

COVENANT & CONVERSATION

LIFE-CHANGING IDEAS IN THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SACKS



www.rabbisacks.org

@rabbisacks



I am deeply touched that Covenant & Conversation has been generously sponsored by The Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Divienne Wohl ז"ל. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist on a vast scale, driven throughout his life by a sense of Jewish responsibility. Divienne was a woman of the deepest humanity and compassion, who had a kind word for everyone. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving. Through their Charitable Foundation, they continue to bring blessings to Jewish communities around the world.



— RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

LIFE-CHANGING IDEAS FEATURED IN COVENANT AND CONVERSATION 5778

- **BEREISHIT:**
God believes in us even if we don't always believe in ourselves. Remember this, and you will find the path from darkness to light.
- **NOACH:**
Next time you meet someone radically unlike you, try seeing difference not as a threat but as an enlarging, possibility-creating gift.
- **LECH LECHA:**
Follow the inner voice, as did those who came before you, continuing their journey by bringing timeless values to a rapidly-changing world.
- **VAYERA:**
First separate, then connect; it is the carefully calibrated distance that allows us to grow as individuals and create stronger relationships together.
- **CHAYEI SARAH:**
To survive tragedy and trauma, first build the future. Only then, remember the past.
- **TOLDOT:**
You are as great as your ideals. If you truly believe in something beyond yourself, you will achieve beyond yourself.
- **VAYETSE:**
The deepest crises of your life can turn out to be the moments when you encounter the deepest truths and acquire your greatest strengths.
- **VAYISHLACH:**
If you find yourself struggling with faith, you are in the company of Jacob-who-became-Israel, the father-in-faith of us all.
- **VAYESHEV:**
Seen through the eye of faith, today's curse may be the beginning of tomorrow's blessing. II.
- **MIKKETZ:**
What can be healed is not holy. God does not want us to accept poverty and pain but to cure them. Israel, the father-in-faith of us all.
- **VAYIGASH:**
We are not prisoners of events but active shapers of them.
- **VAYECHI:**
Judaism allows us to inhabit a culture of grace and hope. If we work hard enough on ourselves, we can be forgiven.

=====

- **SHEMOT:**

When you learn to listen to views different from your own, realising that they are not threatening but enlarging, then you have discovered the life-changing idea of argument for the sake of heaven.

- **VA'ERA:**

Freedom is an achievement. It is a muscle that needs to be exercised daily: use it or lose it.

- **BO:**

Know your own story, because a story told across the generations is a gift. When you know who you are and why, you can navigate the wilderness of time with courage and confidence.

- **BESHALACH:**

There are no fast tracks. Lasting achievement takes time. You can never get there by the shortest road. The harder it gets, the stronger you become.

- **YITRO:**

If you find yourself in a situation of conflict that threatens to break something apart, framing a covenant will help keep people together. There are certain things we can do together that none of us can do alone.

- **MISHPATIM:**

If you seek to change anyone's behaviour, you have to enter into their mindset, and then say the word or do the deed that speaks to their emotions, not yours.

- **TERUMAH:**

The effort you put into something does not just change the object: it changes you. The greater the labour, the greater the love for what you have made.

- **TETZAVEH:**

When you experience suffering, the question to ask is, "Given this has happened, what then shall I do?" for this has an answer not of thought but of deed.

- **KI TISSA:**

We should never feel anger. But there are times when we should show it. People sometimes need that shock to help them change their lives.

- **VAYAKHEL & PEKUDEI:**

The highest achievement is not self-expression but self-limitation: making space for something other and different from us.

=====

- **VAYIKRA:**

For each of us God has a task. Discerning that task, hearing God's call, is what gives a life meaning and purpose.

- **TZAV:**

The more you celebrate the good, the more good you discover that is worthy of celebration.

- **SHEMINI:**

What you think of as your greatest weakness can become, if you wrestle with it, your greatest strength.

- **TAZRIA-METZORA:**

In any relationship that matters to you, deliver praise daily. Seeing and praising the good in people makes them better people, makes you a better person, and strengthens the bond between you.

- **ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM:**

Clear rules and proper discipline help to establish, maintain and expand order for more fulfilled children, families, and society. Love is not enough. Relationships need rules.

- **EMOR:**

Do not rely exclusively on To Do lists. Use a diary. And live by the Jewish calendar to experience the things that give life a meaning.

- **BEHAR:**

In life, ask not, what can I gain?" But "what can I give?" Be a blessing to others and you will find that life has been a blessing to you.

- **BECHUKOTAI:**

Search for meaning and you will discover strength, fulfilment and peace.

=====

- **BAMIDBAR:**

Remember your destination. This will help you to distinguish between an opportunity to be seized and a temptation to be resisted.

- **NASO:**

You are as important as you make other people feel.

- **BEHA'ALOTCHA:**

We tend to become what our friends are. So choose friends who are what you aspire to be.

- **SHELACH LECHA:**

Never let negative emotions distort your perceptions. To see the world as it is, not as you are afraid it might be, let faith banish fear.

- **KORACH:**

If you seek to learn, grow, pursue truth and find freedom, seek places that welcome argument and respect dissenting views.

- **CHUKAT:**

Life lives in the tension between our physical smallness and our spiritual greatness. Life is short, but when we lift our eyes to heaven, we walk tall.

- **BALAK:**

By being what only we are, we contribute to humanity what only we can give.

- **PINCHAS:**

If we truly wish to hand on our legacy to our children, we must teach them to love it.

- **MATOT-MASEI:**

Life is a journey, not a destination. We should constantly set ourselves new challenges that take us out of our comfort zone. Life is growth.

=====

- **DEVARIM:**

If you seek to change someone, make sure that you are willing to help them when they need your help, defend them when they need your defence, and see the good in them, not just the bad.

- **VA'ETCHANAN:**

To make love undying, build around it a structure of rituals.

- **EIKEV:**

Listening is the greatest gift we can give to another human being.

- **RE'EH:**

Never define yourself as a victim. There is always a choice, and by exercising the strength to choose, we can rise above fate.

- **SHOFTIM:**

To lead is to serve. The greater your success, the harder you have to work to remember that you are there to serve others; they are not there to serve you.

- **KI TEITSE:**

Never be in too much of a rush to stop and come to the aid of someone in need of help.

- **KI TAVO:**

Make sure the story you tell is one that speaks to your highest aspirations, and tell it regularly.

- **NITZAVIM:**

Don't wait for the world to get better. Take the initiative yourself. The world is waiting for you.

- **VAYELECH:**

Whatever your achievements, there is always a second mountain to climb, and it may turn out to be your greatest legacy to the future.

- **HA'AZINU:**

If you want to change lives, speak to people's feelings, not just to their minds.

- **VEZOT HABRACHA:**

We are mortal; therefore make every day count. We are fallible; therefore learn to grow from each mistake. We will not complete the journey; therefore inspire others to continue what we began.

=====

To learn more from Rabbi Sacks, please visit www.rabbisacks.org