

# Educators' Guide

(HIGH SCHOOL • AGES 15–18)

## The Home We Build Together

### Introduction

Thank you for participating in this year's **Rabbi Sacks Global Day of Learning in Schools**. Jewish communities and schools around the world will be learning some of the Torah of Rabbi Sacks in his memory during the week of his *yahrzeit* (the anniversary of his passing) and we are thrilled that you are joining this global venture.

The theme of this year's initiative is *The Home We Build Together*. It is powerful to know that people of all ages across the world will be exploring the same ideas from Rabbi Sacks, something you may wish to point out to your students.

This is a suggested outline of what you may wish to explore with your students, but feel free to adapt, pick and choose, or learn something completely different. This outline goes hand-in-hand with the [2023 learning resource](#) that communities and groups around the world will be studying. Please refer to the source sheet whenever indicated.

### Aims

- To introduce your students to Rabbi Sacks as a person, a Rabbi, and Jewish leader.
- To encourage them to learn some of his Torah in his memory.
- To explore the ideas of Rabbi Sacks that are expressed in his book *The Home We Build Together* (among other places). Specific areas we will explore include:
  - How we can build a unified community (including your school community) despite our differences
  - How these ideas can be applied to society at large to create a unified community, whilst also celebrating diversity.



## A Brief Overview of the Life of Rabbi Sacks

(APPROX. 10 MINS)

If your students participated in **The Rabbi Sacks Global Day of Learning in Schools** last year, or are familiar with Rabbi Sacks as a personality, you may wish to skip the next two sections.



**SHOW** this short video about the life of Rabbi Sacks, entitled *A Teacher, a Leader, and a Moral Voice*:  
[rabbisacks.org/videos/a-teacher-a-leader-and-a-moral-voice](https://rabbisacks.org/videos/a-teacher-a-leader-and-a-moral-voice)

**DISCUSS** with your students what they knew about Rabbi Sacks before watching the video and what, if anything, they learned from the video. This would also be an opportunity to share a personal perspective with your students, mentioning the impact Rabbi Sacks has made on your life and your community.

## A Brief Introduction to Communities in Conversation

(APPROX. 5 MINS)

**SHOW** the first 56 seconds of the video ([rabbisacks.org/yahrzeit](https://rabbisacks.org/yahrzeit)) of Gila Sacks, the daughter of Rabbi Sacks, from the launch of *Communities in Conversation* on his first yahrzeit, who explains that Rabbi Sacks was always looking to learn from every person he met, and he would do this through conversation. Today, we will have conversations in our class to learn from each other and to learn together an idea that Rabbi Sacks taught.

**DISCUSS** how they can learn something from every person (you may wish to share with them the Mishna in *Pirkei Avot* (4:1) where a wise person is defined as someone who learns from all people) and help them to take in the fact that they can learn from every single one of their classmates using the following questions:

- Can you learn something from every single person?
- What can you learn from your classmates today?
- Why is conversation a good way to learn from other people?



## The Question: Diversity in Society (APPROX. 5 MINS)

**SHOW** the first 30 seconds of this whiteboard animation video from Rabbi Sacks: [rabbisacks.org/videos/the-home-we-build-together/](http://rabbisacks.org/videos/the-home-we-build-together/) (The transcript of the video is available below the video.)

**READ** the opening quote on page 1 of the source sheet (from *The Home We Build Together*, p. 5).

**DISCUSS** what diversity is there in society, and why is this leading to division and fragmentation:

- What are all the ways we are different from each other in society?
- Why does this sometimes lead to division?
- Is there also diversity and division in your school and community?
- Why do we need to work against divisions in society?



## Finding the Answer in the Torah (APPROX. 20 MINS)

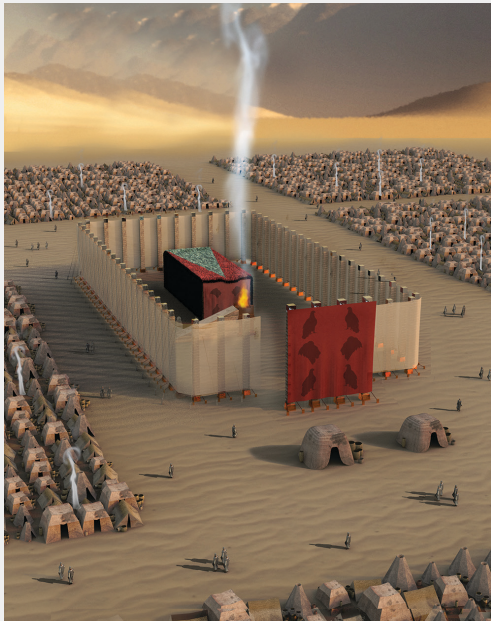
**EXAMINE** the chart found below in *chavruta* (study pairs). This is based on the chart found on page 2 of the source sheet. Ask students to use a *chumash* to map Sefer Shemot by finding out which chapters deal with each theme found in the table. Alternatively, you could provide them with the adapted chart below to complete:

### The Book of Exodus – Development of the Nation of Israel: Freedom, Revelation, and Tabernacle

Parsha	Shemot Va'era Bo	Beshallach	Yitro / Mishpatim	Terumah / Tetzaveh	Ki Tissa	Vayakhel / Pekudei
Theme	Egypt: From slavery to freedom	Salvation at the sea	The Giving of the Torah	Tabernacle: instructions	Golden Calf	Tabernacle: construction
Chapters						

## Finding the Answer in the Torah (CONTINUED)

Image courtesy of Rabbi Menachem Makover / The Mikdash Educational Center



**DISCUSS** why the Torah dedicates so much of Sefer Shemot to the building of the Tabernacle:

- How many chapters in Sefer Shemot are dedicated to the building of the Tabernacle? What percentage of the book is that?
- Why do you think the Torah spends so much time on this topic?
- Is there relevance to us today in these chapters?

**STUDY** in *chavruta*, the source on page 2 of the source sheet, taken from *The Home We Build Together*, pp. 136–140

**DISCUSS** the questions found there on the learning resource on this excerpt. These are:

- In the book of Shemot, God delivers the Israelites, but they keep failing. Why is the construction of the Tabernacle such an important moment?
- How does the Tabernacle express “the dignity of difference”?
- “A nation is built by building.” Have you ever been involved in a project that reminds you of this? How did it make you feel?
- In your family, office, community, and school, what could a “building” project look like that would “create identity out of diversity”?

**READ** the story found on page 4 of the source sheet (taken from *The Home We Build Together*, p. 173) and use the questions there to discuss as a class. These are:

- What did Lord Mishcon achieve by asking his guests to wash up? Why was this effective?
- How does this relate to the presentation of the building of the Tabernacle found in the previous source?
- How can this model be applied to your family, community, and society as a whole?

## A Metaphor: The Country House, The Hotel, and the Home We Build Together

(APPROX. 15 MINS)

**SHOW** the remainder (5.46 min) of the whiteboard animation video from Rabbi Sacks: <https://www.rabbisacks.org/videos/the-home-we-build-together/>

For a better understanding the term “Country House” in English culture (which was Rabbi Sacks’ frame of reference here) see English Country House. (You may also wish to reference the TV show Downton Abbey which some students or at least their parents may have seen or heard of).

**DISCUSS** the message of the video:

- Why is the “Country House” a good metaphor for many European countries in the 20th century?
- Why did this approach to society fail in many European countries?
- What were the pros and cons to the American “Melting-Pot” approach to society?
- Why did both European and American societies adapt to a “Hotel” approach to society instead? What were the pros and cons of this new approach?
- How is the “Home We Build Together” different to these previous approaches?
- How does this approach connect to the message of the building of the Tabernacle in Sefer Shemot?
- Can this approach be applied also to your family, school, and community?



## Conclusion: A toolkit to use when building a home together

(APPROX. 15 MINS)



**DIVIDE** the students into 8 groups, and assign each group one of eight tools found in the final source of the source sheet (pages 5–6). Ask each group to consider how that tool can be applied to your school community in order to create an environment like the one described by Rabbi Sacks in *The Home We Build Together*. Have each group present their proposal to the whole class.



## Next Steps: Bet Nidrash

Ideas for a project inspired by our learning

*Having completed your study of this topic, you may wish to embark with your students on a “**Bet Nidrash**” on the topic, a practical project based on what you have learned and discussed. The term “**Bet Nidrash**” is a play on the term Bet Midrash (study hall) replacing the word for study (Midrash) with the word Nidrash, which means “required” or an “imperative”.*

*This suggests that one’s study should not be just for its own sake, but rather a means to an end, to improve oneself and the world around us. Rabbi Sacks’ philosophy and writings were always focused not on the theoretical, but on the deeply practical, and always had a “call to action”.*

*He urged for the ideas he wrote about to be implemented outside of the walls of the classroom and Bet Midrash, in the real world.*



## High School Contest

To encourage students to bring to life Rabbi Sacks’ ideas about how to create a thriving society, The Rabbi Sacks Legacy is holding a contest for students that challenges them to translate the knowledge they've gained here into real-world action. Each student winner will get a copy of “A Letter in the Scroll”, and their school will receive a copy of Covenant and Conversation Family Edition. Winning submissions may be posted on The Rabbi Sacks Legacy website.

Submissions are due by **November 13, 2023**

They should be uploaded at [rabbisacks.info/competition](https://rabbisacks.info/competition)

**ACTIVE LISTENING:** Division often comes and is exacerbated by an inability to listen and truly hear another’s perspective. This is especially true when we disagree with another person’s or group’s viewpoint. But part of what we learned from Rabbi Sacks in his teachings about The Home We Build Together is that if we want to create a unified society, a home we can all live in, we have to be able to listen and really hear the other, the person with whom we disagree. Over the course of the week, your task—your challenge—is to find as many people as you can—but at least five—with whom you disagree about an important issue and to have a discussion where you listen to their perspective and opinion, consider sincerely and without judgment where they are coming from, and seek to understand their view. Create a 3-minute video where you explain the views you were exposed to and the effect that listening deeply has had on you.



The Rabbi Sacks Global Day of Learning in Schools is part of Communities in Conversation, commemorating the yahrzeit of Rabbi Sacks