



Covenant & Conversation



Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

KI TEITSE • כִּי תֵצֵא

BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS 7"צז

COVENANT & CONVERSATION SUMMARY

Letting Go of Hate

There is a verse in Ki Teitse that is momentous in its implications. It is easy to miss, appearing in the middle of a long list of mitzvot (on the laws of inheritance, rebellious sons, oxen, marriage violations, and escaping slaves.) Then without any fanfare, Moshe delivers a command so counterintuitive that we must read it twice to be sure we aren't mishearing the words:

"Do not hate an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land." (Devarim 23:8)

What can this mean? Remember Bnei Yisrael's history: The Egyptians had enslaved them, "embittered their lives," and attempted genocide by casting every Israelite boy into the river. The 40-year journey through the desert all began with a desperate need to escape a life of oppression and suffering, at the hands of the Egyptians. Yet Moshe tells the people not to hate them. He does not want them to forget their time as slaves - on the contrary, he insists we retell it every year at Pesach. But remembering is not the same as hating.

Moshe's message is this: To be free, you have to let go of hate. If Bnei Yisrael held onto their grievances towards the Egyptians, they would still be its slaves - not physically, but mentally. And as they stand on the banks of Jordan, about to enter the Promised Land and establish their own society, they must understand this, because **you cannot create a free society on the basis of hate.**

You must live with the past, implies Moshe, but you must not live *in* the past. The memory of suffering should lead us not to persecute others, but to ensure no one else endures what we did.

Biblical ethics turns memory into a moral force. We "remember" not to because we wish to hold onto hatred, but

to prevent history from repeating itself. That is why Moshe insists: do not hate the Egyptian.

Only thus can we understand a puzzling detail of the Exodus. God told Moshe that when the people left Egypt, they should ask their neighbours for gold, silver, and clothing (Shemot 3:21-22). Why? Plunder is condemned in the Torah. Why here was it commanded?

The answer appears in a later law: when a slave goes free in the seventh year, you must not send him away

empty-handed. Give him gifts "so that he will not depart with resentment" (Devarim

15:12-15). Slavery leaves a scar. Without some act of recognition, the freed slave remains a prisoner of anger. Gifts represent symbolic closure - not full justice, which is impossible, but a way of releasing hatred so that true freedom can begin.

So, too, with Egypt. God wanted Bnei Yisrael to leave there not in bitterness, but with dignity, with a small form of restorative justice. Yes, the Egyptians enslaved them, but the Israelites could not carry their hate into the future. They needed to remember the pain of being slaves, but not the anger toward their masters. Hatred and liberty cannot coexist.

A free people must let go of hate, or they will never be free. To build a society without persecution, you must break the chains of the past and transform pain into determination for a better future.

Freedom requires the abandonment of hate, and acceptance of responsibility. Moshe's message to a people about to enter the Promised Land was that **a free society can only be built by people who accept the responsibility of freedom, who refuse to see themselves as objects, who define themselves not by hate but by love of God.** "Do not hate an Egyptian, because you were strangers in his land," said Moshe, meaning: **To be free, you have to let go of hate.**

● The full essay written by Rabbi Sacks is available [on our website](#).

In a Nutshell

Ki Teitse contains 74 mitzvot, more than any other Parsha. These laws address family life, justice, warfare, and daily conduct. They include the treatment of captive women, inheritance of the firstborn, the rebellious son, burial practices, returning lost items, and building a safety fence around one's roof. Other rules concern marriage, divorce, and *chalitzah*, paying workers promptly, kindness to animals, and lending without interest. God also sets limits on joining the community, outlines punishments, and demands fairness in business. Ki Teitse ends with the mitzva to remember how Amalek attacked the people after their Exodus from Egypt.

Around the Shabbat Table

1. How does holding on to hatred keep people enslaved, even after gaining physical freedom?
2. Can personal experiences of pain or injustice be transformed into compassion for others?
3. How does the mitzva to remember Amalek differ from the mitzva not to hate the Egyptians?





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ON THE PARSHA • WRITTEN BY SARA LAMM

INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS 7"צז



Delving Deeper

The Torah constantly reminds us: “You were slaves in Egypt.” But this is never invoked to justify revenge. Instead, it becomes the basis of justice and compassion: limit slavery, let slaves go free every seventh year, give everyone rest on Shabbat, share your blessings with the poor, and leave food in the field for the hungry. We remember our days in Egypt, but we must move forward emotionally.

True freedom is impossible while clinging to hatred.

The command in Ki Teitse not to hate the Egyptian, despite centuries of enslavement and cruelty, teaches that liberation is more than physical

escape; it requires release from resentment and anger. Memory must shape compassion, not vengeance.

Recalling the pain of slavery, we must build a just society, protecting the vulnerable and treating others with dignity, not repeating Egypt’s oppression. Even the demand that Egyptians give parting gifts to the Israelites reflected this need for psychological closure, so former slaves could walk into freedom without bitterness. Hatred binds people to the past, but freedom demands responsibility, love of God, and the courage to define the future without chains of animosity.



Parsha Activity

Switching Sides

Pick two people, ideally a parent and child, or two people with opposite roles in the family/group. Swap personas, and play the “other,” together acting out a short, funny scenario everyone knows: the journey to work/school, bedtime (“just one more story!”), homework time, or cleaning and tidying up. Keep it quick, then let a new pair try. The fun comes from flipping everyday moments upside-down and seeing what it feels like on the other side.

When you switched roles, what did you notice, that you aren’t usually aware of?



The Door Knocks

Once, there was a boy who grew up very, very poor. His only shoes wore thin, and then fell apart completely. So barefoot he walked the streets. In desperation, the boy knocked on many doors asking for help in those days. Some would offer him food, or a coin, but others turned him away or refused to even answer the door. The shame clung to him, and he promised himself that one day he would be richer than rich, and then he would never look back.

Years passed, and through blessing and hard work, he did indeed become wealthy. As he grew accustomed to a more luxurious lifestyle, his memory faded. Now others came to his fine oak door, knocking and asking for help. People in all shapes and sizes, from beggars,

to tired travellers, to families with nothing for Shabbat. And the man was irked by them. This wealthy, fortunate man had almost forgotten the childhood feeling of aching hunger, and the sound of doors slamming in his face. “Why should I share what I earned?” he asked his rabbi one day. “I worked hard to gain my riches. They should do the same, rather than bothering people in their homes.” He expected the rabbi to nod his head and agree. But the rabbi’s words took him by surprise.

“My friend, remember when you needed others to open their doors? Try to recall the feeling, and be careful not to become hard-hearted to others in need.” Suddenly the early memories he had locked away came rushing in, and the man began

to weep, realising he had missed



many golden opportunities to change people’s lives for the better.

That night, he opened his door wide, and called out an offer to help all who needed it. Gratefully, they came. From then on, he answered every door knock, listening first, giving next. The truth he had learned is that wealth is not what we keep inside, but what we let flow outward.

• **Why do you think it’s so easy to forget our old lives, once our situations change for the better?**



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FAMILY
EDITION

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

ON THE HAFTARA • WRITTEN BY RABBI BARRY KLEINBERG

INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS 7"צט

HAFTARA SUMMARY



The Haftara in a Nutshell

Isaiah 54:1-10

Our Haftara offers a powerful message of renewal and Divine compassion to Zion, portrayed as a barren and abandoned woman.

God calls on her to rejoice, proclaiming that she will soon have more children than the married woman, symbolising Israel's restoration and growth after exile. She is told to enlarge her tent, as her descendants will spread widely and inherit the nations. Though once shamed and deserted, Zion will no longer suffer humiliation. God promises to take her back

with everlasting love, as a husband might reunite with a forsaken wife. Though she was briefly abandoned in anger, God's steadfast love and covenant of peace will never be removed.

The passage compares God's faithfulness to the days of Noah, assuring that just as the waters would never again flood the earth, so too will God's mercy endure. It is a declaration of unbreakable Divine commitment and compassion toward a restored Israel.



Points to Ponder

1. What is the connection between the barren woman and the Jewish people in exile?
2. Why does God promise many offspring as a promise of hope for the future?



TANACH CONNECTIONS



Parsha and Haftara Links

A fascinating connection between the Parsha and Haftara has been noted by scholars. Parshat Ki Teitze details many laws relating to women. The scenarios include when a man has two wives but one is more loved than the other (Devarim 21:15), accusations made against a bride (Devarim 22:13-21), and levirate marriage (Devarim 25:5-10).

In the Haftara, the prophet Isaiah uses the metaphor of marriage to depict the sacred and loving relationship between God and Bnei Yisrael. An empty Jerusalem is compared to a woman forsaken. However, when the exiles return, she is like a wife reunited with her

husband and children, forgetting the painful past in the love and joy of the reunion (Isaiah 54:1 and 54:4).

Similarly, paralleling the relationship between a husband and a wife to the Jewish people's relationship with God can be seen in the Haftara (Isaiah 54:5) "For your Maker is your husband." The same verb is used in the Parsha (Devarim 24:1) which states "When a man takes a wife, and is her husband..."

Rabbi Sacks elaborated on this metaphor, when he wrote that **"marriage is not just living together, a temporary partnership for mutually beneficial ends. Heaven help us if that is all we**

see in it. It is the point at which the "I" of self meets the "Thou" of another, transforming us into something larger, more spacious, more generous and tender than we could ever be on our own. In marriage at its best, you see humanity at its best, and in a loving home you can almost touch the Divine Presence."

- In some of our prayers we connect our relationship with God to the metaphor of a Parent with His children ('Avinu' - our Father). How do the two different metaphors describe different facets of our relationship to God?



Rabbi Sacks on Love

When thinking about the mitzvot in this week's Parsha, Rabbi Sacks expanded upon the potential danger of favouritism, when a person loves one person more than another, such as showing greater love for one child over another. He wrote: **"Love is the highest of emotions.**

We are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul and might. But it is also, in family contexts, fraught with danger. Love ruined Jacob's life, time and again: in his relationship with Esau (Isaac loved Esau, Rebecca loved Jacob), in the relationship between Leah and Rachel, and in the relationship between Joseph and his brothers. Love brings joy. It also brings tears. It brings some people close, but makes others feel distanced, rejected.

"Therefore, says the Torah, in our command: when love is likely to be the cause of conflict, it must take second place to justice. Love is partial, justice is impartial. Love is for someone specific; justice is for everyone. Love brings personal satisfaction; justice brings social order."



Further Ponderings

If you were leader of a team, or the boss of a company, how would you make sure not to show favour to one person over others?



Quote of the Week

"Judaism got it right by placing love at the heart of the religious life – love of God, neighbour, and stranger – but at the same time recognising that without justice, love will not save us. It may even destroy us."

Does Love Conquer All?, Ki Teitse, Covenant & Conversation, I Believe

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The Rabbi Sacks Legacy perpetuates the timeless and universal wisdom of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks as a teacher of Torah, a leader of leaders, and a moral voice.

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With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel

"I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." – Rabbi Sacks