

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו.  
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך,  
ויום השביעי שבת לה'

# SHABBAT LASHEM

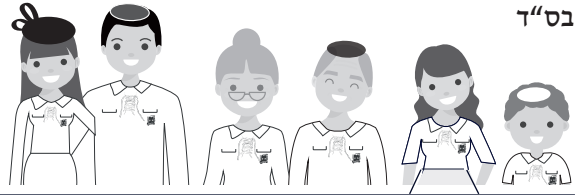
THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

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בס"ד



*This week's edition of Shabbat Lashem is dedicated lilul nishmat HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben Liba, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. May his family be comforted among all the mourners of Zion.*



## TO BE YOU AVISHAI MARCUS SHEVET TZION

It is a really difficult and potentially inappropriate to limit the works of Chief Lord Rabbi Sacks zt"l to one single idea. His writings cover all aspects of life from religion to politics, relationships to art, love to responsibility. Over the past week everything has been said and tributes have come from all around the world. Rabbi Fine noted that the majority of these tributes have not been related to his scholarship (which was of course, resounding), rather they have been personal stories. The narrative is 'how did Rabbi Sacks impact my life'. This is a reflection on who he was. He had such a prestigious status in society yet made every person he interacted with feel like they were the most important person in the world. In his own words 'a good leader has followers, a great leader makes leaders'. I would like to share one way in which Rabbi Sacks impacted my life.

I had the privilege of learning 'Lessons in Leadership' with my fellow Nivchar, Rafi Kleiman. Week in, week out, we were blown away by how poignant and relevant the messages were. They spoke to us on a personal level. One underlying theme that was discussed in many of the essays was to have the 'courage not to conform'. Rabbi Sacks taught me one of the most important elements of being a leader. Often you will be confronted by naysayers. Sometimes people will not approve of your message. Outside of the realm of leadership, people may try and mould you into someone you do not want to be. In response to these challenges, Rabbi Sacks lends the following

advice.

"Leaders lead. That does not mean to say that they do not follow. But what they follow is different from what most people follow. They don't conform for the sake of conforming. They don't do what others do merely because others are doing it. They follow an inner voice, a call. They have a vision, not of what is, but of what might be. They think outside the box. They march to a different tune"

What inspires me about Rabbi Sacks is how genuine his words are. He was a master orator and writer. That is one level of brilliance. The most impressive upper level was the way in which he lived his life by these words.

Very rarely does a crossbench Lord, stand up in the House of Lords and deliver a speech which openly condemns one party. In 2018 this is what Rabbi Sacks did. When he saw that the "virus of anti-Semitism was mutating", he did not stand idly by. He condemned Jeremy Corbyn and his shadow-cabinet in an unprecedented way. Rabbi Sacks had the courage not to conform. What was the outcome of this act of valour? It is difficult to say that it was the causation, however, in 2019 Jeremy Corbyn lost his position as the party leader. The Labour anti-Semitic rhetoric has started to dissipate. Rabbi Sacks was a living example of having the confidence to stick to your values in the most challenging of times.

May we continue to learn the lessons that Rabbi Sacks imparted. May we continue to let them shape us as people, as a nation and as humanity.

**AVISHAI WAS A MADRICH ON GIMMEL-IM  
5780 AND IS A NIVCHAR 5781.**

London	In: 15:58 Out: 17:06	Oxford	In: 15:58 Out: 17:10	Leeds	In: 15:52 Out: 17:07
Manchester	In: 15:59 Out: 17:10	Bristol	In: 16:05 Out: 17:16	Liverpool	In: 15:59 Out: 17:14
Cambridge	In: 15:51 Out: 17:04	Birmingham	In: 15:58 Out: 17:11	Jerusalem	In: 16:05 Out: 17:19

# A CALL TO ACTION

RAV JOEL KENIGSBURG | RAV SHALIACH



The parallel between this week's parsha and the events of the past days is striking. Parshat Chayei Sarah begins with the description of Avraham mourning for Sarah, not just his wife but also the great matriarch of

the Jewish people. So too in our days we find ourselves mourning the loss of one of the great Jewish leaders of modern times – Rabbi Lord Sacks זצ"ל.

But in the Torah's description of the response of Avraham to Sarah's death we find something strange. The passuk tells us that after Sarah died

וַיָּבֵא אֲבְרָהָם לְסֹפֵד לְשָׂרָה וְלִבְכָתָה

*"And Avraham came to eulogise Sarah and to cry for her". (Bereishit 23:2)*

There is a phenomenon we find in several places in the Torah where certain letters are written larger or smaller. One example is in this verse – where the letter kaf of the word וְלִבְכָתָה is written smaller. What is the meaning of this smaller kaf?

The Ba'al HaTurim explains that it is to show that Avraham didn't cry excessively. The smaller letter represents diminished mourning. Rashi quotes the Midrash that tells us that Sarah died when she heard about the Akeidah. The shock of hearing that Avraham had taken their son to be killed, before she could even hear the "happy ending" brought about her demise. The Slonimer Rebbe explains that had Avraham displayed too much outward grief it may have led to the mistaken impression that he regretted fulfilling the word of Hashem – that he would rather have never embarked on the Akeidah, an event which indirectly led to the death of Sarah. The diminished kaf reveals that Avraham had no regrets and understood that everything was the will of Hashem.

But Rabbi Sacks gave another explanation. If we think about the life that Avraham had lived until this point we find it was fraught with difficulties

and hardship. For close to 100 years he and Sarah had waited for a child. Finally when Yitzchak was born, Avraham was commanded to offer him as a sacrifice. After embarking on the Akeidah, he returned to find that he had lost his beloved wife, and he didn't even have anywhere to bury her. Furthermore, Avraham had received 2 great promises from Hashem – of a great nation, and of a land – yet neither of them had yet come to fruition.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world for Avraham to give up. It would have been the most natural thing for him to say that things were unfair. He had done all that was expected from him and in response he lost everything. But Avraham didn't give up. He realised that he

had a job to do and he got on with building the future. Avraham didn't cry excessively because he knew he had to move forward. He knew that Hashem's promises to him would not be fulfilled unless he played his part in fulfilling them. Avraham was promised a land, and so bought a burial plot in that land. He was promised a great nation – so he ensured his son would

marry to begin creating that great nation. As Rabbi Sacks so succinctly puts it: "Abraham did not wait for God to act. He understood one of the profoundest truths of Judaism: that God is waiting for us to act."

These words form such a timely message for us all today. As we find ourselves facing a void and wondering who will rise to fill it, as we find ourselves going through dark times and sometimes wondering where the light will come from – rather than get stuck in the past, rather than give in to despair – let us choose to follow the path of Avraham Avinu. Let us choose to walk in the way that Rabbi Sacks taught and led. Let us choose faith and let us choose the future.

**RATHER THAN GET STUCK IN THE PAST, RATHER THAN GIVE IN TO DESPAIR – LET US CHOOSE TO FOLLOW THE PATH OF AVRAHAM AVINU. LET US CHOOSE TO WALK IN THE WAY THAT RABBI SACKS TAUGHT AND LED. LET US CHOOSE FAITH AND LET US CHOOSE THE FUTURE.**

**FOLLOW RAV JOEL ON FACEBOOK (RAV SHALIACH PAGE) AND ON TWITTER (@JOEL KENIGSBURG)**



# THE DUALITY OF TEFILLA

DANIEL ROSS | SHEVET MORASHA



In this week's Parasha, Parashat Chayei Sarah we encounter the passuk: *"And Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field toward evening."* (Bereishit 24:63) It is unsurprising that this is reminiscent of davening on machane, after all the

Gemara records (Brachot 26b) that (according to Rabbi Yossi son of Rabbi Chanina) this is the source of Mincha, the afternoon prayer, as he explains "meditate" to be referring to tefillah. In fact, Rabbi Yossi son of Rabbi Chanina believes that all three of our daily prayer services were modelled on the Avot, our forefathers.

The alternate belief is that of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. He understands the source of Shacharit, Mincha and Ma'ariv to be the daily korbanot, sacrifices.

The halachic ramifications of this notwithstanding, Rabbi Sacks zt'l explains that we can learn a profound message about the nature of tefillah from this dispute.

Rabbi Sacks zt'l explains, "There were two distinct spiritual traditions in biblical Judaism. On the one hand were the patriarchs and prophets. ... They wore no robes of office. They lived far from the cities of their time. Alone – away from the noise of urban civilization – they heard and heeded G-d's word. They prayed as the situation demanded. No two prayers were the same. They spoke from the depths of their being to the One who is the depth of all Being. That is patriarchal and prophetic prayer." This is the meditation, the tefillah of Yitzchak in the field.

On the other hand, "there was another type of religious personality: the priest. He did have special robes of office. He was a 'holy man,' set apart from others (this is the root meaning of kadosh, 'holy,' in Judaism). For him, avodah, divine 'service,' primarily meant the offering of a sacrifice. Everything about the sacrifices was subject to detailed prescriptive rules. The

temidim or regular sacrifices had their own time (morning and afternoon), their own place (the sanctuary, later the Temple), and their own precisely defined ritual, never varying, always the same.

The difference between these two spiritual traditions can be summarised by their view of spontaneity. For the prophet, spontaneity is essential. The prophet must be constantly responsive to his people, his entire life is dedicated to the belief that tomorrow will be radically different from today. The prophet lives a life of change and motion, of spontaneity.

The kohen, however, is the exact opposite. The avodah of the kohen is fixed, each element

is commanded by Hashem. One only needs to open Sefer Vayikra to see the numerous duties of the service in the Beit Hamikdash, the details of which may not be deviated from.

The answer that Rabbi Sacks zt'l provides is remarkable: tefillah has

both components. "One of the most remarkable and little noted facts about Judaism is that to this day we maintain both practices – because we say each amida twice: once privately and silently as individuals, and then a second time publicly and collectively as a community. The silent prayer belongs to the world of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov, Rachel and Chana – it is private, personal and can include (within certain halachic parameters) individualized requests. The reader's repetition follows the logic of the sacrifices (which is why there is no repetition in the case of maariv, the evening service, because there was no night-time sacrifice in the Temple.)"

Now, when we find ourselves unable to daven with minyanim, when the amida is not being repeated, it is the prime time to work on our tefillah. We have a unique opportunity to take as long as we need for our silent Shemona Esrei to praise, give thanks, and cry out to Hashem in a spontaneous, highly personal manner.

**NOW, WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES UNABLE TO DAVEN WITH MINYANIM, WHEN THE AMIDA IS NOT BEING REPEATED, IT IS THE PRIME TIME TO WORK ON OUR TEFILLAH.**

**DANIEL WAS A MADRICH ON BET BASE/BET CHALUTZI 5780 AND IS CHINUCH WORKER 5781.**

# A TRIBUTE TO RABBI SACKS Z'L

LAURIE REZNIK | SHEVET AVICHAH



Three years ago, whilst on Torani I wrote a Dvar Torah for a Bnei Akiva Olami Shabbat for Parashat Chayei Sarah based on Rabbi Sacks' ideas:

*How can it be that Avraham, who went through ten gruelling trials, died satisfied? If we look at Holocaust survivors, they are among the strongest people you will ever meet. They lived through the most terrifying time in history. When the war was over, they focused entirely on the future. Only after time had passed did they reflect on what had*

*I wanted to share with you a beautiful idea that I read in an article by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.*

*Just three months ago (August 2017), Yisrael Kristal, the world's oldest man, passed away just before his 114th birthday. His life was filled with trials and hardships. He survived four years in the Lodz ghetto, where his two children died. He was then transported to Auschwitz, where his wife was killed. He came out of Auschwitz weighing just 37 kilos. With his entire world destroyed, he remarried, had more children and moved to Israel, where he started a successful confectionery business. His life enables us to understand the pasuk:*

*“וַיָּגֵזַע וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשִׂיבָה טוֹבָה, זָקֵן וְשָׂבֵעַ”  
“And Avraham expired and he died, in a good old age, old and satisfied.” (Bereshit 25:8)*

**LOOKING BACK ON THIS NOW, IT IS EASY TO SEE HOW RABBI SACKS Z'L MADE SUCH AN IMPACT ON THE WORLD. HIS LIFE WAS DEVOTED TO ENSURING A BETTER FUTURE FOR WORLD JEWRY, AND IN FACT FOR ALL OF PLANET EARTH.**

*This is what Avraham did when he buried Sarah, found Yitzchak a wife and had more children. We can learn from him, and from Yisrael Kristal, that in order to get through hard times, we must build the future first, and then reflect on the past.*

Looking back on this now, it is easy to see how Rabbi Sacks z'l

made such an impact on the world. His life was devoted to ensuring a better future for world Jewry, and in fact for all of planet Earth. All this he did while fighting cancer, not once but three times! Despite his personal battles, Rabbi Sacks was the pillar of strength for the rest of us – an ambassador, an educator and a shining example for the Jewish nation.

**LAURIE WAS ROSH OF MILL HILL SVIVA 5779.**

## RABBI SACKS' CHULTZA

JONNY SHERMAN | SHEVET LAVI



This photo is from the final time Rabbi Sacks z't came to speak at the Bayit as Chief Rabbi. I was Mazkir and we came up with a “creative” way to thank him for all he had done for the movement in his years as Chief Rabbi.

He loved it and gave me a hug, which says a lot about how he could so easily mix being Chief Rabbi-y and professorial with being down to earth and madrich-like (as seen from plenty of examples of him standing on his chair

leading Ruach at various Bnei Akiva events over the years!). He truly was an inspiration.

**JONNY WAS MAZKIR 5773.**



# A TRIBUTE TO MY REBBE MY TEACHER RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

SARAH SHARMAN MOSER | SHEVET HATZVI



The first time I remember becoming aware of the greatness that is Rabbi Jonathan Sacks was in my late teens in England. As Chief Rabbi, he ran the "Traditional Alternatives" conference for sixthformers, and he would come and give shiur every so often at Limmud, the regular

Monday night learning evening in the Bayit in Bnei Akiva. We knew he was brilliant, he was amusing and he was also one of us. Maybe that is why there is such an outpouring of grief and love, particularly from Bnei Akiva bogrim.

I didn't know him personally, he was Josh's father, one of our friends. On occasion I would go to Golders Green Synagogue to hear him speak. Actually he tells a story in "To heal a fractured world" of a family in his shul that would always approach strangers and newcomers to welcome them and offer them a meal. It's a true story – they also approached me.

Every Bnei Akiva boger in England knew that the highlight of the year was Yom Ha'atmout in Raleigh Close. 'Tefillah chagigat, b'rov Am', followed by a speech by the Chief Rabbi, the Mazkir and then celebrations in the hall after. Well, when my husband Jason was mazkir, Rabbi Sacks was giving his speech and having already seen Jason's Dvar Torah I knew that amazingly the message was the same!

Rabbi Sacks was a Torah Scholar par excellence. His analysis and synthesis and clearness of thought were breathtaking. He seamlessly wove together Aristotle, Spinoza, Rav Kook, Rav Soloveitchik and the Rambam, to name a few. His delivery was word perfect, in a way that everyone could understand, appropriate for the audience, peppered with humor, and applying his ideas to the reality of the world around us. He was a master storyteller. He was majestic in his words but also humble in his faith. He was interested in people and not scared of difference of opinion. He said on many occasions, surrounding ourselves with likeminded people encouraged extremism. He taught us of the dignity of difference, respect and love for every person, even if we disagreed.

"The test of faith is whether I can make space for difference. Can I recognize God's image in someone who is not in my image, whose language, faith, ideals are different from mine? If I cannot, then I have made God in my image instead of allowing him to remake me in his." But more than that he showed such humanity. Rabbi Sacks was an ambassador for Jews, a unique moral voice in this chaotic world, where nothing can be taken

for granted. His explanation for the first four main stories in Bereishit – the failure of personal, moral, collective, and ontological responsibility resembles his world view and his call for us to learn from them and take responsibility for each other, "We the people" in place of "I".

"A nation is strong when it cares for the weak. It becomes rich when it cares for the poor. It becomes invulnerable when it cares for the vulnerable. This is what makes great nations."

We made aliya 23 years ago, but attribute our way of life, our way of thinking, our world view, and the way we educate our children as coming from our Rebbe, Rabbi Sacks. Every Dvar Torah that I give, every shiur that I write is inspired by Rabbi Sacks. His books and podcasts are my "go to" before anyone else. His Torah was the inspiration to go back to learn in the Midrascha a few years ago. Jason and I became "groupies" queuing up outside halls and shuls for hours to listen

to his public lectures. I am so grateful to live in this generation where he was such a towering leader, such an influence in our lives, even from afar, and that we had and have the opportunity to continue learning and teaching his Torah.

His Pashat Hashavua books accompany me to shul every week.

This week, Parshat Vayera, he asks the question, how could Avraham interrupt his meeting with God while he attends to the three strangers. Isn't that a chutzpah? What could be more important than that receiving Nevuah from God? He answers, "Abraham, father of monotheism, knew the paradoxical truth that to live the life of faith is to see the trace of God in the face of the stranger. It is easy to receive the Divine Presence when God appears as God. What is difficult is to sense the Divine Presence when it comes disguised as three anonymous passers-by. That was Abraham's greatness. He knew that serving God and offering hospitality to strangers were not two things but one. By choosing the most radical of the three possible interpretations of Genesis 18, the sages allowed us to hear one of the most fundamental principles of the life of faith: We honour God by honoring His image, humankind."

Rabbi Sacks saw צלם אלוקים, the Image of G-d, in every single person. And like Avraham Avinu, through his life work we are blessed, ונברכו בך כל משפחת האדמה. And as others have said before me, he was a true prince of God in our midst, ושיא אלוקים אתה בתוכינו.

**SARAH WAS A HACHSHARAT TORANI PARTICIPANT 5752-54 AND A ROSH MACHANE.**

# THE JEWISH ALGORITHM

DANIELLA WIEDER | SHEVET NE'EMAN



One of the most powerful messages I've ever heard came from a clip of Rabbi Lord Sacks speaking at the Olami Summit in 2017, titled The Jewish Algorithm. He starts by quoting a line from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night that he found life changing, which gets to the heart of what it is to be a Jew: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, but some have greatness thrust upon them."

Rabbi Sacks shares that he realised at a pretty early age that he wasn't born great, and he wasn't going to achieve greatness (debatable!). But at a certain point in his life at university, he suddenly realised that if you're a Jew, you have greatness thrust upon you. How so? We are the heirs of the descendants of the most influential man who ever lived, Avraham Avinu, who changed the world by his faithful willingness to follow the call of G-d. We are also the descendants of Moshe Rabbeinu, "the greatest law-giver in the history of humankind", and of David Hamelech; not merely Israel's greatest king, but the greatest religious poet in all of history. We are the heirs of the prophets; the world's first social critics, the first people to speak truth to power. We are the people whose heroes are teachers, whose citadels are houses of study and whose passion is learning and the life of the mind.

And here is the problem; this is why every one of you matters. Because today there are 13 or so million Jews - it's a handful, it's not the problem. The problem is that wherever you look around the world, between one in two and two in three young Jews are walking away from Judaism. And that hurts. You see, Jews have been around for a long time; twice as long as Christianity and three times as long as Islam. We have been around longer than almost any other nation. We have been scattered to every country in the world. We have known in those centuries,

from the height of triumph to the depths of tragedy; and yet never before in Jewish history, ever, have we had two things that we have simultaneously today: sovereignty and independence in Medinat Yisrael, and freedom and equality in the diaspora. There were times when we had one but we never had both before. And today, when every single prayer that your Bubbe and Zayde, your grandparents, and their grandparents ever prayed, back to 100 generations - every one of those prayers have been answered! And what are we doing? We're walking away! That is bad. That hurts. And that is why when Rabbi Sacks was a student, he said he couldn't be part of this. He was determined to get more Jewish, not less. He had no intention of being a rabbi and it was the last thing in his mind, but he made the decision that he can't be one of those who walks away. And if you make that same decision, to be more Jewish, not less, we will together change the course of Jewish history.

Long ago, in a lonely desert at the foot of a mountain in Sinai, G-d entrusted a small, fractious, obstinate people, with nothing particularly to distinguish them, with an algorithm called Torah. And that algorithm turned them into the most remarkable, tenacious, fate-defying people the world has ever known. How it works, Rabbi Sacks doesn't know, but that it works, he does know. Every one of you has dreams and plans, and you've all entered a reality where nothing is predictable. The world is changing faster than ever before, and it gets faster every year. You will need certain strength to come through and thrive and succeed.

Rabbi Sacks then shares from personal experience, what that algorithm of Torah will do to your life:

- 1) It will strengthen all your key relationships. You cannot get through life and find happiness and success on your own. All the studies show that your success

# THE JEWISH ALGORITHM CONTINUED

DANIELLA WIEDER | SHEVET NE'EMAN

and happiness depend on the strength and quality of those relationships. That is the first thing Judaism will do for you.

2) All success depends on habits of discipline and willpower. Halacha is the world's greatest ongoing seminar in discipline and willpower.

3) If you want to avoid burnout mid-career, you have to find and keep Shabbat; the world's greatest seminar in work-life balance. That is the power of Shabbat today. In Moshe's day, freedom from the slavery to Pharaoh, today, freedom from the tyranny to social media and work.

4) Happiness is a matter of gratitude with attitude. When you are living as a Jew, what are the first words you say every morning? Modeh Ani – you thank before you even think. You live a life that way and you will have a lifetime of satisfaction.

5) Judaism will keep your mind active for a lifetime, because to be a Jew there has to be a moment of life-long learning. Rabbi Sacks shares a story of when he was rushed to hospital for a life-saving operation. He was just coming round from the anaesthetic when there was a knock on his hospital door. It was an 80-year-old Jew with a volume of Gemara under his arm saying, "I heard you were here Rabbi Sacks, so I thought we could learn Gemara together." He jokes that he was trying to die, and this man wants to learn Gemara! That will keep you learning and growing throughout your lifetime.

6) Whatever you do in life, you will need an internal moral code. You need the inner voice that says "no", and that is what Judaism teaches you.

7) For happiness, success, and resilience, you need a sense of identity. You need to know who you are; of what story you are a part. We are not some free-floating atom in space blown by every wind. To be a Jew is to be part of the greatest story on Earth.

These 7 things won't make a small difference to your life; they will make all the difference to your life. They are all part of that remarkable algorithm that turn Jews into the most resilient, creative, transformative people the world has ever known. And yes, we may not be born great, we may not achieve greatness, but if we're Jewish we have greatness thrust upon us. And yes, it's hard to be a Jew.

**WE MAY NOT BE BORN GREAT, WE MAY NOT ACHIEVE GREATNESS, BUT IF WE'RE JEWISH WE HAVE GREATNESS THRUST UPON US. AND YES, IT'S HARD TO BE A JEW. IT NEEDS EFFORT OF DEDICATION AND WILL. RABBI SACKS MADE THAT DECISION IN UNIVERSITY, AND NOW WE MUST ALL MAKE THAT SAME DECISION.**

It needs effort of dedication and will; but it's the hard things that make you strong. It's the hard things that give you pride. It's the hard things that make you feel most vividly alive. Rabbi Sacks made that decision in

university, and now we must all make that same decision. Change yourself, and you begin to change your world. Years from now, you will look back and say that was the best decision you ever made! So let us together take this unique moment of independence and sovereignty in Medinat Yisrael, of freedom and equality in the diaspora, and let us really live proudly as Jews; true to our faith, a blessing to others – regardless of their faith. And let us go and change the world together.

To watch the video, go to [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4I871B4bfk&ab\\_channel=TheOfficeofRabbiSacks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4I871B4bfk&ab_channel=TheOfficeofRabbiSacks).

**DANIELLA WAS SGANIT ON GIMMEL-IM 5780 AND IS SVIVOT AND HADRACHA WORKER 5781.**



# MEMORIES OF RABBI SACKS

## MICHAEL RAINSBURY | SHEVET HATZVI



"Some are born great, some achieve greatness, but some have greatness thrust upon them."  
(Twelfth Night)

You might have thought that Rabbi Sacks was born 'great', and certainly that he achieved greatness. That he did. But in his own words, or rather paraphrasing Shakespeare's, he felt that greatness was thrust upon him.

Rabbi Sacks' childhood was typical of many London Jewish families in the 1950s and 60s. His family were active in the community, he went to non-Jewish primary and secondary schools, and he went straight to university, to study Philosophy in Cambridge. And it was here that his life changed forever.

The Six Day War had a profound effect on Rabbi Sacks' life. Like many Jews, he was overwhelmed with Jewish pride and a love for Israel. He spent one summer during his university years in America, where he sought inspiration from the greatest leaders of the Jewish world. He highlights two momentous meetings: with Rav Soloveitchik and the Lubavitcher Rebbe. His summarised that summer as only Rabbi Sacks knows how to do, in one beautifully mirrored, pithy aphorism: "The Rebbe challenged me to lead. Rabbi Soloveitchik challenged me to think."

Indeed, his thought and his leadership have transformed the Jewish world. And when we reflect on his contribution to Jewish communities, his moral clarity, his global leadership, his erudite Torah insights and worldview, and the library of religious and philosophical works that he gave us, I can't help but think that all this would not have been, were it not for one momentous summer during his university years.

And that is perhaps why, despite being one of, if not the, most sought after Jewish leader in the world, he is someone that I and countless other young British Jews, had a deep and personal connection with. He always made time to speak to and encourage young people, students, and youth movements.

My first memory of Rabbi Sacks was when he visited my shul in Woodford when I was 11 years old. I knew then that he was someone incredibly famous, so I made sure to get a picture with him, which I still have today. But it was as I held higher positions in Bnei Akiva that I had the opportunity to spend quality time with 'the Chief', as he was fondly known. From meetings in his home and office, shiurim in the Bnei Akiva Bayit, and even the occasional phonecall, the relationship with Rabbi Sacks was a significant part of being a Mazkir (National Director) of Bnei Akiva UK. It was surreal for a man who was friends with Prince Charles, the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury to make time for you and know your name. And in this, I was not alone.

At times of joy or sadness, he made sure to be there for the youth. I have fond memories of his meaningful words at the memorial service we organised for one of Bnei Akiva's founders, Arieh Handler, and I am privileged to have danced with him at the annual Yom Ha'atzmaut tefilla. Over 1300 people attend the service each year, after which the adults leave and the Bnei Akiva youth start dancing. Rabbi Sacks always made a point of staying to dance with the youth – and you could see the immense joy on his face as he did so.

With my friends and peers, we all knew that we were in the presence of greatness. All my close friends from my Bnei Akiva days felt Rabbi Sacks was their 'life rabbi'. He may not have

taught us in a classroom, but his character, leadership and Torah was a model for us to follow. We quoted him, read his books, learned his Torah and went to his shiurim.

Yet at the same time, we felt close enough to Rabbi Sacks that he was part of our lighter moments too. I can recall many a friend's wedding where the best friends' speech aimed to slip in as many Rabbi Sacks book titles as possible (The Home We Build Together, Radical Then, Radical Now, the Dignity of Difference etc). Impersonating Rabbi Sacks' grand oratory was commonplace amongst madrichim on camp. As I became particularly well-known for this, I once recorded a tribute to a friend who was leaving a role in Bnei Akiva in Rabbi Sacks' voice, which I put on YouTube. A few years later, at my wedding, I was amazed to see that Rabbi Sacks recorded a special Mazal tov message. But imagine my surprise when he went on to say that he loved my impression of him, which sounded more like him than he did, and that he offered me the job as his official clone!

I spent many hours in shul with Rabbi Sacks, both at communal events and on Shabbat. During that time, I never saw him lead a tefilla. Except for once, when he came to Birmingham where I was a student, for the shul's 125th Anniversary in 2008. They asked him if he would like to daven, and he agreed to. He led Pesukei D'Zimra. I am sure that the shul offered him a more 'keynote' tefilla, but this was Rabbi Sacks' preference. And I have never heard a Pesukei D'zimra led, before or after, with as much feeling, vigour, poetry or grandeur than that Shabbat morning in Birmingham. One of my best friends, Arieh Grossman, was with me for that Shabbat, and he had the unenviable job of following him by leading Shacharit. Every so often, when spending Shabbat together, we have reminded ourselves of the most memorable line from Rabbi Sacks' davening, uttered with so much fervour and concentration:

הפנת מספדי למחול לי פתחת שקי ותאזני שמחה: למען זמירך כבוד ולא ידם  
דאנת. *"You have turned my sorrow into dancing. You have removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may sing to You and not be silent. L-rd my G-d, for ever will I thank You."* (Tehillim 30:12-13)

In September 2020, Arieh interviewed Rabbi Sacks for the Koren Podcast. His last question, and one of the last that Rabbi Sacks ever answered, was "How can we find happiness in the year ahead, given that we already know it will almost certainly bring further challenges?" Rabbi Sacks said that he draws inspiration from Tehillim 30, Mizmor Shir Chanukat HaBayit L'David, in which King David describes the feelings after passing through a period of great danger. *"You have turned my sorrow into dancing."*

He explained that as a musician, David HaMelech knew how to "transmute negative energy into positives". He said that life may be hard, but there will always be moments of joy. It is our job to find those moment of joy and treasure them.

We are currently in a period of deep sorrow and mourning. I feel that I have lost my life role model, my greatest connection to greatness, and the guiding light not just for my approach to Torah, but also to politics, society, morality and life. But in time, we will cherish the memories, stories, lessons and Torah of Rabbi Sacks, and they will guide us through this and future challenges. They will push us to think more and lead more. They will thrust greatness onto us. And they will provide us with moments of joy.

For living in the same generation as Rabbi Sacks, and to have known him, was a privilege, to which I will always say: *"L-rd my G-d, for ever will I thank You."*

**MICHAEL WAS CHINUCH WORKER 5770 AND MAZKIR 5771. HE WAS ALSO HEAD OF THE BRITISH DESK AT WORLD BNEI AKIVA 5774-7 AND IS CURRENTLY THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR AT YESHIVAT ERETZ HATZVI.**

# WHAT'S GOING ON?

- We are excited to bring you exciting virtual activities over Lockdown. Keep an eye out for details on the Bnei Akiva social media pages.

- **Svivot are continuing over lockdown!** Look out for updates and virtual events from your local sviva or visit [www.bauk.org/svivot](http://www.bauk.org/svivot).

- **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Coronavirus has hit Bnei Akiva hard, costing us over £150,000. Over the last six months our Mazkirut and Bogrim have been working tirelessly to put on a range of fantastic programming for our youth, from Machane Aviv in the Spring, to a celebration of Israel like no other on Yom Ha'atzmaut, and now a packed summer of programming for over 400 children. Please support our **Yad Achim Campaign**. Visit [bauk.org/yad-achim](http://bauk.org/yad-achim) for more information and to donate.

- Applications are open for **Winter Machane 5781!** Join us at an exciting new site from **21st-28th December** and enjoy a fantastic Bnei Akiva residential full of fun, friends and Ruach! **NEW THIS YEAR: Machane Seenai for Year 11!** Sign up today at [bauk.org/camps](http://bauk.org/camps) or email [camps@bauk.org](mailto:camps@bauk.org) for more information.

- **Winter Machane Tafkidim** have opened! Sign up at [www.bauk.org/camps](http://www.bauk.org/camps).

- **SBM is back!** Look out for updates on social media of the different chaburot being given on a

variety of topics and keynote speakers. If you are looking for a chavruta please get in touch!

- We have launched **Mitzvah Day activities!** Mitzvah Day is the 15th of November and we want you to get involved! Check out our **Facebook page** for details on how to get involved from your homes!

- **Mazal Tov to Aron Lipczer** (Shevet Avichai) on his **engagement** this week!

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to stay informed of our online content!

- To receive weekly copies of **Shabbat Lashem**, sign up for our mailing list at [bauk.org/contact](http://bauk.org/contact).

- Visit [bauk.org/feedback](http://bauk.org/feedback) for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

## Food for thought:

1. Why does the passuk seeming superfluously explicitly teach us that Sarah was buried in Eretz Canaan? (See Haamek Davar 23:19)
2. What deeper message can we learn from Avraham's Eved expression of "Baruch Hashem"? (See Rav Hirsch 24:27)

## SHABBAT SHALOM!!!



Winter  
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5781



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