

# TEN PATHS TO GOD


UNIT 7 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

## אמונה FAITH *Love as Loyalty*

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 Faith, using texts that Rabbi Sacks has selected and written. Faith, and our relationship with God, are such challenging areas for Jewish educators that all too often they are avoided altogether. It is our hope that the direction taken here will allow educators and students to explore with honesty and candor the critical questions of belief, faith, and approach to a relationship to God, in an appropriate, and constructive way. As Rabbi Sacks says, it takes a courageous educator to allow space in the classroom for challenging questions and honest, open inquiry into issues of faith and God, and we hope that this unit will provide the framework to enable that.

## **Educational aims for this unit:**

- To encourage students to think about and explore their personal relationship with God.
- For students to consider the role of faith in Judaism, and their own faith journeys.
- For students to consider the value of questioning, even when questions seem to have no answers.
- For students to understand the notion that it takes courage to live with questions, and that is one definition of faith.
- For students to consider the role and impact of Jewish history in our faith journeys.
- For students to consider that faith is finding space for God, and to begin learning the skills to do that.

## **Trigger Activity:** Finding Space for God

In the opening text for this unit, Rabbi Sacks concludes with the statement: "Faith is the space we create for God." God can be seen or sensed in each and every context that we find ourselves if we look hard enough and push ourselves to be sufficiently sensitive and perceptive. This trigger activity asks your students to do exactly that.

Take your class outside the building into nature (the school campus is great, but even better if you can afford the time to take them off campus into nature). Ask them to find a place to sit and be in their own space, where they will not be distracted by any of their classmates (but not too far away that you cannot see them or they cannot hear you). Ask them to close their eyes and meditate. On God. Where they can sense God. When they have experienced God in their lives. When in their lives they have felt closest to God, and when they have felt most distant. Ask them to look around. Can they sense God in this present moment? If they can, what do they wish to say to God at that moment?

Some students may find this experience easier or more powerful with music playing a part of the process. You could experiment with that, either allowing students to take their own personal music with headphones, or you could bring the class together and use a song of your choice (or your students' choice), to help the class connect to God together at that moment.

In theory, there is no reason why this process couldn't also be achieved inside the building as "God is where we let him in". But for students there are many distractions inside their school buildings that would make this more challenging. You could perhaps try it again at the end of the unit inside the building, and ask them to compare the experiences.





**Watch:** The opening video for Unit 7



■ **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.



Judaism is an unusual, subtle, profoundly humane faith that challenges the conventional wisdom of the ages. Faith is the courage Avraham and Sarah showed when they heard the call of God and left behind all they had known to travel to an unknown destination. Faith led more than a hundred generations of our ancestors to continue that journey, knowing all the risks yet believing that there is no greater privilege than to be part of it. Faith is the voice that says, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for You are with me.'

Faith sustained Jews in the dark days of persecution. It led them never to give up hope that one day they would return to Israel, to Jerusalem and to freedom. Jews kept faith alive, and faith kept the Jewish people alive.

Faith is not certainty. It is the courage to live with uncertainty. It is not knowing all the answers. It is often the strength to live with the questions. It is not a sense of invulnerability. It is the knowledge that we are utterly vulnerable, but that it is precisely in our vulnerability that we reach out to God, and through this learn to reach out to others, able to understand their fears and doubts. We learn to share, and in sharing discover the road to freedom. It is only because we are not gods that we are able to discover God.

God is the personal dimension of existence, the 'Thou' beneath the 'It', the 'Ought' beyond the 'Is', the Self that speaks to self in moments of total disclosure. Opening ourselves to the universe we find God reaching out to us. At that moment we make the life-changing discovery that though we seem utterly insignificant, we are utterly significant, a fragment of God's presence in the world. Eternity preceded us, infinity will come after us, yet we know that this day, this moment, this place, this circumstance, is full of the light of infinite radiance, whose proof is the mere fact that we are here to experience it.

Faith is where God and human beings touch across the abyss of infinity. *Emunah* means faithfulness, love-as-loyalty. The closest analogue is marriage: a mutual commitment, entered into in love, binding the partners together in fidelity and trust. God chose us – we chose God, and though



our relationship has sometimes been tense and troubled, the bond between us is unbreakable.

Knowing, we are known. Feeling, we are felt. Acting, we are acted upon. Living, we are lived. And if we make ourselves transparent to existence, then our lives too radiate that Divine presence which, celebrating life, gives life to those whose lives we touch.

Faith is the space we create for God.

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 key 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 to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.

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#### **Faith is the courage Avraham and Sarah showed**

1. Is it courageous to have faith in God? Why?
2. Why did Avraham and Sarah need the courage of faith to do what they did?
3. Do you know anyone who made a similar journey? Did they need the courage of faith?

#### **'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for You are with me.'**

1. Do you know who wrote this originally? Can you find its source?
2. Why do you think Rabbi Sacks chose this quote to make his point?
3. During which periods of Jewish history could this quote be an appropriate description of the courage to find faith? Have you ever experienced anything in your life that makes this quote resonate personally?

#### **return to Israel, to Jerusalem and to freedom**

1. Why were these things something that Jews needed to have faith in?
2. Rabbi Sacks says faith meant that Jews never gave up hope for these things. Is there a difference between faith and hope?
3. Now we have these things, do we need to have faith in anything else?





### the strength to live with the questions

1. What questions are there without answers that need faith to live with?
2. Do you have any questions that cannot be answered? How do you feel about these questions?
3. Does Judaism have all the answers?

### the 'Thou' beneath the 'It'

"I and Thou" is a book and system of thought by the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. He believes that we can interact with the world as an object (I-It) or in a relationship (I-Thou) and for man the ultimate meaningful relationship is the I-Thou with God.

1. What would a relationship with God be like if it was I-It?
2. What would a relationship with God be like if it was I-Thou?
3. Which one most accurately describes your relationship with God?

### the 'Ought' beyond the 'Is'

1. The "is" is the reality of our world. What is that reality?
2. The "ought" is what the world could and should be like. How is it different from the "is"?
3. Why does God represent the "ought"?

### a fragment of God's presence in the world

1. How are we "a fragment of God's presence in the world"?
2. Why does that make us "utterly significant"?
3. How does this knowledge change the way we live our lives?

### Emunah means faithfulness, love-as-loyalty

1. What is the difference between *faith* and *faithfulness*?
2. Why do you think Rabbi Sacks defines *Emunah/faithfulness* as love-as-loyalty?
3. How does one show faithfulness to God? How does He show the same to us?

**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.

# Exploring our Faith through 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 source helps you understand the core concept it is 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 all are 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 to use the questions to guide their discussion. You may tell them to write down their answers, or 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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**Faith sustained Jews in the dark days of persecution.**

## Faith as defiance

### WHOM THEN SHALL I FEAR?

אֲלֹהִים יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲדָמָה וְיֵשׁוּעִי מִמֶּנִּי אֵיךְ יִהְיֶה מְעוֹזִי מִמֶּנִּי אֶפְחָד: בִּקְרֹב עָלַי וּמִרְעִים לֹא אֲכַל  
אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי וְאֵיבִי לִי הִמָּה כְּשֶׁלּוֹ וְנָפְלוּ: אֶם־תַּחֲנֹנָה עָלַי וּמַחֲנֶה לֹא־יִדָּא לִבִּי אֶם־תִּקְוֶם עָלַי  
מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בֹטֵחַ:

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men close in on me to devour my flesh it is they, my enemies and foes, who stumble and fall. Should an army besiege me, my heart would not fear. Should war break out against me, still I would be confident.

*Tehillim 27:1–3*

### RABBI JOSEPH SCHNEERSON: TWO WORLDS, ONE GOD

Rabbi Joseph Schneerson ran a seminary in Russia. When the Communists came to power they ordered all religious seminaries to close. Rabbi Schneerson defied the order and continued teaching religion.

One day a government officer confronted him and ordered him to close his school. The Rebbe refused. The officer pulled out a gun and said, 'You



will close the school or you will be killed.’ Rabbi Schneerson showed no emotion and quietly responded, ‘The school will remain open.’

The officer could not help being impressed by the Rabbi’s calm demeanor and complete lack of fear. ‘Don’t you take me seriously?’ he asked. ‘Aren’t you afraid of dying?’

The Rabbi responded calmly, ‘Someone who has only one world and many gods is afraid of dying. Someone who has two worlds and only one God has no fear.’

Rabbi Schneerson’s yeshiva remained open. In 1940 he transplanted it to the United States. Today it has branches throughout the world. Russian communism is no more.

*Adapted from Abraham J. Twerski, Do Unto Others, pp. 158–59*

1. In your opinion, what are the darkest days of Jewish history? Do these dark times challenge your faith?
2. Are there periods of Jewish history that reinforce your faith?
3. Does the quote from Tehillim resonate with you? Do you think it would have been a source of strength for you if you had lived during the darkest days of Jewish history?
4. Do you find Rabbi Schneerson’s profound courage and faith in the face of such danger an inspiration? Do you think you would have been able to show similar courage?
5. What does the conclusion of the story (that the yeshiva remained open until today, while Russian communism is no more) say about Rabbi Schneerson’s faith? Does that impact your own faith?

**It is the courage to live with uncertainty.**

### **A faith of questions – living with uncertainty**

#### **DID YOU ASK A GOOD QUESTION TODAY?**

Isidore Rabi, winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, was once asked why he became a scientist. He replied, ‘My mother made me a scientist without ever knowing it. Every other child would come back from school and be asked, “What did you learn today?” But my mother used to ask a different question. “Izzy,” she always used to say, “Did you ask a good question today?” That made the difference. Asking good questions made me a scientist.’

Judaism is a religion of questions. The greatest prophets asked questions of God. The Book of Iyov, the most searching of all explorations of human suffering, is a book of questions asked by man, to which God replies with







a string of questions of His own. The seder service on Pesach begins with four questions asked by a child.

When I first went to study at a yeshivah I was struck by the way the teacher's face would light up when we asked a question. *Du fregst a gutte kashe*, 'You raise a good objection,' was his highest form of praise. Abraham Twerski, an American psychiatrist, tells of how, when he was young, his instructor would relish challenges to his arguments. In his broken English he would say, 'You right! You a hundred prozent right! Now I show you where you wrong.'

Religious faith, in Judaism, is not naïve or blind. Every question asked in reverence is the start of a journey towards God. When faith suppresses questions, it dies. When it accepts superficial answers, it begins to wither. Faith is not opposed to doubt. What it is opposed to is the shallow certainty that what we understand is all there is.

Jonathan Sacks, *Celebrating Life*, pp. 79–81

1. Rabbi Sacks says faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. What uncertainties in life do you think he is referring to?
2. Why does it take courage to live with uncertainty? What is the alternative?
3. Why ask questions that have no answers?
4. Why would faith (or faith leaders) wish to suppress questions? Does Judaism suppress questions?
5. What questions do you have? If you could stand in the presence of God and ask any questions at all, what would you ask?

though our relationship has sometimes been tense and troubled

### Faith as defiance against God

#### A JEW I SHALL REMAIN

*Solomon ibn Verga, (Spain/Italy, 15th–16th Century), was one of the rare Jewish historians of the Middle Ages. In his account of the Spanish Expulsion, he told this story:*

I heard from some of the elders who came out of Spain that one of the boats was infested with the plague, and the captain of the boat put the passengers ashore at some uninhabited place. There, most of them died of starvation, while some of them gathered all their strength to set out on foot in search of some settlement.

There was one Jew among them who struggled on afoot together with





his wife and two children. The wife grew faint and died, because she was not accustomed to so much difficult walking. The husband carried his children along until both he and they fainted from hunger. When he regained consciousness, he found that his two children had died.

In great grief he rose to his feet and said: 'O Lord of all the universe, You are doing a great deal that I might even desert my faith. But know You of a certainty that – even against the will of heaven – a Jew I am and a Jew I shall remain. And neither that which You have brought upon me nor that which You may yet bring upon me will be of any avail.'

Thereupon he gathered some earth and some grass, and covered the boys, and went forth in search of a settlement.

Solomon ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah*, pp. 89–94,  
cited in Nahum Glatzer, *A Jewish Reader*, p. 204

1. Why do you think Rabbi Sacks says "our relationship has sometimes been tense and troubled"?
2. Do you sometimes have a tense and troubled relationship with God? Why?
3. Do you also feel your bond with God is unbreakable?
4. The Jew in the story is angry at God. Why do you think that is?
5. Is he rebelling against God, or showing loyalty to God? Could it be both?

**celebrating life, gives life to those whose lives we touch**

### Faith as inspiration to others

#### TO LIGHT A FIRE

Some people wear their faith like an overcoat. It only warms them, but does not benefit others at all. But some light a fire, and also warm others.

Menachem Mendl of Kotzk (*The Kotzker Rebbe*)

1. How can the way we live and celebrate our lives inspire others to live their lives?
2. How can we make our faith a fire to warm others rather than a coat to just warm ourselves?





## The miracle of faith to inspire

### Faith after the Holocaust

*Rabbi Yekutiel Halberstam, the Klausenberger Rebbe, lived through the Warsaw Ghetto, the work camps, the death march to Dachau, and then Auschwitz itself. He survived, but his wife and eleven children did not. In Auschwitz, he vowed that if he survived he would dedicate himself to life. He resolved to build a hospital that would honor the image of God in every human being. It took him fifteen years to raise the money, but eventually he built the Laniado Hospital in Netanya, Israel, dedicated to treating everyone alike, Jew and Arab, Israeli and Palestinian. This is what he taught his followers after the Holocaust:*

The biggest miracle of all is the one that we, the survivors of the Holocaust, after all that we witnessed and lived through, still believe and have faith in the Almighty God, may His name be blessed. This, my friends, is the miracle of miracles, the greatest miracle ever to have taken place.

*Yaffa Eliach, Chassidic Tales of the Holocaust, p. 228*

1. Do you find survivors of the Holocaust inspiring? How so?
2. Some survivors lost their faith because of their experiences during the Holocaust. Does this take away from the miracle the Klausenberger Rebbe is describing?
3. Why do you think building the Laniado Hospital was so important to him after he settled in Netanya?

## Faith is the space we create for God.

### Faith is making space for God

#### WHERE WE LET HIM IN

*Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787–1859) was one of the most remarkable figures of the Jewish mystical movement known as Chassidism. Angular, unconventional, passionate in his search for truth, he spent his life ‘wrestling with God and with men’.*

On one occasion, at the third Shabbat meal, when the atmosphere of the holy day is at its most intense, the Rebbe turned to his disciples and asked, ‘Where does God live?’

They were stunned by the strangeness of the question. ‘What does the Rebbe mean, “Where does God live?” Where does God *not* live? Surely



we are taught that there is no place devoid of His presence. He fills the heavens and the earth.'

'No,' said the Rebbe. 'You have not understood. *God lives where we let Him in.*'

God is always here, but we sense Him only when we search. He teaches, but only when we are ready to learn. He speaks, but only when we listen. The question is never, Where is God? It is always, Where are we? The problem of faith is not God but humankind. The task of faith is to create an openness in the soul through which the Divine presence can enter. God lives where we let Him in.

*Adapted from a well-known Chassidic tale*

1. What do you think Rabbi Sacks means by "Faith is the space we create for God"? Why do we need to make space for God?
2. What do you think the Kotzker Rebbe meant when he said "God lives where we let him in"?
3. "God is always here, but we sense Him only when we search". Are you searching for God? Where?
4. Where can you sense God? Where do you make space for Him?
5. Do you find faith easy to come by? Do you find it needs constant hard work?



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

If you feel comfortable during the discussion, share with the class your own faith journey. These questions may help you:

1. Do you find faith, and a relationship with God, easy to come by?
2. What is the source of your faith?
3. What are the biggest challenges to your faith?
4. Sometimes there are questions of faith that we just can't answer. Do you find yourself seeking answers to such questions?
5. If so, how do you reconcile those questions with your faith?
6. Do you find Jewish history a challenge to your faith, or a source of strength?
7. Have you found the sources that you have studied in this unit challenging to your faith, or have they helped to strengthen it?





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

Frontal teaching: If you feel your students are confident and able to open up about aspects of their own faith journeys, then ask them to share their personal reflections on these seven questions. It is important to create a safe environment for real sharing, where everyone's feelings and experiences are validated. While this may prove educationally challenging, it is an opportunity for growth for your students.

# The Faith of the Survivors

**Frontal teaching:** Ask for a volunteer to read these opening instructions, and then another to read the opening text.



**Class discussion:** The following text is taken from the final chapter of a book by Rabbi Sacks called *Future Tense*. Here Rabbi Sacks sets out his vision for the future of the Jewish people. He begins the chapter with these powerful words, describing what he has learned from the many survivors of the Holocaust that he has come to know in his life.

The Holocaust is arguably the greatest challenge to our faith in modern times, yet here Rabbi Sacks describes the positive impact that the faith of survivors has had on him personally. In this section we will encounter the stories of several survivors of the Holocaust, and we will try to understand how and why Rabbi Sacks has been so deeply affected by them.

Read this opening text as a class and discuss the questions that follow.



It was the Holocaust survivors who taught me. I have read hundreds of books about the Shoa. I made a television program from Auschwitz. To this day I cannot begin to imagine what they went through, how they survived the nightmare, and how they lived with the memories. Many did not. In my first career as a teacher of philosophy one of my academic colleagues committed suicide. I didn't know him well, but he seemed to me a quiet, gentle, loving man. It was only when he died that we discovered he was a Holocaust survivor. I knew, even from the Torah, what happened to Noah after the Flood, and Lot's wife when she turned back to look at the destruction. There are some memories that do not let you live.

But the survivors I came to know in the past twenty years were astonishing in their tenacious hold on life. Perhaps it's how they survived. Some believed in God, others didn't, but they all believed in life – not life as most of us understand it, something taken for granted, part of the background, a fact that rarely holds our attention, but life as something to fight for, as a consciously articulated value, as something of whose fragility you are constantly aware. They had, in Paul Tillich's phrase, the courage to be. Slowly I began to think about a phrase, not one that exists in the traditional literature, but one that was articulated in fateful circumstances and constituted a kind of turning point in modern Jewish history: *Kiddush hachayim*, the sanctification of life.

I had expected that trauma would turn the survivors inward, making them suspicious of, even hostile to, the wider world. It didn't, at least not



those I knew, and by the time I came to know them. Many of them had undertaken, fifty or more years after the event, to visit schools, talking to children, especially non-Jewish children. What amazed me as I listened to them telling their stories was what they wanted to say. Cherish freedom. Understand what a gift it is to be able to walk in the open, to see a flower, open a window, breathe free air. Love others. Never hate. Practice tolerance. Stand up for others if they are being picked on, bullied, ostracized. Live each day as if it might be your last. They taught the children to have faith in life. The children loved these elderly strangers from another world. I read some of their letters to them; they made me cry. Their courage kept me going through tough times. I count myself blessed to have known them.

*Future Tense*, pp. 253–254

1. “Some believed in God, others didn’t.” How do you feel about those survivors who lost their faith in God?
2. In the previous section we learned that the Klausenberger Rebbe, himself a survivor, described the survivors who held on to their faith as “the greatest miracle ever to have taken place”. Do you agree with his statement?
3. Rabbi Sacks tells us that while every survivor he came to know had a different kind of faith, they all “believed in life”. How is this similar to, or different from, faith in God?
4. Do you think “the courage to be”, coined by Paul Tillich\* and quoted here by Rabbi Sacks, is connected to the “courage to live with uncertainty” that we discussed in the opening text of this unit?
5. The term *kiddush hachayim* was first used by Rabbi Yitzchak Nissenbaum at the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, where he said the concept of *Kiddush Hashem* (martyrdom) was no longer enough because while previous enemies wanted our souls, this enemy (the Nazis) wanted our bodies (our lives), and so in defiance we must defend ourselves and live! He framed surviving as a religious act. Do you agree with him? What do you think the survivors that lost their faith in God would say?
6. Rabbi Sacks describes the survivors visiting schools, and their interactions with the school children. What was their main message?
7. Why did this amaze Rabbi Sacks? Does it amaze you? Does it inspire you?

**Frontal teaching:** Facilitate a class discussion based on the guiding questions to the texts above.

\* Paul Johannes Tillich (1886–1965) was a German-American Christian existentialist philosopher and Lutheran Protestant theologian.





**Survivor narratives:** Together with your *chavruta* read the stories below. Your teacher will assign you one to start with. Read through the story and consider the following questions:

**Chavruta text analysis:** Allocate each *chavruta* one of the stories 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 read the other stories when they have finished. Direct them to read through the stories together and to 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.

1. Can you tell from the story if this survivor was a believing Jew before the Holocaust?
2. Do you think the survivor had faith in God after their experiences in the Holocaust? If so, do they explain how and why?
3. Is there any evidence in the story that this survivor displays “the courage to live with uncertainty”?
4. From their story, what can you say about the faith of the survivor? What do they have faith in?
5. Do you think they have made space for God in their post-Holocaust lives?
6. If possible, can you imagine what your relationship with God would be like if you had experienced the same in your life?
7. How does their story impact your own faith today?

#### STORY 1: THE KLAUSENBERGER REBBE



Looking at his photograph I see a chassidic saint, one of those mystical leaders that Judaism has yielded in such abundance since the eighteenth century, a man with a long white beard, a frock coat and a gentle smile that seems both of this world and the next. There is in that smile something profoundly affirming as if, were you to meet him, you would instinctively know that he would embrace you and assure you that all is well with the world and that you are part of that perfection. Yet this was no ordinary saint, no ordinary life, for I am looking at a picture of the late Rabbi Yekutiel Halberstam, the Klausenberger Rebbe who, during the Holocaust, lost his wife and eleven children. I am looking at the face of Iyov.

I never met him. I would love to have been able to ask him where that smile and its warmth came from in one who saw what he saw and lost what he lost. What I have seen is what he built: the Laniado Hospital in Netanya, Israel. Surviving the Holocaust, he vowed that he would dedicate himself to the saving of life. After many years of planning, he created the hospital, one of the finest in Israel. All that he cared for is embodied in the principles he insisted on in its running. It was to be a religious institution, run according to Jewish law and imbued with Jewish spirit. It was to treat



all persons alike, Jew and Arab, Israeli and Palestinian. Staff were to be chosen not only for their medical excellence but also for their love of their fellow human beings. Every effort was to be made to relieve not just the physical suffering of patients but also their psychological and spiritual distress. The hospital was to be animated by a spirit of compassion, kindness and sympathy. It was to be a place in which you should be able to feel the presence of the God of life.

*To Heal a Fractured World, p. 202*

#### STORY 2: GENA TURGEL



What struck me most about the survivors was their absence of hate, their dedication to life, their desire not for revenge but for tolerance and understanding. There was something awe-inspiring about the way they had worked through their negative emotions, their trauma. Having lost most of their families, the survivors I knew had become an extended family among themselves, helping each other through the bad times when the unquiet ghosts of memory returned.

Gena Turgel is one of them. As a young woman she was sent, successively, to Plaszow, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. She saw her sister and brother-in-law shot. In Plaszow she encountered Amon Goeth, the notorious character in *Schindler's List*, who shot people for fun. She lost many of her family. Only an iron determination to save her mother kept her alive. When Belsen was liberated by the British in 1945 one of the officers was a Jewish man, Maurice Turgel. They met, and within days he had proposed marriage. The Revd Leslie Hardman, the Jewish chaplain who was with the troops as they entered Belsen, officiated at their wedding. Gena came with her husband to London, where she has lived ever since.

In 1987 she wrote her biography, *I Light a Candle*, and she has spent much of her time in recent years visiting universities and schools, recounting her experiences of the extermination camps. Most of the people to whom she speaks are not Jewish, and what she has to tell them often comes as a profound shock. Despite everything, most children do not know the details of those years. Yet what she conveys is not dark. Gena has no bitterness or hate or rage. There is something serene about her, a graciousness I find very moving. Though there are many questions of faith for which she has no answer, she profoundly believes that prayer helped her survive and that God was with her, giving her strength and hope. What she teaches over and above the need for tolerance and the willingness to fight on behalf of those who are victims, is love of life itself. Every day is, for her, an unexpected gift. She knows that there were hundreds of moments at which she might have died. That too is something that, after Auschwitz,



she feels a need to convey to her grandchildren's generation: a sense that time is precious and must be used to create good.

*To Heal a Fractured World, p. 205*

### STORY 3: EMANUEL RINGELBLUM



Faith in God after the Holocaust may be hard; but faith in humanity is harder still.

Today is National Holocaust Memorial Day, and this year the focus will be on one small group of people in the Warsaw ghetto and the astonishing task they took on themselves for the sake of future generations...

Eventually in April 1943 the Nazis gave the order that everyone left should be killed and it was there that the ghetto inhabitants mounted an extraordinary act of resistance, keeping the German army at bay for five weeks until they were overcome.

But by then a quite different act of resistance had taken place, and it's this we're going to remember this year. It was the brainchild of a Jewish historian, Emanuel Ringelblum, who realized that the Nazis were unlike any previous group bent on conquest. All others had preserved a record of their victories for posterity. But the Germans were intent on obliterating or falsifying every trace of their mass exterminations, of Roma, Sinti, homosexuals, the mentally and physically disabled, and the Jews. Ringelblum understood that they were preparing a systematic denial of the Holocaust at the very time it was taking place.

So, in the ghetto, he brought together a group of academics, teachers, journalists, religious leaders, artists and the young to gather testimonies from people in the ghetto, so that the world would one day know what happened. Unbelievably they gathered 35,000 documents, stories, letters, poems and records. They hid them in tin boxes and milk churns where they lay for years until the handful of survivors led the way to their location.

What an astonishing act of faith: that evil would ultimately be defeated, that the documents would be found and not destroyed, and that truth would win out in the end. Faith in God after the Holocaust may be hard; but faith in humanity is harder still, knowing the evil people to do one another, and the hate that lies dormant but never dead in the human heart.

Ringelblum and his friends had faith in humanity, and they left us a legacy of hope preserved intact in the very heart of darkness. In our still tense and troubled age, may we be worthy of that faith, that hope.

*BBC Radio 4 Thought for the Day, 30th January 2010*





#### STORY 4: VIKTOR FRANKL



The person who did most to turn this insight into a systematic psychology was the late Viktor Frankl. Born in Vienna in 1905, he was deported with the rest of his family to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt in 1942, and spent the next three years in extermination camps, among them Auschwitz and Dachau. He and one sister were the only members of the family to survive. It was during this time that he made the discovery which later became his life work.

Already a distinguished neurologist, he preserved his sanity by observing his fellow prisoners, as if he and they were taking part in an experiment... People became automata, hardly living, merely existing from day to day. It was then that Frankl asked the fateful question. Was there any freedom left to a person who has been robbed of everything: dignity, possessions, even the power of decision itself. The Jewish victims of earlier persecutions had been given a choice: convert or die. During the Holocaust there was no choice. *What remained once you had lost everything there was to lose?* Frankl realized that there was one freedom that can never be taken away... The freedom that remained was *the decision how to respond*. Frankl survived by constantly analyzing what was happening to himself and others and helping them find a reason to continue to live...

This became the core of an insight Frankl was to turn, after the war, into a new school of psychotherapy. He called it *logotherapy*, from the Greek *logos*, meaning 'word' in the broadest sense – the spiritual dimension of human life, that which endows life with a sense of purpose. He summarized his teaching in the title of his most famous book: *Man's Search for Meaning*.

If a life could be meaningful even in Auschwitz, it could be meaningful anywhere under any circumstances. "We must never forget that we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed."

*To Heal a Fractured World, pp. 217–218*



#### STORY 5: LIVIU LIBRESCU



That Monday in April 2007 at Virginia Tech, as Cho Seung was murdering his [32] victims, a 76-year-old engineering professor Liviu Librescu was about to begin his class. He was a Holocaust survivor born to Romanian Jewish parents. His father had been deported by the Nazis. He himself was sent as a child to a Soviet labor camp. Returning to Rumania after the war, he was forced out of academic life because of his Zionist sympathies. Eventually, after a long campaign, he was able to emigrate to Israel.

In 1986 he spent a sabbatical in America and decided to stay. He loved teaching, and refused to retire. Hearing gunshots nearby on that fateful morning. He rushed to the classroom door, holding it shut while his students escaped through a window. When the killer fired shots at the door, they hit him. He died; his students lived. One of the survivors wrote to Librescu's wife about that last moment: 'He was holding the door closed and looking over his shoulder to make sure everybody else was safe. It was the bravest thing I have ever seen.' I find it moving that a man who survived two of the worst tyrannies of history, dedicated the rest of his life to learning and teaching, and ended it by choosing to die rather than let his students become victims.

*The Home We Build Together, p. 62*



**Share your analysis:** Come together as a class and share the stories you read, together with your answers to the questions, and the emotions you experienced when reading the story. What did you learn about faith from these stories?

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



**Final Thoughts:** As a class, read Rabbi Sacks' thoughts on our response as a people to the Holocaust. How do these words make you feel?

Ask for a volunteer to read the final text below, and then invite your students to share their responses.

Summarize for the students what you have learned from these stories. Choose a final message to leave your students with – both from this section, and from the ideas studied in this unit as a whole.

#### "OUR HOPE IS NOT DESTROYED"



After the Holocaust, a ravaged, devastated people came back to the land of Israel and there built one of the great states of the modern world. Out of the wilderness they built farms and forests. In place of the totalitarian states from which many of them came, they framed a democracy. From a small population they created an army of invincible courage. In place of Jerusalem "in mourning and in ruins" they created a Jerusalem built "as a city that is closely joined together." They made the Hebrew language, the language of the Bible, live again. They built *yeshivot*, citadels of Jewish learning, so that the streets of Jerusalem would once again echo with the sound of ancient learning. They brought Jewish communities, threatened by persecution, to safety. Together they brought about the collective resurrection of the Jewish people from the shadow of death to the land of life. Today when Jews sing of Israel they say *od lo avdah tikvatenu*, "Our hope is not destroyed."

If you were to ask what our response to the Holocaust should be, I would say this: Marry and have children, bring new Jewish life into the world, build schools, make communities, have faith in God who had faith in man and make sure that His voice is heard wherever evil threatens. Pursue justice, defend the defenseless, have the courage to be different and fight for the dignity of difference. Recognize the image of God in others and defeat hate with love. Twice a year, on *Yom Hashoah* and the Ninth of Av, sit and mourn for those who died and remember them in your prayers. But most of all, continue to live as Jews.

When I stand today in Jerusalem, or in a Jewish school, or see a Jewish couple under the wedding canopy, or see parents at the Shabbat table blessing their children, there are times when I am overcome with tears, not in sadness nor in joy, but in awe at this people who came face to face with the angel of death and refused to give it a final victory. The Jewish people lives, and still bears witness to the living God.

*A Letter in the Scroll*, pp. 183–184



# The Assignment



**Part 1:** Become a Faith Researcher. Faith is a unique journey for each person, but are there any common aspects shared among us? In this unit we have explored our own faith journeys and the faith of our class mates. For this assignment you will research the faith of a range of people by collecting answers to the questionnaire below. Gather the data and analyze the responses you were given. For example, are you able to identify any patterns in the data? Did you find anything surprising? How did the answers given by the participants in the survey compare with your own answers, and with the discussions that you and your classmates had in class about these topics?

Your sample (the group of people you are researching) must include at least one religious leader (for example a rabbi), a teacher from your school, a grandparent, a parent, a friend, and finally, yourself. You may include as many people as you like in your research.

How you collect the data is up to you. Options include personal interviews, emailing the questionnaire, or creating an online questionnaire.

Your final product should include a summary of the answers you collected, a paragraph of analysis for each question, and an overall conclusion of the results of your survey.

## Faith Questionnaire:

1. Name (optional)
2. What is your relationship to the researcher?
3. Where do you live?
4. Describe yourself as a Jew.
5. Do you find faith, and a relationship with God, easy to come by?
6. What is the source of your faith?
7. What are the biggest challenges to your faith?
8. Sometimes there are questions of faith that we just can't answer. Do you find yourself seeking answers to such questions?
9. If so, how do you reconcile those questions with your faith?
10. Do you find Jewish history a challenge to your faith, or a source of strength?



**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 [www.RabbiSacks.org/TenPaths](http://www.RabbiSacks.org/TenPaths) to see his responses.



**Project based learning:** This assignment asks your students to now look at the ideas they have studied in this unit in the world outside of their classroom. It gives them an opportunity to openly engage with the many people in their lives, such as parents, teachers and religious leaders, on a subject that is frequently shied away from. In doing so, they are likely to find that it is common among all levels and age groups to have questions of faith, and that for many people faith is a life-long journey. This realization may well strengthen the students own faith, and increase their sense of belonging, knowing they are not alone in questioning their faith.

You may wish to set up an online questionnaire template (there are many appropriate free platforms such as Google Forms, SurveyMonkey etc.) and have all the results collated centrally. Another option is to reframe the questions in such a way that answers are given on a scale of 1–10, with an opportunity for comments, and this will give you numerical data that can also be analyzed as a class.



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