

TEN PATHS TO GOD

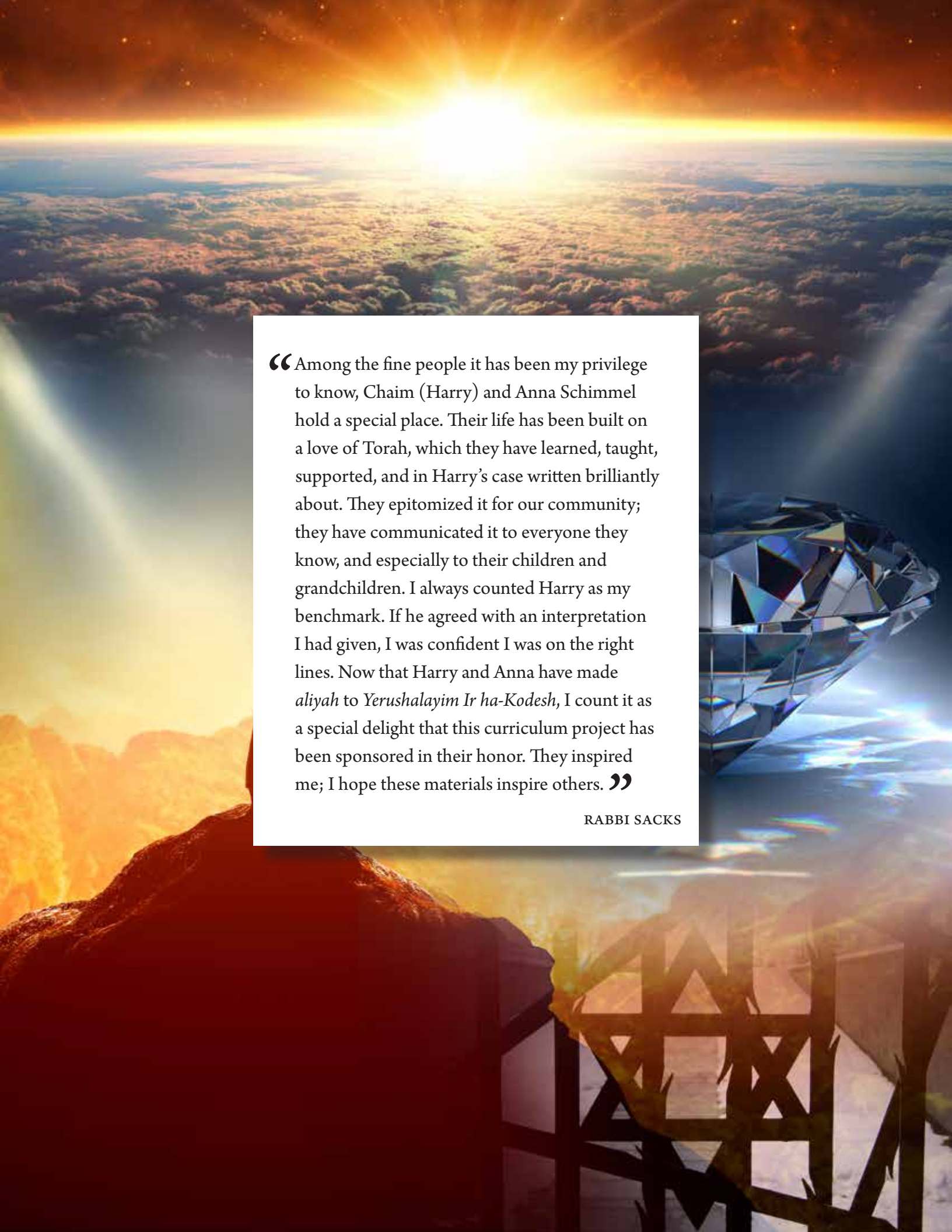
UNIT 9 – Student Guide / Entry Level

קידוש השם KIDDUSH HASHEM

The Jewish Task

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

Watch: The opening video for Unit 9



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.

The way of Judaism is particular, but the concern of Judaism is universal. Avraham was promised that ‘Through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’ Yeshayahu said that we are called on to be God’s ‘witnesses’. Our message is not for ourselves alone.

How so? We do not seek to convert others. We believe that the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come. But we do seek to be living examples, reflections of God’s light, an inspiration to others to find their own way to God. That, we believe, is the only way of honoring the fact, after Babel, of a world of many cultures and civilizations. God is one; we are many, and we must learn to live together in peace. That is why we do not seek to impose our faith on others. Truth is communicated by influence not power, by example not by force or fear.

Others have understood this about us. Winston Churchill, for example, said that the West owes to the Jews ‘a system of ethics which, even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural, would be incomparably the most precious possession of mankind, worth in fact the fruits of all other learning and wisdom put together’.

At a time when we have witnessed the resurgence of antisemitism, the world’s oldest hatred, it is important to know that yes, we have enemies, but we also have friends. We have critics, but there are those who, without seeking to become Jewish, have drawn inspiration from Jewish life. We owe it to them, not just to ourselves, to be faithful to our task: to be God’s ambassadors on earth.

Jonathan Sacks



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.

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The way of Judaism is particular

1. A particular culture (or system of belief) is one that belongs to one group of people (perhaps a religious group or ethnic community). Can you give some examples?
2. What then is a universal culture or belief? Can you give some examples?
3. Can those who are not part of our “particular” people also live the “way of Judaism”?

the concern of Judaism is universal

1. What is the “concern of Judaism”?
2. How is it universal?
3. Do you think Judaism is the only source for the universal values that it espouses?



the righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come

1. According to Judaism, how does someone who is not Jewish gain a share in the world to come?
2. What is the Jewish definition of “righteous”?
3. Does Judaism encourage non-Jewish people to convert to Judaism? Why?

living examples

1. What do we seek to be a “living example” of? How can we achieve that?
2. What does the term *Kiddush Hashem* mean literally? What do you think it means for us in the context we are studying? Is it the same as being a living example?
3. What impact do you think we can have by being a living example to the world?

learn to live together in peace

1. Humanity is highly diverse, full of different kinds of people. Do you think humanity can learn to live together in peace? How?
2. Does humanity live in peace today, in our generation? Why do you think that is?
3. What messages are contained in Judaism that could help the world to learn to live together in peace?

the most precious possession of mankind

1. Why do you think Winston Churchill (British Prime Minister during the Second World War) describes a Jewish system of ethics as “the most precious possession of mankind”?
2. Can you think of some examples of Jewish ethics?
3. The “supernatural” here refers to God. What do you think Churchill meant when he said, “even if it were entirely separated from the supernatural” it would still be considered the most precious possession of mankind?

God’s ambassadors on earth

1. What does the job of being an ambassador involve? How can we do that job for God?
2. Why should we be God’s ambassadors on earth?
3. Do you think you are fulfilling this mission?



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?

The Jewish National Mission



Exploring the concept of a 'Jewish mission': Together with your *chavruta* consider the following biblical quote, using the questions that follow to help your analysis. Then look at the supplementary sources to explore how Rabbi Sacks understands the Jewish national mission is to be “living examples” and “God’s ambassadors on earth”. Use the questions to guide your discussion and analysis.

THE COVENANT AT SINAI: A HOLY NATION



הָאֵתָם רָאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאֵשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל-כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים וָאֵבָא אֲתֶכֶם אֵלַי: וְעַתָּה
אִם-שְׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשִׁמְרַתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֻגְלָה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-לִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ:
וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי מְמַלְכֵת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֵלֹהִה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר 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* does not actually mean a “chosen people,” even though it is often translated that way. Here it is translated as “treasured possession”. Are these two terms connected?
2. What do you think it means to be a chosen people? What have we been chosen for?
3. What do you think it means to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation”? What does it mean to be holy? Were the priests holier than the rest of the people? Are Jews holier than the rest of the world?



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, pp. 65–67

1. How does Rabbi Sacks explain the concept that the Jewish people are a “chosen people”?
2. What does the word ‘vocation’ mean? What do you think is the vocation of the Jewish people?
3. How does Rambam, according to his son, explain what it means to be a “kingdom of priests”?



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. From this quote, together with the opening text for the unit, what do you think is the core message of Judaism that we must model as “living examples”?
2. Where in the Torah do we find this core value?
3. In what ways do you think we can model this value?



[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 (*tzedek/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, pp. 135–136

1. How do you think people would treat each other if they believed that all of mankind is created in the image of God?
2. "Judaism is the constitution of a self-governing nation". This means that there are laws in Judaism that help create a just society that protects all of its citizens. Can you give examples of such laws in Judaism that other religions do not necessarily have?



3. Rabbi Sacks argues that the ultimate fulfillment of the destiny of the Jewish people is to build a society based on these values, and that this can only be done in Israel. What do you think leads him to this view? Do you agree?



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?

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

1. What is the national mission of the Jewish people?
2. How do we fulfill the national mission of the Jewish people? Where can we best fulfill this mission?
3. Are we fulfilling this mission in our land today? If not, what can we do to achieve it?

Israel Among the Nations



Analysis: Together with your *chavruta* join another pair to form a small *chabura* (study group). The supplementary sources below have been written by non-Jewish people and describe how they have been inspired by the Jewish people. Your teacher will inform you which of the texts to look at first.

Imagine you are a member of a university debating team. Use the texts your group has been assigned to formulate an argument opposing the following motion:

"This house believes the Jewish people are a parasite nation living off the cultures of the host societies among which it has been dispersed, while making little or no contribution to those societies."

When analysing the texts, address the following questions:

1. What did the author find most inspiring about the Jewish people?
2. What did the author find most amazing about the Jewish people (or Jewish history)?
3. From the way the author describes the impact of the Jewish people on society, would you say that the Jewish people have been a *Kiddush Hashem*?

ROUSSEAU: AN ASTONISHING PHENOMENON

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was one of the most influential political thinkers in modern times: his book, "The Social Contract", helped inspire the French Revolution. After his death, the following note was discovered among his unpublished papers.

But an astonishing and truly unique spectacle is to see an expatriated people, who have had neither place nor land for nearly two thousand years, a people mingled with foreigners, no longer perhaps having a single descendant of the early races, a scattered people, dispersed over the world, enslaved, persecuted, scorned by all nations, nonetheless preserving its characteristics, its laws, its customs, its patriotic love of the early social union, when all ties with it seem broken. The Jews provide us with an astonishing spectacle: the laws of Numa, Lycurgus, Solon are dead; the very much older laws of Moses are still alive. Athens, Sparta, Rome have perished and no longer have children left on earth; Zion, destroyed, has not lost its children.

They mingle with all the nations and never merge with them; they no longer have leaders, and are still a nation; they no longer have a homeland, and are always citizens of it... Any man whosoever he is, must acknowledge this as a unique marvel, the causes of which, Divine or human, certainly



deserve the study and admiration of the sages, in preference to all that Greece and Rome offer of what is admirable in the way of political institutions and human settlements.

The manuscript is to be found in the public library at Neuchâtel
(Cahiers de brouillons, notes et extraits, no. 7843)

PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS: JEWS AND CIVILIZATION

John Adams (1735–1826) was America’s first Vice-President (1789–1797), and second President (1797–1801).

I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist, and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. If I were an atheist of the other sect, who believe or pretend to believe that all is ordered by chance, I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization.

President John Adams to F.A. Vanderkemp, February 16, 1809,
in *The Works of John Adams*, ed. C.F. Adams, vol. 9, pp. 609–10

LEO TOLSTOY: AS EVERLASTING AS ETERNITY ITSELF

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), author of “War and Peace” and “Anna Karenina”, was perhaps the greatest novelist of all time. In 1877 he had an intense religious experience and thereafter devoted most of his life to religion and a new vision of society which influenced some of the early Zionists, as well as Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

The Jew is that sacred being who has brought down from heaven the everlasting fire and has illuminated with it the entire world. He is the religious source, spring and fountain out of which all the rest of the peoples have drawn their beliefs and their religions . . . The Jew is the emblem of eternity. He whom neither slaughter nor torture of thousands of years could destroy, he whom neither fire nor sword nor inquisition was able to wipe off the face of the earth, he who was the first to produce the oracles of God, he who has been for so long the guardian of prophecy, and who has transmitted it to the rest of the world – such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is as everlasting as eternity itself.

Letter found in the archives of the Bulgarian statesman F. Gabai.
Text in Allan Gould, *What did they think of the Jews*, pp. 180–181



MARK TWAIN: ALL THINGS ARE MORTAL BUT THE JEW



Mark Twain was the pen name of American novelist Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835–1910). The following famous passage is taken from a magazine article he wrote in 1899 in answer to a request to clarify his views about the Jews.

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way.

Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.

The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind.

All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?

Mark Twain, Concerning the Jews, Harper's Magazine, June 1899

NICOLAI BERDYAEV: THE REFUTATION OF MATERIALISM



Nicolai Berdyaev (1874–1948) was a Marxist who held the chair of philosophy at the University of Moscow. In later life he rejected Marxism and became increasingly devoted to religion. In "The Meaning of History" he tells of how he came to realize that the history of the Jews refuted the Marxist belief that the destiny of civilizations was ruled by material forces alone.

I remember how the materialist interpretation of history, when I attempted in my youth to verify it by applying it to the destinies of peoples, broke down in the case of the Jews, where destiny seemed absolutely inexplicable from the materialistic standpoint... Its survival is a mysterious and wonderful phenomenon demonstrating that the life of this people is governed



by a special predetermination, transcending the processes of adaptation expounded by the materialistic interpretation of history. The survival of the Jews, their resistance to destruction, their endurance under absolutely peculiar conditions and the fateful role played by them in history: all these point to the particular and mysterious foundations of their destiny.

Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, 1936, pp. 86–87

PAUL JOHNSON: THE PURPOSE AND DESTINY OF HISTORY



Paul Johnson (1928–) is a Catholic historian, former editor of the New Statesman, and author of “A History of the Jews”, from which these passages are taken.

No people has ever insisted more firmly than the Jews that history has a purpose and humanity a destiny. At a very early stage in their collective existence they believed they had detected a Divine scheme for the human race, of which their own society was to be a pilot. They worked out their role in immense detail. They clung to it with heroic persistence in the face of savage suffering. Many of them believe it still. Others transmuted it into Promethean endeavors to raise our condition by purely human means. The Jewish vision became the prototype for many similar grand designs for humanity, both divine and man-made. The Jews, therefore, stand right at the center of the perennial attempt to give human life the dignity of a purpose...

All the great conceptual discoveries of the intellect seem obvious and inescapable once they have been revealed, but it requires a special genius to formulate them for the first time. The Jews had this gift. To them we owe the idea of equality before the law, both divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind. Without the Jews it might have been a much emptier place.

Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, pp. 2, 585



THOMAS CAHILL: SHAPERS OF THE WEST



Thomas Cahill, a Catholic historian, studied Judaism for two years in preparation for his book “The Gifts of the Jews”, from which the following passages are taken.

The Jews started it all – and by ‘it’ I mean so many of the things we care about, the underlying values that make all of us, Jew and gentile, believer and atheist, tick. Without the Jews, we would see the world through different eyes, hear with different ears, even feel with different feelings...

For better or worse, the role of the West in humanity’s history is singular. Because of this, the role of the Jews, the inventors of Western culture, is also singular: there is simply no one else remotely like them; theirs is a unique vocation. Indeed, as we shall see, the very idea of vocation, of a personal destiny, is a Jewish idea.

The Jews gave us the Outside and the Inside – our outlook and our inner life. We can hardly get up in the morning or cross the street without being Jewish. We dream Jewish dreams and hope Jewish hopes. Most of our best words, in fact – new, adventure, surprise; unique, individual, person, vocation; time, history, future; freedom, progress, spirit; faith, hope, justice – are the gifts of the Jews.

Thomas Cahill, The Gifts of the Jews, pp. 3, 240–41





ANDREW MARR: STORIES FOR THE REST OF US



Andrew Marr (1959–) is a journalist, political philosopher and broadcaster. The following is taken from an article he wrote for The Observer.

The Jews have always had stories for the rest of us. They have had their Bible, one of the great imaginative works of the human spirit. They have been victim of the worst modernity can do, a mirror for Western madness. Above all they have had the story of their cultural and genetic survival from the Roman Empire to the 2000s, weaving and thriving amid uncomprehending, hostile European tribes.

This story, their post-Bible, their epic of bodies, not words, involved an intense competitive hardening of generations which threw up, in the end, a blaze of individual geniuses in Europe and America. Outside painting, Morris dancing and rap music, it's hard to think of many areas of Western endeavor where Jews haven't been disproportionately successful. For non-Jews, who don't believe in a people being chosen by God, the lesson is that generations of people living on their wits and hard work, outside the more comfortable mainstream certainties, will seed Einsteins and Wittgensteins, Trotskys and Seiffs. Culture matters...

The Jews really have been different; they have enriched the world and challenged it.

Andrew Marr, The Observer, Sunday May 14, 2000



Share your analysis: Come together as a class. Share your analysis of the texts you were assigned, and state your argument opposing the motion "This house believes the Jewish people are a parasite nation living off the cultures of the host societies among which it has been dispersed, while making little or no contribution to those societies." Make sure you use the quotes you have studied here to form the basis for your argument.

The Assignment



In this unit we have considered the national mission of the Jewish people: to model the values of the Torah by creating a model society in Israel. We have also considered how individual Jews have done this through their contributions to society.

Part 1: Working in pairs, create a presentation of the top ten contributions Jews have made to the world. First, research the most famous Jews and how they have impacted the world, and then choose your top ten. Rank your list, starting with number ten and working up to your number one choice. Your presentation must be visual, in whichever digital format you choose, for example PowerPoint, Prezi, or creating a video.

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 to see his responses.



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