

Jonathan Sacks  
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

# CARDS AND CONVERSATION

## PESACH EDITION

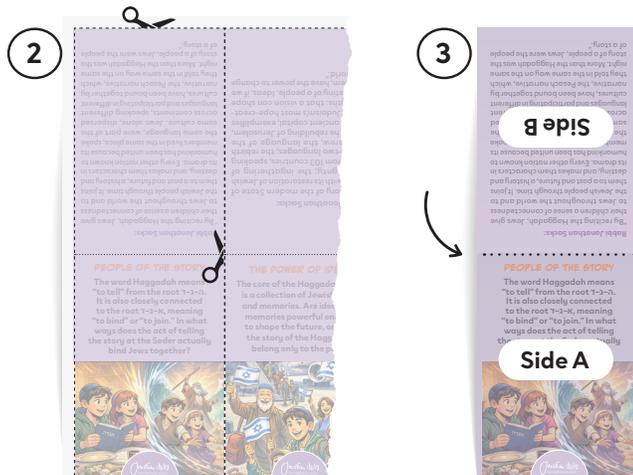
**Pesach is built around asking questions and engaging the next generation.**

**As Rabbi Sacks wrote in his Haggadah:  
"Questioning is at the heart of Jewish spirituality."**

**These cards are designed to bring the Seder to life through conversation and reflection.**

### HOW TO PREPARE

1. Download and print the cards.
2. Cut along the dotted lines.
3. Fold each card so that the question is on one side and the quote on the other.



### HOW TO USE THESE CARDS

Each card includes:

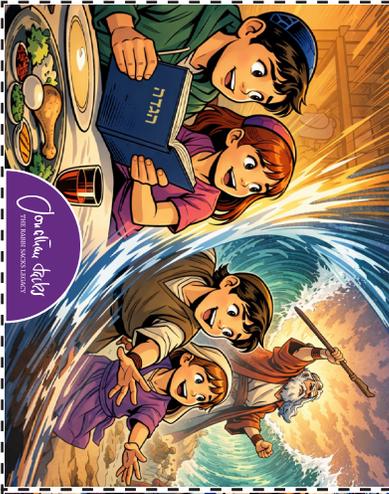
- A question to spark discussion
- A quote from Rabbi Sacks

Begin by discussing the question together, then turn the card over to read Rabbi Sacks' insight and deepen the conversation.

The illustrations are also part of the experience and can spark their own discussions.

Choose which cards to use based on the number of participants and their ages. You can read the full quote or simply the bold words.

**Wishing you a Chag Kasher v'Sameach!**



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### PEOPLE OF THE STORY

The word Haggadah means "to tell" from the root T-Ḳ-T. It is also closely connected to the root T-Ḳ-X, meaning "to bind" or "to join." In what ways does the act of telling the story at the Seder actually bind Jews together?

### RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:

"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 nation known to humankind has been united because its members 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 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 POWER OF IDEAS

The core of the Haggadah story is a collection of Jewish ideas and memories. Are ideas and memories powerful enough to shape the future, or does the story of the Haggadah belong only to the past?

### RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:

"The story of the modern State of Israel, with its restoration of Jewish sovereignty; the ingathering of exiles from 103 countries, speaking 82 languages; the rebirth of Hebrew, the language of the Bible; the rebuilding of Jerusalem, Israel's ancient capital, exemplifies one of Judaism's most hope-creating truths: that a vision can shape the destiny of a people. **Ideas, if we live them, have the power to change the world.**"

### TORAH V'CHOCHMAH

Some Jews focus only on God's commands, while others focus only on human wisdom. Why did Rabbi Sacks believe Judaism needs both Torah and an understanding of the world?

### RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:

"Chochmah is the truth we discover; Torah is the truth we inherit. Chochmah is the shared heritage of humankind; Torah is the particular heritage of the Jewish people. Chochmah is the world of 'is', of fact; Torah is the world of 'ought', of command. Chochmah is where we encounter God through creation; Torah is how we hear God through revelation. The two are not equal in their significance to Jews – Torah is holy in a way chochmah cannot be – yet both are significant, for **if we are to apply Torah to the world, we must understand the world to which it applies.**"

### A STORY INHERITED

Why does the Seder centre on retelling an ancient story, and why is passing it down from generation to generation so central to Jewish life?

### RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:

"The Jewish castle is built not of bricks or stone, but of words...It has been preserved across centuries, handed on by one generation to the next, added to and enhanced in age after age, lovingly cherished and sustained. As a child I knew that one day I would inherit it from my parents, as they had inherited it from theirs. It is not a building but it is, nonetheless, a home, a place in which I live...What we have is not a physical construction but something else – a story... **I am part of that story whose earlier chapters were written by my ancestors and whose next chapter I am now called on to write.**"



Coriella Skilly  
THE JEWISH EDUCATION CENTER

**VALUES OVER MONUMENTS**

Judaism has few monuments, yet it has outlived empires filled with statues and stone. Why has Judaism endured when so many great civilisations did not?



Coriella Skilly  
THE JEWISH EDUCATION CENTER

**TRUE GREATNESS**

What does the story of Moshe teach us about where true greatness comes from?



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**THE GOD OF HISTORY**

Why does the Torah begin the Ten Commandments with "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt," rather than "I am the Lord your God who created heaven and earth"?



Coriella Skilly  
THE JEWISH EDUCATION CENTER

**HISTORY VS MEMORY**

Why doesn't Judaism leave history in the past, instead turning history into memory and remembering into a command?

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"...Moshe led his people along the least likely path to eternity. The Israelites became builders, but what they constructed was not monuments of stone. Instead it was a way of life inspired by the twin ideals of justice and compassion. Its bricks were holy deeds; its mortar, study and the life of the mind. What Moshe taught, and what the Jewish people came to discover, is that you achieve immortality not by building pyramids or statues – **but by engraving your values on the hearts of your children, and they on theirs, so that our ancestors live on in us, and we in our children, and so on until the end of time.**"

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"True royalty, the Bible intimates, does not lie in physical strength, outward appearance, or noble ancestry. Not accidentally does the life of Moshe contradict the stories told of other heroes in antiquity. He is not a prince in disguise. **His greatness lies in the fact that he is a child of slaves whose lives were touched and transformed by the word of God.**"

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"Monotheism was not the only great Israelite discovery. More significant still was the realisation that **God is not only the Creator but also the Redeemer... He is to be found** not only in what Wordsworth describes as that 'sense sublime' of 'something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean and the living air,' but in the great events of history, above all **the liberation of a small slave people from the grip of the greatest empire of the ancient world, the Egypt of the pharaohs.**"

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"To be a Jew is to know that over and above history is the task of memory. As Jacob Neusner eloquently wrote: 'Civilisation hangs suspended, from generation to generation, by the gossamer strand of memory. If only one cohort of mothers and fathers fails to convey to its children what it has learned from its parents, then the great chain of learning and wisdom snaps. If the guardians of human knowledge stumble only one time, in their fall collapses the whole edifice of knowledge and understanding.' More than any other faith, Judaism made this a matter of religious obligation. **Pesach is where the past does not die but lives, in the chapter we write in our own lives and in the story we tell our children.**"



Jonathan Sacks  
THE RABBI JONATHAN SACKS LEADERS

**THE UNIVERSAL STORY**  
Why might the story of the Exodus matter to others, beyond the Jewish people themselves?

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"The Exodus is the inexhaustible source of inspiration to all those who long for freedom. **It taught that right was sovereign over might; that freedom and justice must belong to all, not some; that, under God, all human beings are equal;** and that over all earthly powers is the supreme power, the King of kings, who hears the cry of the oppressed and intervenes in history to liberate slaves."

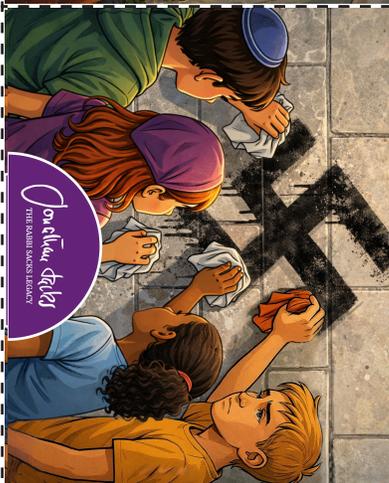


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**LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY**  
How does Jewish memory help us face fear and uncertainty about the future?

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"A protected minority can become a vulnerable minority. There is nothing in the Bible or Jewish faith that speaks of historical inevitability. To live in time is to be exposed to the hazards of time. But Israel knows from its own history that however long it may seem to be delayed, redemption is at hand. **God will bring deliverance in the future because He has done so in the past.**"



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**ON DIFFERENCE**  
Why is antisemitism dangerous to all people, not just Jews?

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"Antisemitism – the hatred of difference – is an assault not on Jews only but on the human condition. Life is sacred because each person – even genetically identical twins – is different, therefore irreplaceable and non-substitutable. Every language, culture, and civilization (provided that it satisfies the minimum conditions of a universal moral code) has its own integrity, and because each is different, each adds something unique to the collective heritage of humankind... **A world without room for Jews is one that has no room for difference, and a world that lacks space for difference lacks space for humanity itself.**"

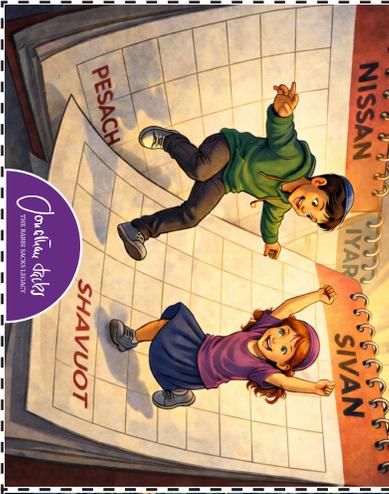


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**A LASTING PEOPLE**  
How and why have Jews survived without ever becoming a world power?

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"To be a Jew... from the days of Abraham and Sarah to today, is to carry the burden and dignity of difference. Jews never built an empire. They never sought to become a world power, imposing their culture on others... **The task of the people of the covenant – set out in God's first call to Abraham – is to be true to its own faith while contributing to the good of others:** 'through you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed' (Bereishit 12:3)."



**COUNTING THE OMER**

Why do we count the days of the Omer after reliving the story of Bnei Yisrael leaving Egypt?



**FAITH AND FUTURE**

Does faith alleviate the feeling of uncertainty in an unpredictable future?



**FUTURE TENSE**

Why would someone work to change the world even if they may not live to see the results?



**WHY WE EXIST**

Why do Jews and Judaism exist – is there a purpose to Jewish existence beyond survival itself?

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"Pesach does not stand alone, because the Exodus as an event does not stand alone. **Leaving Egypt was only the beginning of freedom. Without a moral code – the commandments heard at Sinai – the Israelites might have gained release from oppression, but they had not yet acquired liberty.** The counting of the days [of the Omer] expresses the unbreakable connection between Pesach and Shavuot as stages on a single journey from slavery to redemption. Freedom begins with Exodus but it reaches its fulfillment in the acceptance of a code of conduct, the Torah, freely offered by God, freely accepted by the people. The counting of the Omer is thus an act of retracing the steps from individual freedom to a free society."

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

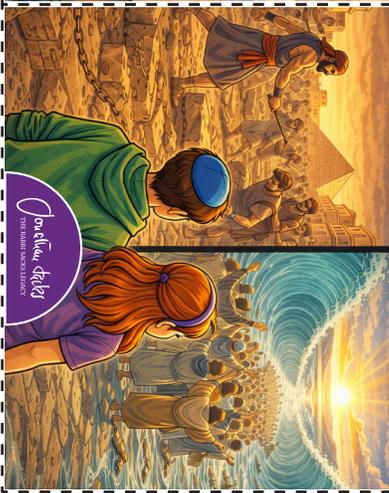
"... the Hebrew word 'emunah', usually translated as 'faith', [is] utterly distinctive in the religious language of humankind. It does not mean certainty; it means, to the contrary, **the courage to live with uncertainty, knowing that the future is radically unpredictable, but that it can be faced without fear because we are not alone. God and His word are with us.**"

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"At best we see the Promised Age as Moshe saw the Land of Israel at the end of his life – distantly, as from a mountaintop. But that is enough. All of history tells us that we are not wrong to travel, to take risks, to see poverty, hunger, disease, and injustice as things we are called on to fight, not accept. Not all of humanity's dreams are destined, as they were for the Greek dramatists, to end in tragedy. **With God's help, and that of other people with whom we are bound in covenant, we can change the world.**"

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"Jews have been called on to bear witness – in their faith, history, and way of life – to certain fundamental truths of the human condition: that **we are free, and thus responsible, and therefore charged with becoming God's partners in the work of redemption;** that life is sacred and therefore human rights are non-negotiable; that civilizations become invulnerable only when they care for the vulnerable; that freedom depends on education and the emotional intelligence that comes from strong families and communities held together by the bonds of shared memory and responsibility; and that all achievement in the social realm takes time and can be sustained only by a narrative of hope."



**NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM**

The Haggadah was shaped centuries before the modern State of Israel. We end the Seder with the hope that "next year" we will celebrate Pesach "in Jerusalem." Is that line still meaningful when Jews today can actually be in Jerusalem?

**CHILD'S PLAY**

What is the child's role on Seder night?

**GOOD QUESTIONS**

The Haggadah encourages questions and education above all. What makes for a good Jewish question?

**COVENANT OF HOPE**

Why does the Haggadah insist on a happy ending?

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"...beneath the surface of the Haggadah we find not four fours, but five fives. In each case there is a missing fifth – a cup, an expression of deliverance, a verse, a question, and a child. Each points to something incomplete in our present situation... The State of Israel has come into being... But Israel is not yet at peace. In the Diaspora assimilation continues apace. Many Jews are estranged from their people and their faith. Something is missing from our celebration – the fifth cup, the fifth deliverance, the fifth verse, the fifth question, and the fifth child. That is a measure of what is still to be achieved. **We have not yet reached our destination. The missing fifths remind us of work still to be done, a journey not yet complete.**"

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"...teaching the young to ask questions is an essential feature of Pesach, so much so that the Haggadah – the narration – must be in response to a question asked by a child. If there is no child present, adults must ask one another, and if one is eating alone, one must ask oneself... 'And the [child] who does not know how to ask,' you must begin to teach him how. Many customs of Seder night (dipping the parsley and removing the Seder plate are two examples) were introduced solely to provoke a child to ask, 'Why?' **Judaism is a religion of questions... In Judaism, to be without questions is a sign not of faith, but of lack of depth.**"

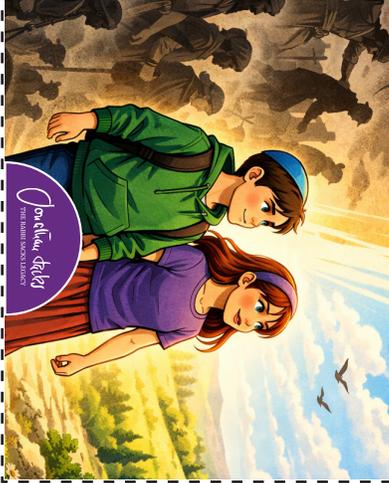
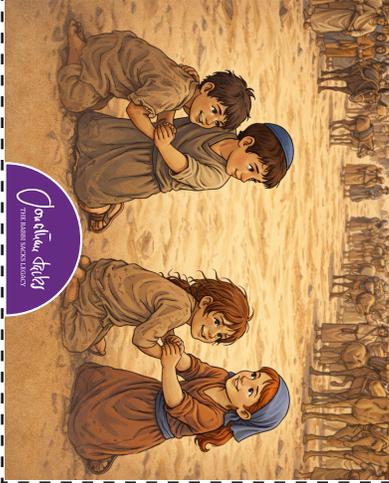
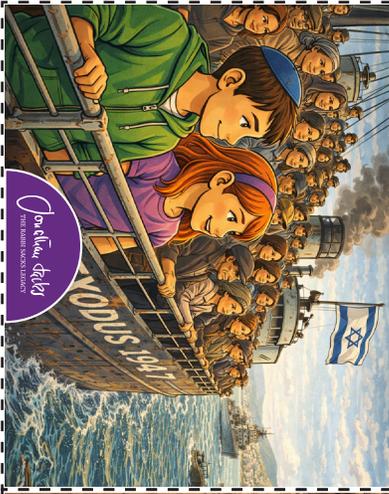
**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"There are three conditions... for asking a Jewish question. The first is that we seek genuinely to learn – not to doubt, ridicule, dismiss, reject... Second is that we accept limits to our understanding... Faith is not opposed to questions, but it is opposed to the shallow certainty that what we understand is all there is. Third is that **when it comes to Torah, we learn by living and understand by doing**... There is no way of understanding Shabbat without keeping Shabbat... Judaism is something that can be understood only from the inside... Every question asked in reverence is the start of a journey toward God, and it begins with the habit that, on Pesach, Jewish parents teach their children: to ask, thereby to join the never-ending dialogue between human understanding and heaven."

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

"The rabbis specified how the Pesach story should be told... we must start with the bad news (slavery, idolatry) and end with the good (liberation, revelation). In this simple rule, the rabbis were doing more than outlining the form of the Haggadah narrative. They were summarizing the structure of the Jewish imagination. A nation's emotional tonality is expressed in how it tells its story... There is no closure to these endings, no guarantee of what will happen next. But there is a confidence, born of covenant, whose name is hope. **There will be difficulties ahead, but they will not be insurmountable. There will be grief, but it will not be paralyzing or final... something and someone will survive. There may be exile but eventually there will be homecoming, return.**"

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Corallina Skelly  
Illustrations by Corallina Skelly

**REDEMPTION**

The Exodus from Egypt set the tone for Jewish history: we emerge from moments of suffering and tragedy. What did redemption look like in the 20th century, and what might it look like for us?

**SLAVERY BEFORE FREEDOM**

Why did Hashem – who knows all – decide that Bnei Yisrael had to go through the specific trial of slavery in the first place?

**FAITH IN HUMANITY**

How could God, who creates in love, bring into being a creature, man, who destroys in hate? How, having made the universe, could God create the one being capable of destroying it?

**THE WORLD THAT OUGHT TO BE**

What does Judaism teach us to do when the world feels broken or unfair? Does Seder night play a part in this message?

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**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

“What we give our children on this night of nights is something more and greater than the bread of oppression and the taste of Jewish tears. It is a faith that in this world, with all its violence and cruelty, we can create moments of redemption, signals of transcendence, acts of transfiguring grace. No people has risked and suffered more for a more slender hope, but no hope has lifted a people higher and led it, time and again, to greatness. So we end the night with a prayer and a conviction. The prayer: **‘God of life, help us win a victory over the forces of death.’** And the conviction? **‘That by refusing to accept the world that is, together we can start to make the world that ought to be.’**”

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

“One day... historians will look back at the second half of the twentieth century and **wonder at how a people that in the Holocaust had come face to face with the Angel of Death responded by** reviving a land, recovering its sovereignty, rebuilding Jerusalem, rescuing threatened Jews throughout the world, and **proving itself as courageous in pursuit of peace as in defending itself in war.** The echoes of Exodus continue to reverberate through Jewish history, undiminished through time, as wondrous now as in those days long ago.”

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

“Israel became the people conceived in slavery so that it would never cease to long for liberty – and know that liberty is anything but natural. It requires constant vigilance, unceasing moral struggle. **Israel discovered freedom by losing it. May it never lose it again.**”

**RABBI JONATHAN SACKS:**

“**More than we have faith in God, God has faith in us** – that one day we will learn the lesson of peace, that war never solved any conflict in the long run; that in victory the victor too is defeated; that in conquering others we diminish ourselves; that only in and through peace do we honour the image of God that is humankind.”