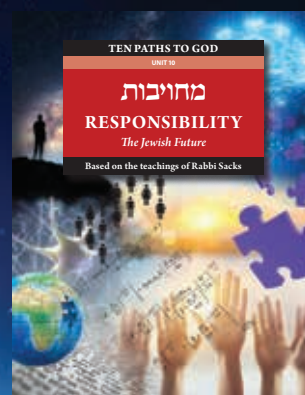
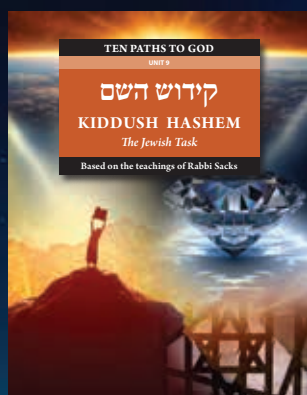
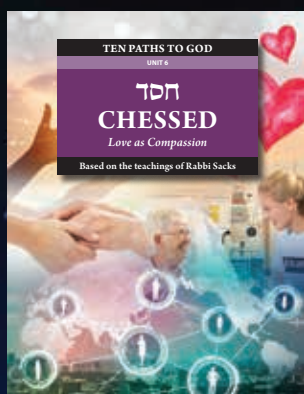
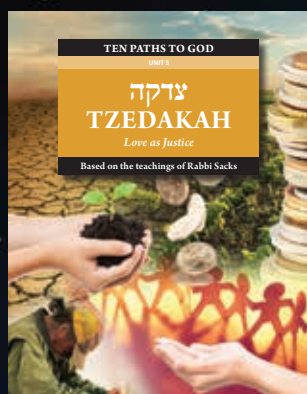
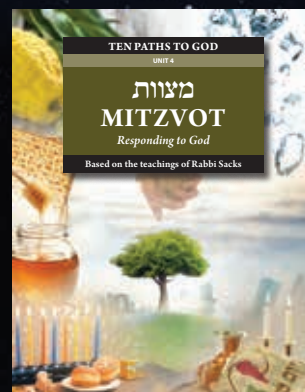
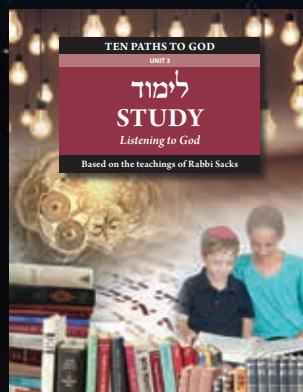
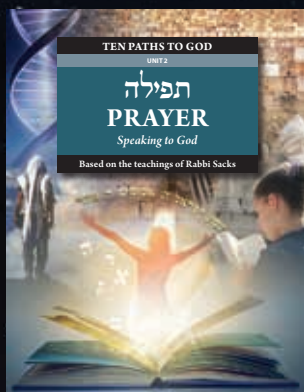
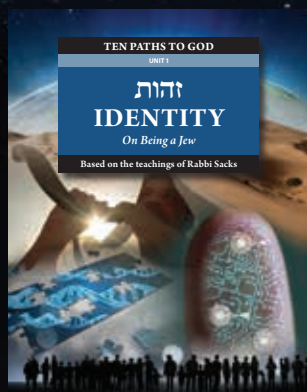


TEN PATHS TO GOD

A curriculum based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks


Educator Guide / Advanced Level



Jonathan Sacks

The Office of Rabbi Sacks

www.RabbiSacks.org/TenPaths



“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 by Rabbi Sacks

Why 'Ten Paths to God'?

'Seek God where He is to be found, call Him when He is close.' The sages were puzzled by this verse. When is God not close? Surely God is everywhere. Their answer was profound. God is always close to us, but we are not always close to God.

At some point in life, every reflective human being will ask three fundamental questions: Who am I? Why am I here? How then shall I live?

Whether we believe, or don't believe, these are religious questions. Science can tell us how life began, but it can never tell us what life is for. Anthropology can tell us the many ways in which people have lived, but it can never tell us how we should live. Economics and business studies can tell us how to generate wealth, but they cannot tell us what to do with the wealth we have made.

The various sciences, natural, social or human, can tell us how, but not why. The 'why' questions ask us to lift up our eyes beyond the immediate, in search of the ultimate. The name we give to the ultimate ultimate is God. The search for meaning at its heart is a religious quest.

God is always close to us, but we are not always close to God. How then do we come close to Him? By living Jewishly. 'We will do, then we will understand,' said our ancestors at Mount Sinai. So it is in all matters of the soul. We learn to love music by listening to music. We learn to be generous by performing acts of generosity. 'The heart follows the deed.' Don't expect to have faith or find God by waiting for Him to find us. We have to begin the journey. Then God meets us halfway.

There are many ways of finding God, many paths to the Divine presence. For this series of videos and accompanying curriculum, I have chosen ten of the most important. The first is **identity**. We are born into a family that has a history. Who are we? To which story do we belong?

The second is **prayer**, the most focused way in which we reach out to God. Third is **study**, the highest of all Jewish acts, which the sages said was more holy even than prayer. Fourth is **mitzvot**, the way of the commands. In prayer we find God by speaking; in study we find God in listening; in *mitzvot* we find God by doing.

Then come the three great attributes of the Jewish personality: **tzeda-kah**, love as justice; **chessed**, love as compassion; and **faith**, love as loyalty. Judaism is a religion of love, not the mystical, otherworldly love that hovers above the world, leaving its imperfections intact, but the love that engages

with the world, trying – one act at a time, one day at a time, one life at a time – to make it a little less cruel, a little more human and humane.

Then, lastly, come the three great expressions of Jewish life: **Israel**, the one place on earth where Jews have the chance to do what every other nation takes for granted, namely the right to rule ourselves and create a society in accordance with our beliefs; ***Kiddush Hashem***, sanctifying God's name in the world by acting as God's ambassadors; and lastly **responsibility**, the idea that we are God's partners in the work of creation, and there is work for each of us to do in this tense and troubled age.

Any of these units may be the starting point of a personal meditation, framed by such questions as: How does this apply to me? How can I act on it to become a better person? How can this help me to lead a more meaningful and fulfilled life? Some may not speak to you, others will. For there are as many ways to the Divine presence as there are Jews, said Rav Nachman of Bratslav. Or as I put it, where what we want to do meets what needs to be done, that is where God wants us to be.

There are many ways to God. Where we begin doesn't matter, so long as we begin. Jewish life is the circumference of a circle at whose centre is God. That is where we meet, whatever our starting point.

However long we live, life is short, too short. Every day matters. Every day in which we do not do some good deed, take some step toward God, make some difference to the world, is a day lost – and our days on earth are too few to waste even one.

Jonathan Stacks

Introduction for Educators

Welcome to ‘**Ten Paths to God**’, a new 10-unit curriculum on Judaism and Jewish identity based on a combination of traditional sources and the teachings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks.

Ten Days, Ten Ways

In 2007, as Chief Rabbi of the UK and the Commonwealth, Rabbi Sacks produced a booklet called *Ten Days, Ten Ways* designed to inspire and engage Jews, whatever their previous educational or religious background, during the High Holy Day period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

This booklet was divided into ten sections, each one a classic Jewish path to God. Each section included an opening piece written by Rabbi Sacks, followed by a range of diverse passages from ancient, medieval and modern sources, including further extracts from many texts written by Rabbi Sacks.

The booklet was well-received as a timely focus around Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but the feeling was that there were ways it could have an even greater impact.

Why I am a Jew

Rabbi Sacks stepped down from the Chief Rabbinate in September 2013, and since then has continued to be a significant and growing presence across the Jewish world and beyond.

Part of this is due to a commitment to experimenting and utilizing the various online and social media platforms to help broadcast his teachings to a global audience.

In September 2015, Rabbi Sacks and his small team released a whiteboard animation video called *Why I am a Jew*. Based on an extract from his powerful book *A Letter in the Scroll* (published as *Radical Then, Radical Now* in Britain), this video went viral, being shown in schools, synagogues, campuses, Jewish organizations and even some churches!

The video presented an inspiring and accessible approach to Judaism and Jewish identity in a creative and engaging way. Following the overwhelmingly positive response to the video, Rabbi Sacks’ team heard the desire for more detailed and sophisticated educational material to delve deeper into some of the concepts and issues raised in the whiteboard animation.

Ten Paths to God

As a result, Rabbi Sacks and his team have now embarked on this ambitious and exciting project to adapt the original booklet into a full educational curriculum, and bring the thought of Rabbi Sacks to new, younger audiences across the world.

The curriculum has been designed with the utmost flexibility, allowing you, the educator, to use it and tailor it to your specific needs. This curriculum has been designed with all educational contexts in mind, from schools to youth movements, university campus learning initiatives, outreach organizations, adult education synagogue programs and beyond. It can even be used by parents as a resource for structured learning with their children.

Each educator must decide which version is best for their audience. For example, middle schools students (7th and 8th grade, ages 12–14) may find the Entry Level more appropriate, but there may be some stronger students who could cope with the Advanced Level. Conversely, some high school educators (grades 9–12, ages 15–18) whose students who have less experience of this type of learning, may wish to use the Entry Level versions, but in general it is our belief that high school students will find the Advanced Level versions appropriate.

The curriculum does not need to be employed in sequence, in fact each unit stands alone. The educator may choose to use one unit, three units, or the entire curriculum in sequence. The curriculum could be implemented over a short period (e.g. one semester), or over a longer period of time (e.g. an academic year). The choice is always with the educator.

Unit Structure

The structure of each of the units is as follows:

(1) Trigger Video: Each unit begins with a short opening video. In the video, Rabbi Sacks presents an overview of the unit subject. These videos last for around 3 minutes each and provide the foundation and starting point for the rest of the unit.

(2) Opening Discussion: The first section of each unit uses the transcript of the opening video as the basis for the unit. Following on from that, specific phrases are highlighted within the text and questions provided to facilitate a further discussion on the topic. The Educator Guides include specific pedagogical comments relating to how to run a class or guide a discussion.

(3) The Core Concepts Further Explored: In the sections that follow, supplementary sources, including some from Rabbi Sacks' writings, are used to take a deeper look at the core concepts in the thought of Rabbi Sacks.

Again, the video transcript forms the starting point for further analysis of the perspectives Rabbi Sacks has given in his many books.

(4) Optional Assignment: The final section of each unit offers an optional assignment for students to undertake. In addition, there is a call for students to submit any questions they have, via the Educator, to Rabbi Sacks. Unfortunately, he will not be able to answer every question received, but the aim is to take some of the most insightful or most common ones from each unit and provide video answers which will then be uploaded onto the website.

Feedback

It is our hope that this curriculum will prove to be a valuable resource for the furthering of Jewish study in general, and a means to bring the unique and inspiring thoughts and ideas of Rabbi Sacks to a wider and new audience. It has been an honor to play a part in achieving this goal.

Together with Rabbi Sacks and his team, we are always looking for feedback – positive or constructive! If successful, we hope to do similar projects in the future on other topics. We would love to know about the context you used this material in, what worked, what didn't work, how your experience of implementing the curriculum has been, and how it might be enhanced in the future.

Rabbi Sacks will continue to be personally involved with the educators and students by posting recorded answers to the most insightful questions he receives from students studying each of the units. These, together with any feedback, can be sent to us at tenpaths@rabbisacks.org.

B'vracha,



Dr. Daniel Rose
Educational Consultant for
'Ten Paths to God', Modi'in



Dan Sacker
'Ten Paths to God' Co-ordinator,
Office of Rabbi Sacks, London

Nissan 5778 / April 2018

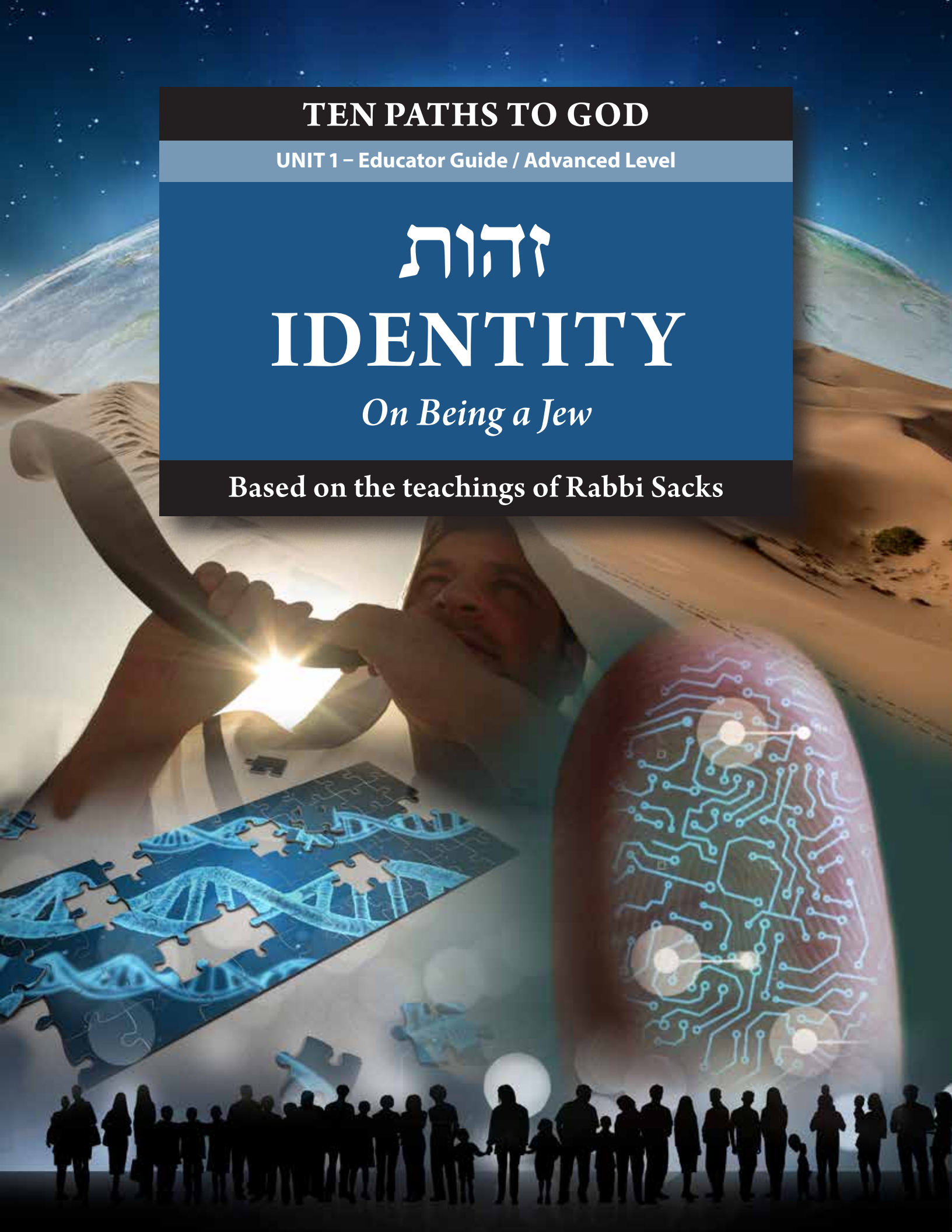
TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 1 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

זהות IDENTITY

On Being a Jew

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

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

Educational aims for this unit:

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

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

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

Watch: The opening video for Unit 1



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



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

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



Uniquely, Jews are born into a faith. It chooses us before we choose it. Physically we come naked into the world, but spiritually we come with a gift: the story of our past, of our parents and theirs, through almost forty centuries from the day Avraham and Sarah first heard the call of God and began their journey to a land, a promise, a destiny and a vocation. That story is ours.

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

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

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

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

Jonathan Sacks

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



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

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

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a faith

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

the story of our past

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

the call of God

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

journey to a land

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

a promise, a destiny and a vocation

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



ambassadors on earth

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

building a society

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

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

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

God's work

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

God's image

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

handing on our ideals to the next generation

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



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

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



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

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

The Core Concepts



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

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

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

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

the story of our past

A PEOPLE OF HISTORY



לֵב כִּי שְׂאֵל־נָא לְיָמִים רָאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ לְמִן־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם עַל־הָאָרֶץ
וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד־קֶצֶה הַשָּׁמַיִם הִנֵּה כְּדָבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה אוֹ הַנִּשְׁמָע כְּמֹהוּ: הִשְׁמַע עִם
לִד קוֹל אֱלֹהִים מִדְּבַר מִתּוֹךְ־הָאֵשׁ כְּאֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַעְתָּ אֹתָהּ וַיַּחֲיוּ: אוֹ הַנִּסָּה אֱלֹהִים לָבוֹא לְקַחַת לָךְ
גוֹי מִקֶּרֶב גּוֹי בְּמִסַּת בְּאוֹתָתָּהּ וּבְמוֹפְתֶיהָ וּבְמִלְחָמָהּ וּבִיד חֲזָקָהּ וּבְזִרְעֵ נְטוּיָהּ וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדֹלִים
כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לָכֶם ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֶיךָ:

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

Devarim 4:32–34

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



a promise

THE CALL

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם לֵךְ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֹרְאָךְ: וְאֶעֱשֶׂךָ
לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל וְאֶבְרַכְךָ וְאֶגְדָּלְהָ שְׁמֹךְ וְהָיָה בְרָכָה: וְאֶבְרַכְהָ מִבְּרַכְיֶיךָ וּמִקֻּלְלֶיךָ אֲאֹד וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְּךָ כָּל
מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה:

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

Bereishit 12:1–3

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

THE WAY OF THE LORD

וְאֶבְרַחֲם הָיָה לְגוֹי יָהִיָּה גָדוֹל וְעָצוּם וְנִבְרַכְוּ בּוֹ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ: כִּי יִדְעֹתִיו לִמְעַן אֲשֶׁר יַעֲזֶה
אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשִׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לִמְעַן הָבִיָּא ה' עַל־אַבְרָהָם
אֵת אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר עָלָיו:

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

Bereishit 18:18–19

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



DUST AND THE STARS



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

Talmud Bavli, Megillah 16a

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

Bereishit Rabbah 41, Lech Lecha

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

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

A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS



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

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

Yeshayahu 42:6–7

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



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

LIKE FRAGRANT OIL



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

Shir HaShirim Rabbah, 1:3:2

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

THE JEWISH HEART OF THE WORLD



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

Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, The Kuzari 11:36

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

THE ENNOBLEMENT OF THE HUMAN RACE



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

Albert Einstein, As I See It, p. 103

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



BIGGER THAN OUR NUMBERS

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

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

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

LOOKING OUTWARD

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

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

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



building a society unlike any other

THE COVENANT AT SINAI: A HOLY NATION



וְעַתָּה 1
 אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאֲשָׁא אֶתְכֶם עַל-כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים וָאֵבָא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי: וְעַתָּה 2
 אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֻגָּה מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים כִּי-לִי כָל-הָאָרֶץ:
 וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ-לִי מְמַלְכֶת כְּהֹנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֱלֹהֵי הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

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

Shemot 19:4–6

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

handing on our ideals to the next generation

LOYALTY TO GOD



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

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

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

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



HOPE IN FAILURE



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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

The Core Concepts in the Writings of Rabbi Sacks



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

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

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

the story of our past



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

The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah, p. 2

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



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

a promise



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

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

Future Tense, p. 23

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



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



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

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

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

To Heal a Fractured World, p. 65–67



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

The Dignity of Difference, p. 53



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



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

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

Future Tense, p. 135–136



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



handing on our ideals to the next generation



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

Will We Have Jewish Grandchildren?, p. 34



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

A Letter in the Scroll, p. 32–33

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

The Assignment

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



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

REMAKING THE WORLD



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

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

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

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



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



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

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



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

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

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

TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 2 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

תפילה PRAYER *Speaking to God*

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Educational Aims for this Unit:

- For students to consider the place of prayer within their religious life
- To explore how prayer can be a way to connect to and develop a relationship with God
- To explore the following themes in the structure of *tefilla*:
 - Creation
 - Revelation
 - Redemption
 - The relationship between man and himself (בין אדם לעצמו)
 - The relationship between man and God (בין אדם למקום)
 - The relationship between man and his fellow (בין אדם לחבירו)
- To understand that these themes form the structure of our *tefillot* and to see examples of these themes in the liturgy of the Siddur

Trigger Activity: Brainstorm – Why Pray?

Ask the students to volunteer reasons for praying. Write each suggestion on the board/screen of your classroom. If possible, try to write the suggestions in the following three groups (without labelling them as such yet). The goal is to see if they fit into the three themes that will be explored in this unit:

- The relationship between man and himself (בין אדם לעצמו). Suggestions may include spiritual improvement/meditation/to improve our lives.
- The relationship between man and God (בין אדם למקום). Suggestions such as strengthening our relationship with God, or because prayer is a religious/*halachik* obligation.
- The relationship between man and his fellow (בין אדם לחבירו). Suggestions such as improving the world/being part of a community/connecting to our traditions/praying for the welfare of loved ones.

Ask the students if they can see what the reasons in each group have in common, but don't label the groups. Capture the image (take a photograph with your phone or a screen shot if you are working on a computer/smartboard) of the brainstorm map to refer to again at the end of the unit so the students can see if these ideas appeared in their approach to prayer even before they studied the unit.

Discussion: Ask your students which of these are the most compelling reasons to pray? Conclude that this unit will explore some of these reasons in the writings of Rabbi Sacks.

Watch: The opening video for Unit 2





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.

See the short glossary below for help.

Glossary

Redeem: to change for the better (this word has other related meanings but this is how it is being used here).

Solitude: the quality or state of being alone or remote from society.

Fate: an inevitable and often adverse outcome, condition, or end.

Infinitesimal: immeasurably or incalculably small.

Concatenation: linked together.

Descartes: René Descartes (1596–1650) French mathematician and philosopher.

Unfathomable: impossible to comprehend.

Parameters: a characteristic element.

Individual text work: Ask the students to do this next activity on their own. If you see there are other words in the text that your class is struggling with you may wish to add to the glossary by writing the terms and their meaning on the board. Students can add those words to the glossary in their guide.



Prayer is our intimate dialogue with Infinity, the profoundest expression of our faith that at the heart of reality is a Presence that cares, a God who listens, a creative Force that brought us into being in love. It is this belief more than any other that redeems life from solitude and fate from tragedy. The universe has a purpose. We have a purpose. However infinitesimal we are, however brief our stay on earth, we matter. The universe is more than particles of matter endlessly revolving in indifferent space. The human person is more than an accidental concatenation of genes blindly replicating themselves. Human life is more than 'A tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' (Macbeth 5.5.26–28). Prayer gives meaning to existence.

It is possible to believe otherwise. There can be a life without faith or prayer, just as there can be a life without love, or laughter, or happiness, or hope. But it is a diminished thing, lacking dimensions of depth and aspiration. Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am.' Judaism says, 'I pray, therefore I am not alone.'

It takes courage to believe. Jews need no proof of the apparent injustice of events. It is written on the pages of our history. Jews had no power or earthly glory. For the better part of forty centuries our ancestors lived dispersed throughout the world, without a home, without rights, all too often experiencing persecution and pain. All they had was an invisible God and the line connecting us to Him: the Siddur, the words of prayer. All they had was faith. In Judaism, we do not analyze our faith, we pray it. We do not philosophize about truth, we sing it, we *daven* it. For Judaism, faith becomes real when it becomes prayer.

In prayer we speak to a presence vaster than the unfathomable universe yet closer to us than we are to ourselves: the God beyond who is also the Voice within. Though language must fail when we try to describe a Being beyond all parameters of speech, yet language is all we have, and it is enough. For God who made the world with creative words, and who revealed His will in holy words, listens to our prayerful words. Language is the bridge that joins us to Infinity.

In prayer God becomes not a theory but a Presence, not a fact but a mode of relationship. Prayer is where God meets us, in the human heart, in our offering of words, in our acknowledged vulnerability.

Jonathan Sachs



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 one more time, 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.

Prayer is our intimate dialogue with Infinity, **the profoundest expression of our faith** that at the heart of reality is **a Presence that cares**, a God who listens, a creative Force that brought us into being in love. It is this belief more than any other that **redeems life from solitude and fate from tragedy**. The universe has a purpose. We have a purpose. However infinitesimal we are, however brief our stay on earth, we matter. The universe is more than particles of matter endlessly revolving in indifferent space. The human person is more than an accidental concatenation of genes blindly replicating themselves. Human life is more than 'A tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' **Prayer gives meaning to existence**.

It is possible to believe otherwise. There can be a life without faith or prayer, just as there can be a life without love, or laughter, or happiness, or hope. But it is a diminished thing, lacking dimensions of depth and aspiration. Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am.' Judaism says, 'I pray, therefore I am not alone.'

It takes courage to believe. Jews need no proof of the apparent injustice of events. It is written on the pages of our history. Jews had no power or earthly glory. For the better part of forty centuries our ancestors lived dispersed throughout the world, without a home, without rights, all too often experiencing persecution and pain. All they had was an invisible God and **the line connecting us to Him: the Siddur**, the words of prayer. All they had was faith. In Judaism, we do not analyze our faith, we pray it. We do not philosophize about truth, we sing it, we *daven* it. For Judaism, **faith becomes real when it becomes prayer**.

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In prayer God becomes not a theory but a Presence, not a fact but a mode of relationship. Prayer is where God meets us, in the human heart, in our offering of words, in our acknowledged vulnerability.



the profoundest expression of our faith

1. What is “our faith” referring to? Can you give some examples of “our faith”?
2. How is *tefilla* an “expression of our faith”? What statement of belief are we making when we pray?
3. What statement are you making when you pray?

a Presence that cares

1. Why does Rabbi Sacks capitalize the ‘P’ of Presence?
2. Do you have a sense that the “Presence” cares about us? Can you think of examples of this from your own life?
3. How is our *tefilla* an expression of this belief?

redeems life from solitude and fate from tragedy

1. How does the opposite of belief in a God that cares lead to a feeling of solitude?
2. The ancient Greeks believed that fate (what is destined to be) determines all the good and bad things that will happen in our life and that we have no way to avoid this fate. How does believing in a caring God differ to this? How does this belief give us the power to make decisions that will determine our own fate?
3. Who do you believe makes the ultimate decision on your destiny: “fate”, or God, or yourself?

Prayer gives meaning to existence

1. How can prayer, and the statement of belief in a caring God that it is, give your life meaning?
2. What meaning does your life have?
3. How does that affect the way you live your life?

It takes courage to believe

1. What is the alternative to believing in a God who cares?
2. Why does Rabbi Sacks describe faith as courageous?
3. “It is written on the pages of our history.” Do you think Jewish history makes belief in God easier or harder? Why?



the line connecting us to Him: the Siddur

1. Describe how the Siddur connects us to God. Give examples from the Siddur itself.
2. Can we also use our own words to connect to God? If so, why do we need a Siddur?
3. Do you find the Siddur helps or hinders your connection to God? Why?

faith becomes real when it becomes prayer

1. Is Judaism primarily a religion of belief or action?
2. How does praying make belief “real”? Are there times when our actions can make belief “real”?
3. Rabbi Sacks says we don’t just talk about faith (philosophize) or keep it in our heart, we sing or *daven* it. Why do you think faith is better acted upon, rather than kept only in your mind or your heart?

the God beyond who is also the Voice within

1. How is it possible to connect to a God who is “beyond” this world? Is it possible at all?
2. Can you hear the God of the “Voice within”? What does that “Voice” say?
3. Do you find it easier to relate to the “God beyond” or the “Voice within”?

Language is the bridge that joins us to Infinity

1. Why “must language fail” when we try and use it to describe God?
2. Why is language “all we have” to connect to God?
3. How do we use language to “join us to Infinity (God)”?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your answers to the questions. 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.

Themes of Tefilla



Exploring Themes of Tefilla: Together with your *chavruta* look at the following text from Rabbi Sacks' introduction to the Koren Siddur, and then the *mishna* from *Pirkei Avot* that follows it. Use the questions below to help you understand Rabbi Sacks' approach to *tefilla*, and its connection with the *mishna*.

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up if you wish), ask the students to read through the two texts that follow and to use 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.



The metaphor that, to me, captures the spirit of prayer more than any other is Yaakov's dream in which, alone at night, fleeing danger and far from home, he saw a ladder stretching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending... Prayer is a ladder and we are the angels. If there is one theme sounded throughout the prayers, it is *creation–revelation–redemption*, or *ascent–summit–descent*.

Creation – Pesukei DeZimra

In the Verses of Praise (*Pesukei DeZimra*), we climb from earth to heaven by meditating on creation. Like a Turner or Monet landscape, the psalms let us see the universe bathed in light, but *this* light is not the light of beauty but of holiness – the light the sages say God made on the first day and “hid for the righteous in the life to come.” Through some of the most magnificent poetry ever written, we see the world as God's masterpiece, suffused with His radiance...

Revelation – Shema/Amida

By the time we reach *Barechu* and the blessings of the *Shema* we have neared the summit. Now we are in heaven with the angels. We have reached revelation. The Divine Presence is close, almost tangible... Now comes the great declaration of faith at the heart of prayer, the *Shema* with its passionate profession of the unity of God and the highest of all expressions of love, “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.”... Then comes the *Amida*, the supreme height of prayer. Three traditions fuse at this point: the silent *Amida* said by individuals, reminding us of prophetic prayer; the Leader's repetition representing priestly worship and prayer as sacrifice; and then the *Kedusha*, prayer as a mystical experience.



Redemption – Concluding Prayers

From here, prayer begins its descent. First comes *Tachanun* in which we speak privately and intimately to the King. At this point, with a mixture of anguish and plea, we speak not of God's love for Israel but of Israel's defiant love of God... Then comes *Ashrei* and the subsequent passages, similar to the *Pesukei DeZimra* but this time with redemption, not creation, as their theme. The key verse is "A redeemer will come to Zion." The section closes with a prayer that we may become agents of redemption as we reengage with the world... We are now back on earth, the service complete except for *Aleinu*, *Kaddish* and the *Shir shel Yom*. We are ready to reenter life and its challenges...

We are not the same after we have stood in the Divine Presence as we were before. We have been transformed. We see the world in a different light. Perhaps we radiate a different light. We have spoken to and listened to God. We have aligned ourselves with the moral energies of the universe. We have become, in Lurianic terminology, vessels for God's blessing. We are changed by prayer.

Understanding Jewish Prayer, The Koren Siddur

Creation – Pesukei DeZimra

1. The first theme is creation, and our part in it. How does thinking about creation help us climb the ladder to stand before God?
2. Where in our *tefillot*, specifically in *Pesukei DeZimra*, can you see examples of "magnificent poetry" that describes the world as "God's masterpiece"?
3. Turner and Monet were painters who tried to capture the splendor of nature in the same way as the *Sefer Tehillim*. Do you think we can use music and art in all its forms, even nature itself, to find a connection to God?

Revelation – Shema/Amida

1. The second theme is revelation, when God reveals or communicates something to us. How is standing in front of God and praying like revelation?
2. How is prayer different from revelation? (Clue: dialogue vs. monologue)
3. The climax of our *tefilla* is the *Shema* and the *Amida*. Who wrote the *Shema*? Who wrote the *Amida*?



Redemption – Concluding Prayers

1. The third theme is redemption, looking outward to make the world a better place. What does that have to do with prayer? Where in the Siddur do we find this theme?
2. Why do we not end our *tefillot* at their climax, standing in the presence of God? Why descend at all?
3. “We are not the same after we have stood in the Divine Presence as we were before... we are changed by prayer”. Can you explain how we are different? Can you think of an example of how prayer has changed you?



שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד.
על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים.

Shimon HaTzadik was one of the last of the Men of the Great Assembly.
He used to say: the world stands on three things: *Torah*, *Avodah*, and *Acts of Lovingkindness*.

Mishna Avot 1:2

1. What do you think Shimon HaTzadik means when he says the world “stands on three things”?
2. Why three?
3. Who is the focus when you keep the *Torah*?
4. *Avodah* is the service in the *Bet HaMikdash*, which was replaced by the *tefilla* service after the *Bet HaMikdash* was destroyed. Who is the focus during the *Avodah*?
5. Who is the focus of “acts of lovingkindness”?
6. These “three things” in the *mishna* are the basis of the three core relationships: man and himself (בין אדם לעצמו), man and God (בין אדם למקום) and man and others (בין אדם לחבירו). They can also be found in other sources that come in threes such as *Mishna Avot 1:12*; the three cardinal sins found in *Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 74a*; the three concepts of repentance, prayer, and charity that are mentioned in the *Rosh HaShana* and *Yom Kippur* prayers as “averting the evil decree”. Can you see a connection between these and the three themes of *tefilla* we explored above?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your conclusions. Listen carefully to the perspectives of your classmates. Did anyone take a different approach to these themes from you? Does their approach speak to you?

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

This section has shown us that tefilla is structured into three themes:

- Creation: the vehicle that transports us to God's presence.
- Revelation: the experience of standing before God.
- Redemption: the ultimate sequel to prayer in Judaism – taking the experience of facing God and coming back to our lives with it, ready to play our part in redeeming the world.

These three themes are connected to the three principal relationships in Judaism:

- Man and himself (בין אדם לעצמו) – creation
- Man and God (בין אדם למקום) – revelation
- Man and others (בין אדם לחבירו) – redemption

Further Exploration of the Themes of *Tefilla*



Further Exploration of the Themes of *Tefilla*: Together with your *chavruta* look at one of the themes below through the two supplementary sources. Your teacher will tell you which theme to focus on. Use the guiding questions to help you.

Chavruta text analysis: Give each *chavruta* one of the three sections below to study. Ask the students to read through the first two texts in the section given to them, and to use 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.



Then join another *chavruta* to form a small *chabura* (study group) to examine the *tefilla* text from the Siddur that illustrates the theme. Use the guiding questions and commentary to help you with your analysis.

Group text analysis: Pair up two or more of the *chavrutot* who were studying the same theme. Ask them to look at the excerpt of the Siddur in their section, and to use the questions that follow to guide their discussion. You may wish to ask the students to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis. Ask the students to focus on how the ideas from the first two texts can be seen in their corresponding page from the Siddur.



Creation: Between Man and Himself (בין אדם לעצמו)



Before I was born, Your love enveloped me.
 You turned nothing into substance, and created me.
 Who etched out my frame?
 Who poured me into a vessel and moulded me?
 Who breathed a spirit into me?
 Who opened the womb of Sheol and extracted me?
 Who has guided me from youth-time until now?
 Taught me knowledge, and cared wondrously for me?
 Truly, I am nothing but clay within Your hand.
 It is You, not I, who have really fashioned me.
 I confess my sin to You, and do not say
 That a serpent intrigued, and tempted me.
 How can I conceal from You my faults, since
 Before I was born Your love enveloped me.

Rabbi Shlomo ibn Gabirol, *Before I was Born*

1. What realization is Rabbi Shlomo ibn Gabirol expressing about himself? Can you describe what that must feel like emotionally?
2. Can *tefilla* lead to this same humbling process? How so?
3. How is this reflected in the etymological form of the verb to pray – להתפלל?



All beings long for the very source of their origin. Every plant, every grain of sand, every clod of earth, small creatures and great, the heavens and the angels, every substance and its particles – all of them are longing, yearning, panting to attain the state of holy perfection. Human beings suffer constantly from this homesickness of the soul, and it is in prayer that we cure it. When praying, we feel at one with the whole creation, and raise it to the very source of blessing and life.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, *Olat Hariyah*

1. What is the “source of their origin” for all of creation?
2. What do you think Rav Kook means when he says prayer is the “cure” for this “homesickness of the soul”?
3. How do you think praying encourages us to “feel at one with the whole creation”? How does this process change the way we see ourselves?



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
 אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם בְּחָכְמָה
 וּבָרָא בּוֹ נִקְבִּים וְנִקְבִּים, חֲלָלִים וְחֲלָלִים.
 גְּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לִפְנֵי כֹסֶא כְבוֹדְךָ
 שְׂאֵם יִפְתָּח אֶחָד מֵהֶם
 אוֹ יִסְתֵּם אֶחָד מֵהֶם
 אִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְקִים וְלַעֲמֹד לִפְנֶיךָ.
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'
 רוֹפֵא כָּל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת.

...A THOUSAND WORDS



בְּרוּךְ Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the Universe,
 who formed man with wisdom
 and created in him many openings and cavities.
 It is revealed and known before the throne of Your glory
 that were one of them to be ruptured or blocked,
 it would be impossible to survive and stand before You.
 Blessed are You, LORD,
 Healer of all flesh
 who does miracles.

REFLECTION

*"We forget that we have
 a holy body
 no less than a holy spirit."
 (Rav Kook, Orot HaTe'hiya 33)*

Is your body a highly
 efficient scientific machine
 or a miracle from God?
 Can it be both?

Does your human body
 help you to believe in God?

If your human body is a
 gift from God, how would
 that change the way you
 treat your body?

CONNECTION

*"The human body contains 100 trillion cells.
 Within each cell is a nucleus. Within each
 nucleus is a double copy of the human ge-
 nome. Each genome contains 3.1 billion letters
 of genetic code, enough if transcribed to fill a
 library of five thousand books. Each cell, in other
 words, contains a blueprint of the entire body
 of which it is a part. The cumulative force of these
 scientific discoveries is nothing short of wondrous.
 In ways undreamt of by our ancestors, we now
 know to what extent the microcosm is a map
 of the macrocosm. From a single cell, it may be
 possible to reconstruct an entire organism."*

(Rabbi Jonathan Sacks,
 Covenant & Conversation, Emor 5768)

LEARNING

This *berakha* is said after every
 visit to the restroom, to thank
 Hashem for the intricate won-
 ders of the human body. It is

recommended to go to the restroom im-
 mediately after washing your hands in the morn-
 ing, and then say both the *berakha* of *Netilat
 Yadayim* and *Asher Yatzar*.

1. Answer the questions under the "Reflection" section. What is the common theme behind them?
2. What is the image on the page? How is it related to the "Reflection" questions and the "Connection" section?
3. What statement of belief are you making when you make this *beracha*?
4. Describe the emotions that come with the message from this *beracha*.
5. What impact does this *beracha* have on your relationship with yourself (בין אדם לעצמו)?



Revelation: Between Man and God (בין אדם למקום)



Lord, where shall I find You?
High and hidden is Your place.
And where shall I not find You?
Your glory fills infinities of space...
I have sought Your presence
called You with all my heart,
And going out to meet You
I found You coming toward me.

Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, *Selected Poems of Judah Halevi*, p. 134

1. One of God's names is *Makom*/מקום, (as in *בין אדם למקום*), literally "space". Does this poem help you understand why?
2. "High and hidden is Your place" vs. "And where shall I not find You"? Which one is it? Is God far away and transcendent (beyond our ordinary world) or close and imminent (immediate, close by)? Which of these do you connect to more? Why?
3. Can God be both of these at the same time? Can you think of a *tefilla* in the siddur that says so? (Clue: said on fast days and High Holidays.)



In my heart I will build a sanctuary
To God's glorious splendour,
And in the sanctuary I will raise an altar
To the radiance of His majesty.
As fire I will take
The fire of the Binding,
And as a sacrifice I will offer Him
My undivided soul.

Adapted from Rabbi Eliezer Azikri, *Sefer Charedim*

1. Originally we used the *korbanot* in the *Bet HaMikdash* to worship God. What is the message behind that form of worship?
2. Since the destruction of the *Bet HaMikdash* almost 2000 years ago, we replaced that form of worship with prayer. How is prayer also a sacrifice to God?
3. How do you offer God your "undivided soul" in your everyday life?



קדושת השם

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ
וְקָדוֹשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהַלְלוּךָ סֵלָה.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הָאֵל הַקָּדוֹשׁ. / הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ.

(עמידה (If forgotten, repeat the Amidah.)

REFLECTION

How can I behave today in a way that reflects my inner holiness?

Am I behaving in a way that makes a kiddush Hashem?

What will you do today to bring holiness into the world?

LEARNING

"A person will have to answer for everything that his eye beheld and he did not consume." (Yerushalmi, Kiddushin 4:12) In Judaism, holiness does not mean denying the physical, rather enjoying that which is permitted to us and uplifting it to make it spiritual. *Kedusha* is the transformation and the elevation of the mundane to the holy and spiritual.

... A THOUSAND WORDS



HOLINESS

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ You are holy and Your name is holy, and holy ones praise You daily, Selah!

Blessed are You, LORD,

the holy God. / Between Rosh HaShana & Yom Kippur: the holy King./

(If forgotten, repeat the Amidah.)

CONNECTION

Imagine a city in the middle of a war. The dirt flying in the air. Missiles overhead. Everything in chaos. The smell of chemicals permeating the thick fog that has become the sky and civilians running through the streets in confusion, in panic – a living nightmare. A doctor runs across the blood-stained streets looking for people he can help, wounds he can heal just enough to get people back on their feet so they can keep running, keep living. He tends to a man bleeding from a piece of shrapnel, when he suddenly hears someone call out, "Doctor."

A short distance away he sees the woman calling out. She is hurt and in need of immediate attention. But as soon as he runs toward her, he hears another voice: "David!" He looks over to see his neighbor on the ground with a serious injury. No sooner than two steps to the neighbor's direction, a small voice pierces through the sweaty air and whispers, "Dad." The doctor is paralyzed for a moment before looking for his son amidst the rubble.

"Hashem" is the Jewish People's way of saying Dad.

To most people, the man in the story

was an anonymous person running around the streets – until someone saw him performing a medical act. Then he became "Doctor." To his neighbor, however, he was "David," a name that suggests an attachment that forced him to care just a little bit more. And when he heard "Dad" come through the thick fog, he was paralyzed.

This is the power of a name. It defines the relationship we have with the person and forces us to treat him in a particular way.

"Hashem" is the Jewish People's way of saying Dad. Dad is not the person's legal name, it's not their Hebrew name, it's not their business title. It's shorthand. It's a way to say that we, as Jews, have a nickname for You, God. It's a nickname that suggests both intimacy and respect, like the appellation "Dad." It's a way to tell your father that you love him, but that you still understand he's the father, he's in charge.

Likewise with Hashem: we love You and feel close to You. And at the same time we recognize our distance and who is really in charge.

(Jon Dabach)

1. Look at the list of names in the photograph. What's in a name? What does a name represent? How does your name do that?
2. Why do you think we mention God's "name" in this *beracha*? If a name reflects the essence of a person, what do the names of God reflect?
3. What do you think "Holiness" means? If God is holy, and you are created in His image, then are you holy? Do you have to work at it or does it happen automatically?
4. Read the story on the page of the Siddur. It seems that there is a lot in a name. It can define our relationship with a person. Which of God's names do you most connect to?
5. What kind of impact does this *beracha* have on your relationship with God (בין אדם למקום)?



Redemption: Between Man and his Fellow (בין אדם לחבירו)



May it be your will, O Lord our God, to cause to dwell in our lot Love, fellowship, peace and friendship, to widen our boundaries through students, to prosper our goal with hope and with future, to appoint us a share in the garden of Eden, to direct us in your world through good companions and good impulse, That we may rise in the morning and find Our heart awake to fear your name.

Talmud Bavli, Berachot 16b

1. Why do we need to pray for help with finding “Love, fellowship, peace and friendship”? Aren’t these in our own hands? Are these things easy or hard to achieve?
2. Why should we pray to have students if we are not a teacher? Does everyone have “students”? Do you have any “students”?
3. Why do we need to pray for help to find hope? Isn’t that a state of mind that we can control? How can God help us find hope?



Lord and King of Peace,
Who makes peace and creates all things:
Help all of us that we may always hold fast to the attribute of peace,
So that true and abundant peace prevail between man and man, between
husband and wife,
And no strife separate humankind even in thought.
You make peace in Your heaven, You bring contrary elements together:
Extend abundant peace to us and to the whole world,
So that all discords be resolved in great love and peace,
And with one mind, one heart, all come near to You and Your law in truth,
And all form one union to do Your will with a whole heart.
Lord of peace, bless us with peace.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, *Likkutei Tefillot*, I, 95

1. Why do we need God’s help to make peace?
2. Do you think peace is hard to achieve? In your school? In your family? In your community? In the world?
3. Is having “one mind and one heart” the same as living in peace? Which is a greater achievement, living peacefully with “one heart and one mind” or living peacefully with people that disagree and think differently from you?



עַל בֶּן נִקְוָה לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, לְרֹאוֹת מְהֵרָה בְּתַפְאֳרַת עֲזֶךָ
לְהַעֲבִיר גְּלוּלִים מִן הָאָרֶץ, וְהָאֱלֹלִים כְּרוֹת יִכְרֹתוּן
לְחֶקֶן עוֹלָם בְּמַלְכוּת שְׁדֵי.
וְכָל בֶּן־בָּשָׂר יִקְרָאוּ בְּשִׁמְךָ לְהַפְנוֹת אֲלֶיךָ כָּל רְשָׁעֵי אָרֶץ.
יִפְּיֻרוּ וְיִדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל
כִּי לָךְ תִּכְרַע כָּל בָּרֶךְ, תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל לָשׁוֹן.
לְפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִכְרְעוּ וְיִפְּלוּ
וְלִכְבוֹד שִׁמְךָ יִקְרִי יִתְנוּ
וְיִקְבְּלוּ כָלָם אֶת עַל מַלְכוּתְךָ
וְתִמְלֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם מְהֵרָה לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.
כִּי הַמַּלְכוּת שֶׁלָּךְ הִיא וְלְעוֹלָמִי עַד תִּמְלֹךְ בְּכָבוֹד
בְּכַתּוּב בְּתוֹרָתְךָ, ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד:
וְנֹאמַר, וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה' אֶחָד וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

שמות טו

זכריה יד

משלי ג

ישעיה ח

ישעיה מו

Some add:
אֶל־תִּירָא מִפֶּחַד פֶּתָאם וּמִשְׂאֵת רְשָׁעִים כִּי תֵבֵא:
עָצוּ עֵצָה וְתַפֵּר, דְּבַר דְּבַר וְלֹא יָקוּם, כִּי עֲמָנִי אֵל:
וְעַד־זִקְנָה אֲנִי הוּא, וְעַד־שִׁיבָה אֲנִי אֶסְבֵּל, אֲנִי עֲשִׂיתִי וְאֲנִי אֶשָּׂא וְאֲנִי אֶסְבֵּל וְאֲמַלֵּט:

Some add:

REFLECTION

"[Hillel says]: That which is hateful to you, do not do to your friend. That is the entire Torah. The rest is just explanation. Go and study it!" (Shabbat 31a)

How would you sum up Judaism in one sentence?

... A THOUSAND WORDS



LEARNING

The two paragraphs of the prayer *Aleinu* represent two distinct but related themes. The first paragraph explores our chosenness in the eyes of Hashem, while the second speaks of our mission in the world – to improve it (*tikkun olam*), which is the reason why we have been chosen. In the words of

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: "No prayer more eloquently expresses the dual nature of the Jewish People: its singular history as the nation chosen to be God's witness on earth, and its universal aspiration for the time when all the inhabitants of earth will recognise the God in whose image we are formed."

Therefore, we place our hope in You, LORD our God, that we may soon see the glory of Your power, when You will remove abominations from the earth, and idols will be utterly destroyed, **when the world will be perfected under the sovereignty of the Almighty**, when all humanity will call on Your name, to turn all the earth's wicked towards You. All the world's inhabitants will realise and know that to You every knee must bow and every tongue swear loyalty. Before You, LORD our God, they will kneel and bow down and give honour to Your glorious name. They will all accept the yoke of Your kingdom, and You will reign over them soon and for ever. For the kingdom is Yours, and to all eternity You will reign in glory, as it is written in Your Torah: "The LORD will reign for ever and ever." Ex. 15
And it is said: "Then the LORD shall be King over all the earth; on that day the LORD shall be One and His name One." Zech. 14

Some add:

Have no fear of sudden terror or of the ruin when it overtakes the wicked. Prov. 3
Devise your strategy, but it will be defeated, propose your plan, Is. 8
but it will not stand, for God is with us.
When you grow old, I will still be the same. Is. 46
When your hair turns grey, I will still carry you.
I made you, I will bear you, I will carry you, and I will rescue you.

1. What does "Tikkun Olam" mean? How can we do it?
2. Read the Reflection question. Hillel sums up the essence of Judaism. How can that help us achieve "Tikkun Olam"?
3. The photograph shows the flag of the State of Israel flying among the community of nations outside the United Nations building in New York. What role can Israel play in "Tikkun Olam"?
4. Can you make more of an impact with *Tikkun Olam* if you live in the diaspora or in Israel?
5. What kind of impact does this *beracha* have on your relationships with other people in your life (בין אדם לחבירו)?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class. Present what you learned about the theme of *tefilla* that was allocated to you, making reference to the supplementary sources and the answers you came up with to the questions accompanying them.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students' presentations. Conclude the discussion with a summary of the themes and structures they have seen in this unit.

Themes of *Tefilla* in the Writings of Rabbi Sacks



Analysis in Chavruta: Now let's explore further themes of *tefilla* in Rabbi Sacks' thought in more depth. The texts are taken from his introduction to the Koren Siddur. In your *chavruta* take one of the themes below (your teacher will tell you which one to look at). Use the guiding questions to help you analyze and understand what Rabbi Sacks is saying.

Chavruta text analysis: Give each *chavruta* one of the themes below to study, using the questions to guide their discussion. Make sure each theme is covered by at least one *chavruta*. If there is time, the students can look at other themes when they have finished. You may wish to ask 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 themes of *tefilla*.

Then in your *chavruta* prepare a short presentation on what Rabbi Sacks says about the theme you explored, to be given to the rest of your class.

All texts in this section are taken from the introduction Rabbi Sacks wrote to the Koren Siddur entitled Understanding Jewish Prayer.

Prayer and Sacrifice



The connection between prayer and sacrifice is deep. As we have seen, sacrifice is not the only forerunner of our prayers; many prayers were spoken by figures in the Bible. These were said without any accompanying offering. Yet the sacrificial system is a major tributary of the Jewish river of prayer. After the destruction of the second *Bet HaMikdash*, prayer became a substitute for sacrifice. It is *avoda shebalev*, "the sacrificial service of the heart." Yet it is just this feature of the prayers that many find difficult to understand or find uplifting. What, then, was sacrifice?

The Hebrew word for sacrifice is *korban*, which comes from a root that means "to come, or bring close." The essential problem to which sacrifice is an answer is: how can we come close to God? This is a profound question – perhaps *the* question of the religious life – not simply because of the utter disparity between God's infinity and our finitude, but also because the very circumstances of life tend to focus our gaze downward to our needs rather than upward to our source. The Hebrew word for universe, *olam*,



is connected to the verb meaning “to hide” (see *Vayikra* 4:13; *Devarim* 22:1). The physical world is a place in which the presence of God is real, yet hidden. Our horizon of consciousness is foreshortened. We focus on our own devices and desires. We walk in God’s light, but often our mind is on other things.

How then do we come close to God? By an *act of renunciation*; by giving something away; specifically, by giving something *back*. The sacrifices of the biblical age were ways in which the individual, or the nation as a whole, in effect said: what we have, God, is really Yours. The world exists because of You. *We* exist because of You. Nothing we have is ultimately ours. The fundamental gesture of sacrifice is, on the face of it, absurd. What we give to God is something that already belongs to Him. As King David said: “Who am I and who are my people that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your hand” (*Divrei HaYamim* I 29:14). Yet to *give back* to God is one of the most profound instincts of the soul. Doing so, we acknowledge our dependency. We cast off the carapace of self-absorption. That is why, in one of its most striking phrases, the Torah speaks of sacrifice as being *rei’ach nicho’ach*, “sweet savor” to God.

1. How is prayer connected to the concept of sacrifice?
2. Do you have to make any sacrifices to pray?
3. How does offering a sacrifice to God bring you closer to Him?
4. When you give a present to someone does that bring you closer to them?
5. According to Rabbi Sacks, what statements are we making when we offer a sacrifice (whether a possession, or our time and effort) to God?

Kavana: Directing the Mind



Prayer is more than saying certain words in the right order. It needs concentration, attention, engagement of mind and heart, and the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Without devotion, said Rabbi Bachya ibn Pakuda, prayer is like a body without a soul. The key Hebrew word here is *kavana*, meaning mindfulness, intention, focus, direction of the mind.

In the context of prayer, it means several different things. The most basic level is *kavana le-shem mitzva*, which means, having the intention to fulfill a *mitzva*. This means that we do not act for social or aesthetic reasons. We pray because we are commanded to pray. Generally in Judaism there is a



long-standing debate about whether the commandments require *kavana*, but certainly prayer does, because it is supremely an act of the mind.

At a second level, *kavana* means understanding the words (*perush hamilim*). At least the most important sections of prayer require *kavana* in this sense. Without it, the words we say would be mere sounds. Understanding the words is, of course, made much easier by the existence of translations and commentaries.

A third level relates to context. How do I understand my situation when I pray? Rambam states this principle as follows: “The mind should be *freed from all extraneous thoughts* and the one who prays should *realize that he is standing before the Divine Presence*.” These are essential elements of at least the *Amida*, the prayer par excellence in which we are conscious of standing before God. That is why we take three steps forward at the beginning, and three back at the end – as if we were entering, then leaving, sacred space.

The fourth level of *kavana* is not merely saying the words but meaning them, affirming them. Thus, for example, while saying the first paragraph of the *Shema*, we “accept of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven” – declaring our allegiance to God as the supreme authority in our lives. In the second paragraph, we “accept of the yoke of the commandments.” The word *Amen* means roughly, “I affirm what has been said.” In prayer we put ourselves into the words. We make a commitment. We declare our faith, our trust, and our dependency. We mean what we say.

1. Why is *kavana* more important for *tefilla* than for other *mitzvot*?
2. Which of the four levels of *kavana* do you generally reach when you pray? How can you improve your *kavana*?
3. Do you think there is still value in engaging in prayer with only the first level of *kavana*?
4. How do you think we can achieve the goal of “meaning what we say” in the fourth level of *kavana*?
5. Do you think preparation before *tefilla* would help with improving *kavana*? Would it help with all four levels of *kavana*, or just some of them?

Is Prayer Answered?

Is prayer answered? If God is changeless, how can we change Him by what we say? Even discounting this, why do we need to articulate our requests? Surely God, who sees the heart, knows our wishes even before we do, without our having to put them into words. What we wish to happen is





either right or wrong in the eyes of God. If it is right, God will bring it about even if we do not pray. If it is wrong, God will not bring it about even if we do. So why pray?

The classic Jewish answer is simple but profound. Without a vessel to contain a blessing, there can be no blessing. If we have no receptacle to catch the rain, the rain may fall, but we will have none to drink. If we have no radio receiver, the sound waves will flow, but we will be unable to convert them into sound. God's blessings flow continuously, but unless we make ourselves into a vessel for them, they will flow elsewhere. *Prayer is the act of turning ourselves into a vehicle for the Divine.*

Speaking from personal experience, and from many encounters with people for whom prayer was a lifeline, I know that our prayers are answered: not always in the *way* we expected, not always as quickly as we hoped, but *prayer is never in vain*. Sometimes the answer is, "No." If granting a request would do us or others harm, God will not grant it. But "No" is also an answer, and when God decides that something I have prayed for should not come to pass, then I pray for the wisdom to understand why. That too is part of spiritual growth: to accept graciously what we cannot or should not change. Nor is prayer a substitute for human effort: on the contrary, prayer is one of the most powerful sources of energy for human effort. God gives us the strength to achieve what we need to achieve, and to do what we were placed on earth to do.

Prayer changes the world because it changes us. At its height, it is a profoundly transformative experience. If we have truly prayed, we come in the course of time to know that the world was made, and we were made, for a purpose; that God, though immeasurably vast, is also intensely close; that "were my father and my mother to forsake me, the Lord would take me in"; that God is with us in our efforts, and that we do not labor in vain. We know, too, that we are part of the community of faith, and with us are four thousand years of history and the prayers and hopes of those who came before us. However far we feel from God, He is there behind us, and all we have to do is turn to face Him. Faith is born and lives in prayer, and faith is the antidote to fear: "The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?"

1. Read the first paragraph again. In what way is Rabbi Sacks challenging our concept of prayer? What assumption is he basing this challenge on?
2. Can you relate to the first classic answer given to this question?
3. What does "'No' is also an answer," mean?
4. How does prayer change us?



5. This approach to prayer seems to place us at the center of the prayer experience. How is this reflected in the etymological construction of the verb to pray – להתפלל?

Frontal teaching: Ask each *chavruta* to give their presentation to the class on Rabbi Sacks' writings about the themes of *tefilla*. Make sure each of the themes is covered by at least one *chavruta*, so that the class hears a presentation about every theme.

The Assignment



In this unit we have explored the themes of *creation*, *revelation*, and *redemption* in *tefillah* and how they connect to the three paradigm relationships – *between man and himself* (בין אדם לעצמו), *between man and God* (בין אדם למקום) and *between man and his fellow* (בין אדם לחבירו).

Part 1: This assignment is to write your own *tefilla*, with all of these themes contained within it. Try to make your *tefilla* beautiful and expressive of what is in your heart. It may be a poem, or a song, or prose. If you want to explain the meaning behind it you can also write your own commentary on it.

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.

Project Based Learning: This assignment asks the students to creatively apply the ideas they have explored in this unit to their lives and their own approach to *tefilla* in a practical way, by writing their own *tefillot* containing the themes and ideas they have been exploring.

You may wish to collect all of the *tefillot* that your students have composed and to publish the compilation as a class Siddur for the rest of the school community to share.

TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 3 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

לימוד

STUDY

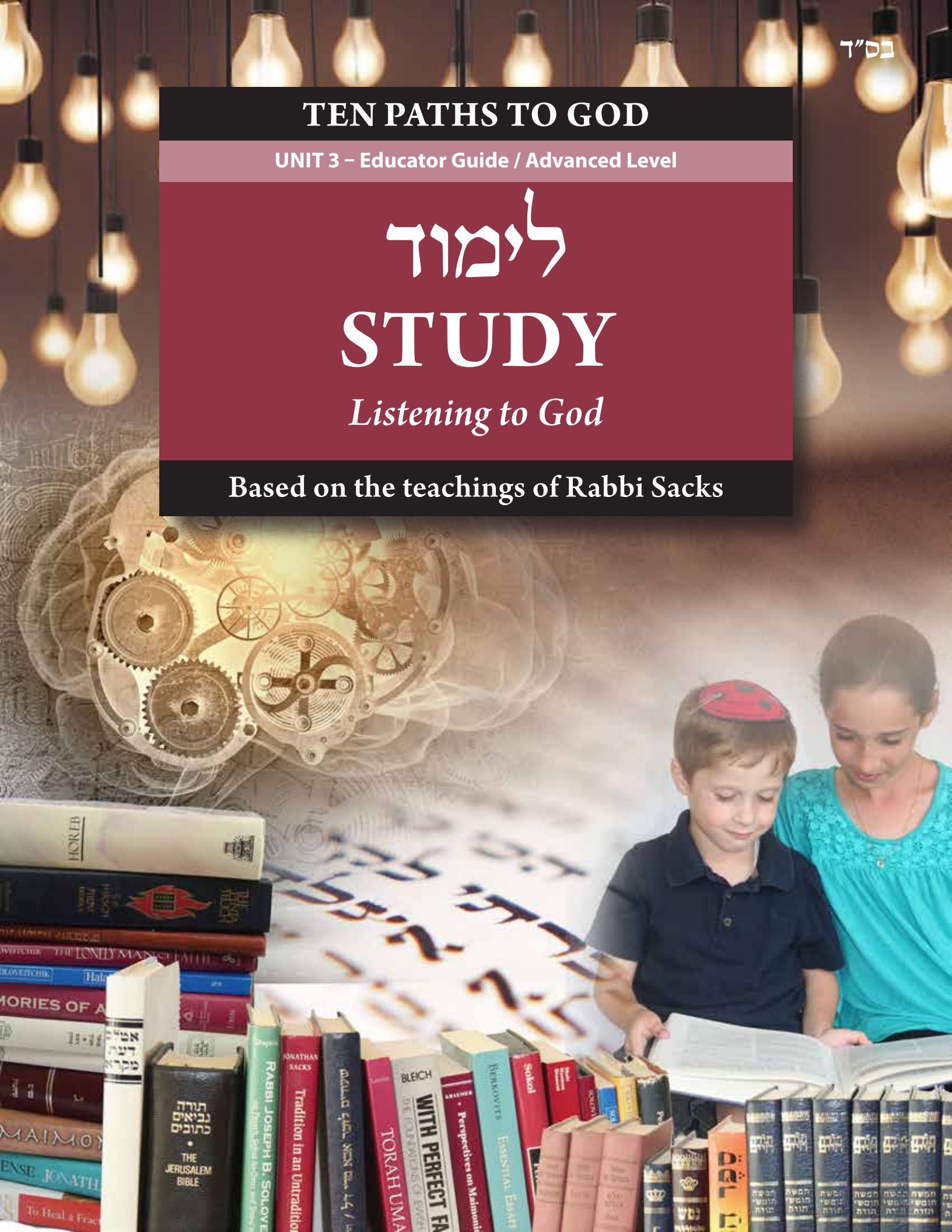
Listening to God

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks

UNIT 3 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

לימוד
STUDY
Listening to God

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Overview: In this unit we will explore the path to God through Torah study, using texts that Rabbi Sacks has selected. The *mitzvah* of Torah study is traditionally considered equal to all the other *mitzvot*, and features prominently in Jewish philosophical frameworks and spiritual paradigms. Rabbi Sacks gives a socio-historical approach to *Talmud Torah*, that is the impact of the obsession with this *mitzvah* in particular and Jewish education in general, and how it has shaped the Jewish people through the ages.

Educational aims for this Unit:

- For students to consider the value and essence of the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah*
- The role of Torah study in achieving Jewish continuity
- For students to consider the source and meaning behind the following descriptions of the Jewish people:
 - People of the book
 - A nation of philosophers
 - A nation of students and teachers
 - For students to explore in depth Rabbi Sacks' approach to secular study and "Torah and *chochma*".

Trigger Activity: Jewish Interior Designing

Ask volunteers to draw a "Jewish Home" on the board (or smart board). You could ask for a different volunteer for each room of the house. It is possible that the volunteers will include two sinks in the kitchen, *mezuzot* on the doorposts, a *tzedaka* box, maybe Jewish art on the walls, and perhaps even a section left undecorated, *zecher lechurban*. It is likely that your students will place books prominently in the house. This would be a great trigger to hold a short discussion on why the average Jewish home has a lot of books. If they do not add books to their home, then ask for volunteers from the class to add things they think are missing from the drawing until someone thinks to add books. If no one does, then you will have to yourself, and ask your class if they think you are right to, and if they think books are an integral part of a Jewish home.

Watch: The opening video for Unit 3



- **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.



Jews are the “people of the book.” *Talmud Torah* – studying Torah – is the greatest of all the commands and the secret of Jewish continuity. In the *Shema* we are commanded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, and your might.” Then almost immediately it says, “Teach these things repeatedly to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise.” Judaism is a religion of education.

Study is holier even than prayer, for in prayer we speak to God, but in study we listen to God. We strive to understand what God wants from us. We try to make His will ours. For the holiest thing is God’s word. The Torah – God’s word to our ancestors – is our constitution as a nation, our covenant of liberty, the code by which we decipher the mystery and meaning of life.

The words of the Torah span a thousand years, from Moses to Malachi, the first and last of the prophets. For another thousand years, until the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, Jews added commentaries to the Book, and for yet another thousand years they wrote commentaries to the commentaries. Never has there been a deeper relationship between a people and a book. The ancient Greeks, puzzled by the phenomenon of an entire people dedicated to learning, called Jews “a nation of philosophers.” Certainly we are called on to be a nation of students and teachers. In Judaism we not only learn to live; we live to learn. In study, we make Torah real in the mind so that we can make it actual in the world.

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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“people of the book”

1. Have you heard this description of the Jewish people before? What does it mean to you?
2. Which book? Could it be more than one book or just books in general?
3. How do you think the Jewish people earned this description? Do you think it is equally applicable in our generation as it was in previous generations?



greatest of all the commands

1. Why do you think Rabbi Sacks describes the *mitzvah* of learning Torah as the “greatest of all the commands”?
2. What exactly is the *mitzvah* of learning Torah? How can we fulfill it?
3. Do you agree that it is the most important of all the *mitzvot*?

secret of Jewish continuity

1. What does “Jewish continuity” mean?
2. Why do we need to be concerned about it?
3. Why do you think Rabbi Sacks describes the *mitzvah* of learning Torah as the “secret of Jewish continuity”?

in study we listen to God

1. Unit 2 of this curriculum, which is about Prayer, is entitled “Talking to God,” and this unit, which is about learning Torah, is entitled “Listening to God.” How is learning Torah listening to God?
2. Which do you think is more important, talking to God or listening to God?
3. Considering the above, do you think studying Torah could be likened to receiving prophecy?

constitution as a nation

1. What is a constitution? (For reference, consider the constitution of the United States of America.)
2. How is the Torah the constitution of a nation?
3. What is the core message of the Torah as the constitution of the Jewish people?

covenant of liberty

1. What is a covenant (in Hebrew a *brit*/ברית)?
2. What does liberty mean?
3. How is the Torah a “covenant of liberty”?

code by which we decipher the mystery and meaning of life

1. What is the meaning of life according to the Torah?
2. Why does Rabbi Sacks describe the Torah as a code to help us find the answer?
3. Does life have to have meaning? What would your life be like without meaning?



“a nation of philosophers”

1. What is a philosopher?
2. Can you give evidence to support the claim that the Jewish people are a “nation of philosophers”?
3. Is there a relationship between the description of the Jewish people as the “people of the book” and “a nation of philosophers”?

nation of students and teachers

1. What is more important, to be a student or to be a teacher?
2. Can you be one without the other?
3. Are you a student, a teacher, or both? Will this always be the case?



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

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

The Torah is...

Individual text work: Ask the students to do this next activity on their own. Phrases used to describe the Torah, and the *mitzvah* of learning Torah, are highlighted for you.



Analysis: Take another look at the text and highlight every time Rabbi Sacks describes the Torah, or the *mitzvah* of learning Torah. Make a list of all the descriptions of Torah that you find as you learn the sources in this section.

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Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up), ask the students to read through the texts that follow and to use 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.



Analysis in Chavruta: Now in *chavruta*, explore the following texts, using the questions below to guide you. Each time you come across another description of the Torah, add it to your list.

HOW I LOVE YOUR LAW



צו מה־אֶהְבֶּתִי תוֹרַתְךָ כָּל־הַיּוֹם הִיא שִׁיחָתִי:

Oh, how I love your law!
I meditate on it all day long.

קד מה־נִמְלֵצוּ לִחְכִּי אִמְרֹתֶיךָ מִדְּבַשׁ לִפִּי:

How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!

קה גִּדְלֹגְלִי דְבַרְךָ וְאוֹר לְנִתְיָבְתִּי:

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.

קיא נַחֲלָתִי עֲדוּתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם כִּי־שִׂשׂוֹן לִבִּי הִמָּה:

Your statutes are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.

קל פֶּתַח־דְּבָרֶיךָ יֵאִיר מִבֵּין פְּתִיּוֹם:

The unfolding of your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.

קמד צֶדֶק עֲדוּתֶיךָ לְעוֹלָם הִבִּינֵנִי וְאֶחֱיָה:

Your statutes are forever right;
give me understanding that I may live.

Tehillim 119:97, 103, 105, 111, 130, 144

1. Why do you think the author of this psalm compares the Torah to honey? Is this a metaphor you can relate to in your experience?
2. What is a heritage? Why would a heritage bring you joy?
3. How does the Torah bring light into the world?

FIRE



Rav Papa [said] in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: The Torah that God gave Moshe, was given to him as a white fire engraved with black fire.

Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim, 6:1

1. What are the properties of fire that could also be applied to the Torah?
2. What does that black fire represent? What does the white fire represent?
3. How can the white fire (the parts of the parchment that has no letters written on it) also be considered fire? Can the gaps between letters and words also be meaningful?



AIR (OXYGEN)

Pappos ben Yehuda came and found Rabbi Akiva, who was convening assemblies in public and engaging in Torah study. Pappos said to him: Akiva, are you not afraid of the empire? Rabbi Akiva answered him: I will relate a parable. To what can this be compared? It is like a fox walking along a riverbank when he sees fish gathering and fleeing from place to place.

The fox said to them: From what are you fleeing?

They said to him: We are fleeing from the nets that people cast upon us.

He said to them: Do you wish to come up onto dry land, and we will reside together just as my ancestors resided with your ancestors?

The fish said to him: You are the one of whom they say, he is the cleverest of animals? You are not clever; you are a fool. If we are afraid in the water, our natural habitat which gives us life, then in a habitat that causes our death, all the more so.

The moral is: So too, we Jews, now that we sit and engage in Torah study, about which it is written: "For that is your life, and the length of your days" (Devarim 30:20). We fear the empire to this extent; if we proceed to sit idle from its study, as its abandonment is the habitat that causes our death, all the more so will we fear the empire.

Talmud Bavli, Berachot 61b

1. Why can't fish live without water? What would life be like without it for the fish?
2. What does the water represent for the fish in the story? What is the message for the Jewish people?
3. What would life be like for the Jewish people without the Torah? What happens to Jews today without the Torah in their life?



WATER



It is taught in a *baraita* with regard to the verse: “And Moshe led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water” (Shemot 15:22). Those who interpret verses metaphorically said that water here is referring to nothing other than Torah, as it is stated metaphorically, concerning those who desire wisdom: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come for water” (Yeshayahu 55:1). The *baraita* continues: “The verse means that since the Jews traveled for three days without hearing any Torah they became weary, and therefore the prophets among them arose and instituted for them that they should read from the Torah each Shabbat, and pause on Sunday, and read again on Monday, and pause on Tuesday and Wednesday, and read again on Thursday, and pause on Shabbat eve, so they would not tarry three days without hearing the Torah.”

Talmud Bavli, Bava Kamma 82a

1. What does water represent to a human being?
2. How is the Torah therefore like water?
3. Can you think of any other elements of water that are also a good metaphor for the Torah?



Share your analysis: Join another *chavruta* to form a *chabura*. Share the lists you made of descriptions of the Torah. Are they the same? Which of all the descriptions of Torah most resonated with you? Have you heard the Torah described in any other way? Can you think of another way to describe the Torah?

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

■ **Core idea:** The Torah and its impact on our lives are central to the Jewish religious experience. There are a myriad of sources that describe the vital qualities of the Torah and the impact it has on our lives, and these are but a few chosen by Rabbi Sacks to explore. Ensure your students consider the many facets of the qualities of the Torah found in the metaphors and descriptions in these sources, and encourage them to relate them to their own lives.

The People of the Book

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up), ask the students to read through Rabbi Sacks' words again, this time focusing on the descriptions of the Jewish people. These are highlighted for you.



Analysis in Chavruta: Together with your *chavruta*, reread Rabbi Sacks' opening words. This time, using a different color, highlight every time Rabbi Sacks describes the Jewish people or Judaism and how it has been influenced by the *mitzvah* of studying Torah.

Jews are **the “people of the book.”** *Talmud Torah* – studying Torah – is the greatest of all the commands and the secret of Jewish continuity. In the *Shema* we are commanded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, and your might.” Then almost immediately it says, “Teach these things repeatedly to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise.”

Judaism is a religion of education.

Study is holier even than prayer, for in prayer we speak to God, but in study we listen to God. We strive to understand what God wants from us. We try to make His will ours. For the holiest thing is God's word. The Torah – God's word to our ancestors – is our constitution as a nation, our covenant of liberty, the code by which we decipher the mystery and meaning of life.

The words of the Torah span a thousand years, from Moses to Malachi, the first and last of the prophets. For another thousand years, until the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, Jews added commentaries to the Book, and for yet another thousand years they wrote commentaries to the commentaries. Never has there been a deeper relationship between a people and a book. The ancient Greeks, puzzled by the phenomenon of an entire people dedicated to learning, called Jews **“a nation of philosophers.”** Certainly we are called on to be **a nation of students and teachers.** In Judaism we not only learn to live; we live to learn. In study, we make Torah real in the mind so that we can make it actual in the world.



Analysis in Chavruta: Now let's try to understand how the Jewish people have earned this reputation. We will do this through analyzing several secondary texts that explore the role of education and Torah learning in Jewish culture and Judaism. By the end of this section you should have a clearer idea of what has led to the Jewish people becoming the "People of the Book." Prepare a brief presentation to be shared with the rest of your class – your thesis on what has led to this phenomenon. Include examples from your own life and your community.

THE THREE CROWNS



With three crowns was Israel crowned – with the crown of the Torah, the crown of the priesthood and the crown of sovereignty. The crown of the priesthood was bestowed on Aaron... The crown of sovereignty was conferred on David... But the crown of the Torah is for all Israel, as it is said, "Moshe commanded us a law, an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov" (Devarim 33:4). Whoever desires it can win it. Do not suppose that the other two crowns are greater than the crown of the Torah for it is said, "By me, kings reign and princes decree justice. By me, princes rule" (Mishlei 8:15–16). Hence you can infer that the crown of the Torah is greater than the other two crowns.

Rambam, Laws of Torah Study, 3:1

1. Why do you think priesthood, kingship and Torah scholarship are described as "crowns"?
2. Who has been gifted with each crown? What do these groups represent?
3. According to this source, the religious leadership of the priesthood, and the political leadership of the king, are less important and powerful than Torah study. If knowledge is power, then according to this source who has access to the ultimate power in Judaism?



THE WORLD'S FIRST UNIVERSAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

H.G. Wells noted in his Outline of History that “The Jewish religion, because it was a literature-sustained religion, led to the first efforts to provide elementary education for all children in the community.” Universal compulsory education did not exist in England until 1870; it existed in Israel eighteen centuries earlier. This Talmudic passage gives an overview of how it evolved.

May the name of Yehoshua ben Gamla be remembered for good, for were it not for him, the Torah would have been forgotten from Israel. For at first if a child had a father, his father taught him, and if he had no father he did not learn at all. Then they made an ordinance that teachers of children should be appointed in Yerushalayim. Even then, however, if a child had a father, the father would take him to Yerushalayim to have him taught, but if not, the child would not go. They then ordained that teachers should be appointed in every district, and boys would enter school at the age of sixteen or seventeen. But then, if the teacher punished a child, the child would rebel and leave school. Eventually Yehoshua ben Gamla came and ordained that teachers of young children should be appointed in each district and town, and that children should enter school at the age of six or seven.

Abridged from Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 21a

1. What is universal education? Why is it important? What is the alternative?
2. What does a “literature-sustained” religion mean? Why did this lead to universal education?
3. In the previous source Rambam claims that everyone has access to knowledge, and therefore power, in Judaism. Despite this, the Rabbinic leadership could have kept that power for themselves. How does this source prove they did not?



COMMUNITIES BUILT AROUND SCHOOLS



The history of the Jews has been a history of communities built around schools. They are the key institutions because they convey learning. Greek civilization survived for five hundred years after the Roman conquest of the Greek city-states, because the Greeks, like the Jews, had developed academies and they could live around those academies. When the academies failed, Greek civilization disappeared. The Jewish people has never allowed its academies to fail.

Daniel J. Elazar, *People and Polity*, p. 489

1. According to this source what is the secret to Jewish continuity?
2. Which Jewish academies is this source referring to? What is learnt in these academies? Do they still exist today?
3. How have the Jewish people managed to ensure its academies have never failed?

NON-JEWISH TESTIMONY



A twelfth century Christian monk wrote the following in one of his commentaries, in an age when most of Europe was illiterate:

The Jews, out of their zeal for God and their love of the Law, put as many sons as they have to letters, that each may understand God's Law . . . A Jew, however poor, if he had ten sons, would put them all to letters, not for gain, as the Christians do, but for the understanding of God's Law; and not only his sons but his daughters.

B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, p. 78

1. According to this source, what is the motivation for Jewish parents to educate their children?
2. Why is it important to understand God's laws in order to keep them?
3. Why do you think the source specifically mentions daughters as well as sons? Do you think this was controversial in the 12th century? Is it controversial today?



JEWISH EDUCATION IN THE SHTETL



From infancy the boy is guided and prodded towards scholarship. In the cradle he will listen to his mother's lullabies: "Sleep soundly at night and learn Torah by day / And thou'lt be a Rabbi when I have grown grey." The most important item in the family budget is the tuition fee that must be paid each term to the teacher of the younger boy's school. "Parents will bend the sky to educate their son." The mother, who has charge of household accounts, will cut the family food costs to the limit if necessary, in order to pay for her sons' schooling. If the worst comes to the worst, she will pawn her cherished pearls in order to pay for the school term. The boy must study, the boy must become a good Jew – for her, the two are synonymous.

Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with People*, p. 85–87

1. Do you think education is really the most important item in the family budget?
2. Do you think the money spent on your Jewish education is an important use of resources?
3. What message are parents (both in the shtetl and today) sending their children by dedicating their finances to their children's Jewish education?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your thesis on how the Jewish people earned the reputation and title of the "People of the Book." Support your thesis with examples from your own life and community.

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

Core idea: Jews have always had an obsession with education, making profound sacrifices to ensure their children receive the education they need to guarantee Jewish continuity. The Jewish people instituted universal education for all children thousands of years before this became the norm in the rest of the world. They have been a unique model in this respect, building their communities primarily around educational institutions. The following are some ideas you may wish to discuss with your students:

- Is Jewish continuity at risk today? If so, why? Has it always been?
- How has universal education guaranteed Jewish continuity?
- Where did the Jewish obsession with education come from? Is it just a smart strategy to achieve continuity or does it go even deeper than that?
- How does universal education lead to the democratization of knowledge (and to some extent power in Jewish society)?
- Are all these ideas relevant in contemporary times, in the lives of your students today? Do their parents make sacrifices for their Jewish education? Is that because of Jewish continuity or something else? Is there universal Jewish education today?

Torah and *Chochma*

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up), ask the students to read through the two *mishnayot* from *Pirkei Avot* and to answer the guided questions that follow them.

Now that we have seen the value and beauty of Torah learning and the impact it has had on the Jewish people, let's consider the role of secular learning and wisdom in our lives.



Analysis in Chavruta: Read the texts below from *Pirkei Avot*, with your *chavruta*. Use the guided questions to help you unlock the meaning of each *mishna*.

Rabbi Yaakov said: One who walks on the road while reviewing [learning Torah] and interrupts his review and exclaims: “How beautiful is this tree and how beautiful is this plowed field” Scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul.

Mishna Avot 3:7



Ben Bag-Bag said: Turn it [the Torah] over and over, for everything is in it. Reflect on it, grow old and gray in it and do not stir from it, for there is no better standard of conduct for you than this.

Mishna Avot 5:22



1. “Bears guilt for his soul” means he deserves the death penalty. Although in practice it is not a capital crime it is considered on an equal level. What has he done that is so sinful?
2. Is admiring the beauty of the world a good thing? Couldn't that be a positive religious experience in itself? If that is true, then why is Rabbi Yaakov so against what this man has done?
3. What can we conclude about Rabbi Yaakov's approach to secular learning?
4. But why? Perhaps Ben Bag Bag can explain why we should only be learning Torah. What does he say about the Torah?
5. Do you agree? Do you think that everything we could learn from the world to serve Hashem can be found in the Torah?



Frontal teaching: Bring the class together to summarize the teachings of the *mishnayot*. From a plain reading of the text it would seem that Torah learning is the ultimate value to the exclusion of all other sources of knowledge, even if they could be considered religiously inspiring.

You may wish to point out the *aggadic* nature of *Pirkei Avot* – that these are not normative texts with universal applicability but rather reflect the philosophical approach of their authors, and are open to interpretation. In fact, the first *mishna*, Avot 3:7, will be reconsidered at the end of this section, and reinterpreted with the help of Rav Kook.



Analysis in Chavruta: From these two sources it would seem that Rabbi Yaakov and Ben Bag Bag are very much against secular learning. But what does Rabbi Sacks think? With your *chavruta* read through the following four texts by Rabbi Sacks. Beneath each text is a list of core themes. Group these themes into two separate lists. When your lists are complete, give each one a title and answer the Key Question for each text.

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up), ask the students to read through these quotes from the book *Future Tense*. In this chapter, Rabbi Sacks succinctly presents his approach to the religious imperative to learn secular studies. (He develops this and many other issues surrounding science and Torah in another book entitled *The Great Partnership*.)

Your students are tasked with forming two lists of the core terms found after each text. At the end of all four texts their two lists will be complete and they can consider a title for each list. They should also discuss and answer the key-questions that follow each text.



[T]he structure of the Hebrew Bible is unusual and significant. Its subject is the people of Israel, the descendants of Avraham and Sarah. Yet the Torah does not start with Avraham. It begins instead with universal archetypes of humanity as a whole. We read about Adam and Chava, Kayin and Hevel, Noah and the Flood, Bavel and its builders. None of these is a Jew, a Hebrew, an Israelite. They are us in our universality: temptation and sin, sibling rivalry and violence, hubris and the desire for godlike powers. Only after this prologue does the Torah narrow its focus to one man, one family, eventually one nation and its highly specific destiny.

The Torah is a particular text, but it begins with the universals of the human condition...

What is absolutely clear is that Bereishit tells the story not of one covenant, but of two. The first, with Noah after the flood (Bereishit 9), applies to all humanity. The second, with Avraham and his descendants (Bereishit 17), does not. It is the covenant of one people, the people with whom God, many centuries later at Mount Sinai, makes a more highly articulated Covenant of Sinai with its 613 commands.

Judaism is built on a dual structure. It has a universal dimension and particularistic one, neither of which negates the other. God has a general relationship with all humanity and a particular relationship with the Children of Israel. Rabbi Akiva expressed this, simply and beautifully, in his statement in Pirkei Avot: "Beloved is humanity, for it was created in God's image... Beloved are Israel for they are called God's children" (3:14).

Future Tense, p. 211–212

Core Themes:

Brit Noach (the covenant between God and Noah)

God's particular relationship with the Children of Israel

Universal human condition (the things that make all humans the same)

Brit Avraham (the covenant between God and Avraham)

Universal dimension of Judaism (ontology – the nature of being)

Torah as a particular text (connected to a particular people)

God's general relationship with all of humanity

Particularistic dimension of Judaism (One of Judaism's two approaches to ontology – the nature of being)

Key Question:

Why does Judaism, the particular religion of a particular people, have a universal dimension?



Rambam articulated thirteen principles of faith. Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Duran reduced them to three, which Franz Rosenzweig called creation, revelation, and redemption. The relationship between God and the universe is creation: the *work* of God. Between God and humanity it is revelation: the *word* of God. When we apply revelation to creation, the word of God to the work of God, the result is redemption.

We can now define the difference between *Elokim* and *Hashem*. *Elokim* is God in creation. The entire creation narrative of Bereishit 1:1–2:3 is constructed around the name *Elokim*. It is *Elokim* who made the universe and all it contains, *Elokim* who spoke and brought the world into being, *Elokim* who said, “Let us make man in our image after our likeness.” *Elokim* is the God of space, the stars and the planets, the God of life and the human genome, the God of nature and science, the God of Newton and Einstein.

When it comes to revelation, the word the Torah uses is *Hashem*. It was *Hashem* who warned Kayin against sin, who summoned Noach to enter the ark, who called to Avraham, telling him to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father’s house, *Hashem* who promised him children and a land, *Hashem* who spoke to Moshe at the burning bush, who rescued his people from Egypt, who made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai, who gave them the Ten Commandments and the laws of life.

Future Tense, p. 217–218

Core Themes:

Creation (the universe)

Revelation (when God “reveals” Himself to us through His word)

Elokim (the generic term/name for God in Hebrew)

Hashem (Literally “the Name”. This is the way we refer in Hebrew to the proper name of God – the four Hebrew letters usually transliterated YHWH and known in Greek as the tetragrammaton)

Key Question:

According to Rabbi Sacks, how do we achieve Redemption (the world in a state redeemed – changed for the better)? Can you give a practical example?



So we have a dual ontology, two modes of being. But Judaism also recognizes a dual epistemology. There are two ways of *knowing*. One is called *chochma*, ‘wisdom’, the other is *Torah*, ‘teaching, instruction, law, guidance’. The difference was stated clearly by the sages: “If you are told that there is wisdom among the nations believe it. If you are told there is Torah among the nations, do not believe it” (Midrash Rabbah Eichah 17).

We can now state the difference between the two modes of knowledge. *Chochma* is the truth we discover; Torah is the truth we inherit. *Chochma* is the universal heritage of humankind; Torah is the specific heritage of Israel. *Chochma* is what we attain by being in the image of God; Torah is what guides Jews as the people of God. *Chochma* is acquired by seeing and reasoning; Torah is received by listening and responding. *Chochma* tells us what is; Torah tells us what ought to be. *Chochma* is about facts; Torah is about commands. *Chochma* yields descriptive, scientific laws; Torah yields prescriptive, behavioral laws. *Chochma* is about creation; Torah is about revelation...

We can now state the following. *Chochma* has an honorable place within the Jewish worldview. It has religious dignity. It is the gift of God. It is available to everyone, because everyone is in the image of God. We can also hazard the following definition: *chochma* is what allows us to understand the world as God’s work (science) and the human person as his image (the humanities).

Future Tense, p. 219–222

Core Themes:

Chochma (Wisdom. One of Judaism’s two approaches to epistemology – the nature of knowing)

Torah (One of Judaism’s two approaches to epistemology – the nature of knowing)

The truth we discover by seeing and reasoning

The truth we inherit by listening and responding

The universal heritage of humankind

The specific heritage of Israel

What is

What ought to be

Key Question:

How does Rabbi Sacks disagree with Ben Bag Bag (Mishna Avot 5:22)? Is this a problem?



Without Torah we cannot understand the Jewish story. But without *chochma* we cannot understand the human story. As I put it above, there are three elements of Jewish faith: creation, revelation and redemption. Creation is God's relationship with the universe. Revelation is God's relationship with us. Redemption is what happens when we apply revelation to creation, when we apply God's word to God's world. *We cannot apply Torah to the world unless we understand the world.* Without an understanding of creation, we will fail to bring about redemption.

Future Tense, p. 226

Core Themes:

The Jewish Story

The human story

Key Question:

Why should we learn *Chochma*?

Frontal teaching: Ask each of the *chavrutot* to share their titles for the two lists, and choose the best one for your own list on the board. Then ensure that everyone placed all the core-terms in the correct lists. Suggested titles for the lists could be: Universal and Particular; *Chochma* and Torah; Humanity and Jewish People.

The lists:

Brit Noach

Universal dimension of Judaism

Universal human condition

God's general relationship with all of humanity

Creation

Elokim

Chochma

The truth we discover by seeing and reasoning

The universal heritage of humankind

What *is*

The human story

Brit Avraham

Particularistic dimension of Judaism

Torah as a particular text

God's particular relationship with the Children of Israel

Revelation

Hashem

Torah

The truth we inherit by listening and responding

The specific heritage of Israel

What *ought* to be

The Jewish Story



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your answers to the key questions. Now let's revisit the Mishna from Pirkei Avot with which we started this section. Is there another way to read it that fits in with Rabbi Sacks' approach to studying *chochma*? (Clue: Rav Kook says the important word in the Mishna that explains the man's sin is the word "interrupts" [מפסיק].)



Rabbi Yaakov said: One who walks on the road while reviewing [learning Torah] and interrupts his review and exclaims: "How beautiful is this tree and how beautiful is this plowed field" Scripture considers it as if he bears guilt for his soul.

Mishna Avot 3:7

Frontal teaching: Rabbi Sacks' approach to learning *chochma* is that it is a vital religious imperative in order to be able to apply Revelation (Torah) to Creation (*chochma*) and thus to achieve Redemption. To do this, you must understand the world, God's creation.

While this does seem to disagree with Ben Bag Bag in Avot 5:22 (it is important to point out that disagreeing with a philosophical point in *Pirkei Avot* is not necessarily a problem, as they are not normative texts, and in fact *mishnayot* within *Pirkei Avot* often disagree and contradict each other), a rereading of Avot 3:7 with the help of Rav Kook will solve the contradiction between Rabbi Yaakov in the *mishna* and Rabbi Sacks' approach. Rav Kook focused on the word **מפסיק** – interrupts. If examining Creation (nature, science, etc.) is considered an interruption from your Torah study, completely separate, and a totally secular pursuit, then this is a grave mistake. But if you look at nature as a source for inspiration and a religious imperative in itself, then this is in fact the ideal.

The Assignment



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

THE SECRET OF JEWISH CONTINUITY



The Israelites, slaves in Egypt for more than two hundred years, were about to go free... On the brink of their release Moshe, the leader of the Jews, gathered them together and prepared to address them. He might have spoken about freedom. He could have given a stirring address about the promised land to which they were traveling, the “land flowing with milk and honey.” Or he might have prepared them for the journey that lay ahead, the long march across the wilderness.

Instead... he spoke about children and the distant future, and the duty to pass on memory to generations yet unborn... About to gain their freedom, the Israelites were told that they had to become a nation of educators.

Freedom, Moshe suggested, is won, not on the battlefield, nor in the political arena, but in the human imagination and will. To defend a land you need an army. But to defend freedom you need education. You need families and schools to ensure that your ideals are passed on to the next generation, and never lost, or despaired of, or obscured. The citadels of liberty are houses of study. Its heroes are teachers, its passion is education and the life of the mind. Moshe realized that a people achieves immortality not by building temples or mausoleums, but by engraving their values on the hearts of their children, and they on theirs, and so on until the end of time.

The Israelites built living monuments – monuments to life – and became a people dedicated to bringing new generations into being, and handing on to them the heritage of the past. Their great institutions were the family and education via the conversation between the generations. In place of temples they built houses of prayer and study. In place of stones they had words and teachings... In that counter-intuitive reversal they discovered the secret of eternity.

A Letter in the Scroll, p. 31–33

In this unit we have explored how the Jewish people have been molded into the “People of the Book” by their passionate commitment to education. This last quote from Rabbi Sacks beautifully and dramatically expresses the role of education in our religion, culture, and history.



Part 1: Working in small groups allocated by your teacher, create a visual representation of the descriptions found in this text. You may choose any form of visual arts (painting/drawing, animation, Power Point Presentation, etc.) to create your visual representation.

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.

Project Based Learning: This assignment asks the students to express the ideas they have explored in this unit in a creative way using the visual arts. The words of Rabbi Sacks in the Final Thoughts powerfully summarize the ideas of the unit, and should be the focus of the project.

You may wish to arrange an exhibition of the students' artwork, and to invite VIP visitors from the school community to the exhibition.

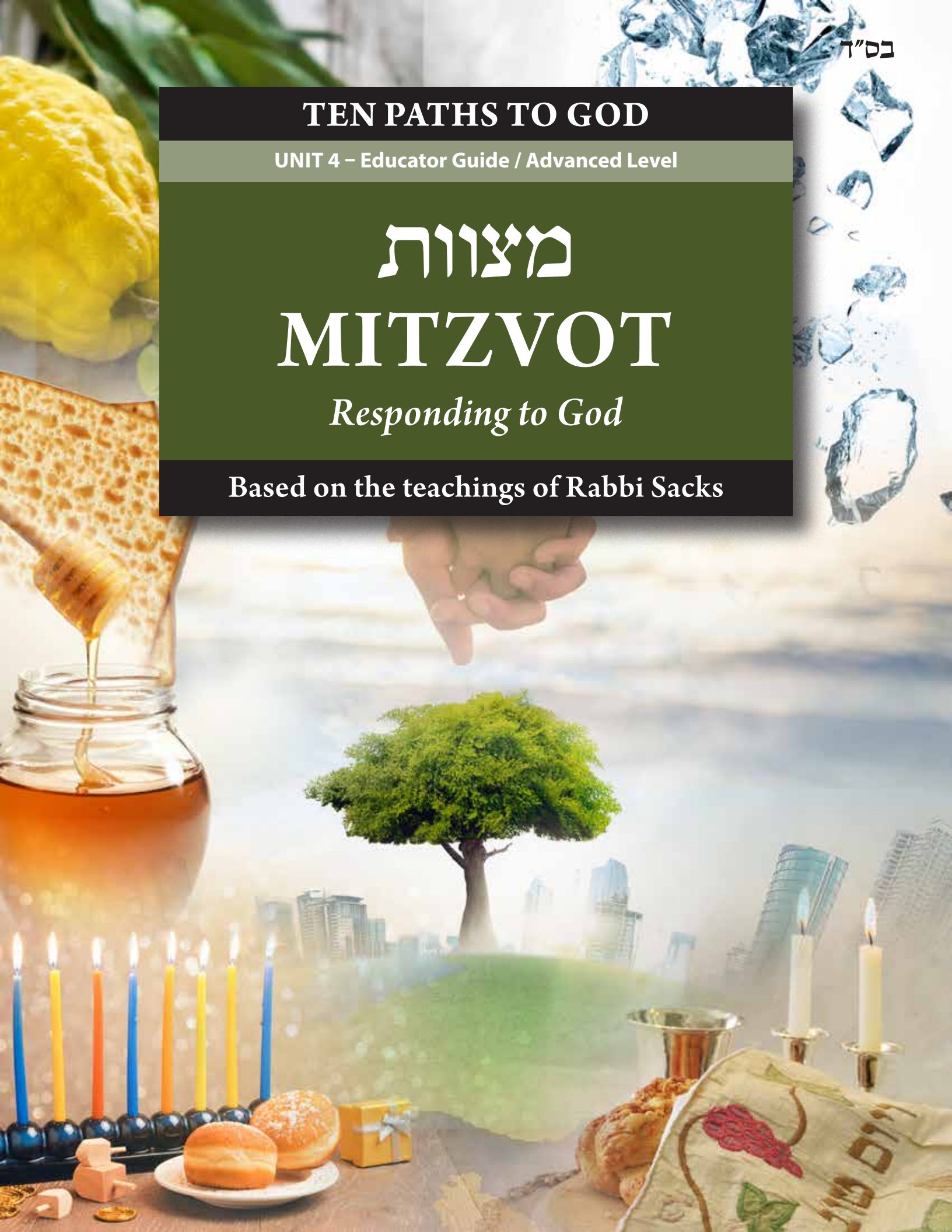
TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 4 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

מצוות MITZVOT

Responding to God

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Overview: In this unit we will explore the path to God through *mitzvot*, using texts that Rabbi Sacks has selected. Rabbi Sacks explains that *mitzvot* represent “miniature acts of redemption,” elevating the secular to holiness, bringing God into our world, becoming His partner in creation and ultimately leading to a universal redemption of the world. Most importantly, *mitzvot* are “truth lived” making Judaism unique as a religion of action rather than merely contemplation and thought.

Educational aims for this unit:

- For students to consider the role and impact of *mitzvot* in Judaism in general, and in the thought of Rabbi Sacks in particular.
- To understand the difference between the three categories of *mitzvot*: *Mishpatim*, *Chukim*, and *Edot*.
- To consider examples from these three categories in order to explore them further.
- To consider whether Judaism is primarily a religion of thought and faith or action and ritual.

Trigger Activity: Discussion – “Doing Jewish”

Ask your class: “How do we do Jewish?” or “How do we live Jewishly?”

The meaning behind these questions is how do we live the ideals of Judaism on a daily basis? How do we actualize the values that are at the very core of Judaism in our everyday lives?

It is very likely that your students will answer that being a good person, and treating others and the world around them with respect, is what is meant by living Jewish values and ideals, but the question is what actually makes these acts “Jewish,” and how can we be certain they are the intended values of God and the Torah? The system of *mitzvot* is Judaism’s failsafe way to ensure that Jews live the values of Judaism.




Watch: The opening video for Unit 4



- **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's genius was to take high ideals and translate them into life by simple daily deeds: the way of *mitzvot*, acting in accordance with God's will. We do not just contemplate truth: we live it.

We don't contemplate creation by studying theoretical physics. We live it by making a blessing over what we eat and drink, acknowledging God as the creator of all we enjoy. We don't think about our responsibility for the environment. We keep Shabbat, setting a limit, one day in seven, to our exploitation of the world. We don't just study Jewish history. On the fasts and festivals, we re-enact it. Truth becomes real when it becomes deed. That is how we transform the world.

There are those who see the world as it is and accept it. That is the stoic way. There are those who see the world as it is and flee from it. That is the mystic, monastic way. But there are those who see the world as it is and change it. That is the Jewish way. We change it through *mitzvot*, holy deeds that bring a fragment of heaven down to earth.


Every *mitzvah* is a miniature act of redemption. It turns something secular into something holy. When we keep *kashrut* we turn food for the body into sustenance for the soul. When we keep Shabbat we sanctify time, making space in our life to breathe and give thanks, celebrating what we have instead of striving for what we do not yet have. When we observe the festivals we sanctify history by turning it into personal memory, forging a connection between our ancestors' past and our present. When we keep the laws of *taharat hamishpacha*, family purity, we turn a physical relationship into a sacred bond of love.

The *mitzvot* bring God into our lives through the intricate choreography of a life lived in accordance with God's will. They are the poetry of the everyday, turning life into a sacred work of art.

Mitzvot teach us that faith is active, not passive. It is a matter of what we do, not just what happens to us. Performing a *mitzvah*, we come close to God, becoming His "partner in the work of creation." Every *mitzvah* is a window in the wall separating us from God. Each *mitzvah* lets God's light flow into the world.

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 clarifying 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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We do not just contemplate truth: we live it.

1. Who does "just contemplate truth"?
2. What does it mean to "live truth"? How do Jews "live truth"?
3. What are the truths that we live? Can you think of some examples?



That is the Jewish way.

1. What is the stoic approach to injustice in the world? (Stoicism is a school of philosophy that believes man should be without passion, accepting nature/natural law the way it is.)
2. What is the mystical/monastic approach to injustice in the world? (Monasticism is the way monasteries, and monks who live a life without physical pleasure in order to immerse themselves in purely spiritual and mystical ways of being.)
3. What is the Jewish approach to injustice in the world?

miniature act of redemption

1. To redeem something is to change for the better. How are the examples of *mitzvot* that Rabbi Sacks gives “miniature acts of redemption”?
2. How can *mitzvot* lead to a much larger act of redemption? How can *mitzvot* redeem our world?
3. Which *mitzvah* can you do today as a miniature act of redemption that will make a small contribution to the ultimate redemption of the world?

The *mitzvot* bring God into our lives

1. How do the *mitzvot* bring God into our everyday lives?
2. What do you think “intricate choreography of a life lived in accordance with God’s will” means?
3. Which *mitzvot* do you do on a regular basis that give your life a rhythm and “choreography” through which you can connect to God?

“partner in the work of creation”

1. Was the world complete after the seven days of creation?
2. What still needs completing today?
3. How does performing *mitzvot* create a partnership between us and God in the work of creation?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class and share your answers to the questions. 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.

Categorizing the *Mitzvot*

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up), ask the students to read the following quote from Rabbi Sacks, from his book *A Letter in the Scroll*, and to use the questions to guide their study. In this text Rabbi Sacks presents the three classic categories that *mitzvot* fall into, and provides examples for each. You may wish to ask them to write down their answers, or to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.



Analysis: Together with your *chavruta*, read the following quote from Rabbi Sacks that describes the three different categories of *mitzvot*. Use the questions below to help you fully understand each of the three categories.



Most of the commandments fall into one of three categories. There are those loosely called *mishpatim*, judgements. These include all the detailed provisions of civil and criminal law, the rules of reciprocal altruism and distributive justice that make up Judaism's social legislation. Then there are *chukim*, statutes, such as the laws against eating milk and meat together, or wearing clothes of mixed wool and linen. These are sometimes thought of as commands that have no reason. Rambam rightly dismisses this idea. Essentially, *chukim* are "laws embedded in nature", and by keeping them we respect the integrity of the natural world. So we do not combine animal (wool) and vegetable (linen) textiles, or mix animal life (milk) with animal death (meat). Behind these and other such commands is the idea that God is the creator of biodiversity rather than hybrid uniformity. By observing them we acquire the habits of treating animals with kindness and the environment with care. Judaism's ecological imperative is a delicate balance between "mastering and subduing" nature (Bereishit 1), and "serving and protecting" it (Bereishit 2). So we have laws against needless waste, the destruction of species and the despoliation and overexploitation of the environment. The general principle is that we are the guardians of the world for the sake of future generations.

The other cluster of commands – known as *edot*, or "testimonies" – have to do with our identity as part of a people and its story. So on Pesach we return to Egypt, eating the bread of affliction and the bitter herbs of slavery; on Shavuot we are at Sinai, hearing the Ten Commandments and sharing in the covenant; and on Sukkot we re-enact the Israelites' journey across the desert with only a hut for a home. The festivals are the supreme transformation of history into memory, from events in the distant past



into a personal experience of the present. When I observe the festivals I know, more powerfully than in any other way, that I am not a disconnected atom: I am a letter in the scroll, not yet complete, written by my ancestors, whose past lives on in me.

A Letter in the Scroll, p. 164–165

1. *Mishpatim* include civil and criminal law. Can you give some examples of civil and criminal laws from both the laws of the country where you live and from the Torah?
2. Which *mitzvot* do you think can be described as “distributive justice”?
3. How do the examples of *chukim* “respect the integrity of the natural world”?
4. How do you think the laws of *kashrut* fit into this category?
5. Testimony is when you declare something to be true. What testimony are we giving when we celebrate the biblical festivals?
6. How do the festivals connect us to the Jewish people, past and present?



Share your analysis: Join another *chavruta* to form a *chabura* and share your answers to the questions.

Frontal teaching: With the help of your students, present a summary of the ideas contained in this text.

Mitzvot Further Explored

Chabura text analysis: In *chaburot* (pair *chavrutot* together), ask the students to read through the following three quotes from Rabbi Sacks. Each one presents an example of a *mitzvah* from the categories above. Depending on how much time you have for this section, you could either give each *chabura* one of the *mitzvot* to study, or let them choose one themselves, or ask them to look at all three.



Further analysis: Below is an example of a *mitzvah* from each of the three categories. In your *chabura*, choose one of the examples to explore in more depth. If you have more time, look at the other *mitzvot* presented here also.

MISHPATIM: THE MITZVAH OF TZEDAKAH



The word *Tzedakah* is usually translated as “charity,” but in fact it means social or distributive justice. In biblical law it involved a whole series of institutions that together constituted the first ever attempt at a welfare state. The corners of the field, the dropped sheaf and grapes and olives left from the first picking were to be left for the poor. A tithe was to be given to them in certain years. Every seventh year, debts were cancelled, slaves went free, no work was done on the land, and the produce of the fields belonged to everyone. In the fiftieth year, the jubilee, anyone who had been forced through poverty to sell ancestral land was given it back. *Tzedek*, the Bible’s welfare legislation, is built on the premise that freedom has an economic dimension. Not only does powerless enslave, so too does poverty. So no one is to forfeit his independence or dignity. One may not take a person’s means of livelihood as security for a loan or hold on to items of clothing they need, nor may one delay payment to an employee.

A Letter in the Scroll, p. 120

1. What is the meaning of the root of the word *tzedakah* (tz-d-k)?
2. The *mitzvah* we call *tzedakah* actually includes a number of biblical *mitzvot*. What are they?
3. How is *tzedakah* an example of a *mitzvah* from the category of *mishpatim*?
4. Does the country in which you live achieve distributive justice in the same way that the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* does? How?
5. According to Rabbi Sacks how does *tzedakah* guarantee freedom?



CHUKIM: THE MITZVAH OF KILAYIM (NOT MIXING DIFFERENT SPECIES)



Another group of commandments is directed against interference with nature. The Bible forbids crossbreeding livestock, planting a field with mixed seeds, and wearing a garment of mixed wool and linen. It calls these rules *chukim* or “statutes.” The thirteenth-century scholar Ramban understood this term to mean laws which respect the integrity of nature. To mix different species, he argued, was to presume to be able to improve on the order of creation, and thus an affront to the Creator. Each species has its own internal laws of development and reproduction, and these must not be tampered with: “One who combines two different species thereby changes and defies the work of creation, as if believes that the Holy One, blessed be He, has not completely perfected the world and he now wishes to improve it by adding new kinds of creatures.”

The Dignity of Difference, p. 168

1. What is the mitzvah of *kilayim*?
2. Does it have any practical ramifications for us today?
3. How does it fit into the category of *chukim*?
4. How is this part of Judaism’s environmental ethic?
5. Does your country have any similar laws that protect the environment? Can you think of any examples?



EDOT: THE MITZVOT OF LEIL PESACH



[F]rom the very outset the Bible seems to sense that the journey from slavery to freedom is one we need to travel in every generation. So we were commanded to gather our families together every year at this time and tell the story of what it was like to be a slave and what it felt like to go free. Not just tell the story but act it out as well. We eat *matzah*, the unleavened “bread of affliction.” We sample *maror*, the bitter herbs, so that we can experience the taste of suffering. And we drink four cups of wine, each one a stage on the road to liberation. We tell the story in such a way that each of us feels as if we had lived through persecution and come out the other side as free human beings – as if history had been lifted off the page to become recent memory. That is how we learn to cherish freedom.

Faith in the Future, p. 139

1. Why do we need to make the same journey from slavery to freedom in every generation? How do we do that?
2. How do the *mitzvot* of *Leil HaSeder* help us to experience the story of the Exodus from Egypt?
3. Why is it important to experience the story rather than just learn about it?
4. Why is celebrating Pesach a great example of a *mitzvah* from the category of *edot*?
5. What testimony are we giving when we celebrate Pesach?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and present what you learnt about Rabbi Sacks’ explanation of the *mitzvah* you chose. Describe the category it falls into, and how the *mitzvah* fits that category.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion based on the questions following each text. Make sure your students fully understand each category, and why the *mitzvah* that Rabbi Sacks discusses is a good example of a *mitzvah* from that category.

Judaism: a religion of belief or action?

Full class activity: This activity is designed to encourage the students to reflect on the two approaches to Judaism – as a religion of philosophy and doctrine, and as a religion of practice and law. Obviously both these aspects are essential to Judaism, but Jewish thinkers have long debated the primacy of each aspect. Rabbi Sacks argues that Judaism is distinct from other thought systems (such as that of ancient Greece) in that it is a religion of action (*mitzvot*) which led to the centrality of *halacha* as the means to live a Jewish life. Rabbi Sacks calls this “living truth,” rather than thinking about truth.

Divide your class into two teams, the proposition and the opposition. Ask each team to use the sources provided below to formulate an argument. The first two sources provide proof for the proposition, and the final two sources provide proof for the opposition. Give your class enough time to prepare their arguments, and then facilitate a debate.



Your class will hold a debate on the following motion:

“Judaism is a religion of thought and belief rather than practice and action.”

Your teacher will divide the class into two groups, the team supporting the motion (the proposition) and the team against (the opposition). Prepare your arguments using the sources below. Think about your content (what you will say and what examples/proof you will give), and how you will respond to your opponent’s position.

PRINCIPLES OF FAITH



1. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the Creator and Guide of everything that has been created; He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is One, and that there is no unity in any manner like His, and that He alone is our God, who was, and is, and will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, has no body, and that He is free from all the properties of matter, and that there can be no (physical) comparison to Him whatsoever.
4. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, is the first and the last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that to the Creator, Blessed be His Name, and to Him alone, it is right to pray, and that it is not right to pray to any being besides Him.



6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.

7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moshe our teacher, peace be upon him, was true, and that he was the chief of the prophets, both those who preceded him and those who followed him.

8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that is now in our possession is the same that was given to Moshe our teacher, peace be upon him.

9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be exchanged, and that there will never be any other Torah from the Creator, Blessed be His Name.

10. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, knows all the deeds of human beings and all their thoughts, as it is written, "Who fashioned the hearts of them all, Who comprehends all their actions" (Tehillim 33:15).

11. I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, Blessed be His Name, rewards those who keep His commandments and punishes those that transgress them.

12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Mashiach; and even though he may tarry, nonetheless, I wait every day for his coming.

13. I believe with perfect faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, Blessed be His name, and His mention shall be exalted for ever and ever.

Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith

1. What is this a list of?
2. Written in the 12th century this is one of the earliest statements of Jewish dogma. Why do you think it took so long for a set of Jewish beliefs to be formulated?
3. What happens to a Jew who does not believe these things? How do we relate to him?
4. From a Jewish perspective is there a difference between having doubt in these beliefs and denying them outright?
5. Does this source prove that Judaism is primarily a religion of belief or action?

THE FIRST OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS AND RAMBAN'S EXPLANATION

בְּאֵנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים:

"I am Hashem your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage"

Shemot 20:2

"I am Hashem your God:" This statement is a positive commandment, as it says, "I am Hashem, who teaches and commands you that you should know and believe that there is a Hashem, and He is your God," that is to say, He existed before, from Him came everything by means of his desire [i.e., He created the world because He wanted to, not by accident] and capability, and He is your God, so you are required to serve Him.

Ramban on Shemot 20:2

1. What do you think the first verse of the Ten Commandments means?
2. What is the problem the commentaries must deal with in this verse?
3. How does Ramban deal with this problem?
4. Can belief be commanded?
5. Does this source prove that Judaism is primarily a religion of belief or action?

MITOCH SHELO LISHMA, BA LISHMA

Even a *mitzvah* performed with ulterior motives garners reward, as Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: A person should always engage in Torah study and performance of *mitzvot*, even if he does so not for their own sake, as through the performance of *mitzvot* not for their own sake, one gains understanding and comes to perform them for their own sake.

Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 50b

1. Can you give an example of a "*mitzvah* performed with ulterior motives"?
2. What is the value of performing a *mitzvah* if you do not believe in the *mitzvah*?
3. According to this source, do your *mitzvot* have any value if you do not believe in God?
4. What value does this source give to *mitzvot* performed for any motivation other than because it is a *mitzvah*?
5. Does this source prove that Judaism is primarily a religion of belief or action?



DO MITZVOT NEED KAVANA (INTENTION)?


Rava teaches us that the absence of intent (*kavana*) does not invalidate fulfillment of the *mitzvah*, even in the case of *shofar*. The Gemara concludes: Apparently, Rava maintains that the fulfillment of *mitzvot* does not require *kavana*. That is to say, if one performs a *mitzvah*, he fulfills his obligation even if he has no intention of doing so.

Talmud Bavli, Rosh Hashana 28b


1. Why would mitzvot need to have “intention” (*kavana*)?
2. Why do you think Rava says they do not need *kavana*?
3. Why do you think the gemara says “even in the case of *shofar*”? Why would you think *shofar* is different?
4. Do you think there is value in doing *mitzvot* without *kavana*?
5. Does this source prove that Judaism is primarily a religion of belief or action?

Full class activity: At the end of the debate, once both teams have presented their arguments and responded to any questions the other team has for them, ask your students to vote on the motion based on their own opinions (ie as individuals now rather than in their teams). Following the vote ask if any of them had a preconceived idea on this issue and changed their position during the debate.

Now ask for a volunteer to read the following text from Rabbi Sacks, and then discuss the questions below.




The Great Debate: Come together as a class and debate the motion. Did both teams present convincing arguments? Was there a clear winner?



Conclusion: Now that you have considered both sides of the debate, let's look at Rabbi Sacks' view. Read the following text together, and answer the questions below.

THE COMMANDMENTS: NOT TRUTH THOUGHT BUT TRUTH LIVED.



Mitzvot mark a fundamental difference between Judaism, the life of faith, and the civilization of ancient Greece and its supreme expression, philosophy. Philosophy represents truth thought; Judaism represents truth lived. The Greeks sought knowledge of what is. Jews sought knowledge of what ought to be. So, though Judaism is a set of beliefs, it is not a creed. Instead it is a series of truths that only become true in virtue of the fact that we have lived them. By living them we turn the 'ought' into the 'is.' We make a fragment of perfection in an imperfect world and create a living truth, a life of faith. By keeping *mitzvot*, following the commandments, we help transform the world that is into the world that ought to be.

The great principles of Jewish faith are *creation*, *revelation* and *redemption*. But these are not truths we discover; they are truths we make real by living them. On Shabbat we live creation. Learning Torah we live revelation. Performing acts of *chesed* and *tzedakah*, we live redemption. We do not philosophize about these things, we enact them. Judaism is not faith thought but faith lived.

Edited extract from *A Letter in the Scroll*, pp. 163–165

1. What does "truth (or faith) thought" mean as opposed to "truth (or faith) lived"?
2. How does keeping *mitzvot* mean we are living the truth of Judaism?
3. Where did the Greeks seek knowledge of "what is"? Where do Jews find knowledge of "what ought to be"?
4. How do we "turn the 'ought' into the 'is'"?
5. Would Rabbi Sacks be for or against the motion you debated?

The Assignment

Frontal teaching: This section contains a worthwhile analysis of the *mitzvah* of Shabbat as an example of a meta-*mitzvah*. This meta-*mitzvah* transcends our categories by having elements of each of the three categories within it. The text should be used as a summary of the unit, whether or not you include the final assignment.



Final Thoughts: In this unit we have considered the role and importance of *mitzvot* in Judaism, and how they fall into three categories: *Mishpatim*, *Chukim* and *Edot*.

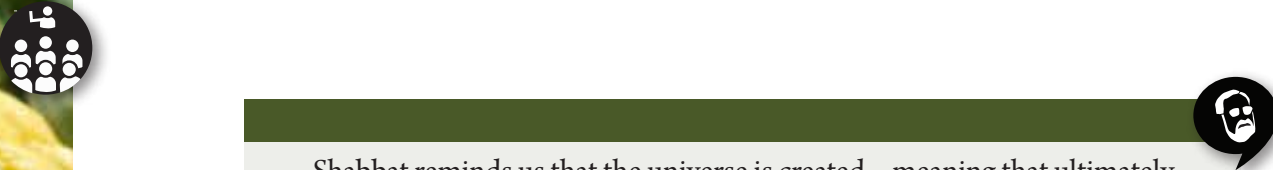
However, there is one *mitzvah* that doesn't seem to fit into any category, and according to *chazal* it is equal to all the other *mitzvot*:



We find in the Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim that Shabbat is the equivalent of all the *mitzvot*.

Talmud Yerushalmi, Nedarim 3:9

Why is that? Many answers can be given, but Rabbi Sacks explains here that Shabbat falls into **all three** categories of *mitzvot*. (You may find it helpful to refer back to the quote from *A Letter in the Scroll*, where Rabbi Sacks defines the three categories of *mitzvot*.)




Shabbat reminds us that the universe is created – meaning that ultimately it belongs to God and we are merely its guardians. Adam was placed in the Garden to “serve and protect it,” and so are we. One day in seven we must renounce our mastery over nature and the animals, and see the earth not as something to be manipulated and exploited, but as a thing of independent dignity and beauty. It too is entitled to its rest and protection. More powerfully than any tutorial or documentary, Shabbat makes us aware of the limits of human striving. It is a day, if you like, of ecological consciousness.

But it is also a day of history and politics. The Bible tells us to rest because of the exodus from Egypt and liberation from slavery. It is a time of freedom, and the greatest freedom is the freedom to be masters of our own time. On Shabbat we may not work, meaning that one day in seven we are no one’s servant except God’s. Nor may we force anyone to work for us. Even our servants should be able to rest the way we do.

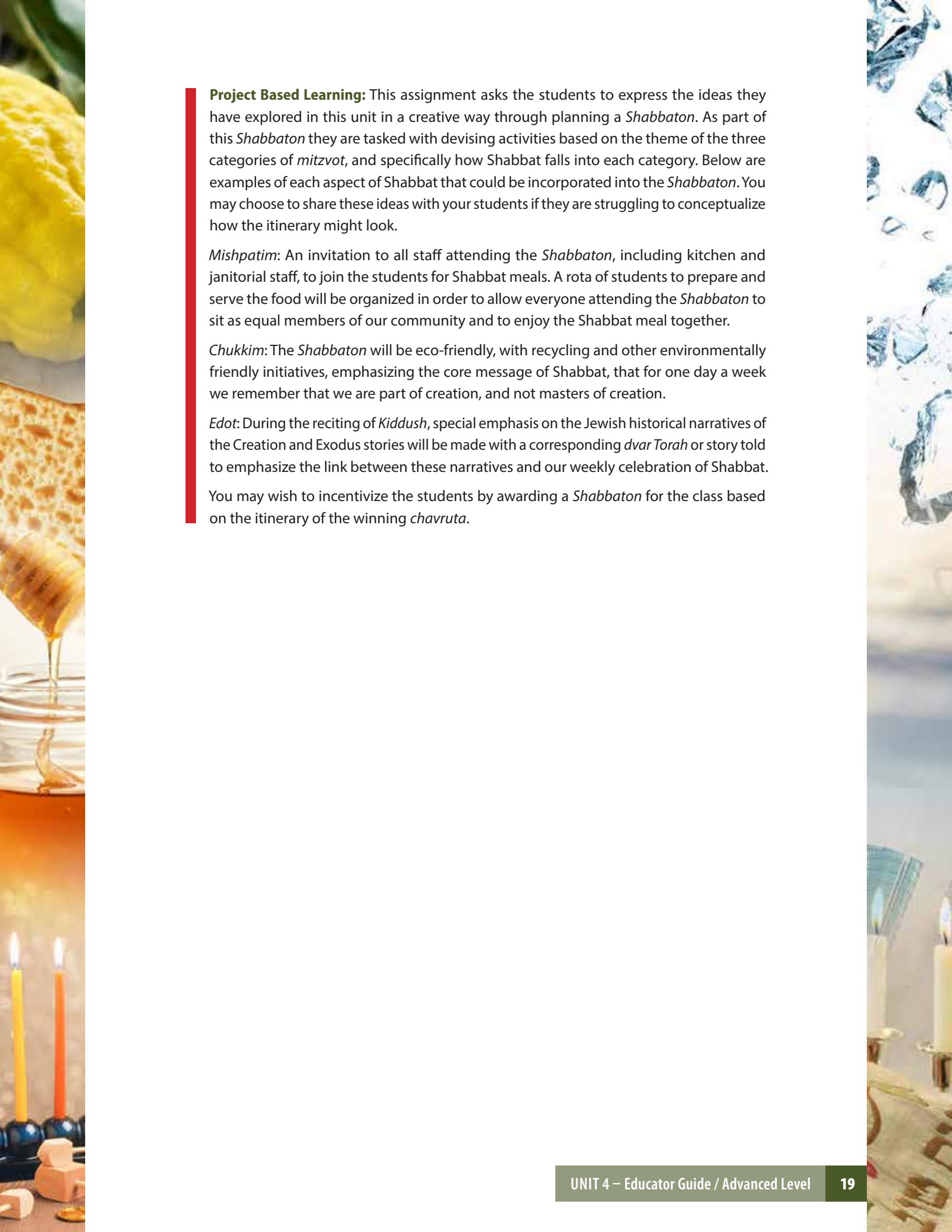
Tyrannies make people slaves by making them forget the taste of freedom. But no one who observes Shabbat can ever forget what it is to be free. Jews know more than most what it is to have spent long centuries in homelessness and persecution. Yet every week, for a day, however poor they were, they gathered their possessions and celebrated like royalty. Shabbat was their political education, a regular reminder of liberty.

Faith in the Future, p. 136



Part 1: Together with your *chavruta*, plan a *Shabbaton* for your class and write a detailed itinerary for the day. Include short descriptions of the activities that will take place that demonstrate how Shabbat falls into each of the three categories of *mitzvot*: *Mishpatim*, *Chukim*, and *Edot*. Support your explanation with quotes from Rabbi Sacks’ texts that we have studied.

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.



Project Based Learning: This assignment asks the students to express the ideas they have explored in this unit in a creative way through planning a *Shabbaton*. As part of this *Shabbaton* they are tasked with devising activities based on the theme of the three categories of *mitzvot*, and specifically how Shabbat falls into each category. Below are examples of each aspect of Shabbat that could be incorporated into the *Shabbaton*. You may choose to share these ideas with your students if they are struggling to conceptualize how the itinerary might look.

Mishpatim: An invitation to all staff attending the *Shabbaton*, including kitchen and janitorial staff, to join the students for Shabbat meals. A rota of students to prepare and serve the food will be organized in order to allow everyone attending the *Shabbaton* to sit as equal members of our community and to enjoy the Shabbat meal together.

Chukkim: The *Shabbaton* will be eco-friendly, with recycling and other environmentally friendly initiatives, emphasizing the core message of Shabbat, that for one day a week we remember that we are part of creation, and not masters of creation.

Edot: During the reciting of *Kiddush*, special emphasis on the Jewish historical narratives of the Creation and Exodus stories will be made with a corresponding *dvar Torah* or story told to emphasize the link between these narratives and our weekly celebration of Shabbat.

You may wish to incentivize the students by awarding a *Shabbaton* for the class based on the itinerary of the winning *chavruta*.

TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 5 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

צדקה TZEDAKAH

Love as Justice

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Overview: In this unit we will explore the path to God through *Tzedakah*, using texts that Rabbi Sacks has selected. For Rabbi Sacks, *tzedakah* is based on four core concepts:

- Judaism's approach to the ethics of material wealth
- Responsibility as a value and calling for every Jew
- *Tzedakah* as a vehicle for spiritual and moral growth
- The value that is at the very core of the concept of *tzedakah* in Jewish thought and practice – the dignity of the human being.

Rabbi Sacks struggles to find an appropriate English translation for the Hebrew word *tzedakah*. Some translate it as charity, yet the root of the Hebrew word, *tz-d-k*, means justice. For Rabbi Sacks, neither is sufficient because conceptually *tzedakah* encompasses both of these ideas, despite their seemingly contradictory nature. Justice is dispensed by a judge or a king, and charity is a gift of love given by a parent. But God plays both roles in our life as *Avinu Malkeinu*, and *tzedakah* asks us to relate to our fellow human as both as well. Hence the title of this unit; *Tzedakah* is love as justice.

Educational aims for this unit:

- For students to understand Judaism's approach to material wealth, including the difference between ownership and possession, and the responsibilities that come with being guardians of God's gifts.
- For students to consider in both a theoretical and practical way the value of responsibility and how *tzedakah* is an expression of that.
- For students to comprehend the value of dignity for all humans, its relationship to all humans being created in the image of God, and why this value is central to Judaism's approach to *tzedakah*.
- For students to consider how the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, as well as being concerned with human relationships, can also be a vehicle for spiritual growth connecting us to God.

Trigger Activity: Role Play – Love as Justice

Option A: Ask your class for four volunteers. Give each a slip of paper with one of the following roles on it and ask them to keep it to themselves: judge, parent, police officer, friend, Rabbi, teacher. Ask for a further volunteer (who may be switched with another student after they have had a turn or two) to play the role of a victim of a mugging. Tell each of the other volunteers, one by one, to interact with the student playing the role of victim to find out what happened and how best to help the victim. Ask the rest of the class to guess the role of each of the volunteers. At the end discuss with your class what the main values being expressed by each role were (for example the judge and police officer were most interested in justice, while the friend and parent were probably more interested in showing love and concern).

Option B: Ask for pairs of volunteers to act out Rambam's Eight Levels of *Tzedakah* (see below). Each pair should act out a few of the levels. Ask the rest of your students to guess what each level is. Discuss at the end which values they think Rambam based each of the levels on.



Watch: The opening video for Unit 5



■ **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.



There are two kinds of *mitzvot*. There are the commands of self-restraint that hold us back from damaging the human or natural environment. And there are the positive commands of love, for the world as God's work, and for human beings as God's image. Of the second, the greatest is *tzedakah*: love as justice or sometimes translated as "charity".

The world is not always just, or equitable, or fair. Our task is to make it more so, by helping those in need, sharing some of what we have with others. This act of sharing is more than just charity. It is a recognition of the fact that what we have, we have from God, and one of the conditions of God's gifts is that we ourselves give. That way we too become like God, "walking in His ways".

The market creates wealth: that is its virtue. But it does not necessarily distribute it in such a way as to alleviate poverty, granting everyone the means of a dignified life. That is its weakness. So there are two possibilities: either abandon the market, or mitigate its negative effects. The first has been tried, and failed. The second can be done in two ways: through the government by taxation or welfare, or through individuals. Governments can do much, but not everything. *Tzedakah* is Judaism's way of saying that each of us has a part to play. Every one of us must give.

Tzedakah means both justice and charity, because we believe that they go hand in hand. Justice is impersonal, charity is personal. We call God *Avinu Malkenu*, "Our Father, our King". A king dispenses justice, a parent gives a child a gift out of love. That is the meaning of *tzedakah*, an act that combines both justice and love. Giving to others is one of the most beautiful things we can do, and one of the most creative. We create possibilities for other people. We soften some of the rough edges of the world. We help alleviate poverty and pain. We give God the sacrifice He most desires of us: that we honor His image in other people.

Nothing more marks Judaism as a religion of love than its emphasis on *tzedakah*. We do not accept poverty, hunger, homelessness or disease as God's will. To the contrary, God's will is that we heal these fractures in His world. As God feeds the hungry, so must we. As God heals the sick,



so must we. We become good by doing good. We walk in God's ways by acting out of love.

Jonathan Sachs



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.

There are two kinds of *mitzvot*. There are the commands of self-restraint that hold us back from damaging the human or natural environment. And there are the positive commands of love, for the world as God's work, and for **human beings as God's image**. Of the second, the greatest is **tzedakah: love as justice** or sometimes translated as "charity".

The world is not always just, or equitable, or fair. Our task is to make it more so, by helping those in need, sharing some of what we have with others. This act of sharing is more than just charity. It is a recognition of the fact that what we have, we have from God, and one of the conditions of God's gifts is that we ourselves give. **That way we too become like God, "walking in His ways".**

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human beings as God's image

1. If God has no physical presence, how can humans be "God's image"? What does it mean to be created in God's image?
2. What are the ethical ramifications of the belief that all humans are created in God's image?
3. What is the connection between human dignity and human rights, and the belief that all humans are created in God's image?

tzedakah: love as justice

1. Why do you think Rabbi Sacks equates *tzedakah* with love? Can love be commanded? Why then is *tzedakah* commanded?
2. How can love lead to justice?
3. What is the connection between *tzedakah*, the dignity of the human being, and justice?

That way we too become like God, "walking in His ways".

1. "Walking in His ways" is a philosophical concept called *Imitatio Dei* (imitating God). Why should we "walk in God's ways" and imitate God?
2. How is *tzedakah* imitating God?
3. What else do we do to imitate God?

The market creates wealth: that is its virtue.

1. The "market" means a free economy (as in most western countries) where government interferes as little as possible, allowing market forces to play out. How does that generate wealth?
2. Is this a good thing? What do you think the Torah view would be of a market economy?
3. What are the drawbacks of a free (market) economy?



through the government by taxation or welfare, or through individuals

1. How can the government address the downside of a free economy such as poverty and other injustices?
2. Is taxation the same as *tzedakah*? If you pay your taxes, do you still need to give *tzedakah*?
3. Which do you think is more effective at addressing injustice from unequal wealth distribution, governments or individuals and NGOs?

an act that combines both justice and love

1. How is *tzedakah* the act of both a father and a king?
2. Is the welfare state (government taxation and spending on services for its citizens) more like a king dispensing justice, or a father giving a present?
3. Is an individual giving *tzedakah* more like a king dispensing justice or a father giving a present?

God's will is that we heal these fractures in His world.

1. What are the "fractures in God's world"?
2. How can we heal them?
3. Why do we have to heal them? Why can't God? Can we partner God in this? How?

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

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

The Core Concepts

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



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 text helps you understand the core concept it is connected to. Use the questions to guide your discussion and analysis.

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The Ethics of Materialism

what we have, we have from God

TREASURES OF SOULS



Our masters taught: it is related of King Monabaz [king of Adiabene in the first century CE who converted to Judaism] that during years of scarcity he spent all his own treasures and the treasures of his fathers on charity. His brothers and other members of his family reproached him: “Your fathers stored away treasures, adding to the treasures of their fathers, and you squander them!” He replied: “My fathers stored away for the world below, while I am storing away for the world above. My fathers stored away in a place where the hand of others can prevail, while I have stored away in a place where the hand of others cannot prevail. My fathers stored away something that produces no fruit, while I have stored away something that does produce fruit. My fathers stored away treasures of money, while I have stored away treasures of souls.”

Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 11a

ABRAVANEL: WE OWN WHAT WE ARE WILLING TO SHARE



The fifteenth century Jewish diplomat and scholar Don Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508), chancellor to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Castile, was once asked by the king how much he owned. He named a certain sum. “But surely,” the king said, “you own much more than that.” “You asked me,” Abravanel replied, “how much I owned. The property I have, I do not own. Your majesty may seize it from me tomorrow. At best I am its temporary guardian. The sum I mentioned is what I have given away in charity. That merit alone, neither you nor any earthly power can take away from me.” We own what we are willing to share.

Adapted from Abraham J. Twerski, *Do Unto Others*, pp. 26–27

1. These two sources are about leaving a lasting legacy. King Monabaz and the Abravanel believe that material wealth is not a lasting legacy. Why not? Do you agree with them?
2. According to these texts, what can be a lasting legacy?
3. What will your legacy be?



The Dignity of Human Beings

a dignified life

RAMBAM'S EIGHT LEVELS OF TZEDAKAH



There are eight degrees of charity, one higher than the other.

The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of one who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment – in a word by putting him in a situation where he can dispense with other people's aid...

A step below this is one who gives alms to the needy in such a way that the giver does not know to whom he gives and the recipient does not know from whom he takes. This exemplifies doing a good deed for its own sake. One example was the Hall of Secrecy in the Temple, where the righteous would place their gift clandestinely and where poor people from noble families could come and secretly help themselves to aid. Close to this is putting money in a charity box...

One step lower is where the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor person does not know from whom he receives. Thus the great sages would go and secretly put money into poor people's doorways...

A step lower is when the poor person knows from whom he is taking, but the giver does not know to whom he is giving. Thus the great sages would tie coins in their scarves, which they would fling over their shoulders, so that the poor could help themselves without suffering shame.

Lower than this, is where someone gives the poor person a gift before he asks.

Lower still is one who gives only after the poor person asks.

Lower than this is one who gives less than is fitting, but does so with a friendly countenance.

The lowest level is one who gives ungraciously.

Rambam, *Mishneh Torah, Mattenot Ani'im* 10:7–14

1. Which important values at the heart of this *mitzvah* may have influenced Rambam when he compiled these eight levels of *tzedakah*?
2. According to these values, how is entering a business relationship with a poor person the highest level of *tzedakah*?
3. Why is anonymity important for the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*?



Responsibility

Tzedakah is Judaism's way of saying that each of us has a part to play.

DO NOT BE HARD-HEARTED

ז כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְּךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחַד אֶחָיֶךָ בְּאַרְצְךָ אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ לֹא תִאֲמַץ
ח אֶת־לִבְּךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ מֵאֶחָיֶךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן: כִּי־פָתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לוֹ וְהֶעֱבַט תִּעֲבִיטֵנוּ
ט דֵּי מַחֲסוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִחַסֵּר לוֹ: הִשְׁמַר לְךָ פִּן־יִהְיֶה דְבַר עַם־לִבְּךָ בְּלִיעַל לֵאמֹר קִרְבָּה שְׁנַת־הַשְּׁבַע
י שְׁנַת הַשְּׁמִטָּה וְרָעָה עֵינֶיךָ בְּאֶחָיֶךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן וְלֹא תִתֵּן לוֹ וְקָרָא עָלֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵי וְהָיָה בְּךָ חָטָא: נָתַן
תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא־יִרַע לִבְּךָ בְּתִתֵּן לוֹ כִּי בְּגִלְלֵי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יִבְרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבְכָל
יא מִשְׁלַח יָדְךָ: כִּי לֹא־יִחַדֵּל אֶבְיוֹן מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ עַל־פִּן אֲנֹכִי מִצֹּדֶךָ לֵאמֹר פָּתַח תִּפְתָּח אֶת־יָדְךָ
לְאֶחָיֶךָ לְעֵנֶיךָ וְלֹא־בִינֶךָ בְּאַרְצְךָ:

If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted towards your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and freely lend him whatever he needs... Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed towards your brothers and towards the poor and needy in the land.

Devarim 15:7–11

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לְגִמּוֹר

He used to say: It is not your responsibility to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.

Mishna Avot 2:16

1. Is being open-hearted and open-handed the same thing? Can you be one without the other?
2. What if you are also poor? Do poor people also have to give *tzedakah*?
3. Can our small contributions through *tzedakah* really make a difference?



Tzedakah as a vehicle for our spiritual and moral growth

We become good by doing good. We walk in God's ways by acting out of love.

ADMITTED TO THE DIVINE PRESENCE



R. Dostai son of R. Yannai taught: Consider the difference between the Holy One and a king of flesh and blood. If a man brings a present to the king, it may or may not be accepted. Even if it is accepted, it remains doubtful whether the man will be admitted into the king's presence. Not so with the Holy One. A person who gives even one small coin to a beggar is deemed worthy of being admitted to behold the Divine presence, as it is written, "I, through charity, shall behold your face" (Tehillim 17:15). R. Eleazar used to give a coin to a poor man and only then say his prayers, because, he said, it is written, "I, through charity, shall behold your face."

Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 10a

THE STRONGEST THING



There are ten strong things in the world:

Rock is strong, but iron breaks it.

Iron is strong, but fire melts it.

Fire is strong, but water extinguishes it.

Water is strong, but the clouds carry it.

The clouds are strong, but the wind drives them.

The wind is strong, but man withstands it.

Man is strong, but fear weakens him.

Fear is strong, but wine removes it.

Wine is strong, but sleep overcomes it.

Sleep is strong, but death stands over it.

What is stronger than death?

Acts of charity (*tzedakah*), for it is written,

"Tzedakah delivers from death" (Mishlei 10:2).

Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 10a



ISRAEL'S TWO SEAS



There is a fascinating feature of the geography of the land of Israel. It contains two seas: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of life: fish, birds, vegetation. The Dead Sea, as its name implies, is not. Yet they are fed by the same river, the Jordan. The difference is that the Sea of Galilee receives water at one end and gives out water at the other. The Dead Sea receives but does not give. The Jordan ends there. To receive but not to give is, in Jewish geography as well as Jewish psychology, simply not life. To live is to give.

Covenant & Conversation, Pekudei (5771)

1. What message about the importance of *tzedakah* do these sources present?
2. Why do you think Rabbi Eleazar would always give *tzedakah* before praying?
3. How can a *mitzvah* that asks us to look after our fellow man also bring us closer to God?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class and present your approach to the core concept allocated to you, making reference to the supplementary sources, and the answers you came up with to the questions accompanying them. As a class, consider what you have learned about the four core concepts.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion based on the students' answers to the questions for each text. Make sure your students fully understand each of the four core concepts that form the foundation for the Jewish approach to *tzedakah* according to Rabbi Sacks.

The Core Concepts in the Writings of Rabbi Sacks

Chavruta text analysis: In the previous *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up) ask your students to study each of the core concepts from the original text by Rabbi Sacks, as well as new texts from his book *To Heal a Fractured World* where he further explores the concept. Ask them to answer the questions that follow each text, considering the quote itself as well as the core concept in general, and to use the questions to guide their discussion. You may wish to ask them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.



Analysis in Chavruta: Now you have explored each of the four core concepts through supplementary sources, in your original *chavruta* explore the same core concept as it appears in the writings of Rabbi Sacks. Rabbi Sacks discusses these concepts more fully in his book *To Heal a Fractured World*, and you will find relevant quotes for each of the core concepts below. Read through each quote and use the questions to guide your discussion. Make sure you understand each concept fully, and write down any questions you have.

The Ethics of Materialism

what we have, we have from God



The word *tzedakah* is untranslatable because it joins together two concepts that in other languages are opposites, namely charity and justice. Suppose, for example, that I give someone \$100. Either he is entitled to it, or he is not. If he is, then my act is a form of justice. If he is not, it is an act of charity. In English (as with the Latin terms *caritas* and *iustitia*) a gesture of charity cannot be an act of justice, nor can an act of justice be described as charity. *Tzedakah* means both.

It arises from Judaism's theological insistence on the difference between possession and ownership. Ultimately, all things are owned by God, creator of the world. What we possess, we do not own – we merely hold it in trust for God. The clearest statement of this is the provision in Vayikra: "The land must not be sold permanently because the land is Mine; you are merely strangers and temporary residents in relation to Me." If there were absolute ownership, there would be a difference between justice (what we are bound to give others) and charity (what we give others out



of generosity). The former would be a legally enforceable duty, the latter, at best, the prompting of benevolence or sympathy. In Judaism, because we are not owners of our property but guardians on God's behalf, we are bound by the conditions of trusteeship, one of which is that we share part of what we have with others in need. What would be regarded as charity in other legal systems is, in Judaism, a strict requirement of the law and can, if necessary, be enforced by the courts

To Heal a Fractured World, p. 32

1. Does everything we have come from God? What about the things we have worked hard for?
2. How does this recognition, that all our material wealth is from God, change the way we live our lives?
3. How does *halacha* remind us of this?
4. What is the most accurate translation of the Hebrew word *tzedakah*?
5. If we truly owned our possessions and wealth then could *tzedakah* be enforceable by law? If not, why not?



The Dignity of Human Beings

a dignified life

The nearest English equivalent to *tzedakah* is the phrase that came into existence alongside the idea of a welfare state, namely social justice... behind both is the idea that no one should be without the basic requirements of existence, and that those who have more than they need must share some of that surplus with those who have less. This is fundamental to the kind of society the Israelites charged with creating, namely one in which everyone has a basic right to a dignified life and equal worth as citizens in the covenantal community under the sovereignty of God...

Ibid pp. 32–33

There is nothing inevitable or divinely willed about social and economic inequality. Judaism rejects the almost universal belief in antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages that hierarchy and divisions of class are written into the structure of society. What human beings have created, human beings can rectify.

It followed that everyone should be provided with the basic requirements of a dignified life. The sages inferred this from the biblical phrase, “be open-handed and freely lend him whatever he needs”. Needs included food, housing, basic furniture, and if necessary funds to pay for a wedding. To this end, each community organized *tzedakah* funds, contributions to which could be coerced by communal sanction.

Ibid, p. 36

Judaism represents a highly distinctive approach to the idea of equality, namely that it is best served not by equality of income or wealth, nor even of opportunity. Nor is it sufficient that we each have equal standing before God at times of prayer, and before the law in cases of dispute. A society must ensure equal dignity – the Hebrew phrase is *kavod habriyot*, “human honor” – to each of its members.

Ibid, p. 39



1. What is a “dignified life”? What is not a “dignified life”?
2. Do you need to be wealthy to have a dignified life?
3. Do you need justice to lead a dignified life?
4. The dignity of the recipient is a core value of giving *tzedakah*. How does this affect the way we perform the *mitzvah*?
5. Equality for a socialist means everyone has equal wealth. Equality for a democrat means everyone is equal under the law as citizens of a state. Equality for a feminist means equal opportunities for women and men. What does equality mean for a Jew?



Responsibility

Tzedakah is Judaism's way of saying that each of us has a part to play.



The ethic of responsibility structures Judaism's entire approach to the world. An obvious example is that biblical ethics is constructed in terms of responsibilities, not rights. Does this make a difference? Are rights not simply responsibilities seen from another point of view? "Thou shalt not murder" creates a right to life. "Thou shalt not steal" creates a right to property. The obligation to administer justice creates the right to a fair trial, and so on. That is true, but it omits one feature insufficiently alluded to in discussions of law.

Rights are passive, responsibilities active. Rights are demands we make on others, responsibilities are demands others make on us. A responsibility-based culture exists in the active mode. It emphasizes giving over receiving, doing not complaining. What is wrong with what Mary Ann Glendon calls "rights-talk" is that it draws on resources that only exist if we recognize responsibilities. It puts the cart before the horse. It neglects the moral commitments we need to create if rights are to be honored at all. Rights are the result of responsibilities; they are secondary, not primary. A society that does not train its citizens to be responsible will be one in which, too often, rights-talk will be mere rhetoric, honored in the breach not the observance...

To give and not receive, to act rather than be acted on, to be free and not dependent on other human beings, to be dependent on God alone: these are what give Judaism its distinctive tone of voice. That is what makes *tzedakah* something other than charity. It is not merely helping those in need. It is enabling the afflicted, where possible, to recover their capacity for independent action. Responsibility lies at the heart of human dignity.

Ibid, pp. 183–184

1. Why is it our responsibility to address injustice in our community and in society as a whole?
2. In the original text for this unit Rabbi Sacks writes that we can play a role that even governments cannot. How so?
3. What about God? Why isn't it His responsibility? Why can't we just pray for God to help instead?



4. What is the difference between a responsibility and a right?
5. Why is a society focused solely on human rights not enough? Why must society be focused on responsibility as well?

Tzedakah as a vehicle for our spiritual and moral growth

We become good by doing good. We walk in God's ways by acting out of love.



Justice-as-charity is a religious act, not merely a social one. We worship God not only in prayer, but also by how we act in the world. The nineteenth-century biblical commentator R. Zvi Hirsch Mecklenburg gave a striking interpretation of Bereishit 1. That chapter sets out creation as a series of stages in which God says, "Let there be..." and there is, and "God saw that it was good." Mecklenburg notes that the word "that" in biblical Hebrew more often means "because". God saw, not "that it was good" but "because He is good". To be good is to do good. God created the world so that others could enjoy it. Goodness is not an attribute of the soul but a way of acting and creating: creating happiness for other people, mitigating their distress, removing even a fraction of the world's pain. We worship God spiritually by helping his creations physically. That is why, when the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed and the sacrifices came to an end, *tzedakah* became a substitute.

Ibid, p. 40

1. Why doesn't the Torah leave it to us to decide how to be a good person? Why does it need to tell us how?
2. Is love an emotion that can be commanded? Why does the Torah tell us how to show love?
3. Does acting like God bring us closer to God? How?
4. How is giving *tzedakah* a way of worshipping God?
5. How can helping our fellow man bring us closer to God?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your answers to the questions. 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 based on the questions. Make sure your students fully understand each of the four core concepts that they have studied.

The Assignment

Frontal teaching: Read through the following summaries of the four core concepts that form the foundation for the Jewish approach to *tzedakah* according to Rabbi Sacks. Alternatively you could ask your students to write their own summaries for each on the board. Then introduce the final assignment (see below).

Final Thoughts: In this unit we have explored the core values behind the *mitzvah* of *Tzedakah*.

1. **The ethics of materialism** – that our material wealth comes from God and does not really belong to us.
2. **Responsibility** – that every one of us has the responsibility to be a social activist and “heal our fractured world” by addressing injustice in society, including poverty.
3. **The dignity of human beings** – injustice, and poverty as an example of injustice, is a compromise on the dignity of the human being, and *tzedakah* should address that by protecting the dignity of every member of society.
4. ***Tzedakah* is a vehicle for our spiritual and moral growth** – we become good people, and can connect to God, through doing acts of kindness, and that is why the Torah requires us to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*.

Part 1: Design a *tzedakah* campaign for your school community. Working in small groups allocated by your teacher, create a proposal for a *tzedakah* campaign to help those in need in your community. Your design should reflect the four core values of *tzedakah* identified in this chapter.

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.

Project Based Learning: This assignment asks the students to express the ideas they have explored in this unit in a creative and practical way through planning a *tzedakah* campaign. Their proposal must clearly specify which practical aspects of their campaign fulfill each of the four core concepts they have studied.

If appropriate, you may wish to incentivize their work by arranging for the students to present their ideas to the head of your school with a view to implementing them as a class project for your school’s community. This could take the form of each group presenting their own ideas, or you may choose to create a hybrid of the best ideas to represent the class as a whole.

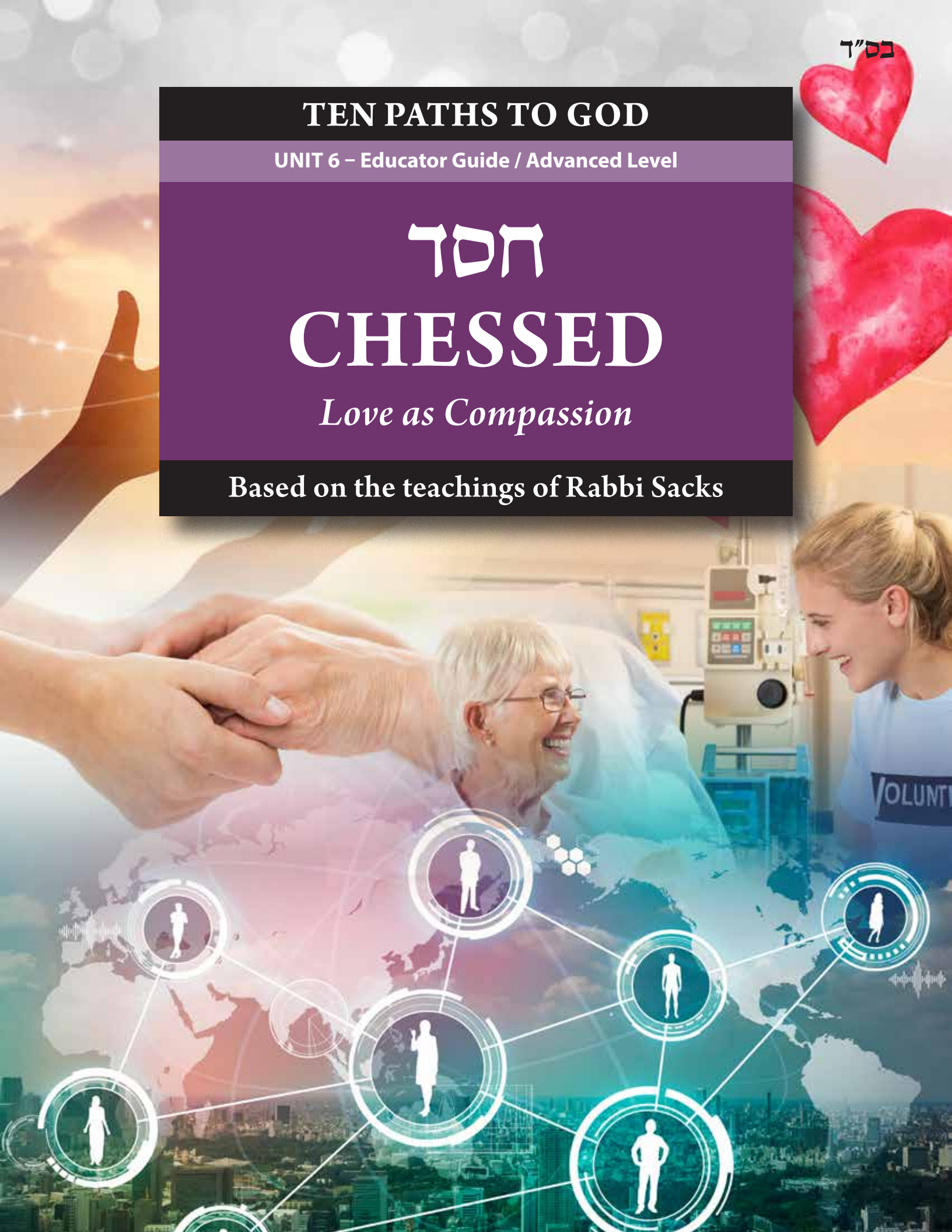
TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 6 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

חסד CHESSED

Love as Compassion

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Overview: In this unit we will explore the path to God through *Chessed*, using texts that Rabbi Sacks has selected.

While *tzedakah* is giving with our material resources, *chessed* is giving of ourselves, with our time and with our hearts. For Rabbi Sacks, *chessed* is a critical element of the covenantal bond that he believes is at the very core of Judaism's vision for society. A society that is founded on a social contract, concerned primarily with regulating power and justice, will have *mishpat* and *tzedek/tzedakah* as its core values, whereas a 'society as extended family' that is founded on a social covenant, built on the values of loyalty, fidelity and faithfulness, will have *chessed* at its core.

To truly understand the values of *chessed* and the impact of *chessed* on society, one has to experience it. Thus, in this unit we have chosen to use storytelling as the primary vehicle for educating about *chessed*, allowing the student to experience *chessed* in an emotional as well as intellectual way.

Educational aims for this unit:

- For students to understand that all human beings have both physical needs and emotional needs, and while *tzedakah* can address physical poverty, it is *chessed* that addresses emotional poverty.
- For students to understand that while political and economic institutions are interested in the regulation of wealth and power, it is often left to communities and individuals to address emotional needs in society.
- For students to understand that Judaism's vision for society is one of social covenant, where strangers are seen as family, and *chessed* is the vehicle for human interaction.
- To provide an opportunity for students to understand the real value and impact of *chessed* in society, through studying several stories of *chessed*.
- To give students a practical opportunity to fulfill this vision for society within their community in creating their own authentic *chessed* story.

Trigger Activity: The Last Act of Chessed

Ask for volunteers to share the most recent act of *chessed* that they either witnessed or performed themselves. Write each act on the board. Then ask for volunteers to analyze what all of these acts of *chessed* have in common, and suggest a definition of *chessed* based on these examples. They may define *chessed* as a voluntary act of kindness, an act with no expectation of reward or compensation, giving help to strangers, an act with no ulterior motive, and so on.

Watch: The opening video for Unit 6



- **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.



Tzedakah is the gift of money or its equivalent. But sometimes that is not what we most need. We can suffer emotional as well as physical poverty. We can be depressed, lonely, close to despair. We may need company or comfort, encouragement or support. These too are human needs, no less real for being untranslatable into the language of politics or economics.

That is what *chessed* is about: emotional support, loving-kindness, love as compassion. It is what we mean when we speak of God in Psalm 147 as one who 'heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds'. It includes hospitality to the lonely, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, raising the spirits of the depressed, helping people through crises in their lives, and making those at the margins feel part of the community.

It is *tzedakah's* other side. *Tzedakah* is done with material goods, *chessed* with psychological ones: time and care. *Tzedakah* is practical support, *chessed* is emotional support. *Tzedakah* is a gift of resources, *chessed* a gift of the person. Even those who lack the means to give *tzedakah* can still give *chessed*. *Tzedakah* rights wrongs; *chessed* humanizes fate.

Avraham and Sarah were chosen because of their *chessed* to others. Rut became the ancestress of Israel's kings because of her *chessed* to Naomi. At the heart of the Judaic vision is the dream of a society based on *chessed*: society with a human face, not one dominated by the competition for wealth or power. *Chessed* is the mark of a people joined by covenant. Covenant creates society as extended family; it means seeing strangers as if they were our long-lost brothers or sisters. A community based on *chessed* is a place of grace, where everyone feels honored and everyone is at home.

Jonathan Sachs

■ **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.

Tzedakah is the gift of money or its equivalent. But sometimes that is not what we most need. **We can suffer emotional as well as physical poverty.** We can be depressed, lonely, close to despair. We may need company or comfort, encouragement or support. These too are human needs, no less real for being untranslatable into **the language of politics or economics**.

That is what *chessed* is about: **emotional support, loving-kindness, love as compassion**. It is what we mean when we speak of God in Psalm 147 as one who 'heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds'. It includes hospitality to the lonely, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, raising the spirits of the depressed, helping people through crises in their lives, and making **those at the margins** feel part of the community.

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We can suffer emotional as well as physical poverty.

1. What do you think "emotional poverty" means? What can cause emotional poverty?
2. Do you think emotional poverty is worse in this generation than previous times? Why do you think that might be?
3. How can we treat emotional poverty?



the language of politics or economics

1. What is “the language of politics or economics”? What is the government and the economy generally concerned with?
2. Why do you think emotional needs are not the concern of government or economics?
3. Do you think the political system or the economy should be more concerned with the emotional wellbeing of those in society?

emotional support, loving-kindness, love as compassion

1. What do these three terms mean?
2. How do they differ from each other?
3. Who can and should be the recipients of these?

those at the margins

1. What does it mean to be at the margins of society?
2. What kind of people might be at the margins of society?
3. What do they all have in common?

Tzedakah is done with material goods, *chessed* with psychological ones

1. What are material goods? Give examples.
2. What are psychological goods? Give examples.
3. Which can make the most impact for those in need?

chessed humanizes fate

1. What does fate mean?
2. To humanize something is to make it feel human, so that it becomes something that we can all relate to. What do you think Rabbi Sacks means when he says “*chessed* humanizes fate”?
3. What message are you giving someone else when you show them *chessed*? How can this help them deal with their fate?

a society based on *chessed*

1. What values are at the center of *chessed*?
2. What would a society based on these values look like?
3. Is our society based on these values today? Can you think of some examples?



Covenant creates society as extended family

1. What is a covenant? What is a society based on a covenant?
2. When you see strangers in the street do you consider them part of your extended family? Should you?
3. What do you think needs to change so that members of society feel more like an extended family?

where everyone feels honored

1. What does it mean to “feel honored”?
2. What does it take to make someone feel that way?
3. How can a community ensure that this happens?

everyone is at home

1. What does it mean to feel at home?
2. What does it take to make someone feel that way?
3. What is the difference between feeling at home and feeling honored? Is there a connection?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your answers to the questions. 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.

Chessed: Covenantal Love

Chessed is the mark of a people joined by covenant. Covenant creates society as extended family; it means seeing strangers as if they were our long-lost brothers or sisters.



Analysis in Chavruta: In our opening text Rabbi Sacks describes *chessed* as “the mark of a people joined by covenant”. In this section we are going to explore what he means by covenant, and the role *chessed* can play in a society based on covenantal relationships.

In your *chavruta* read through the following text by Rabbi Sacks, in which he defines a **social covenant** and distinguishes it from a **social contract**. Write two headings on a piece of paper, ‘Social Covenant’ and ‘Social Contract’, and make a list of defining characteristics for each. If you can, try to include some examples of contracts and covenants, and institutions that uphold them. Use these lists to help you compare and contrast the meaning of contract and covenant.

Chavruta text analysis: In *chavrutot*, ask the students to use the following source to generate a definition of a society based on social contract and another based on social covenant.



Covenants and contracts are different things and address different aspects of our humanity. In a contract, what matters is that both gain. In a covenant, what matters is that both give. Contracts are agreements entered into for mutual advantage. They are undertaken by individuals or groups on the basis of self-interest. They have specific purposes. They can be terminated by mutual consent. They end once both parties have fulfilled their obligations. By contrast, covenants are moral commitments, and they are open-ended. They are sustained not by letter of law or by self-interest but by loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness. In fact the key word of Judaism, *emunah*, usually translated as ‘faith’, is better translated as faithfulness.

Social contract creates a state; social covenant creates a society. Social contract is about power and how it is to be handled within a political framework. Social covenant is about how people live together despite their differences. Social contract is about government. Social covenant is about coexistence. Social contract is about laws and their enforcement. Social covenant is about the values we share. Social contract is about the use of potentially coercive force. Social covenant is about moral commitments, the values we share and the ideals that inspire us to work together for the sake of the common good.

The Home We Build Together, pp. 109–110



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share the lists you made of characteristics that define contracts and covenants.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the text based on the students' definitions.

Characteristics of the two societies may include:

Social Contract:

- Sustained by self-interest and mutual advantage
- Terminated by mutual consent
- Finite term – ends when obligations have been fulfilled
- Social contract creates the state
- Political institutions regulate power

Examples of contracts include commercial agreements, resident association contracts, and legal agreements.

Social Covenant:

- Sustained by loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness
- Based on moral commitments
- Open-ended
- Social covenant creates society
- Institutions that promote coexistence

Examples of covenants include marriage, membership of a society or club, and the Torah.



Chessed in a Covenantal Society. Your teacher will ask for a volunteer to read out this next quote, and then as a class discuss the role of *chessed* in a covenantal society.

Frontal teaching: Ask for a volunteer to read out the next quote, and then facilitate a discussion on the role of *chessed* in a covenantal society. A society that sees the stranger as a brother must have *chessed* at its core to ensure that the values of morality, loyalty, coexistence, mutual responsibility and dignity of all people, are the foundations of society.



What is *chessed*? It is usually translated as 'kindness' but it also means 'love' – not love as emotion or passion, but love expressed as deed. Theologians define *chessed* as covenant love. Covenant is the bond by which two parties pledge themselves to one another, each respecting the freedom and integrity of the other, agreeing to join their separate destinies into a single journey that they will travel together, 'fearing no evil, for You are with me' (Tehillim 23:4). Unlike a contract, it is an open-ended relationship lived toward an unknown future.

To Heal a Fractured World, p. 45



Analysis in Chavruta: Now let's further explore the role of *chessed* in a covenantal society. Together with your chavruta, read through the following two quotes from Rabbi Sacks, and use the questions below to help your analysis.

Chavruta text analysis: In *chavrutot*, ask your students to study the next two quotes, 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



The logic of the covenant, unlike the social contract of the state, has nothing to do with rights, power and self-interest. Instead it is defined by three key words – *mishpat*, *tzedek* and *chessed*.

Mishpat means, roughly, justice-as-reciprocity. It is the principle of the covenant with Noah: As you do, so shall you be done to. It is the legal equivalent of Hillel's famous saying, 'That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.' *Mishpat* is the universal minimum of a just society. Wrong is punished, injury redressed. All persons are equal under the law, and all have access to it.

Tzedek or *tzedakah* is a far more radical idea. The word *tzedakah* is usually translated as 'charity' but in fact it means social or distributive justice. In biblical law it involved a whole series of institutions that together constituted the first-ever attempt at a welfare state ... *Tzedek*, the Bible's



welfare legislation, is built on the premise that freedom has an economic dimension. Not only does powerlessness enslave, so too does poverty. So no one is to forfeit his independence or dignity...

And finally there is *chessed*, usually translated as 'kindness' but in fact meaning covenantal love. *Chessed* is the loyalty I owe to those who are members of my family – and a covenantal society is one in which all citizens form a single extended family, as the children of one God. Much of the Bible's welfare legislation, especially those provisions which concern rescuing someone from servitude, is introduced by such phrases as, 'If your brother becomes poor.' God Himself uses the language of family in announcing the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt: 'My son, My firstborn, Israel.' This is the origin of the concept of fraternity invoked in the French revolution. As a secular concept, though, it has never succeeded because the necessary theological foundation – the brotherhood of man under the parenthood of God – is lacking. *Chessed* represents the idea that a gracious social order can never be constructed on the basis of rights and obligations alone. There are times when we must go 'beyond the letter of the law,' beyond the requirements of equity and reciprocity. *Chessed* is the personal, unquantifiable, I-Thou dimension of society, the compassion and humanity that can never be formalized as law but instead belong to the quality of relationships, to the idea that the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger are my brothers and sisters.

A Letter in the Scroll, pp. 120–122



Tzedek and *mishpat* belong to morality. *Chessed* and *rachamim* belong to ethics. The former are about justice, the latter about loving attention, for which the simplest English term is care. Justice is and must be impersonal. 'You shall not recognize persons in judgement', says Devarim (16:19). The beauty of justice is that it belongs to a world of order constructed out of universal rules through which each of us stands equally before the law. *Chessed*, by contrast, is intrinsically personal. We cannot care for the sick, bring comfort to the distressed or welcome a visitor impersonally. If we do so, it merely shows that we have not understood what these activities are. Justice demands disengagement (Adam Smith spoke of adopting the standpoint of an 'impartial spectator'). *Chessed* is an act of engagement. Justice is best administered without emotion. *Chessed* exists only in virtue of emotion, empathy and sympathy, feeling-with and feeling-for. We act with kindness because we know what it feels like to be in need of kindness.



We comfort the mourners because we know what it is to mourn. *Chessed* requires not detached rationality but emotional intelligence.

To Heal a Fractured World, p.51

1. From your understanding of a society based on social contract, and a society based on a social covenant, in which do the values inherent in *mishpat* more naturally belong?
2. In which of those societies does *tzedekah* more naturally belong?
3. In which of those societies does *chessed* more naturally belong?
4. *Chessed*, according to Rabbi Sacks, is more naturally shown to members of our own family. Why do you think this is?
5. How, then, does he suggest we make our society a place where *chessed* is found between all people, even strangers?
6. Make two lists of defining characteristics again – this time for *mishpat/tzedek* on the one hand, and *chessed* on the other. Do these two new lists fit neatly under the lists you previously made for social covenant and social contract?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your answers to the questions, including the lists that you have made for the terms social covenant, social contract, *mishpat/tzedek*, and *chessed*. Listen carefully to the perspectives of your classmates. Did anyone take a different approach to the texts from you? Does their approach resonate with you?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion based on the guiding questions to the texts above. These texts define *chessed* and its role in a covenantal society, as opposed to *mishpat* and *tzedek/tzedaka* that are universal values that exist in a society based on social contract only (they also exist in a covenantal society, but it is *chessed* that is the defining value in a covenantal society).

The defining characteristics of *tzedek* and *mishpat* are:

- Justice-as-reciprocity
- That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.
- The universal minimum of a just society
- Morality
- Dispassionate impersonal justice

Example: Covenant with Noah

The defining characteristics of *chessed* are:

- Covenantal love
- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- “Beyond the letter of the law”
- Ethics
- Emotional, empathetic, intrinsically personal love

Example: Covenant with Avraham

Stories of *Chessed*



Exploring the core concepts through stories of *chessed*: Together with your *chavruta* join another pair to form a small *chabura* (study group). Your teacher will assign you one of the stories below. Read through the story and consider the following questions:

1. Who is the hero of the story?
2. What values did you find modeled in the story?
3. What did the agent of *chessed* hope to achieve by the act of *chessed* they performed? Do you think they achieved it?
4. How do you think the recipient of the act of *chessed* felt at the end of the story?
5. According to this story, how would you define *chessed*?
6. Can you find any of the ideas you considered in the story about *chessed* within the opening text from Rabbi Sacks?

In your *chabura* prepare to tell the story to the rest of the class, followed by your analysis of the story and responses to these questions.

Group text analysis: Pair up two or more of the *chavrutot* from the previous section. Allocate each *chabura* 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 look at other stories when they have finished. Direct them to read through the stories together, and to use the questions to guide their discussion. The same six questions are to be used for each story. You may tell them to write down their answers, or to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.



STORY 1: A POOR MAN'S FUNERAL



Once two Jews died in Brisk on the same day. In the morning a poor shoemaker who had lived out his life in obscurity died, while about noontime a wealthy prominent member of the community passed away. According to the *halachah*, in such a case the one who dies first must be buried first. However the members of the burial society, who had received a handsome sum from the heirs of the rich man, decided to attend to him first, despite the fact that he had died later, for who was there to plead the cause of the poor man? When Rav Chaim [of Brisk] was informed about the incident, he sent a messenger of the court to warn the members of the burial society to desist from their disgraceful behavior. The members of the burial society, however, refused to heed the directive of Rav Chaim and began to make the arrangements for the burial of the rich man. Rav Chaim then arose, took his walking stick, trudged over to the house of the deceased, and chased all the attendants outside. Rav Chaim prevailed – the poor man was buried before the rich man.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halachic Man*, p. 95

STORY 2: AND MAYBE EVEN HIGHER



Every Friday morning before dawn, the Rebbe of Nemirov would disappear. He could be found in none of the town's synagogues or houses of study. The doors of his house were open but he was not there. Once a Lithuanian scholar came to Nemirov. Puzzled by the Rebbe's disappearance he asked his followers, 'Where is he?' 'Where is the Rebbe?' they replied. 'Where else but in heaven? The people of the town need peace, sustenance, health. The Rebbe is a holy man and therefore he is surely in heaven, pleading our cause.'

The Lithuanian, amused by their credulity, determined to find out for himself. One Thursday night he hid himself in the Rebbe's house. The next morning before dawn he heard the Rebbe weep and sigh. Then he saw him go to the cupboard, take out a parcel of clothes and begin to put them on. They were the clothes, not of a holy man, but of a peasant. The Rebbe then reached into a drawer, pulled out an axe, and went out into the still dark night. Stealthily, the Lithuanian followed him as he walked through the town and beyond, into the forest. There he began chopping down a tree, hewing it into logs, and splitting it into firewood. These he gathered into a bundle and walked back into the town.

In one of the back streets, he stopped outside a run-down cottage and knocked on the door. An old woman, poor and ill, opened the door. 'Who are you?' she said. 'I am Vassily,' the Rebbe replied. 'I have wood to sell,



very cheap, next to nothing.' 'I have no money,' replied the woman. 'I will give it to you on credit,' he said. 'How will I be able to pay you?' she said. 'I trust you – and do you not trust God? He will find a way of seeing that I am repaid.' 'But who will light the fire? I am too ill.' 'I will light the fire,' the Rebbe replied, and he did so, reciting under his breath the morning prayers. Then he returned home.

The Lithuanian scholar, seeing this, stayed on in the town and became one of the Rebbe's disciples. After that day, when he heard the people of the town tell visitors that the Rebbe ascended to heaven, he no longer laughed, but added: 'And maybe even higher.'

Adapted from a short story by Y.L. Peretz

STORY 3: THE KINDNESS OF A STRANGER



In 1966 an 11-year-old black boy moved with his parents and family to a white neighborhood in Washington. Sitting with his two brothers and two sisters on the front step of the house, he waited to see how they would be greeted. They were not. Passers-by turned to look at them but no one gave them a smile or even a glance of recognition. All the fearful stories he had heard about how whites treated blacks seemed to be coming true. Years later, writing about those first days in their new home, he says, 'I knew we were not welcome here. I knew we would not be liked here. I knew we would have no friends here. I knew we should not have moved here...'

As he was thinking those thoughts, a white woman coming home from work passed by on the other side of the road. She turned to the children and with a broad smile said, 'Welcome!' Disappearing into the house, she emerged minutes later with a tray laden with drinks and cream-cheese and jelly sandwiches which she brought over to the children, making them feel at home. That moment – the young man later wrote – changed his life. It gave him a sense of belonging where there was none before. It made him realize, at a time when race relations in the United States were still fraught, that a black family could feel at home in a white area and that there could be relationships that were color-blind. Over the years, he learned to admire much about the woman across the street, but it was that first spontaneous act of greeting that became, for him, a definitive memory. It broke down a wall of separation and turned strangers into friends.

The young man, Stephen Carter, is now a law professor at Yale, and he eventually wrote a book about what he learned that day. He called it *Civility*. The name of the woman, he tells us, was Sara Kestenbaum, and she died all too young. He adds that it was no coincidence that she was a religious Jew. 'In the Jewish tradition,' he notes, such civility is called '*chesed* – the doing



of acts of kindness – which is in turn derived from the understanding that human beings are made in the image of God.’ He adds, ‘Civility itself may be seen as part of *chesed*: it does indeed require kindnesses toward our fellow citizens, including the ones who are strangers, and even when it is hard.’

Stephen Carter, *Civility*, pp. 61–71

STORY 4: THE HEALING POWER OF KINDNESS



In late summer of 1999 I was in Pristina making a television program about the aftermath of the Kosovo campaign. Outside every church was a NATO tank. At the start of the conflict it had been the Serbian Christians who had attacked mosques. Now they feared reprisals from the returning refugees. The mood was tense. Murders were taking place every night. Revenge was in the air. The most important task was to establish order and a return to civil peace.

I interviewed General Sir Michael Jackson, then head of the NATO forces. To my surprise, he thanked me for what ‘my people’ had done. The Jewish community had taken charge of the city’s 23 primary schools. It was, he said, the most valuable contribution to the city’s welfare. When 800,000 people have become refugees and then return home, the most reassuring sign that life has returned to normal is that the schools open on time. That, he said, we owe to the Jewish people. Meeting the head of the Jewish community later that day, I asked him how many Jews were there currently in Pristina. His answer? Eleven.

The story, as I later uncovered it, was fascinating. In the early days of the conflict, the State of Israel had, along with many international aid agencies, sent a field medical team to work with the Kosovan Albanian refugees. Immediately they noticed something others had missed. The aid agencies were concentrating, not unnaturally, on the adults. There was no one working with the children. Traumatized by the conflict and far from home, they were running wild.

The team phoned back to Israel and asked for young volunteers. Virtually every youth group in Israel, from the most secular to the most religious, sent out teams of youth leaders at two-week intervals. They worked with the children, organizing summer camps, sports competitions, drama and music events and everything else they could think of to make their temporary exile feel like a summer holiday. At all levels it was an extraordinary effort. The Kosovan Albanians were Muslims, and for many of the Israeli youth workers it was their first contact and friendship with children of another faith. Their effort won high praise from UNICEF, the United Nations children’s organization. It was in the wake of this that ‘the Jewish people’ –



Israel, the American-based 'Joint' and other Jewish agencies – were asked to supervise the return to normality of the school system in Pristina.

That episode taught me many things: the force of *chesed*, acts of kindness; the beauty and healing power of kindness extended across the borders of faith; and the way young people can rise to great moral achievements if we set them a challenge. The entire relief effort in Kosovo was a wonderful convergence of many people and agencies, from many faiths and nations.

Rabbi Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, pp. 94–95

STORY 5: DARCHEI SHALOM, 'THE WAYS OF PEACE'



April 2002: another suicide bomb had exploded in Israel, and I had been interviewed for my reactions by the BBC. A few days later I received a letter from a lady in Kent. This is what she wrote:

Having listened to you on the radio today, and hearing your concern for your people, I felt prompted to write you a letter of comfort.

You see, I am a gentile. I was born in 1943 and [years later] I met a Jewish woman who made a great difference in my life.

I was then in my mid-twenties, the victim of a broken marriage and with a small son to care for. I was seeking employment in South London as a hairdresser to pay for our rooms, and a child-minder.

The unemployment agency sent me to a salon. A large motherly woman greeted me at the interview. Her first words were, 'Are you in trouble, my dear?'

I was given employment in her salon. Then she offered to house us in the rooms above the shop, furnishing them with carpets and furniture from her own home. She thought – then she employed two girls from Leeds to share the flat and so reduce my rent. She also found a very kind child-minder for my son. This Proverbs 31 lady [the famous chapter beginning, 'A woman of worth, who can find?'] also spoke wisdom into my life. I shall always remember her kindness.

On the television news we all saw the dreadful pictures of the bus destroyed in Jerusalem on the eve of the Sabbath. At the sight of the plaited loaf lying in the dust, I felt as if a knife had gone through me as tears ran down my face – for the loaf represents family, unity, the common humanity we all share and which is oh, so fragile.

Please Rabbi Sacks, accept an outstretched hand to you: peace within your borders, comfort for your people, security within your walls. These are my prayers.

Ibid, pp. 97–98



Share your analysis: Come together as a class and share the stories you read, together with your analysis. Discuss what the stories all had in common. What did you learn about *chesed* from these stories? Did you find any of these ideas within the opening text from Rabbi Sacks?

Frontal teaching: Ask each group to present one of the stories. You may wish to make this a creative exercise, using alternative means for their retelling of the story, such as drama or art. Then facilitate a class discussion based on the questions above.

The Assignment



Part 1: Tell your own *chessed* story: Working in small groups allocated by your teacher, write your own story about when you performed an act of *chessed*. But this cannot be a story from your past. It must be about an act of *chessed* performed after studying this unit. Firstly, together with your friends, plan an act of *chessed* worthy of a story to be told to your class. This could be within your school community, or in the wider community. Then, after you have done this act of *chessed*, sit down in your group and write all the details of the story, from planning to execution, reflecting on how your act was received and the impact it made.

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.

Project Based Learning: This assignment asks the students to write their own *chessed* story based on an authentic act of *chessed* that they must now plan and execute. This assignment provides an opportunity for the ultimate in experiential education, requiring the students to actualize the values they have learned about in this unit. The best of the stories could be publicized in the school community via social media, school newspapers etc.

TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 7 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

אמונה FAITH *Love as Loyalty*

Based on the teachings of 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 as defiance

WHOM THEN SHALL I FEAR?

אֵל לְדָוִד | יְהוָה | אֹרֵי וַיִּשְׁעֵי מִמֶּנִּי אֵיךָ יְהוָה מַעֲזֹחַי מִמֶּנִּי אֶפְחָד: בִּקְרֹב עָלַי | מְרִעִים לֹאֲכָל
אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי וְאֵיבִי לִי הִמָּה כְּשֶׁלּוֹ וְנָפְלוּ: אֶם־תַּחֲנֹנָה עָלַי | מִחֲנָה 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 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.

TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 8 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

ישראל
ISRAEL
The Jewish Land

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Overview: In this unit we will explore the role of the Land of Israel in Rabbi Sacks' thought and philosophy of Judaism. Rabbi Sacks is well known for his advocacy and passion for the modern State of Israel, especially in his social media presence. Israel also plays a prominent theological role in his writings. For Rabbi Sacks, the Jewish people living in security in their homeland, building a society based on the core values of Judaism, is critical to the fulfillment of Jewish destiny and the national Jewish mission.

Educational aims for this unit:

- For students to consider the central role of Israel
 - Historically
 - *Halachically*
 - Culturally
 - Spiritually
- For students to explore the notion of contemporary *aliyah* within the context of these parameters.
- For students to consider the miraculous nature of the history of the modern State of Israel, and the balance in that narrative between human and divine accomplishments.
- For students to understand the role Israel must play in the fulfillment of Jewish destiny and the Jewish national mission, as envisioned by Rabbi Sacks.
- For students to consider what a 'Jewish society' would look like as the fulfillment of Jewish destiny and the Jewish national mission.

Trigger Activity:

First, ask your students if any of them have experienced a miracle in their lives. Ask for volunteers to share what those miracles were, and write them on the board.

Then make a list of everyday occurrences, or events from history, that people consider miraculous. If you can, collect images of these events to project onto a screen, or pictures to put up, as this can be more effective in stimulating a discussion. For each event, ask your students if they think it is miraculous or natural, or if, in fact, miracle and nature could be one and the same (i.e. God acting through nature).

Your list could include:

- the birth of a baby
- healing in a hospital
- rain in the desert
- enemies making peace (or different races embracing as friends)
- the underdog winning the championship
- a student passing a test
- The Six-Day-War

- a Shoah survivor's story
- the Jewish people's return to Israel after 2000 years of exile
- the Niagara Falls
- the Grand Canyon
- natural beauty of the local surroundings

Conclude with a discussion on the definition of a miracle, whether miracles have to be supernatural, or whether natural processes can be considered miraculous. Debate the question: Does God perform His work through natural means?

Watch: The opening video for Unit 8



■ **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.

No religion in history has been as closely tied to a land as has Judaism. That connection goes back almost 4,000 years, from the first words of God to Avraham: 'Leave your country, your birthplace and your father's house and go to the land I will show you.' No sooner had he arrived than God said: 'To your offspring I will give this land.' Seven times God promised the land to Avraham, and promised it again to Yitzchak and Yaakov.

The word *teshuvah*, often translated as 'repentance', literally means 'homecoming' in a double sense: spiritually to God, and physically to the land of Israel. For Israel is the Jewish people's place of destiny: a tiny land for a tiny people, yet one whose role in religious history is vast. It is the land to which Moshe and the Israelites travelled across the desert, the land from which they were exiled twice, the land to which our ancestors journeyed whenever they could and which they never voluntarily left, never relinquished. Jewish history is the story of the longing for a land.

The holy land remains the place where Jews were summoned to create a society of justice and compassion under the sovereignty of God. And though it was subsequently held holy by Christianity and Islam, the centers of these other faiths were elsewhere: for Western Christians, Rome, for Eastern Christians, Constantinople, and for Muslims, Mecca and Medinah. There are 56 Islamic states today, 82 Christian ones, but only one Jewish state. It is the only place on earth where Jews are a majority, where they



enjoy self-rule, where they are able to build a society and shape a culture as Jews.

The Balfour Declaration in 1917, subsequently ratified by the League of Nations, long before the Holocaust, was an attempt to rectify the lingering denial of a nation's right to its land and the subsequent persecution of Jews in country after country, century after century, in a history of suffering that has no parallel.

The Jews who returned were not strangers, outsiders, an imperial presence, a colonial force. They were the land's original inhabitants: the only people in 4,000 years who created an independent nation there. All other occupiers of the land – from the Assyrians and Babylonians to the Ottomans and the British – were imperial powers, who ruled the land as a district of their vast realms. The Egyptians did not offer the Palestinians a state when they ruled Gaza between 1948 and 1967; neither did the Jordanians when they ruled the West Bank during those years. The only nation to have offered Palestinians a state is the State of Israel. And every day, we pray for its peace.

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 below 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.

No religion in history has been as closely tied to a land as has Judaism. That connection goes back almost 4,000 years, from the **first words of God to Avraham**: 'Leave your country, your birthplace and your father's house and go to the land I will show you.' No sooner had he arrived than God said: 'To your offspring I will give this land.' Seven times God promised the land to Avraham, and promised it again to Yitzchak and Yaakov.

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first words of God to Avraham

1. What is the implication that the first words God spoke to Avraham were, 'Leave your country, your birthplace and your father's house and go to the land I will show you'?
2. What is the meaning of these words?
3. Why do you think God decided to begin his relationship with Avraham with these words and this command? What does this mean for us?



'homecoming'

1. The literal meaning of the word *teshuvah* is 'return'. How is repentance a 'return'? What are we returning to?
2. Rabbi Sacks translates the word *teshuvah* as 'homecoming'. After we have done true *teshuvah* we are said to have 'returned'. How is this return like a homecoming?
3. Rabbi Sacks connects the 'homecoming' of *teshuvah* with the physical return to the Land of Israel. Can you explain the connection?

Jewish history is the story of the longing for a land.

1. Can you support this claim with proof from Jewish history?
2. Can you find proof of this in *halacha* and Jewish rituals?
3. Can you explain why the Jewish people never gave up on returning to their land?

It is the only place on earth where Jews are a majority

1. What are the effects of being a minority?
2. Why is it important to be a majority? What are the benefits?
3. How do you feel living as a minority in your country? Would you like to one day live in Israel because it has a Jewish majority? Why?

where they are able to build a society and shape a culture as Jews

1. Can Jews build a society, and shape the culture of that society, when they live in the diaspora?
2. What would a Jewish society look like?
3. Is Israel a Jewish society today? How so?

The Balfour Declaration

1. The Balfour Declaration was the first time since the birth of modern Zionism that a world power had recognized the Jewish people's claim to a homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*. Why did we need a world power to recognize this right?
2. On what basis did the Jewish people have a right to a land over which we had not been sovereign for 2000 years?
3. It is now over a hundred years since the Balfour Declaration. Do you think the world has come to terms with this right?



They were the land's original inhabitants

1. What does Rabbi Sacks mean when he claims that the Jews who heeded the call of modern Zionism and began returning to *Eretz Yisrael* from the 1880s onward were 'the land's original inhabitants'?
2. Who disagrees with Rabbi Sacks on this point? What is the basis of their argument?
3. What are your thoughts on this?

The only nation to have offered Palestinians a state is the State of Israel.

1. Why do you think no Palestinian state was created while other Arab nations were in power in this land?
2. Why do you think the State of Israel made these painful concessions to the Palestinian people, offering to help create a Palestinian state? Why do you think the Palestinian leadership rejected the offer?
3. What do you think needs to happen for peace to finally be achieved in the Land of Israel?



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

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

The Core Concepts



Exploration of the Core Concepts: Together with your *chavruta*, consider the five core concepts contained in the opening text. Use the questions to guide your discussion and analysis.

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot*, ask the students to read through the text again, and to this time consider the five core concepts that have been highlighted. Ask them to use the questions to guide their discussion. You may wish to ask them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.

No religion in history has been as closely tied to a land as has Judaism. That connection goes back almost 4,000 years, from the **first words of God to Avraham**: ‘Leave your country, your birthplace and your father’s house and go to the land I will show you.’ No sooner had he arrived than God said: ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’ Seven times God promised the land to Avraham, and promised it again to Yitzchak and Yaakov.

The word *teshuvah*, often translated as ‘repentance’, literally means **‘homecoming’** in a double sense: spiritually to God, and physically to the land of Israel. For Israel is the Jewish people’s place of destiny: a tiny land for a tiny people, yet one whose role in religious history is vast. It is the land to which Moshe and the Israelites travelled across the desert, the land from which they were exiled twice, the land to which our ancestors journeyed whenever they could and which they never voluntarily left, never relinquished. **Jewish history is the story of the longing for a land.**

The holy land remains the place where Jews were summoned to create a society of justice and compassion under the sovereignty of God. And though it was subsequently held holy by Christianity and Islam, the centers of these other faiths were elsewhere: for Western Christians, Rome, for Eastern Christians, Constantinople, and for Muslims, Mecca and Medinah. There are 56 Islamic states today, 82 Christian ones, but only one Jewish state. **It is the only place on earth where Jews are a majority**, where they enjoy self-rule, **where they are able to build a society and shape a culture as Jews**.

The Balfour Declaration in 1917, subsequently ratified by the League of Nations, long before the Holocaust, was an attempt to rectify the lingering denial of a nation’s right to its land and the subsequent persecution of Jews in country after country, century after century, in a history of suffering that has no parallel.

The Jews who returned were not strangers, outsiders, an imperial presence, a colonial force. **They were the land’s original inhabitants**: the only people in 4,000 years who created an independent nation there. All



other occupiers of the land – from the Assyrians and Babylonians to the Ottomans and the British – were imperial powers, who ruled the land as a district of their vast realms. The Egyptians did not offer the Palestinians a state when they ruled Gaza between 1948 and 1967; neither did the Jordanians when they ruled the West Bank during those years. **The only nation to have offered Palestinians a state is the State of Israel.** And every day, we pray for its peace.

tied to a land

1. In what way is Judaism 'tied to a land'?
2. If Judaism is so closely tied to a land, how do you think it has survived for so many generations in exile?
3. Do you think a Judaism in the diaspora is in anyway inferior to Judaism practiced in *Eretz Yisrael*?

'Leave your country, your birthplace and your father's house and go to the land I will show you.'

1. What *mitzvah* is Avraham being asked to perform here?
2. What were the challenges facing Avraham's *aliyah*? Are they the same challenges as those faced by *olim* today?
3. What reasons can you think of for making *aliyah*? Assuming you were living in the diaspora, could you imagine making *aliyah* yourself?

'To your offspring I will give this land.'

1. To which generation of Avraham's descendants do you think God is promising the land?
2. Why do you think God did not give the land to Avraham there and then?
3. Has this promise been fulfilled in history? When?

Israel is the Jewish people's place of destiny

1. What is destiny?
2. What is the Jewish people's destiny? How does it involve Israel?
3. What is your destiny? How does it correlate with your vision for the Jewish people?

summoned to create a society of justice and compassion

1. What would a society based on these ideas look like? How do you build such a society?
2. Do you think that the modern State of Israel is a society of justice and compassion?
3. Why has God summoned the Jewish people to do this?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class, and share your answers to the questions. 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. Why is *Eretz Yisrael* so central to Judaism?
2. What is the national mission of the Jewish people and how is it connected to having our own land?
3. Are we fulfilling this mission in our land today? If not, what can we do to achieve it?

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

The Miracle of the Rebirth of Israel



Together with your *chavruta* join another pair to form a small *chabura* (study group). Examine the following texts from *The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah*. Here Rabbi Sacks describes some of the miracles of the founding of the modern State of Israel, and discusses who was behind them. Use the guiding questions that follow each text to help you with your analysis, and at the same time consider these general underlying questions:

1. What is your definition of a miracle?
2. Can a miracle be man-made? If it can, is it still divine in origin?
3. If the story of the State of Israel is miraculous in nature, how does that impact the way we think of it?

Group text analysis: Pair up two or more of the *chavrutot* from the previous section. Direct them to read through the excerpts from the *Jonathan Sacks Haggadah* below, 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. Make sure the students also consider the questions above while they explore Rabbi Sacks' presentation of the miraculous history of the modern State of Israel.



So Zionism was born. It would be hard to find any other movement that brought together so many dissonant, competing visions. There were utopian religious Zionists like Rav Kook, and practical religious Zionists like Rabbi Reines. Among the secularists were political Zionists like Herzl, cultural Zionists such as Ahad ha-Am, Nietzscheans like Berdichevski, Tolstoyans of the caliber of Aaron David Gordon, and dozens of others, each with their own carefully wrought utopia. They clashed, at times vehemently. Yet out of their clamorous discord came one of the most astonishing achievements of all time.

The creation of the State of Israel was fraught with difficulty. Despite the Balfour Declaration (1917), in which Britain, the new mandatory power in Palestine, promised Jews a national home, there was intense opposition – from the Arab world, other international forces, from politicians in Britain, and at times from Jews themselves. For thirty years, various compromises were proposed, all accepted by Jews and rejected by their opponents. On the day the State was proclaimed, it was attacked on all fronts by its neighbors. Since then it has lived under constant threat of war, violence, terror and delegitimization. Yet it has achieved wondrous things.

The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah, pp. 51–52



1. Is it a miracle that so many different Zionists with such divergent views managed to join together to build the State of Israel?
2. What does 'utopia' mean? What does it mean that a Zionist philosophy is 'utopian'?
3. Which groups of people does Rabbi Sacks list as opposing the creation of the State of Israel? Why did each group oppose it?
4. Why do you think Israel has lived in a constant state of war ever since its creation?
5. Is it possible that this constant threat of war has had any advantage for Israel achieving 'wondrous things'?



Through it Hebrew, the language of the Bible, was reborn as a living tongue. Jewish communities under threat have been rescued, including those like the Jews of Ethiopia who had little contact with other Jews for centuries. Jews have come to Israel from over a hundred countries, representing the entire lexicon of cultural diversity. A desolate landscape has bloomed again. Jerusalem has been rebuilt. The world of Torah scholarship, devastated by the Holocaust, has been revived and the sound of learning echoes throughout the land. Economically, politically, socially and culturally, Israel's achievements are unmatched by any country of its age and size. The sages said that, at the crossing of the Red Sea, the simplest Jew saw miracles that the greatest of later prophets were not destined to see. That, surely, was the privilege of those who witnessed Israel's rebirth and youth. The messiah has not come. Israel is not yet at peace. The *Beit Hamikdash* has not been rebuilt. Our time is not yet redemption. Yet many, if not all, of the prayers of two thousand years have been answered...

Ibid, p. 52

1. Was the rebirth of the ancient language of the Bible into a modern vibrant language a miracle?
2. Why do you think the State of Israel feels a responsibility for the safety of Jews around the world, such as the Ethiopian Jewish community?
3. How did the Jews in Israel make the desert bloom? Is that a miracle?
4. Are there miracles in Israel's economic, political, social and cultural history?
5. Which of our prayers of two thousand years have not yet been answered? Does that change the way we see Israel?



The Irish historian Conor Cruise O'Brien once remarked that Jews who see themselves as unreligious are sometimes very religious indeed. That was true of Hess, Pinsker, Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion and many other heroes and pioneers of the return to Zion. They were not 'spiritual' nor did they observe many of the commandments. But the vision of the prophets and the covenant of Jewish history flowed through their veins. God works through people; sometimes, so the prophets taught, without their conscious knowledge and consent. It is difficult to reflect deeply on the rebirth of Israel without sensing the touch of heaven in the minds of men and women, leading them to play their parts in a drama so much greater than any individual could have executed, even conceived. The historian Barbara Tuchman, writes, 'Viewing this strange and singular history one cannot escape the impression that it must contain some special significance for the history of mankind, that in some way, whether one believes in divine providence or inscrutable circumstance, the Jews have been singled out to carry the tale of human fate.'

Ibid, p. 53

1. Do you think aspects of secular Zionism can be considered 'religious'?
2. What is the 'vision of the prophets and the covenant of Jewish history'?
3. What does Rabbi Sacks mean when he says the secular Zionists had the 'touch of heaven' in their minds? How do you think they would feel if they were to hear Rabbi Sacks' view of them?
4. Do you think that God has directed history through people who are not necessarily religious or aware of their religious impact?
5. Do you think that Jewish history contains 'some special significance for the history of mankind'? What do you think that significance might be?



Who then wrote the script of the Jewish drama? God, or the Jewish people? Or was it, as the sages taught, an inextricable combination of both: God as he was heard by the people, and the people as they responded to God? Isaac Bashevis Singer came close when he said, 'God is a writer and we are both the heroes and the readers.' One thing is certain, that without Pesach, celebrated over the centuries, the State of Israel would not have been born. The prophets were right: the exodus of the past contained within it the exodus of the future; and I, born in the same year as the State, can only say, 'Blessed are you, O Lord... who kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this day.'

Ibid, pp. 51–53

1. 'Who then wrote the script of the Jewish drama?' How would you answer this question?
2. What does it mean to be both the hero and the reader of Jewish history?
3. If God is the writer, can we still really be the heroes?
4. What connection do you think Rabbi Sacks is making between Pesach and the birth of the State of Israel?
5. Rabbi Sacks concludes this essay with the *beracha* of *Shehecheyanu*. What profound statement is he making about the State of Israel?



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 texts from you? Does their approach resonate with you?

Include your responses to the following questions in the class discussion:

1. What is your definition of a miracle?
2. Can a miracle be man-made? If it is, does that still make it divine in origin?
3. If the story of the State of Israel is miraculous in nature, how does that impact the way we think of it?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students' answers. Conclude the classroom discussion with the three questions that were posed at the beginning of this section.

Why a Land?

Chavruta text analysis: In the next three sections we will explore the role that Rabbi Sacks believes a land (and the Land of Israel in particular) plays in Judaism. Although these three sections make this unit somewhat longer than other units in the curriculum, we believe it is important to allow these ideas to become fully evolved in the minds of the students. If time is limited and you need to shorten the unit, you may decide to study just the first or second of these three sections, or skip the previous section – you can choose which are the most appropriate sections for your class.

In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix your students up), direct your students to read through the following excerpts from *Future Tense*, 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.



The following quote is from Rabbi Sacks' book *Future Tense*, in the chapter *Israel, Gateway of Hope*. Here, Rabbi Sacks presents his vision for Judaism and the calling for the Jewish people, and why he believes this vision can only be fulfilled in the land of Israel and not as the religion of an exiled and dispersed people. Together with your *chavruta*, consider what the ideal Jewish society would look like in a Jewish state. Start by reading through the excerpt, and then use the questions that follow to formulate a description of Rabbi Sacks' vision.

ISRAEL IS THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S PLACE OF DESTINY



[Jewish] 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. It would be the opposite of Egypt, whose bread of affliction and bitter herbs of slavery they were to eat every year on the festival of Pesach to remind them of what they were to avoid. . . . *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 . . .

[B]ecause 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.

The broad principles driving this elaborate structure, traditionally enumerated as 613 commands, are clear. No one should be left in dire poverty.



No one should lack access to justice and the courts. No family should be without its share of the land. One day in seven, everyone should be free. One year in seven, all debts should be cancelled. One year in fifty, all land that had been sold was to revert to its original owners. It was the nearest thing the ancient world had ever seen to an egalitarian society.

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. According to Rabbi Sacks, what is Jewish destiny?
2. Rabbi Sacks contrasts Judaism, the religion of a nation in its land, with other more individualistic religions. Explain each term and phrase below that defines Judaism, and contrast it from other forms of religion:
 - a. Judaism is the code of a self-governing society.
 - b. Judaism is a religion of redemption rather than salvation.
 - c. Judaism is about the shared spaces of our collective lives, not an interior drama of the soul.
 - d. Judaism is the constitution of a self-governing nation.
 - e. Judaism is the architectonics of a society.
3. Rabbi Sacks says that “without a land and state, Judaism is a shadow of itself”. What do you think he means?
4. Does this mean the Judaism of exile is a “shadow of itself”? Do you agree with him?
5. These are the values that Rabbi Sacks believes must be at the core of a Jewish society: righteousness (*tzedek/tzedakah*); justice (*mishpat*); loving-kindness (*chessed*);



compassion (*rachamim*). Complete the table describing how these values can be upheld by individuals, communities, and as a nation living in its own land.

Value	Individual	Community	Nation State
<i>Tzedek/Tzedakah</i>			
<i>Mishpat</i>			
<i>Chessed</i>			
<i>Rachamim</i>			

- What does Rabbi Sacks mean when he says that in the diaspora Judaism lives only in “the hearts of Jews but not in the public square”?
- What does Rabbi Sacks say can only be done in Israel? Do you agree with him?
- Do you agree that a Judaism lived in the diaspora is an “edited version” as Rabbi Sacks describes?
- Do you think modern day Israel is fulfilling Rabbi Sacks’ vision for a Jewish society?
- Are these arguments having an impact on your view of *aliyah*?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students’ answers. When reflecting on their answers to the questions, it would be beneficial to reproduce the table on the board and complete it together. An example of applying one of the values to all three contexts would be giving *tzedakah* as an individual, a community building a soup kitchen, and welfare state government legislation concerning poverty, such as minimum wage legislation.

Why This Land?

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix your students up), direct them to read through the sources below, 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.

In the previous section we explored the importance of having a land as the center of the vision and destiny of Judaism and the Jewish people. In this section we will look at the question ‘Why this land?’ Why is *Eretz Yisrael* the chosen location for the fulfillment of the destiny of the Jewish people? Together with your *chavruta*, examine the sources, and using the questions that follow each source formulate the answer Rabbi Sacks gives us to this question.

A PROTEST AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Why there? The Bible doesn’t say. We can only speculate. But implicit in the biblical narrative is an answer. Israel is a place from which it is impossible to build an empire. The geography is wrong. The Judean hills in one direction, the Sinai desert in the other, block easy access to surrounding lands. The coastal plain is narrow and, in ancient times, open to easy attack from the sea.

The cradle of civilization was not there. It was in the alluvial plains of the Tigris-Euphrates valley and the rich, well-watered lands of the lower Nile. It was in Mesopotamia that the first city-states were built, and in Egypt that the greatest and longest-lived of ancient empires had its base. So Israel would almost invariably be a small country at the juncture of powerful empires, in a simultaneously strategic and vulnerable location on major trade routes.

Future Tense, pp. 137–138

1. Is it true that nowhere in the Torah is a reason given for why the Land of Israel was chosen? Does it describe Israel in any terms? Is this the same as explaining why it was chosen?
2. Rabbi Sacks describes the geography of Israel, demonstrating that not only is it inappropriate for the building of an empire, but that any civilization there would be hard to defend. Does Jewish history bear this out?
3. From the perspective of Jewish history, what do Mesopotamia and Egypt have in common? What message can you learn from this?
4. Why does the fact that Israel is at the junction of major ancient trade routes lead to increased vulnerability?
5. Can you think of a positive angle on living in a place of such vulnerability?



י כִּי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בֹא־שָׂמָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ לֹא כְאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הִוא אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאתָם מִשָּׁם אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע
 יא אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ וְהִשְׁקִיתָ בְּרִגְלְךָ כְּגֵן הָיִרְקָה: וְהָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּם עֹבְרִים שָׂמָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ אֶרֶץ הָרִים
 יב וּבְקֻצֹת לַמָּטָר הַשָּׁמַיִם תִּשְׁתַּה־מֵיָם: אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ דֹרֵשׁ אֹתָהּ תִּמְיֵד עֵינֶי יְהוָה
 יג אֱלֹהֶיךָ בָּהּ מִרְשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד אַחֲרִית שָׁנָה: וְהָיָה אִם־שָׁמַעַתְּ תִשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹתַי
 יד אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוָּה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם לֵאמֹר לַהֲבִיָּה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְלַעֲבֹדוֹ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּכֶם וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁכֶם:
 יו וְנָתַתִּי מָטָר־אֲרָצְכֶם בְּעֵתוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ וְאִסַּפְתִּי דִגְנְךָ וְתִירְשְׁךָ וַיִּצְהָרְךָ:

For the land that you are about to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come. There the grain you sowed had to be watered by your own labors, like a vegetable garden;

But the land you are about to cross into and possess, a land of hills and valleys, soaks up its water from the rains of heaven.

It is a land which the LORD your God looks after, on which the LORD your God always keeps His eye, from year's beginning to year's end.

If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the LORD your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul,

I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil.

Devarim 11:10-14

1. Is it an advantage or disadvantage that Israel is dependent on rain?
2. What is Egypt's water source? If you were a farmer would you rather live in Egypt or Israel?
3. Is it good or bad for the farmer that God always keeps his eye on the land?
4. God promises He will guarantee the rain on what condition?
5. From these verses, which do you think sounds like a better place to live, Israel or Egypt? Explain your answer.

WHERE GEOGRAPHY AND SPIRITUALITY MEET



Israel is not the Nile delta or the Tigris-Euphrates valley. It is a land dependent on rain, and rain in that part of the world is not predictable... But the passage intimates a correlation between geography and spirituality. Israel is a place where people look up to heaven in search of rain, not down to earth and its natural water supply. It is a place where you have to pray, not one in which nature and its seasons are predictable.

That is part of a larger narrative. Because the terrain of Israel is such that it cannot become the base of an empire, it will constantly be at threat from larger and stronger neighboring powers. Israel will always find itself outnumbered. It will need to rely on exceptional courage from its soldiers, and ingenuity in battle. That will take high national morale, which in turn



will require from the people a sense of belonging to a just and inclusive society.

Commitment will be needed from every individual. They will need to feel that their cause is justified and that they are fighting for something worth preserving. So the entire configuration of the Torah's social ethics, whose guardians were the prophets, is already implicit in the kind of geo-political entity Israel is and will be. It would always be a small and highly vulnerable country, set in a strategic location at the junction of three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia... as with its agriculture, so with its battles: Israel is a people that must lift its eyes to heaven.

Future Tense, pp. 139–140

1. Rabbi Sacks seems to suggest Israel's dependence on the unreliable rain as a source of water is a good thing. How is that so?
2. With this new understanding, how would you view the central narratives in the Torah, in particular Avraham turning his back on Mesopotamia and the empire built on the prosperity of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and Moshe taking his people away from the empire of the ancient Egyptians built on the prosperity of the Nile river?
3. Some countries produce strong fighters, some produce ingenious and creative artisans. According to Rabbi Sacks, what type of people does the Land of Israel produce?
4. According to Rabbi Sacks, what is the connection between the geography of the Land of Israel and spirituality?
5. Where would you rather live as a Jew: Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Western world today, or Israel?

Share your analysis: Come together as a class and discuss your answers and reflections on the sources.

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

1. What message to the Jewish people is carried in the physical geography of the Land of Israel?
2. Why did God choose the Land of Israel to be the homeland of the Jewish people?
3. Does what you have learned in this section connect to what you learned in the previous section, i.e. that the fulfillment of the destiny and vision of Judaism is the creation of a society in the Land of Israel?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students' answers. Conclude the classroom discussion with responses and reflections on the three meta-questions.

The State of Israel

Individual text work: Ask the students to read through the following text that also appears in Unit 6. If you have worked through Unit 6 then this will remind your students of the difference between a social contract that creates a state, and a social covenant that creates a society. If this is the first time they are seeing the text they may need more help understanding the concepts. They are asked to do the same analysis activity here as in Unit 6. If they completed this in Unit 6, then you may prefer to simply provide them with the lists on the board. These are:

Social Contract:

1. Sustained by self-interest and mutual advantage
2. Terminated by mutual consent
3. Finite term – end when obligations have been fulfilled
4. Social contract creates the state
5. Political institutions to regulate power

Examples of contracts include commercial agreements, resident association contracts, and legal agreements.

Social Covenant:

6. Sustained by loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness
7. Based on moral commitments
8. Open-ended
9. Social covenant creates society
10. Institutions that promote coexistence

Examples of covenants include marriage, membership of a society or club, and the Torah.

Analysis: In the previous two sections we explored Rabbi Sacks' view of the role of the Land of Israel. We have seen that Rabbi Sacks believes the destiny of the Jewish people is "to create a society that would honor the proposition that we are all created in the image and likeness of God," and that "Judaism is the code of a self-governing society" that can only be achieved in its own land. In this final section, we will evaluate how the modern State of Israel is fulfilling this destiny, and understand how Rabbi Sacks thinks it must change in order to do so.

First we need a refresher in the difference between a state and a society. In Unit 6, *The Way of Chessed*, we studied the following quote from Rabbi Sacks' book *The Home We Build Together*. Here, he defines a *social covenant* and distinguishes it from a *social contract*. In that unit you were asked to write two headings on a piece of paper, Social Contract and Social Covenant and to make a list of defining characteristics for each. If you have already studied Unit 6, then review the notes you made there. If you have not, do this activity now after reading the text.



Covenants and contracts are different things and address different aspects of our humanity. In a contract, what matters is that both gain. In a covenant, what matters is that both give. Contracts are agreements entered into for mutual advantage. They are undertaken by individuals or groups on the basis of self-interest. They have specific purposes. They can be terminated by mutual consent. They end once both parties have fulfilled their obligations. By contrast, covenants are moral commitments, and they are open-ended. They are sustained not by letter of law or by self-interest but by loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness. In fact the key word of Judaism, *emunah*, usually translated as ‘faith’, is better translated as faithfulness.

Social contract creates a state; social covenant creates a society. Social contract is about power and how it is to be handled within a political framework. Social covenant is about how people live together despite their differences. Social contract is about government. Social covenant is about coexistence. Social contract is about laws and their enforcement. Social covenant is about the values we share. Social contract is about the use of potentially coercive force. Social covenant is about moral commitments, the values we share and the ideals that inspire us to work together for the sake of the common good.

The Home We Build Together, pp. 109–110



Now let's apply our definitions to the modern State of Israel. The next quote is from a chapter in Rabbi Sacks' book *Future Tense* entitled *New Zionism*. Together with your *chavruta*, use the definitions of 'state' and 'society' as described by Rabbi Sacks and apply them to Israel today. Use the questions that follow the text to guide your discussion.

Chavruta text analysis: In *chavrutot* ask your students to read through the next quote and to use the questions that follow to guide their discussion. You may wish to ask them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.



The history of Zionism was dominated from the outset by the idea of state rather than society. This was understandable, given its historical origins. Jews in the Diaspora had, if not a society, then at least a community of communities. What they lacked was political power, sovereignty, a state. It was the birth of the European nation state that created modern antisemitism, because for the first time the question was asked: are Jews really Frenchmen or Germans, or are they merely Jews residing in Germany and France? Herzl understood that if the nation state created the problem, it also contained the solution. Jews must have a nation state of their own.

So it was not accidental that the most powerful effort to create a national culture, that of Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion, was called *mamlachtiut*, 'statism', placing the state at the heart of identity... the essence of *mamlachtiut* was the primacy of the state over civil society, secular law over tradition and custom, government institutions over voluntary bodies.

The result was that, though Israel managed remarkably the transition from powerlessness to power, it did so at the cost of weakening the very institutions that had been the source of Jewish strength in the past: communities, charities, voluntary associations and community-based schools. Even religion became a branch of the state. So, while the state grew strong, society grew weak. Instead of an *edah*, there were *edot* in the plural: in place of a single national community, there was an endless proliferation of local communities, differentiated by ethnicity, culture and their place on the religious-secular spectrum. Each had its own political party or parties. Every battle was fought in the political arena.

Future Tense, pp. 168–170

1. What is Zionism? Why was it focused on 'state' rather than 'society'?
2. Why was having a state so important to Jews in Europe in the 19th century?
3. Why did Ben Gurion place the 'state' at the center of the new State of Israel?
4. What did he sacrifice in order to do this?

5. Can you think of any examples that still exist in Israel today of sacrifices that have been made in society in order to make a state?

Share your analysis: Come together as a class and discuss your answers and reflections on the texts. Make sure you address the most important question: Is Israel today a 'state' or a 'society'?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the text based on the students' answers, addressing the question of whether Israel is more like a state or a society. Obviously the answer is complex and there are aspects of both. Here we are building a critique of Israeli society whereby Rabbi Sacks asserts that Judaism needs to take a more covenantal role in Israeli society in order to renew the social covenant, rather than focusing on the social contract on which Israel was originally founded.

Further analysis: In this chapter, Rabbi Sacks continues to explore these questions and considers how Israel can become more like a civil society based on a social covenant rather than the social contract of a state. Together with your *chavruta* join another pair to form a small *chabura* (study group), and explore this question with Rabbi Sacks using the following texts together with the questions that follow.

Group text analysis: Pair up two or more of the *chavrutot* from the previous section. Direct the students to read the following texts, and to use the questions to help them understand why Israel has a society that is currently based more on social contract than social covenant.

[The] challenge is to re-empower civil society. The extraordinary fact is that, for twenty centuries without a state, Jewish communities throughout history managed to create their own educational, health and welfare systems, all run on purely voluntary lines. Few if any would suggest today that in Israel education, healthcare and welfare should be privatized, but this entire tradition of voluntary self-help was Jewry's greatest strength in the past, and it has been twice threatened in Israel. The first time, the threat came from *mamlachtiut* itself, the belief that whatever was to be done for the common good should be done by the state, a view that owes more to East European socialism than to Judaism. The second time it came from the adoption of Thatcherism and Reaganomics and reliance on the market rather than the state. The result was the growth of consumerism and what J.K. Galbraith called private affluence and public poverty. Neither of these is the covenantal way.

The state and the market have a different logic from that of covenant. The state is about the concentration and application of power. The market




is about the production and distribution of wealth. These are two primary modes of human organization. We get people to act in the way we want, either by forcing them to – the way of power – or by paying them to – the way of wealth.


Future Tense, p. 174

1. What are the advantages of running educational, health and welfare systems on voluntary lines rather than through the central state?
2. Why does the market and consumerism lead to “private affluence and public poverty”?
3. If the state is about the application and regulation of power, and the market is about the production and distribution of wealth, what is covenant and civil society about?
4. To help answer this last question Rabbi Sacks continues in the chapter with a thought experiment which is paraphrased here:
 - a. Imagine you have total power, then you decide to share it with nine others. What are you left with?
 - b. Suppose you have a thousand dollars, and decide to share it with nine others. What are you left with?
 - c. Now suppose that you decide to share not power or wealth, but love, friendship, influence, or even knowledge, with nine others. What do you have now?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the text based on the students’ answers. The last question is a thought experiment. Ask the students to do this together, and then, with the class, read the text on the page below as a conclusion for these ideas.




Rabbi Sacks writes that there is a third way, not the power of the state, or the wealth of the market, but the love and relationship of covenantal society:




The reason is that love, friendship and influence are things that only exist by virtue of sharing. I call these *covenantal goods* – goods such that, the more I share, the more I have. In the short term at least, wealth and power are zero-sum games. If I win, you lose. If you win, I lose. Covenantal goods are non-zero-sum games, meaning, if I win, you also win. Wealth and power, economic and politics, the market and the state, are arenas of *competition*. Covenantal goods are arenas of *co-operation*. The home of covenantal goods is not the state or the market but civil society: families, communities, schools, congregations, fellowships (*chevrot*), communities, and society itself once we have clearly differentiated society from state. Covenantal goods exist wherever human relationships are structured not around wealth or power but around collective belonging and shared responsibility, around, in other words, the principle of ‘All Israel are responsible for one another.’

Future Tense, pp. 174–175



In the final text of this section, read through the continuation of the chapter in your *chabura*, and with the help of the questions that follow, consider how Rabbi Sacks challenges the modern State of Israel to become a society based on social covenant.

Group text analysis: In their *chaburot*, ask the students to read the following texts, and to use the questions to study how Israel can move more towards the covenantal society model using Judaism as its inspiration and source of core values.



The shape of Israel’s civil society is set out in Tehillim 146 as the way of God: ‘He secures justice for the oppressed. He gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets captives free. The Lord gives sight to the blind. The Lord raises those bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous. The Lord protects the stranger. He gives courage to the orphan and widow.’ It is there in every syllable of Diaspora Jewish life, in the social infrastructures Jews created voluntarily because they had no state to turn to. It is there in the basic idea of the Jewish polity, namely a society of equal dignity in which no one is condemned to poverty or solitude, in which Jews sustain one another through the thousand filaments of connectedness, caring for the sick, visiting the lonely, comforting the bereaved, giving hospitality to strangers: the vision of what Aharon Lichtenstein called ‘societal beatitude’ which was Jewry’s greatest contribution to the moral vocabulary of humankind.

Future Tense, pp. 175–176



1. What can the State of Israel learn from Diaspora Jewish life?
2. Where did Jews in the Diaspora learn this?
3. How would the State of Israel implement this? Do you think this already exists in Israeli society today?



A Judaic civil society depends on the highest priority being given to education. Judaism created the world's first system of universal education, and remains the supreme example of a civilization predicated on schools and houses of study. Education, in Judaism, is the keystone of the social structure. It is the best way of securing equality and human dignity. It must be the top item in any budget. Jews knew that to defend a country you need an army, but to defend a civilization you need schools. Education is the Jewish ministry of defence.

Equally, it is here at the level of civil society that Israel must integrate all entire population, Jewish, Muslim or Christian, as equal citizens, 'the stranger in your midst,' giving non-Jews precisely the level of dignity and respect that Jews would wish were the roles reversed: 'Do not oppress the stranger because you know what it feels like to be a stranger' (Shemot 23: 9).

Future Tense, p. 176

1. Why is education so important in a society based on social covenant?
2. Do you agree with Rabbi Sacks that Israel, a Jewish state, must integrate all minorities equally into society? Why?
3. How does Jewish history help us realize the importance of protecting minorities?



That is the challenge of Judaism in the State of Israel in our time. Its place is not in party politics, not as an arm of the state, not as a set of segregated enclaves, not as an 'adversary culture', and not as a territorial ideology. Its role is to create, shape, drive and motivate civil society. If religion is not seen by Israelis as a unifying force in society, if religious Jews are not admired for their work with the poor, the lonely and the vulnerable, if Judaism is not the voice of justice and compassion, then something is wrong in the soul of Israel. To be sure, some of this work happens already; there are admirable examples. But there is much more to be done. Judaism in Israel today has lost the prophetic instinct when it needs it most...

Societies need hope. Covenantal societies need high moral aspiration. Israel faces a long and difficult struggle to find peace. There is a real and present danger of national despair. Peace is not something one side can



achieve alone: it is always a duet, never a solo. There is nothing Israel can do to guarantee peace. But there is something it can do to recapture the moral energy that went into the building of the land. It can renew the social covenant. It can create a new civic Judaism, one that embraces religious and secular, Jew and Palestinian alike. Zionism, phase 1, gave back to Jewry what it lacked in dispersion: sovereignty and a state. Zionism phase 2 must re-appropriate what Jewry had even when it lacked a state, namely a profound sense of responsibility to the weak, the poor, the socially marginalized, the neglected and unheard. That is the challenge for a new religious Zionism: to build a society worthy of being a home for the divine presence by honoring the divine image in all its citizens.

Future Tense, pp. 178–180

1. If religion's impact in society is through party politics, what is often the outcome?
2. How can religion become a unifying force in society instead?
3. What does Rabbi Sacks believe is the challenge for a new religious Zionism? What is Zionism phase 2?



Share your analysis: Come together as a class and discuss your answers and reflections on the texts. Make sure you address the critical question: How can Judaism renew the social covenant in the State of Israel?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the text based on the students' answers. Make sure that the students understand the three clear stages that we have brought them through:

- The difference between social contract which creates a state, and social covenant which creates society.
- Why, in the context of history, Israel created its society in the form of a social contract rather than social covenant.
- The role Rabbi Sacks sees for Judaism in transforming Israel into a society based on social covenant rather than social contract.

The Assignment

Project based learning: Using the simulation of being a “Paranormal Activity Investigator”, your students will evaluate and debate the miraculous nature of the history of the modern State of Israel. They will do this through exploring three specific events of their choice, and making an argument for both sides of the question; seeing the hand of God in these narratives, and seeing them as the achievement of man alone. They are asked to conclude the project with their own opinion as to the relationship between God and man in the narrative of modern Jewish history. You may wish to add your own suggestions to the list of events for the students to choose from.



In this unit we have explored the role of the Land of Israel in Judaism and the destiny of the Jewish people. We have also considered the story of the modern State of Israel and reflected on its miraculous nature, and the possible role of man and God in this story.

Part 1: You are a Paranormal Activity Investigator, and your client has asked you to research the history of the modern State of Israel for evidence of miraculous activity. Choose three examples of events in Israel’s history and describe what happened. Then, for each event you have chosen give two sides of the argument – firstly demonstrating God’s hand in the miracle, and conversely, how this could be seen as the work of purely human effort. Your final paragraph should be your own conclusions, whether the history of the State of Israel points towards the hand of God, man’s ingenuity and effort, or a combination of both.

Here are some examples of events from Israel’s history you may wish to research (but there are many others you could present instead):

- The rebirth of Hebrew as a modern language
- The UN Partition Plan vote of 1947
- The War of Independence
- The immigration and absorption of a million refugees in the first decade of Israel’s existence
- The Six-Day War
- The settling of the Negev desert and making it bloom
- The rescue of Jewish communities around the world, including Yemen, Iraq, Ethiopia, and Russia
- Israel’s economic boom in the last two decades

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.

TEN PATHS TO GOD

UNIT 9 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

קידוש השם KIDDUSH HASHEM

The Jewish Task

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Overview: It can be argued that this unit is the most critical in understanding the thought of Rabbi Sacks, as it explores his concept of the Jewish national mission, the central idea in his philosophy of Judaism. For Rabbi Sacks, the Jewish people have been commissioned by God to be His ambassadors on earth, spreading the core values of Judaism. We are to do that by creating a model society, and by being a role model nation, embodying the values that are inherent and central to Judaism.

Educational Aims for this Unit:

- For students to understand the term *Kiddush Hashem* and what it means in a practical way
- To understand the concept of universalism and particularism, and the role of these ideas in the thought of Rabbi Sacks
- To understand what the Jewish National Mission is according to Rabbi Sacks
- To consider what it means to be an ambassador for God through modeling behavior
- To explore the core message of Judaism in order to be living examples
- To explore quotes from non-Jewish thinkers and authors paying testament to the role and impact of the Jews on history

Trigger Activity: *Kiddush Hashem* Google Race. Assuming each of your students can have access to any device that connects to the Internet, have a race to see who is the first to find a story in mainstream media (a reputable news outlet) that can be considered a *Kiddush Hashem*. Once you have a winner (and have given the other students a few more minutes to find their own stories) ask the students to share the stories they have found. Ask the students to define what a *Kiddush Hashem* is, and why this story qualifies as one.

Watch: The opening video for Unit 9



■ **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.



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 Bavel, 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 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

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



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

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



The way of Judaism is particular, but **the concern of Judaism is universal**. Abraham 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.

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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**.

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? ⁷
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?

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

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.

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up if you wish), ask the students to read through the texts that follow and to use the questions to guide their discussion. You may wish to ask them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.

THE COVENANT AT SINAI: A HOLY NATION



וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה
אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אִתְּכֶם אֶתְּמִידוּת וְהָיִיתֶם לִי סֹגֵל מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים כִּי־לִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ
וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מְמֻלָּכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹּר 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?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students' answers. The most important concepts to clarify in this discussion is that the Jewish national mission is to model the core values of Judaism by creating a society (in Israel) based on them.

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*?

Group text analysis: Pair up two or more of the *chavrutot* from the previous section. Allocate each *chabura* at least one of the texts below written in modern times by a non-Jewish author. Make sure all are covered in preparation for the classroom discussion at the end. If there is time, the students can look at the other texts when they have finished. Direct them to read through the texts together and to use the three questions above to guide their discussion. Ask them to use the text as the basis for an argument opposing the premise that Jews have not contributed anything significant to society throughout history.

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.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on 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." Allow each group to make their argument, and encourage them to present the text they were allocated to the rest of the class as the basis for their argument.

The Core Message of Judaism



Exploring the core message of Judaism: In the previous section we learned the idea from Rabbi Sacks that the Jewish national mission was to be different, in order to teach humanity *the dignity of difference*. In this section we will explore this further as a core value in Judaism. Together with your *chavruta*, consider each of the following texts using the questions below to guide your discussion and analysis.

Chavruta text analysis: Ask the students to read through the texts that follow to explore the core message and values of Judaism, using the questions to guide their discussion. You may wish tell them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.



Not until chapter 12 do Avraham and Sarah appear on the scene, and from then on the entire narrative shifts its focus, from humanity as a whole to one man, one woman and their children. They become an extended family, then a collection of tribes, then a nation and eventually a kingdom. In some obscure and unmistakable way – this is the Hebrew Bible’s fundamental theme – *they were to become the carriers of a universal message*. For the God they believed in was not a tribal deity, a God of this people and not that. He is the God of all, creator of heaven and earth, *who in love set His image on all humanity*.

Future Tense, p. 75

1. The first eleven chapters of the Torah contain a universal story. What message does this give us?
2. What does it mean to “carry a universal message”? What do we do with that message?
3. According to Rabbi Sacks, what is the universal message?



The result is a combination, unique to the Hebrew Bible, of universality and particularity. The human condition is universal, but the expressions of that condition are particular. Each nation, each language, each culture has its distinctive character. One nation, that of Avraham and his descendants, is charged with the duty of embodying in its history and laws the sovereignty of God. As this idea became gradually clearer, I found myself putting it in the following proposition: God took one man, then one people, and summoned it to be different *to teach all humanity the dignity of difference*.

Only the combination of a particular faith and a universal God can yield this conclusion. If God is everywhere, and has set His image on everyone, then God exists outside the Abrahamic covenant as well as within. That is the only form of theology that can yield the God-given integrity of otherness, the dignity of the stranger. The alternatives are tribalism – many nations, many gods, or universalism – one God, one faith, and only one gate to salvation.

Future Tense, pp. 80–82

1. What is the “human condition”? Can you give some examples?
2. Does it make sense to ask one unique, particular people to teach the world the *dignity of difference*?
3. What are *tribalism* and *universalism*? Why aren’t they good alternatives to a system of ethics based on the *dignity of difference*?



כֹּו וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם בְּצִלְמוֹ בְּעֵלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female He created them.

Bereishit 1:27

1. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? How can God have an image?
2. Who is created in the image of God? What message is contained in that fact?
3. How does this knowledge change the way we live in the world?



We are all in God's image, and we are all different . . . Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch saw this idea already foreshadowed in the symbol of the covenant God made with humanity after the Flood, namely the rainbow. Hirsch suggests that it represents the white light of God's radiance refracted into the infinite shadings of the spectrum.

Future Tense, p. 79

1. Can you explain the physics of white light refracted into "the infinite shadings of the spectrum"?
2. How does Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch use this as a metaphor for understanding the concept of all of humanity being created in the image of God?
3. How are these ideas (the image of God and the rainbow) connected to the story of the flood and the covenant God made with humanity following the flood?



In terms of ethics, Judaism was the first religion to insist upon the dignity of the person and the sanctity of human life. For the first time, the individual could no longer be sacrificed for the group. Murder became not just a crime against man but a sin against God: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God has God made man." Already prefigured here is the phrase in the American Declaration of Independence that speaks of all human beings as "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." We cannot give up what is not ours. The sanctity of life is written into the structure of the universe by the terms of creation. It is a non-negotiable standard by which all human conduct is to be judged.

A Letter in the Scroll, p. 72

1. What examples are given in this text of the practical, ethical ramifications of all of humanity being created in the image of God?
2. What is the ultimate crime against another human being? What reason does Rabbi Sacks give for this also being a crime against God?
3. This idea was sanctified in the American Declaration of Independence. Does this mean that American society has always understood and protected the image of God in all of its citizens? Can you give examples of when this was not the case? Do you think that American society, Western society in general, and indeed all of humanity, is moving closer to this ideal?



Nowhere is the singularity of biblical ethics more evident than in its treatment of the issue that has proved to be the most difficult in the history of human interaction, namely *the problem of the stranger*, the one who is not like us. Most societies at most times have been suspicious of, and aggressive toward, strangers. That is understandable, even natural. Strangers are non-kin. They come from beyond the tribe. They stand outside the network of reciprocity that creates and sustains communities. That is what makes the Mosaic books unusual in the history of moral thought. As the rabbis noted, the Hebrew Bible in one verse commands, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”, but in no fewer than 36 places commands us to “love the stranger”.

The Dignity of Difference, p. 58

1. Why is it natural to be “suspicious of...strangers” in society?
2. Is it understandable that the Jewish people might be even more suspicious of the stranger than the average person? Why?
3. Yet the Torah asks us to be super-sensitive to the stranger, because we know what it is like. How do we know? Do you think this is why Jewish history has played out as it has? Explain.



Share your analysis: Come together as a class and share your answers and perspective on each text. Listen carefully to the perspectives of your classmates.

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

1. What is the *dignity of difference*? What is the core value inherent in the concept? What are the biblical sources for this value?
2. Do you agree with Rabbi Sacks that this is a core value of Judaism?
3. How does this impact our everyday lives as individuals, and our vision as a people?

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students’ answers. Use the three meta-questions to guide the analysis of the sources and the discussion.

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.

Project Based Learning: This assignment asks the students to research and present creatively a list of examples of Jews who have made a *Kiddush Hashem* through their important contributions to society. Encourage your students to suggest how these contributions to society were based on the core values of Judaism. You may wish to dedicate some time to allow the students to share their presentations with the class.

UNIT 10 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

UNIT 10 – Educator Guide / Advanced Level

מחויבות RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY

The Jewish Future

Based on the teachings of Rabbi Sacks



Introduction

Overview: Building on the central concept of the Jewish national mission that was explored in Unit 9, this unit presents Rabbi Sacks approach to responsibility. For Rabbi Sacks, the very definition of a Jew is one who sees the problems in the world and seeks to fix them. Judaism is God's call to responsibility, and to be a Jew is to accept responsibility.

Educational aims for this unit:


- For students to consider that despite our small number (or perhaps because of it) we have been chosen to fulfill a national mission
- For students to understand that Judaism is a call to responsibility to improve the world
- For students to see that while this responsibility may seem overwhelming, it can be fulfilled with small, individual acts
- For students to connect to these ideas in a practical and personal way, and to consider how they can fulfill their own sense of responsibility

Trigger activity: Take your class on a tour of your school campus to find ways in which they can take responsibility and improve the school environment. This could include picking up trash, tidying hallways, helping visitors to find their way, and thanking the staff that perform these acts daily, such as the custodians, dining room staff, security staff, office staff, etc.

Watch: The opening video for Unit 10



■ **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.

For every Jew today there are roughly 155 Christians and 120 Muslims. More than three thousand years later, the words of Moshe in *Sefer Devarim* remain true: 'The Lord did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of peoples.' We were then. We are now.

Why did God choose this tiny people for so great a task, to be His witnesses in the world, the people who fought against the idols of the age in every age, the carriers of His message to humanity? Why are we so few? Why this dissonance between the greatness of the task and the smallness of the people charged with carrying it out?





There is a strange passage in the Torah in *Shemot* 30:12: ‘When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the Lord a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no mishap (*negef*) will come on them when you number them.’ The implication is unmistakable. It is dangerous to count Jews. Centuries later, King David ignored the warning and disaster struck the nation. So why is it dangerous to count Jews?

Nations take censuses on the assumption that there is strength in numbers. The larger the people, the stronger it is. And that is why it is dangerous to count Jews. If Jews ever believed that their strength lay in numbers, we would give way, God forbid, to despair. In Israel they were always a minor power surrounded by great empires. In the Diaspora, everywhere, they were a minority.

Where then did Jewish strength lie if not in numbers? The Torah gives an answer of surpassing beauty. God tells Moshe: Do not count Jews. Ask them to give, and then count the contributions. In terms of numbers we are small. But in terms of our contributions, we are vast. In almost every age, Jews have given something special to the world: the Torah, the literature of the prophets, the poetry of the Psalms, the rabbinic wisdom of *Mishnah*, *Midrash* and *Talmud*, the vast medieval library of commentaries and codes, philosophy and mysticism.

Then, as the doors of Western society opened, Jews made their mark in one field after another: in business, industry, the arts and sciences, cinema, the media, medicine, law and almost every field of academic life. They revolutionized thought in physics, economics, sociology, anthropology and psychology. Jews have won Nobel Prizes out of all proportion to our numbers.

The simplest explanation is that to be a Jew is to be asked to give, to contribute, to make a difference, to help in the monumental task that has engaged Jews since the dawn of our history, to make the world a home for the Divine presence, a place of justice, compassion, human dignity and the sanctity of life. Though our ancestors cherished their relationship with God, they never saw it as a privilege. They knew it was a responsibility. God asked great things of the Jewish people, and in so doing, made them great.

When it comes to making a contribution, numbers do not count. What matters is commitment, passion, dedication to a cause. Precisely because we are so small as a people, every one of us counts. We each make a difference to the fate of Judaism and the Jewish people. Zechariah said it best: ‘Not by might nor by power but by My spirit, says the Almighty Lord.’

Physical strength needs numbers. The larger the nation, the more powerful it is. But when it comes to spiritual strength, you need not numbers but a sense of responsibility. You need a people, each of whom knows that



he or she must contribute something to the Jewish, and to the human story. The Jewish question is not, What can the world give me? It is, What can I give to the world? Judaism is God's call to responsibility.

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

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When it comes to making a contribution, numbers do not count. What matters is commitment, passion, dedication to a cause. **Precisely because we are so small as a people, every one of us counts.** We each make a difference to the fate of Judaism and the Jewish people. Zechariah said it best: 'Not by might nor by power but by My spirit, says the Almighty Lord.'

Physical strength needs numbers. The larger the nation, the more powerful it is. But when it comes to spiritual strength, you need not numbers but a sense of responsibility. You need a people, each of whom knows that he or she must contribute something to the Jewish, and to the human story. The Jewish question is not, What can the world give me? It is, What can I give to the world? **Judaism is God's call to responsibility.**



Why did God choose this tiny people

1. When was the Jewish people chosen?
2. What does being chosen mean to you? Are you comfortable with the idea of a chosen people?
3. Just how small is this people? Compare the number of Jewish people to the population of the country you live in.

so great a task

1. What task was the Jewish people chosen for?
2. Why do you think Rabbi Sacks describes this as a “great” task?
3. How do you think we are doing with this task?

Why are we so few?

1. Do you think there are factors, for example events in Jewish history, that can explain why the Jewish people are so few in number?
2. Do you think a larger people would have an advantage in fulfilling this “great task”?
3. Do you think our small number may be an important part of God’s plan for the Jewish people and its national mission?

Ask them to give

1. What are Jews asked to give in order to be counted?
2. Rabbi Sacks says there is an inherent message in this *mitzvah*. What is it?
3. Can you explain what it means that the Jewish people’s strength is not in numbers, but rather in what they give?

in terms of our contributions, we are vast

1. Rabbi Sacks lists many contributions that the Jewish people have given to the world. What are they?
2. Why do you think he calls these “vast”?
3. Do you think we have contributed to the world beyond our numbers? Can you give proof to support your opinion?



Precisely because we are so small as a people, every one of us counts.

1. Do you feel as if you are a member of a small people?
2. If so, how does that impact the way you live your life?
3. Does it encourage you to feel a sense of “commitment, passion, and dedication to a cause”? Why?

Judaism is God’s call to responsibility.

1. What does Rabbi Sacks mean by a “call to responsibility”? Responsibility to do what?
2. Do you feel that sense of responsibility?
3. Where do you find this call to responsibility within Judaism? Can you give examples?

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

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

The Core Concepts

Chavruta text analysis: In the same *chavrutot* (or you could mix them up if you wish), ask the students to read through this next text, written by Rabbi Sacks, that presents the core concepts of the value of responsibility in Judaism. Each of these concepts is more deeply explored in the supplementary sources that follow. Direct them to read through the supplementary sources together using the questions to guide their discussion. You may tell them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis. Ask them to focus on how the supplementary sources expand our understanding of the core concepts.

Exploration of the Core Concepts: Together with your *chavruta*, examine the following quote from a short pamphlet entitled *From Renewal to Responsibility*, written by Rabbi Sacks to mark the beginning of his second decade as Chief Rabbi. Then look at the supplementary sources provided below for each of the core concepts highlighted in the text. Make sure you understand it fully, and write down any questions you have. Explain how the supplementary sources help you understand the core concept they are connected to. Use the questions to guide your discussion and analysis.

A BLESSING TO OTHERS

To be a Jew is to be alert to the poverty, the suffering, the loneliness of others. Karl Marx called religion ‘the opium of the people’. No religion is less so than Judaism. Opium de-sensitizes us to pain. Judaism sensitizes us to it.

No Jew who has lived Judaism can be without a social conscience. **To be a Jew is to accept responsibility.** The world will not get better of its own accord. Nor will we make it a more human place by leaving it to others – politicians, columnists, protestors, campaigners – making them our agents to bring redemption on our behalf. Life is God’s question; our choices are the answer.

To be a Jew is to be a blessing to others. That is what God told Avraham in the first words he spoke to him, words that four thousand years ago set Jewish history into motion. ‘Through you,’ He said, ‘all the families on earth will be blessed.’ To be a Jew is not to ask for a blessing. It is to be a blessing.

Judaism is about creating spiritual energy: the energy that, if used for the benefit of others, changes lives and begins to change the world. Jewish life is not the search for personal salvation. It is a restless desire to change the world into a place in which God can feel at home. **There are a thousand ways in which we help to do this**, and each is precious, one not more so than another.

When we give, when we say, **‘If this is wrong, let me be among the first**



to help put it right, we create moments of imperishable moral beauty. We know how small we are, and how inadequate to the tasks God has set us. Even the greatest Jew of all time, Moshe, began his conversation with God with the words, **‘Who am I?’** But it is not we who start by being equal to the challenge; it is the challenge that makes us equal to it. We are as big as our ideals. The higher they are, the taller we stand.

From Renewal to Responsibility

To be a Jew is to accept responsibility.

1. What does it mean to accept responsibility? Who and what do we have to take responsibility for?
2. Why does the world need fixing? What needs fixing? Why do you need to be the one to fix it?

SHARING A FATE

A man in a boat began to bore a hole under his seat. His fellow passengers protested. ‘What concern is it of yours?’ he responded, ‘I am making a hole under my seat, not yours.’ They replied, ‘That is so, but when the water enters and the boat sinks, we too will drown.’

Vayikra Rabba, 4:6

THE GREAT PRINCIPLE

All Israel are responsible for one another.

Sifra, Bechukotai, 2:7

NO ONE LEFT TO SPEAK UP

In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Pastor Martin Niemöeller, First They Came...

1. Can you apply the message of the man in the boat to today, and to your own life?
2. Why are all members of the Jewish people responsible for one another? Do you think we are also responsible for non-Jewish neighbors and friends? What about non-Jewish strangers?



3. What is the message of the famous quote from Martin Niemöller?
4. Each one of these quotes speaks about a different kind of responsibility. Can you explain the differences between them? (Clue: try using the words passive and active, and negative and positive actions)
5. Do you feel a sense of responsibility? To what?

There are a thousand ways in which we help to do this

1. Name three.
2. How can you as an individual fix the world? What can you do today to help fix the world?

OUR NEXT ACT CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Throughout the year, everyone should see himself and the world as if evenly poised between innocence and guilt. If he commits a sin he tilts the balance of his fate and that of the world to guilt, causing destruction. If he performs a good deed he shifts the balance of his fate and that of the world to innocence, bringing salvation and deliverance to others. That is the meaning of [the biblical phrase] ‘the righteous person is the foundation of the world’ (*Mishlei* 10: 25), namely that by an act of righteousness we influence the fate of, and save, the world.

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah, 3:4

THE STARFISH

An old man was walking on the beach at dawn when he noticed a young man picking up starfish stranded by the retreating tide, and throwing them back into the sea one by one. He went up to him and asked him why he was doing this. The young man replied that the starfish would die if left exposed to the morning sun. ‘But the beach goes on for miles, and there are thousands of starfish. You will not be able to save them all. How can your effort make a difference?’ The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. ‘To this one’, he said, ‘it makes a difference.’

Loren Eiseley, The Star Thrower



A SMALL ACT OF CIVILITY

In 1966 an 11-year-old black boy moved with his parents and family to a white neighborhood in Washington. Sitting with his two brothers and two sisters on the front step of the house, he waited to see how they would be greeted. They were not. Passers-by turned to look at them but no one gave them a smile or even a glance of recognition. All the fearful stories he had heard about how whites treated blacks seemed to be coming true. Years later, writing about those first days in their new home, he says, 'I knew we were not welcome here. I knew we would not be liked here. I knew we would have no friends here. I knew we should not have moved here'.

As he was thinking those thoughts, a white woman coming home from work passed by on the other side of the road. She turned to the children and with a broad smile said, 'Welcome!' Disappearing into the house, she emerged minutes later with a tray laden with drinks and cream-cheese and jelly sandwiches which she brought over to the children, making them feel at home. That moment – the young man later wrote – changed his life. It gave him a sense of belonging where there was none before. It made him realize, at a time when race relations in the United States were still fraught, that a black family could feel at home in a white area and that there could be relationships that were color-blind. Over the years, he learned to admire much about the woman across the street, but it was that first spontaneous act of greeting that became, for him, a definitive memory. It broke down a wall of separation and turned strangers into friends.

The young man, Stephen Carter, is now a law professor at Yale, and he eventually wrote a book about what he learned that day. He called it *Civility*. The name of the woman, he tells us, was Sara Kestenbaum, and he adds that it was no coincidence that she was a religious Jew. 'In the Jewish tradition,' he notes, 'such civility is called *Chessed* – the doing of acts of kindness – which is in turn derived from the understanding that human beings are made in the image of God.'

Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, pp. 45–45

1. Why do you think Rambam encourages us to think that the fate of the world is in our hands and based on our very next act?
2. What is the message of the 'Star Thrower'? How can you apply that message to your life?
3. How did Sara Kestenbaum change the world?
4. How can small acts change the world? Why is that important to realize?
5. What small act to change the world can you do today?



'If this is wrong, let me be among the first to help put it right,'

1. Why be the first? What do you benefit from this?
2. Are there occasions when standing by, and letting others more qualified attend to a situation, might actually be the right thing to do? Is it wrong to stand by and watch others more qualified get there first?

DO NOT BE A BY-STANDER



Do not stand idly by when your brother's life is in danger. I am the Lord.

Vayikra 19:16

MORDECHAI AND ESTHER: TAKING RESPONSIBILITY



When Esther's words were reported to Mordechai, he sent back this answer: 'Do not think that because you are in the king's house, you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will come from elsewhere, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?'

Megillat Esther 4:12-14

THE RIGHTEOUS DO NOT COMPLAIN



The pure and righteous do not complain about wickedness: they increase righteousness. They do not complain about heresy: they increase faith. They do not complain about ignorance: they increase wisdom.

R. Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohen Kook, *Arpilai Tohar*, pp. 27-28

1. What is a by-stander? What is wrong with being a by-stander? How can you balance that with what we discussed in the previous question – that sometimes we have to let others more qualified do the job?
2. Mordechai asks Esther to hear her calling, to step up to her destiny in history. Do you have a calling? What do you think your role in history could be?
3. The idea contained in Rabbi Kook's quote could also be said in the form of a well-known saying: "If you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem." What does that mean?
4. What is the danger in always thinking that someone else will do it?
5. How can you step up today and take responsibility for something?



'Who am I?'

1. Are we inadequate to the task of changing the world? If so, then why bother trying?
2. Does the knowledge that even Moshe doubted his own abilities help you? How?

"I WILL BE WITH YOU"

But Moshe said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the Israelites from Egypt?"

And He said, "I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you. And when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

Shemot 3:11–12

HILLEL'S WISDOM

Hillel used to say: If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

Pirkei Avot, 1: 14

IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO COMPLETE THE TASK

Rabbi Tarfon said: The day is short, the task is great, the laborers are lazy, the reward is much, and the Master insistent. He used to say: It is not for you to complete the task, but neither are you free to stand aside from it.

Pirkei Avot, 2: 20–21

1. How did God answer Moshe, and how did this help? Does it help you?
2. Hillel teaches three very important lessons. What are they? Which of these are critical to the theme of this unit?
3. If we cannot complete the job, why start it?
4. Do you believe you can change the world? How?

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. Ensure that each of the concepts is fully explored, and that the students understand its source in Jewish thought.

Radical Responsibility

Group text analysis: Pair up two or more of the *chavrutot* from the previous section. Ask the *chaburot* to examine the following four texts. The first is a *midrash*, followed by Rabbi Sacks' analysis of the *midrash* in his book *A Letter in the Scroll*. The final two sources in this section, found in his book *Future Tense*, explore Rabbi Sacks' concept of responsibility. Direct your students to use the questions that follow each source to guide their discussion. You may wish to ask them to write down their answers, or just to use the questions as an oral guide to their textual analysis.

If your class is not familiar with *midrashic* literature in general, and the literary device of the *mashal* / *nimshal*, then it would be worthwhile explaining how they are used as an introduction to this section.

Due to the complex nature of this *midrash* and the message that Rabbi Sacks extrapolates from it, extra guidance and answers are provided in this Educator Guide.



The concept of responsibility in the writings of Rabbi Sacks: Together with your *chavruta* join another pair to form a small *chabura* (study group). Examine the following sources to explore how Rabbi Sacks views the central role of the concept of responsibility in Judaism.

This first source is a *midrash*, which uses the literary device of *mashal* and *nimshal*. A *mashal* is a story that is given in order to teach us something about the text we are studying (here we are looking at the story of *Lech Lecha* in the 12th chapter of *Sefer Bereishit*, where Avraham is told by God to leave his birthplace and home and journey to the Land of Israel). The *nimshal* is the lesson we learn from the *mashal* about the original text. The text that follows this *midrash* is Rabbi Sacks' explanation of the *midrash*, and the quotes that follow that are further ideas from Rabbi Sacks on the subject of responsibility in Judaism.

Use the questions that follow each source to guide your discussion and analysis.



WHO IS THIS AVRAHAM?

אמר רבי יצחק משל **לאחד** שהיה **עובר ממקום למקום** וראה **בירה** אחת **דולקת** אמר תאמר שהבירה זו בלא **מנהיג** הציץ עליו **בעל הבירה** אמר לו אני הוא בעל הבירה כך לפי שהיה אבינו אברהם אומר תאמר שהעולם הזה בלא **מנהיג** הציץ עליו הקב"ה ואמר לו אני הוא **בעל העולם** (שם) ויתאו המלך יפוך כי הוא אדוניך ויתאו המלך יפוך לפותיך בעולם והשתחוי לו הוי ויאמר ה' אל אברהם:

Said R. Isaac: This may be compared to **a man** who was **traveling from place to place** when he saw a **building** in **flames**. 'Is it possible that the building lacks a **manhig**?' he wondered. The **owner of the building** **peeped out** and said, 'I am the owner of the building.' Similarly, because Avraham our father said, '**Is it conceivable that the world is without a manhig**?' the Holy One, blessed be He, peeped out and said to him, 'I am the **Ba'al of the World**.'

Bereishit Rabba, 39:1

a man / לאחד

1. Who is the man in the *mashal* / *nimshal*?

■ **Answer:** Avraham

traveling from place to place / עובר ממקום למקום

1. In the *nimshal* what do you think the traveling might be referring to?

Answer: It could be Avraham's journey to the Land of Israel following the command from God "*Lech Lecha*", or it could be a spiritual wandering. The *midrash* addresses the question of who is this Avraham who God has chosen to be the progenitor of His chosen people. The Torah text introduces no biographical information, and the *midrash* addresses that missing information in the Torah by presenting us with a philosophizing Avraham, struggling to find meaning in the world, and coming to the conclusion that there is a caring God from his own deductive powers of reason. We see here that it was Avraham who found God, rather than God revealing Himself first.

building / בירה

1. What does the Hebrew word **בירה** usually mean?

■ **Answer:** Capital city, as in **שושן הבירה** (Megillat Esther 1:2).

2. What kind of a building do you think **בירה** must be referring to here?

Answer: Probably a palace – the seat of power, much the same as the US Capitol in Washington D.C. The building is a grand one that someone has invested time and money in, adding to the power of Avraham's bewilderment that it is on fire and no one is concerned with extinguishing the flames.



3. What does this building refer to in the *nimshal*? What is the *midrash* trying to teach us by using this word in the *mashal*?

Answer: The world. The *midrash* is emphasizing the point that the world around us has grandeur and beauty, and has been created with tremendous investment, as opposed to a random chain of scientific events and processes.

flames / דולקת

1. What do you think the *midrash* is saying the flames represent for the *nimshal*?

Answer: The flames represent chaos and evil in the world.

manhig / מנהיג

1. What does the word *manhig* / מנהיג mean?

Answer: The etymological meaning of the word is leader.

2. What does it mean in the context of the *mashal* (i.e. what do we call the *manhig* of a building)?

Answer: The “leader” of a building is someone who has been given the responsibility to maintain the building.

3. Why does the man ask where the *manhig* of the building is?

Answer: The man is bewildered that a grand and beautiful building has been abandoned without someone to look after it (and extinguish the fire).

owner of the building / בעל הבירה

1. How is the owner of the building different from the *manhig* of a building?

Answer: The owner of a building has invested time and funds in the development of the building, and may or may not benefit from living in or using it, but is not necessarily the person that is responsible for its maintenance. This is especially true of a luxury building such as a palace or parliamentary building, where it is more than likely that someone is employed to have this responsibility (such as a butler or building services manager).

2. Who is probably the owner of this building in the *mashal*?

Answer: If it is a royal palace then the owner is likely to be the king. If it is a mansion of some sort then a wealthy owner will have paid for and may live in the building, but does not necessarily run the building.



3. Why isn't he putting out the fire?

■ **Answer:** He has employed someone else who is probably more competent in this task.

peeped out / הציץ

1. Why do you think he is "peeping"?

■ **Answer:** Perhaps he is scared or trapped. The word suggests vulnerability and helplessness.

2. What message is the *midrash* teaching us by using that word in the *mashal*?

■ **Answer:** In the *nimshal* the "owner" is God. While philosophically it is difficult to say that God is vulnerable and helpless, the *midrash* suggests that God chooses to be passive in the face of chaos and evil in the world. The question is, why?

'Is it conceivable that the world is without a *manhig*?'

1. What has Avraham seen in the world to cause him to ask this question?

■ **Answer:** There is so much evil and injustice in the world, Avraham seems to be considering the possibility that there is no "*manhig*" looking after it. However, the double language of the *midrash*, אומר תאמר, suggests that Avraham is asking this question to himself, and therefore it is rhetorical.

Ba'al of the World / בעל העולם

1. Does God answer Avraham's question?

■ **Answer:** It seems not. He appears and introduces Himself as the *Ba'al* (Owner / Creator) of the world, while Avraham has asked where the *manhig* of the world is.

2. Why do you think the *midrash* describes God as the *Ba'al* of the world rather than the *manhig*?

■ **Answer:** The message here is that God decides not to function in the role of *manhig*, but rather allows space for man to step up and take responsibility.

3. What message do you think the *midrash* wants to convey in describing God as "peeping"?

■ **Answer:** While God is the Creator of the world (justifying Avraham's clear sense that there is a Creator of this world of beauty and grandeur), and it is certainly within His power to control every aspect of the world, including "extinguishing the fire", He chooses instead to partner with man, and to give man the ability to help in the running of the world.



A PALACE IN FLAMES



Avraham sees a palace. The world has order, and therefore it has a creator. But the palace is in flames. The world is full of *disorder*, of evil, violence and injustice. Now, no one builds a building and then deserts it. If there is a fire there must be someone to put it out. The building must have an owner. If so, where is he? That is the question and it gives Avraham no peace...

From time immemorial to the present, there have always been two ways of seeing the world. The first says, There is no God. There are contending forces, chance and necessity, the chance that produces variation, and the necessity that gives the strong victory over the weak. From this perspective, the evolution of the universe is inexorable and blind; there is no justice and no judge, and therefore there is no question. We can know *how*, but we can never know *why*, for there is no why. There is no palace. There are only flames.

The second view insists that there is God. All that exists because He made it. All that happens transpires because He willed it. Therefore all injustice is an illusion. Perhaps the world itself is an illusion. When the innocent suffer, it is to teach them to find faith through suffering, obedience through chastisement, serenity through acceptance, the soul's strength through the body's torments. Evil is the cloak that masks the good. There is a question, but there is always an answer, for if we could understand God we would know that the world is as it is because it would be less good were it otherwise. There is a palace. Therefore there are no flames.

The faith of Avraham begins in the refusal to accept either answer, for both contain a truth, and between them there is a contradiction. The first accepts the reality of evil, the second the reality of God. The first says that if evil exists, God does not exist. The second says that if God exists, evil does not exist. But supposing both exist? Supposing there are both the palace and the flames?

... Judaism begins not in wonder that the world is, but in protest that the world is not as it ought to be. It is in that cry, that sacred discontent, that Avraham's journey begins... the easy answer would be to deny the reality of either God or evil. Then the contradiction would disappear and we could live at peace with the world. But to be a Jew is to have the courage to refuse easy answers and to reject either consolation or despair. God exists; therefore life has a purpose. Evil exists; therefore we have not yet achieved that purpose. Until then we must travel, just as Avraham and Sarah travelled, to begin the task of shaping a different kind of world...

What haunts us about the *midrash* is not just Avraham's question but God's reply. He gives an answer that is no answer. He says, in effect, 'I am here,' without explaining the flames. He does not attempt to put out the fire.



It is as if, instead, He were calling for help. God made the building. Man set it on fire, and only man can put out the flames. Avraham asks God, 'Where are you?' God replies, 'I am here, where are you?' Man asks God, 'Why did you abandon the world?' God asks man, 'Why did you abandon me?' So begins a dialogue between earth and heaven that has no counterpart in any other faith, and which has not ceased for four thousand years. In these questions, which only the other can answer, God and man find one another. Perhaps only together can they extinguish the flames...

God gives His word to man, and man gives his word to God. God teaches, man acts, and together they begin the task of *tikkun olam*, 'repairing, or mending, the world'. They become, in the rabbinic phrase, 'partners in the work of creation'.

A Letter in the Scroll pp. 54–56

1. According to Rabbi Sacks, what does the palace represent? What do the flames represent?

Answer: The palace represents the world of order, beauty, and grandeur, while the flames represent chaos and evil.

2. What kind of people look at the world and cannot see the palace, only the flames?

Answer: Those people who use only science to explain the origins of the universe, and have no room in their outlook for a Creator, see the world around us as a result of random processes and coincidences. There is no design or plan, just chaos and randomness that sometimes, by chance, looks as if it has order and design.

3. What kind of people look at the world and can only see the palace, and refuse to see the flames? How do they miss the flames?

Answer: Some deeply religious people (both Jewish and non-Jewish) refuse to see any evil or chaos in the world. They explain everything as the hand of God, no matter how difficult it is to understand why God would allow terrible situations and evil events such as genocide or disease and poverty.

4. What approach does Judaism take?

Answer: Judaism refuses to accept an either/or approach, which Rabbi Sacks believes is an easy way out of the more challenging position that there is both a palace and flames. The world has a Creator and a design, but there also exists chaos and evil.

5. If there is both a palace and flames, why doesn't God put out the flames? Who does Judaism expect to put out the flames? Why?

Answer: God is asking us, humanity, to partner with Him to put out the flames; to redeem and make order in the world, and become true "partners in creation".



FUTURE TENSE



We will not understand Judaism, or the Jewish people, or the trajectory of Jewish history, until we ask: ‘What made Jews different?’ ... What are Jews called on to do? And why, in the twenty-first century, does it matter? The answer ... has to do with the future tense. Judaism is supremely the religion of the not-yet ... The answer, I believe, lies in four strange, highly distinctive features of Judaism as a faith.

The first occurs at the formative moment in the life of Moshe, when the prophet encounters God at the burning bush ... Moshe asks, ‘Who are you? When the Israelites ask, who has sent you, what shall I say?’ God replies in a cryptic three-word phrase, *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* (Shemot 3:14) ... God tells Moshe to say to the Israelites, ‘“I will be” sent me to you.’ It is as if God had said, ‘My name is the future tense. If you seek to understand me, first you will have to understand the nature and significance of the future tense.’ ...

The second is the Jewish sense of time ... in the Hebrew Bible, a new concept of time was born ... Time, for ancients, was cyclical, a matter of the slow revolving of the seasons and the generations, an endlessly repeated sequence of birth, growth, decline and death ... The Hebrew Bible is a radical break with this way of seeing things. God is to be found in history, not just in nature. Things do change. Human life is an arena of transformation ... until Avraham and Moshe, no one thought of time as a journey in which where you are tomorrow will not be where you were yesterday ... the future is not a mere repetition of the past. Change, growth, development, are decisive moments that alter everything. God is not only present in eternity. He is also present in the here and now, in the process of change and transformation ...

The third has to do with the nature of the Jewish narrative ... The Hebrew Bible is a book of stories, quintessentially so. Whereas science and philosophy represent truth as system, Judaism represents truth as story, a sequence of events that must play themselves out in and through time ... there is no other story quite like this. It breaks all the rules of narrative form. It leads us to expectations that are never met in the way we anticipated them. The Hebrew Bible is a story without an ending ... The Bible leaves us ... with ‘the unappeased memory of a future yet to be fulfilled’ ... in Judaism we are always in the middle of a story whose ending lies in the future ...

Which brings us to the fourth of Judaism’s unique ideas. It is the only civilization whose golden age is in the future. Judaism invented the messianic idea ... to be a Jew has always been to answer the question ‘Has the messiah come?’ with the reply ‘Not yet’. Not while there is war and terror, hunger and injustice, disease and poverty, corruption and inequality. Hence the fourth conclusion: in Judaism the golden age is always in the future.



We have, then, in Judaism four remarkable, related ideas: a God whose name is in the future tense, a future-orientated concept of time, a literature whose stories always end in a future-not-yet-reached, and a golden age which belongs to the future.

Future Tense, pp. 231–241

1. How was 'Jewish time' different to the perception of time in the ancient world?

Answer: 'Jewish time' is a progression, where the future can be better than the present and the past. Ancient time was a never-ending, cyclical repetition of events.

2. According to Rabbi Sacks, why doesn't the story of the *Tanach* have an ending?

Answer: *Tanach*, and in fact Jewish history, has no ending because we have not yet arrived at the ending, or rather we have not yet achieved the ending. We have work to do to achieve the redemption of the world, and when we achieve that that will give us the ending that is missing in Jewish history and the Jewish Bible.

3. Does Jewish history have an ending? When?

Answer: There will be an end to Jewish history, but we have not reached it yet. The end of Jewish history will be the messianic age, when the world will be fully redeemed.

4. What does the future tense have to do with the Jewish people's national mission?

Answer: By focusing on the future, Judaism encourages us to take responsibility for the world now in order to reach a time in which redemption is possible. The act of taking on this responsibility is called *Tikkun Olam*.

5. Is this idea found in the *midrash* we explored at the beginning of this section? Where?

Answer: This is the message contained in God "peeping" out from the "building in flames", and announcing Himself as the *Ba'al* of the world. It's as if He is extending His hand in partnership, inviting Avraham, the Jewish people, and humanity, to partner with Him in the task of *Tikkun Olam*.



THE VOICE OF HOPE IN THE CONVERSATION OF MANKIND

This was perhaps the greatest contribution of Judaism – via the Judaic roots of Christianity – to the West. The idea that time is an arena of change, and that freedom and creativity are God’s gift to humanity, resulted in astonishing advances in science and our understanding of the world, technology and our ability to control the human environment, economics and our ability to lift people out of poverty and starvation, medicine and our ability to cure disease. It led to the abolition of slavery, the growth of a more egalitarian society, the enhanced position of women, and the emergence of democracy and liberalism . . .

To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope. Every ritual, every command, every syllable of the Jewish story is a protest against escapism, resignation and the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism, the religion of the free God, is a religion of freedom. Jewish faith is written in the future tense. It is belief in a future that is not yet but could be, if we heed God’s call, obey His will and act together as a covenantal community. The name of the Jewish future is hope . . .

Jews were and are still called on to be the voice of hope in the conversation of humankind.

Future Tense, pp. 249–252

1. How did the Jewish conception of time lead to the Jewish people’s greatest contribution to the world?

Answer: Because Jews have always understood that the future can be better than the present and past, this has always encouraged us to work hard to make it so, contributing to the world in all the fields that bring progress to humanity.

2. How does the Jewish conception of time lead to hope?

Answer: If the future can be better than the present and past, then this gives us hope that it will be so if we work hard to achieve it.

3. What does it mean that “Jewish faith is written in the future tense”?

Answer: Because Judaism as a religion and a civilization is constantly focused on the future this leads to a culture that naturally works hard today to make the world in the future a better place.

4. How can we be “the voice of hope in the conversation of humankind”?

Answer: By spreading these messages and modeling the values that are inherent to Judaism. We do this by working hard to contribute to the world in the progression of mankind, partnering in *Tikkun Olam* in order to bring redemption closer.



5. How do the ideas that Rabbi Sacks has presented here lead to a radical sense of responsibility to the world?

Answer: These ideas are transmitted in all of our Jewish texts and rituals. They are at the center of the very definition of what it means to be a Jew. It's almost as if they are present in our spiritual DNA when we are born, and explains why so many Jews, whether they are religiously observant or not, feel a deep sense of responsibility to contribute to the world and the wellbeing of humanity.

Frontal teaching: Facilitate a class discussion on the texts based on the students' answers. Ensure that the students understand Rabbi Sacks presentation of the core value in Judaism of radical responsibility.

The Assignment



Final Thoughts: The following text, by Rabbi Sacks, summarizes the lessons and concepts we have been studying in this unit, and may be used as the basis for the final assignment:



In 1888, Alfred Nobel, the man who invented dynamite, was reading his morning papers when, with a shock, he found himself reading his own obituary. It turned out that a journalist had made a simple mistake. It was Nobel's *brother* who had died.

What horrified Nobel was what he read. It spoke about “the dynamite king” who had made a fortune from explosives. Nobel suddenly realized that if he did not change his life, that was all he would be remembered for. At that moment he decided to dedicate his fortune to creating five annual prizes for those who’d made outstanding contributions in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature and peace. Nobel chose to be remembered not for selling weapons of destruction but for honoring contributions to human knowledge. The question Yom Kippur forces on us is not so much “Will we live?” but “How will we live?” For what would we wish to be remembered?

The Koren Yom Kippur Machzor

Part 1: Write your own obituary. How do you want to be remembered? Write an obituary looking back on your life (of 120 years!) based on all the things you plan to accomplish in your lifetime. What impact have you made on the world?

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.

Reflective Learning: This assignment asks the students to take the concepts and values they have studied in this unit and apply them to their own lives. While it is true that they are asked here to consider the end of their life, it should be made clear to the students that the focus of the assignment is the hopes and dreams of the person they wish to become and the things they wish to achieve.

TEN PATHS TO GOD

EPILOGUE – Educator Guide

להיות יהודי WHY I AM A JEW

Based on the teachings of 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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