine presence into the world. By recognizing the image of God in other people, we help to remake the world in the image of God.



In this unit we have explored the concept of the Jewish people having a “destiny and vocation” to be “God’s ambassadors on earth,” and to “build a society like no other” based on the values found in the Torah, and described in this text. While it is perhaps a little early on in your life to think about being a society builder (although why not dream big?!) let’s start with your school’s community.



Part 1: Work in small groups allocated by your teacher. Your job in this assignment is to create a proposal to improve your school society. Suggest three initiatives that will improve your school’s community based on the values that Rabbi Sacks says our wider society should be built on.

1. Make a list of the values found in the paragraph in the text that is italicized. Describe where each of these values is already found in your school.
2. Choose three of the values. Write a short proposal based on each value to create a program that will improve your school’s community.



Part 2: For bonus points, prepare a list of questions for Rabbi Sacks on any of the topics we have studied in this unit. Send your questions to your teacher, who will forward a number of insightful questions from the class to Rabbi Sacks. Rabbi Sacks will respond to a selection of the questions he receives for each unit from students around the world. Visit <http://www.RabbiSacks.org/TenPaths> to see his responses.

Project Based Learning: This assignment leads the students to apply the ideas they have explored in this unit to their lives. While it may be hard for them to imagine themselves making decisions and having an impact on adult society, here the students are asked to apply these ideas to their school community.

If appropriate, you may wish to incentivize their work by arranging for the students to present their ideas to the head of your school with a view to implementing them.



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