Lesson Plan: Jewish Identity

The following lesson plan is a suggestion of how some of the resources contained in this unit could be incorporated into a 60-minute class period for a class of high-school aged students. This will focus solely on a particular idea within the thought of Rabbi Sacks. There are many other themes and teaching opportunities found in this unit of resources which would take more classroom-time to explore with your students.

Goal: For your students to begin considering what their Judaism means to them, inspired by Rabbi’s Sacks own philosophy of the roots of Jewish identity.

1-5 minutes: Opening Activity

- Play the new whiteboard animation video On Being Jewish to your students. www.RabbiSacks.org/videos/on-being-jewish/
- Ask your students to close their eyes and imagine they are holding the book that has been written by each of their ancestors, from their parents and grandparents all the way back through the generations to Avraham.
- Ask them to consider the following questions:
  - What does it feel like to hold this book in your hands?
  - What languages do you think the previous chapters would be written in?
  - What would you talk about with the authors of your book?
  - Turn to the last blank chapter with your name on it. What do you feel when you look at your name on that blank page?
  - What would you like to write on that page?
  - Why is it important that you write something?
- Select a few of your students to share their thoughts on the video and on these questions.
6-35 minutes: Exhibition: Rabbi Sacks on ‘Being Jewish’

- Set up a display of texts around the room (either on posters or digital devices) using the longer texts, video resources (these will need to be shown on devices), and short quotes provided in this unit (www.rabbisacks.org/teaching-resources/jewish-identity).
- Ask your students to walk around the sources in pairs (chavruta) and watch/read/learn about Rabbi Sacks’ approach to being Jewish. Ask them to look out for the following themes and ideas:
  - What makes Rabbi Sacks proud to be a Jew?
  - What does Rabbi Sacks think Jews have contributed to humanity?
  - What values does Rabbi Sacks think are central to Judaism and in being Jewish?
  - What does Rabbi Sacks think the destiny of the Jewish people is?

36-50 minutes: Writing your own Chapter

Ask your students to spend some time thinking about (and then writing) what their chapter in the book will be.

This could also become a project or exhibition of their own, presented to the rest of the school/parents/wider community. In this case they will need more class time and/or homework time.

51-60 min: Sharing Ideas

- Ask some students to share their ideas and read out what they have written so far.
- Summarise the important ideas from Rabbi Sacks on this topic (and include your own thoughts on your chapter as part of the conclusion to the class).