



A GLOBAL DAY OF LEARNING IN MEMORY OF

**COMMUNITIES  
IN CONVERSATION**

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ז"א ז"ל

*Jonathan Sacks*  
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

# Teacher's Guide

## Learning Resources for Middle School (11-14 year olds) - Teacher's Guide

### Approximate Timeframe:

1. Who was Rabbi Sacks? (10 min)
  2. Why are we learning in Rabbi Sacks' memory? (5 min)
  3. The Home We Build Together (5 min)
  4. Three answers that failed and one that might work (20 min)
  5. Conclusion: Building Together (15 min)
  6. [Next Steps: Beit Nidrash Introduction]
- Discussion slides include suggested questions. (Educators should feel free to edit these as they wish, for their own students.)
  - All activity slides are suggestions, time permitting.



# Who was Rabbi Sacks?



RABBI LORD  
Jonathan  
Sacks

Jonathan Sacks  
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY



# Think and Discuss



- 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.



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?

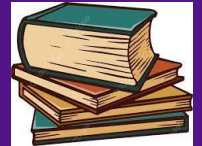


- Which **locations (countries and places)** did you notice in the video?  
What can we learn about Rabbi Sacks from these?



- Which **famous people** did you notice in the video?  
What does that tell you about Rabbi Sacks?

- How many **books** do you think you saw in the video (give a guess)?  
What does that tell us about Rabbi Sacks?



- What **titles** did Rabbi Sacks have, and what do they mean?



# Reflections of Rabbi Sacks



## Activity

Ask your students to research online stories about Rabbi Sacks to share with the class (or to share stories they have heard from people they know).

They might wish to use the Reflections section from the website: [rabbisacks.org/life-of-rabbi-jonathan-sacks/reflections](https://rabbisacks.org/life-of-rabbi-jonathan-sacks/reflections).





# Why are we learning in Rabbi Sacks' memory?





**Gila Sacks**  
Rabbi Sacks' daughter



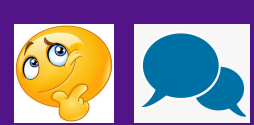
בֶּן זֹמָא אָמַר, אֵיזְהוּ חָכָם, הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם

(פרקי אבות ד:א)

Ben Zoma said:

Who is wise? One who learns from every person.

(Pirkei Avot 4:1)



- 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?

# Turn and Talk



## **Activity**

Pair up with a classmate. What is one thing you have learned from your partner? Take turns, and then switch partners.

# The Home We Build Together (the full video)





- 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?

Let's explore three answers that failed,  
and one that might work...



# The Country House



# Background: What is an English Country House?

[English country house - Wikipedia](#)



importance in establishing and maintaining the power of the owner. The common denominator of this category of English country houses is that they were designed to be lived in with a certain degree of ceremony and pomp. It was not unusual for the family to have a small suite of rooms for withdrawing in privacy away from the multitude that lived in the household. These houses were always an alternative residence to a London house.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, for the highest echelons of English society, the country house served as a place for relaxing, hunting and running the country with one's equals at the end of the week, with some houses having their own theatre where performances were staged.<sup>[11]</sup>

The country house, however, was not just an oasis of pleasure for a fortunate few; it was the centre of its own world, providing employment to hundreds of people in the vicinity of its estate. In previous eras, when state benefits were unheard of, those working on an estate were among the most fortunate, receiving secured employment and rent-free accommodation. At the summit of this category of people was the indoor staff of the country house. Unlike many of their contemporaries prior to the 20th century, they slept in proper beds, wore well-made adequate clothes and received three proper meals a day, plus a small wage. In an era when many still died from malnutrition or lack of medicine, the long working hours were a small price to pay.<sup>[12]</sup>



- Would you like to live long-term as a guest in somebody else's house?
- Why did the European countries welcome the immigrants in as “guests” in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries?
- Was it good or bad to be a “guest” in someone else's country?
- How did this model fail, and lead to the Holocaust?

# The Melting Pot

(watch from 1:43)





- Why is this model called a “Melting Pot”?
- What was it trying to create?
- What did it ultimately create? Why was this a problem?

# The Hotel: Multiculturalism

(watch from 2:33)





- Would you like to live long -term in a hotel?
- Why is this model called the “Hotel”?
- How do the guests “pay” in the “Hotel” model of society?
- What are the good aspects of this model?
- What are the bad aspects of this model?
- Why did this model lead to “segregation”? and lack of community? Why is community important?



# A New Way: The Home We Build Together

(watch from 4:03)







- Would you like to have been part of the building and designing of your home?
- How does this model mean new people in society can still be different and still feel at home?
- Respect is a central value for this model to work. Who needs to respect who/what?
- How does “Building Lead to Belonging”?



# Build and Design



## Activity

Students are now asked to make **architectural plans or 3D models** of these three models:

“Country House”

“Hotel”

“Home We Build Together”

**Annotate these with full explanations of how they work** (and what they lead to).

# Building Together

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 realized 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.



- Why did Lord Mishcon ask his guests to wash up? Why was this effective?
- How is this connected to the idea in the video of *The Home We Build Together*?
- How can you use this idea in your life (in your family, community, and school)?

# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 1:

A culture of debate. Judaism is the only religion I know, all of whose canonical texts are anthologies of arguments: arguments between God and humans, humans and God, humans and one another. The Mishnah preserves the arguments of the Sages even when it knows that the law is like one not the other. So difference, argument, clashes of style and substance, are signs not of unhealthy division but of health. The law of entropy states, all systems lose energy over time. Not Judaism. Where you find argument, there you will find passion.

# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 2:

Keep talking. Remember what the Torah says about Joseph and his brothers: *Lo yachlu dabro leshalom*, “They couldn’t speak to him in peace” (Genesis 37:2). In other words, had they kept speaking, eventually they would have made peace. So, keep talking to one another.

# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 3:

Listen to one another. *Shema Yisrael*, “Listen: Israel” calls on us to listen to one another in a way that we can actually hear what our opponent is saying. If we do this, we discover it is not just a powerful way to avoid conflict, but profoundly therapeutic as well.

# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 4:

Work to understand those with whom you disagree. Remember why the law follows Hillel as opposed to Shammai. According to the Talmud, Hillel was humble and modest; he taught the views of his opponents even before his own. He laboured to understand the point of view with which he disagreed.



# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 5:

Never seek victory. Never ever seek to inflict defeat on your opponents. If you seek to inflict defeat on your opponent, they must, by human psychology, seek to retaliate and inflict defeat on you. The end result is though you win today, you lose tomorrow and in the end everyone loses. Do not think in terms of victory or defeat. Think in terms of the good of the Jewish people.

# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 6:

If you seek respect, give respect. Remember the principle of the Book of Proverbs: “As water reflects face to face, so does the heart of person to person.” As you behave to others, they will behave to you. If you show contempt for other Jews, they will show contempt to you. If you respect other Jews, they will show respect to you.

# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 7:

You can disagree, but still care. Jews will never agree on everything, but we remain one extended family. If you disagree with a friend, tomorrow they may no longer be your friend. But if you disagree with your family, tomorrow they are still your family. In the end, family is what keeps us together, and that is expressed best in the principle *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh*, “All Jews are responsible for one another.” Remember that this is the ultimate basis of Jewish peoplehood. As Shimon bar Yochai said, “When one Jew is injured, all Jews feel the pain.” So that is why we must strive to remember rule seven. Ultimately, I don’t need you to agree with me, I just need you to care about me.

# Eight Tools of Communication and Behaviour

## Tool 8:

The message of Peace - God loves us all:

The Sages said a very striking thing. They said, “Great is peace, because even if Israel is worshipping idols and there is peace among them, God will never allow harm to happen to them.” That is a powerful idea to reflect upon. So the next time you are tempted to walk away from some group of Jews that you think has offended you, make that extra effort, that gesture to stay together, to forgive, to listen, to try and unite because if God loves each of us, can we justify failing to strive to do this too?

# Beit Nidrash

## בֵּית נִדְרָשׁ

A practical project based on what we've learned from Rabbi Sacks

**Our Exploration of Speech:** How we speak to and about each other in our homes, schools, and communities contributes significantly to the quality of life each of us has in those spaces. Over the course of the week, work with a partner or in a group of three to make sure you use the Eight Tools for Communication and Behaviour we have outlined.

Create a 3-minute video or podcast that reflects what you and your partner(s) accomplished over the course of the week, and what kind of impact these 8 tools had on your communication skills, and on your relationships.

If you would like, you can choose to submit your work as part of a global contest with other schools who have also participated in **Communities in Conversation**. The contest begins on November 3 and ends on November 10. Submissions due by November 13. There is a maximum of 3 people per group submission. Find out more, and submit your projects, via [rabbisacks.info/competition/](https://rabbisacks.info/competition/).