



TO PROTECT AND TO PROJECT: IN APPRECIATION OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l

A couple of years ago, I was invited to speak in the keynote session of the national conference of the CCCU—the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in Washington, DC. On stage were the presidents of each religion's leading faith-based universities. The topic was the place of religion in our country and I was surprised to hear my fellow panelists bemoan the challenges that faith leaders faced in our contemporary times. When it was my turn to speak I thought of Rabbi Sacks and I told those assembled that I had a different perspective. The Jewish people have endured an exile lasting thousands of years, I explained, and while in the

past our goal was simply to persevere, today we have the opportunity to influence and inspire. And this, to me, is the key historic shift at the core of Rabbi Sacks' extraordinary legacy.

For centuries, prominent Jews in the Diaspora were called upon to utilize their positions of influence to protect our people. From Mordechai to the Abarbanel, the fundamental purpose for life in the public sphere was simply to ensure survival. Now, however, we live in an era that is miraculous and wondrous. While the challenges of protecting have not ceased, a whole new vista of opportunities exist. The Jewish people are no longer lost in exile but have once again returned to their homeland. Torah study is





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open and accessible throughout the world. Where once we might have looked at our neighbors and saw only persecutors, today we may look at them and see potential partners. And this presents us not only with great opportunities but also great responsibilities. Rabbi Sacks is a product of this era and a forerunner in realizing the possibilities of our moment in history. Previous generations protected, Rabbi Sacks projected — he shared his Jewish values to the entire world for the benefit of the entire world. We live in an unprecedented moment in time, and Rabbi Sacks showed us what it means to live and embody a life of Jewish values that seeks to redeem the world and move history forward.

This is, in fact, the Jewish mission. It is why G-d gave us His Torah.

As expressed so powerfully in the Chanukah lights. Lit inside the Jewish home, our candles brighten a darkened world. It is the consciousness of this holy mission that elevates our life ambitions and all of our day to day activities and interactions whether it be with family, neighbors or co-workers. From cubicles to corner offices, from batei medrash to Zoom rooms, in boardrooms and classrooms, inside your own home or in dealing with world leaders, the mission and responsibility of each Jew is to embody and forward our values to the next generation and to those around us. This is how we redeem the world.

In our multiple conversations throughout my tenure as President of Yeshiva University, Rabbi Sacks impressed upon me the importance

of seeing ourselves and our mission in these broader terms. He encouraged me to transmit this empowering message to our community and especially to our students, the leaders of the world of tomorrow.

One cannot say enough about Rabbi Sacks' brilliance, erudition and oratory mastery. His profound Torah insights on morality and humanity speak for themselves. For me, however, his lasting impact is the insight he inspired within us about ourselves. "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be," Ophelia famously declares. Lord Sacks showed us what we may become. And for that we remain forever inspired and forever grateful.

May his memory be for a blessing.



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