


TEN PATHS TO GOD

EPILOGUE – Educator Guide

להיות יהודי WHY I AM 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: This unit is for students who have completed all ten units of the Ten Paths to God curriculum, and serves as a way to review and connect it all together, giving the students a complete picture of Rabbi Sacks' approach to this important subject. Central to this concluding unit is the animated video "Why I am a Jew", produced by Rabbi Sacks and based on a text taken from his book *A Letter in the Scroll*. In this video, Rabbi Sacks explores the reasons why he is proud to call himself a Jew, and what that means to him, referencing each of the Ten Paths both directly and indirectly. The video gives us, effectively, a concise summary of Rabbi Sacks' philosophy of Judaism.

This unit focuses on the final assignment – a creative project for the students to reflect on why they are proud to call themselves a Jew, and what that means for them in their own lives. With this in mind, they are invited to create their own "Why I am a Jew" video.

Educational aims for this unit:

- For students to review each of the Ten Paths they have previously studied, and to reflect on how each path can be a unique way to connect to God.
- For students to consider the connection between each of the paths, and to reflect on the ideas that run through the curriculum as a whole.
- For students to process their own thoughts on what it means to them to be a Jew, and to take ownership of the ideas that they have been studying.
- For students to feel a sense of completion in finishing the Ten Paths to God curriculum.


Trigger activity: Brainstorm. Write the words "Why I am a Jew" in large letters on the whiteboard/smartboard/a poster. Ask for volunteers to draw a line from the words and write a short sentence in answer to this question (you could also use post-it notes or some other variation). When everyone that wants to answer has done so, ask your students if they found this a difficult question to answer, and if some say that it was, ask them to explain why they found it difficult. You may leave it at that, or you could expand the discussion and ask for volunteers to share how they arrived at an answer, and then conduct a brief class discussion based on some of their responses.

Congratulations! You have explored all ten of Rabbi Sacks' Ten Paths to God! In this concluding unit you will have the opportunity to further reflect on each of the Ten Paths, and tie them together to help you create your own personal approach to what it means to be a Jew. First, let's see how Rabbi Sacks explains why he is proud to be a Jew.

Watch: The opening video "Why I am a Jew"




Discussion: Ask the students for their initial reactions to the video. Ask them what they think of how Rabbi Sacks answered the question, and whether any of his answers were given by students in the class.



First Reading: Read through the text from the video. Highlight each phrase or sentence that refers to one of the Ten Paths from the units you have studied in this curriculum.

Use the questions that follow the text to help you understand its message.



The deepest question any of us can ask is: 'Who am I?' To answer it we have to go deeper than 'Where do I live?' or 'What do I do?' The most fateful moment in my life came when I asked myself that question and knew the answer had to be: I am a Jew. This is why.

I am a Jew not because I believe that Judaism contains all there is of the human story; I admire other traditions and their contributions to the world. Nor am I a Jew because of anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism. What happens to me does not define who I am; ours is a people of faith, not fate. Nor is it because I think that Jews are better than others, more intelligent, creative, generous or successful. It's not Jews who are different, but Judaism. It's not so much what we are but what we are called on to be.

I am a Jew because, being a child of my people, I have heard the call to add my chapter to its unfinished story. I am a stage on its journey, a connecting link between the generations. The dreams and hopes of my ancestors live on in me, and I am the guardian of their trust, now and for the future.

I am a Jew because our ancestors were the first to see that the world is driven by a moral purpose, that reality is not a ceaseless war of the elements, to be worshipped as gods, nor history a battle in which might is right and power is to be appeased. The Judaic tradition shaped the moral civilization of the West, teaching for the first time that human life is sacred, that the individual may never be sacrificed for the mass, and that rich and poor, great and small, are all equal before God.

I am a Jew because I am the moral heir of those who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai and pledged themselves to live by these truths for all time. I am the descendant of countless generations of ancestors who, though sorely tested and bitterly tried, remained faithful to that covenant when they might so easily have defected.

I am a Jew because of Shabbat, the world's greatest religious institution, a time in which there is no manipulation of nature or our fellow human beings, in which we come together in freedom and equality to create, every week, an anticipation of the messianic age.

I am a Jew because our nation, though at times it suffered the deepest poverty, never gave up on its commitment to helping the poor, or rescuing Jews from other lands, or fighting for justice for the oppressed, and did so without self-congratulation, because it was a *mitzvah*, because a Jew could do no less.



I am a Jew because I cherish the Torah, knowing that God is to be found not just in natural forces but in moral meanings, in words, texts, teachings and commands, and because Jews, though they lacked all else, never ceased to value education as a sacred task, endowing the individual with dignity and depth.

I am a Jew because of our people's passionate faith in freedom, holding that each of us is a moral agent, and that in this lies our unique dignity as human beings; and because Judaism never left its ideals at the level of lofty aspirations, but instead translated them into deeds which we call *mitzvot*, and a way, which we call the *halacha*, and thus brought heaven down to earth.

I am proud, simply, to be a Jew.

I am proud to be part of a people who, though scarred and traumatized, never lost their humor or their faith, their ability to laugh at present troubles and still believe in ultimate redemption; who saw human history as a journey, and never stopped traveling and searching.

I am proud to be part of an age in which my people, ravaged by the worst crime ever to be committed against a people, responded by reviving a land, recovering their sovereignty, rescuing threatened Jews throughout the world, rebuilding Jerusalem, and proving themselves to be as courageous in the pursuit of peace as in defending themselves in war.

I am proud that our ancestors refused to be satisfied with premature consolations, and in answer to the question, 'Has the Messiah come?' always answered, 'Not yet.'

I am proud to belong to the people Israel, whose name means "one who wrestles with God and with man and prevails." For though we have loved humanity, we have never stopped wrestling with it, challenging the idols of every age. And though we have loved God with an everlasting love, we have never stopped wrestling with Him, nor He with us.

I admire other civilizations and traditions, and believe each has brought something special into the world, *aval zeh shelanu*, "but this is ours". This is my people, my heritage, my faith. In our uniqueness lies our universality. Through being what we alone are, we give to humanity what only we can give.

This, then, is our story, our gift to the next generation. I received it from my parents, and they from theirs, across great expanses of space and time. There is nothing quite like it. It changed, and still challenges, the moral imagination of mankind.

I want to say to Jews around the world: Take it, cherish it, learn to understand and to love it. Carry it and it will carry you. And may you in



turn pass it on to future generations. For you are a member of an eternal people, a letter in their scroll. Let their eternity live on in you.

Jonathan Sacks

1. How would you answer the question, "Who are you?"
2. Why do you think some Jews only remain Jewish because of anti-Semitism? Why do you think Rabbi Sacks rejects this approach?
3. Do you think Jews are "better" than non-Jews? What is it, then, that makes us different?
4. Have you thought about the chapter in Jewish history that you will write – what Rabbi Sacks calls your "letter in the scroll"? What would you like it to be?
5. What does Rabbi Sacks say our ancestors were the first to realize about the world?
6. Why do you think being a link in the chain of generations of Jews is a compelling reason for Rabbi Sacks to remain Jewish?
7. What aspects of Judaism does Rabbi Sacks provide as reasons for why he is proud to be a Jew?
8. According to Rabbi Sacks, how have the Jewish people responded to tragedy and suffering in Jewish history?
9. "Through being what we alone are, we give to humanity what only we can give." What is it that the Jewish people uniquely contribute to humanity?
10. How would you answer the question, "Why are you a Jew"?

Frontal teaching: Ask for a list of words or concepts that students had trouble understanding. Write them on the board and discuss them briefly to clarify their basic meaning. Ask the students to volunteer their answers to the questions above as the basis of a class discussion on the underlying message of the text.

The Final Assignment

Project based learning: Unlike the preceding ten units of the curriculum, the assignment here does not function as a practical conclusion to the unit, but is in fact the full focus of the unit. It is therefore presented immediately after the transcript of the opening video.

Divide your class into small groups of three or four students to work together on this project. Ask them to watch the video again, this time with a view to creating their own version. Their video must contain references to ideas from each of the ten units in the curriculum, in the same way as Rabbi Sacks does in his video.

To help them with this, each group should use the summary sheets below in order to review each unit. If your groups consist of four students, you could divide the ten units between the two *chavrutot* in the group and then ask them to present their work to the other *chavruta* when they have finished.

Once each group has covered all ten units, they can begin to plan their video. Encourage them to think about what they want their overall message to be, the text they need to write for the video (i.e. for the audio narration or closed captions, depending on which they choose), and the visuals they plan to use.

At the end of the course, when each group has submitted a video, host a screening of all the videos for the class. If you wish, you could ask your students to vote on which of the videos should be sent to Rabbi Sacks for his consideration.



Why are you a Jew? This final unit is designed to help you see the entire curriculum as a whole, and tie all the units together. The best way to do this is to consider your own connection to each of the Ten Paths that we have explored together, and the role they play in your Jewish identity, belief and practice. The final assignment will give you the opportunity to present this in a creative and exciting way, through answering the question, “Why am I a Jew?” in much the same way that Rabbi Sacks answered it in the video.

Watch the “Why I am a Jew” video again. In a small group, appointed by your teacher, create your own “Why I am a Jew” video. It does not need to be animated, but should contain some visual aspect, as well as narration (either as text or voice-over), exploring the reasons why you are proud to be a Jew. You must relate to each of the ten unit themes that we have studied in this curriculum at some point in your video. You may also feel free to include elements of Jewish identity not covered by Rabbi Sacks in this curriculum – there are, after all, many paths to God.

Your teacher will then send a selection of the videos that your class produces to Rabbi Sacks, and he will choose from those which videos he would like to share with the public. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org/TenPaths to see which videos he chose!



To help you create your video based on your connection to each of the Ten Paths, we are going to briefly revisit each unit, and see how they connect to Rabbi Sacks' video "Why I am a Jew".

At the beginning of this unit you were asked to highlight any phrases or sentences from the text that refer to one of the Ten Paths to God that you have studied in this curriculum. Here is the text again, with ten phrases that are connected to the Ten Paths highlighted for you. Each of these phrases will be our starting point to review one of the ten units.

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The Way of Identity: On Being a Jew

I am a Jew

1. What were the seven core concepts that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 - vi.
 - vii.
2. Of all the supplementary sources that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most as a source of your own Jewish identity? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of Identity: On Being a Jew”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of Prayer: Speaking to God

one who wrestles with God

1. What were the nine key terms that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 - vi.
 - vii.
 - viii.
 - ix.
2. Of all the supplementary sources (including the *tefillot*) that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through prayer? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of Prayer: Speaking to God”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of Study: Listening to God

cherish the Torah

1. What were the nine key terms that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 - vi.
 - vii.
 - viii.
 - ix.
2. Of all the supplementary sources that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through learning Torah? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of Study: Listening to God”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of *Mitzvot*: Responding to God

translated them into deeds which we call *mitzvot*

1. What were the nine key terms that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 - vi.
 - vii.
 - viii.
 - ix.
2. Of all the supplementary sources that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through performing *mitzvot*? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of *Mitzvot*: Responding to God”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of *Tzedakah*: Love as Justice

human life is sacred

1. What were the four core concepts that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
2. Of all the supplementary sources that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through performing acts of *tzedakah*? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of *Tzedakah*: Love as Justice”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of *Chessed*: Love as Compassion

fighting for justice for the oppressed

1. What were the ten key terms that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 - vi.
 - vii.
 - viii.
 - ix.
 - x.
2. Of all the stories that we read in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through performing acts of *chessed*? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit "The Way of *Chessed*: Love as Compassion".
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of Faith: Love as Loyalty

my faith

1. What were the five core concepts that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
2. Of all the supplementary sources that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through the way of faith? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of Faith: Love as Loyalty”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of Israel: The Jewish Land

reviving a land, recovering their sovereignty

1. What were the five core concepts that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
2. Of all the extracts from the *Rabbi Sacks' Haggadah* that we explored in this unit, which one inspires you the most and strengthens your relationship with God through the land of Israel? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit "The Way of Israel: The Jewish Land".
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of *Kiddush Hashem*: The Jewish Task

what we are called on to be

1. What were the seven key terms that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
 - vi.
 - vii.
2. Of all the supplementary sources that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through the way of *Kiddush Hashem*? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of *Kiddush Hashem*: The Jewish Task”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



The Way of Responsibility: The Jewish Future

who saw human history as a journey

1. What were the four core concepts that we elicited from the words of Rabbi Sacks in the pamphlet entitled From Renewal to Responsibility, quoted in this unit?
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
2. Of all the supplementary sources that we explored in this unit, which one speaks to you the most in terms of your relationship with God through the way of responsibility? Why?
3. Write one paragraph summarizing the message of the unit “The Way of Responsibility: The Jewish Future”.
4. How can the themes contained in this unit lead you to a stronger connection to God?
5. Do these ideas contribute to your own sense of Jewish identity and explain why you are proud to call yourself a Jew? How?



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