

# Educators' Guide

(ELEMENTARY SCHOOL • AGES 8–11)

## 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 Jewish day schools around the world will be learning some of the Torah of Rabbi Sacks in his memory during the week of his third *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.

### 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 help them understand the idea that when we build something together we get to know each other better and become united. (Rabbi Sacks applied this idea to society in his book *The Home We Build Together*.)



## Part 1: Who was 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 which were also included in last year's resources.



**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** the video. Select some general questions for discussion, such as:

- What are your general impressions of Rabbi Sacks from this video?
- What did you learn about Rabbi Sacks?
- Share something you noticed in the video that interested you.
- Share something you noticed in the video that surprised you.

**CHOOSE** some more analytical questions for discussion:

- Discuss what the following descriptions of Rabbi Sacks mean to you:
  - Teacher
  - Leader
  - Moral Voice
- Who did Rabbi Sacks impact, in each of these three roles?
- Which locations (countries and places) did you notice in the video? What can we learn about Rabbi Sacks from these?
- Which famous people did you notice in the video? What does that tell you about Rabbi Sacks?
- What titles did Rabbi Sacks have, and what do they mean?
- How many books do you think you saw in the video? What does that tell us about Rabbi Sacks?

### Optional activity

Write a letter to the family of Rabbi Sacks to share what you learned about him and what made an impression on you.



## Part 2: Why are we learning in Rabbi Sacks' memory?

(APPROX. 5 MINS)



**EXPLAIN** that when someone we hold dear passes away, there is a special mitzvah to learn Torah in their memory.

This is a way to always remember them, and to show Hashem how much we miss them, and ask Him to look after them in heaven.

It is especially meaningful to do this when the words of Torah actually came from them, as in this case with Rabbi Sacks.

**SHOW** the first 56 seconds of the video ([rabbisacks.org/yahrzeit](http://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 Mishnah 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?

### Optional activity

Ask every student to find a partner and ask them to share with each other something they have learned from them. This can be repeated with different partners.



## Part 3: The Home We Build Together (APPROX. 10 MINS)

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*The most brilliant act of creative diplomacy I encountered was undertaken by the late Lord (Victor) Mishcon. He cared passionately about peace in the Middle East, and in the early 1980s he realised he had the chance to do something about it. He knew the then ruler of Jordan, King Hussein. Their children had gone to the same school and the families had become friends. He also knew the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, because he was his lawyer.*

*He decided to bring the two of them together. He invited both to dinner at his apartment. The evening proceeded agreeably until the two got up to leave. They thanked their host for his hospitality. Mishcon put on an air of surprise. ‘You can’t leave yet,’ he said. ‘What about the washing up?’ ‘Are you serious?’ they said. ‘Absolutely,’ Mishcon replied. And so the two men removed their jackets, rolled up their shirtsleeves, went into the kitchen and did the washing up.*

*People bond when they do something together. So, the king of Jordan washing, the Israeli Foreign Minister drying, a friendship was struck between the two. The result would have been a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan had it not been overruled by the then Prime Minister of Israel. But the treaty did eventually happen.*

**TELL** this story together, which comes from *The Home We Build Together*, p. 173, and use the questions here to discuss as a class:

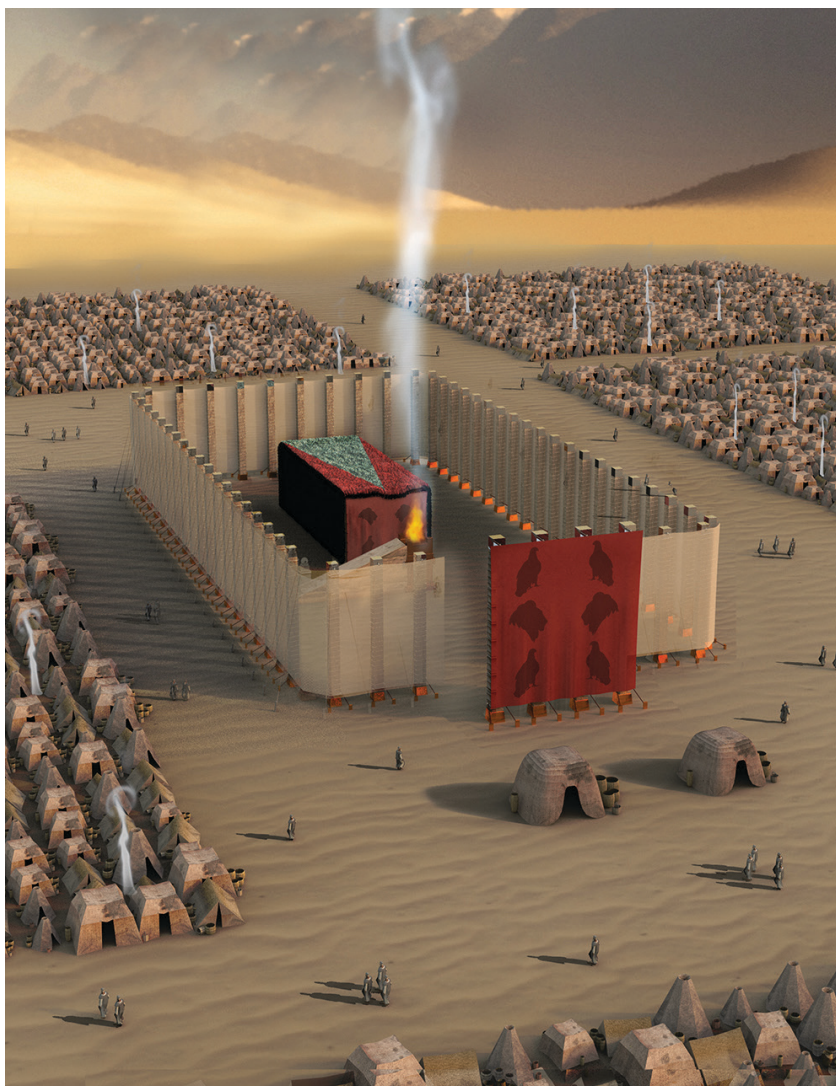
- Why did Lord Mishcon ask his guests to wash up? Wasn’t this rude? What was he trying to achieve?
- What have you built or achieved with your friends? How did it make you feel? How did you feel about your friends afterward?

### Optional activity

Give your students tasks to accomplish in pairs (or small groups) and then discuss with them how it felt to be part of a team and how they felt about their partners or teammates. You could add an element of competition to emphasise the point.

## Conclusion: A final quote (APPROX. 5 MINS)

Image courtesy of Rabbi Menachem Makover / The Mikdash Educational Center



**SHOW** this image of the Israelite camp, with the Tabernacle at the centre.



**READ** this quote from Rabbi Sacks, adapted from *The Home We Build Together*, pp. 136–140:

“

*A nation is built by building. What they built when they built the Tabernacle was a ‘home’ for Hashem. The Tabernacle, placed at the centre of the camp with the tribes camped around it, symbolised the public square and it was a visible image of community.*

**DISCUSS** how the act of the building of the Tabernacle created a united nation from a divided and fractured people. Encourage your students to find practical ways that this can work for us in our school, in our community, and wider society also.



## 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.*



## Elementary 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)

**PROJECT ON ACTIONS:** Each day of the week bring a sticky note that explains how you helped at home, in school, or in your community. As a class over the course of the week, create an artwork of a home that incorporates all the students’ sticky notes. The artwork may be of any medium. Submit a photo of your artwork.

