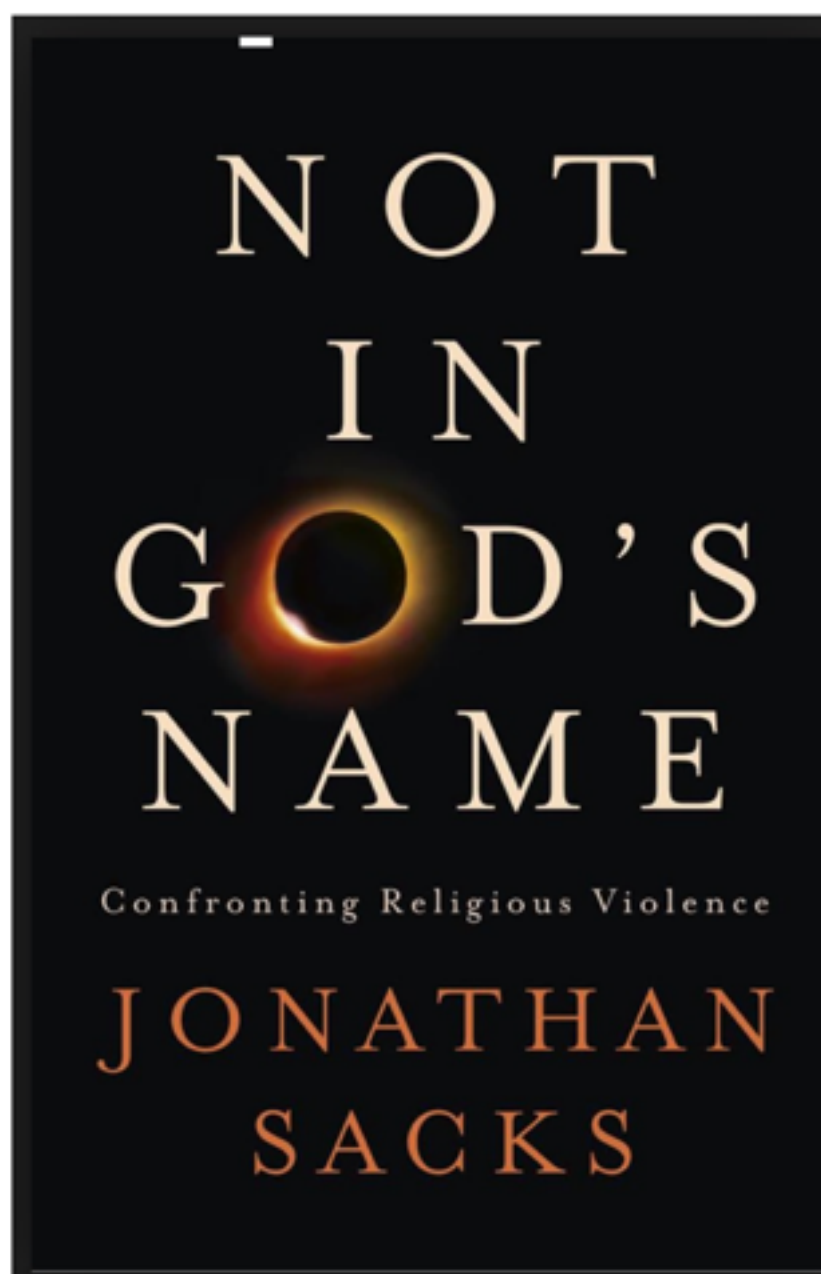


NOT IN GOD'S NAME



ACTS
WINTER 2018

St David's United Church
Calgary



Holy Manners Book Study # 40

Session #8

- House Keeping
- Opening:
Aileen Shewchuk

Housekeeping

- Please feel free to raise questions and comment as we go.
- March 26: Guatemala
- SDUC.ca
- Jock's Poem

to notice

there are few who seem
to notice;

and fewer yet that
notice -
and do.

there is a kind of
assuring hope;

that sees and cares -
and does.

sad are those that lose
their dreams;

in the storms of life -
and in the confusions
of time.

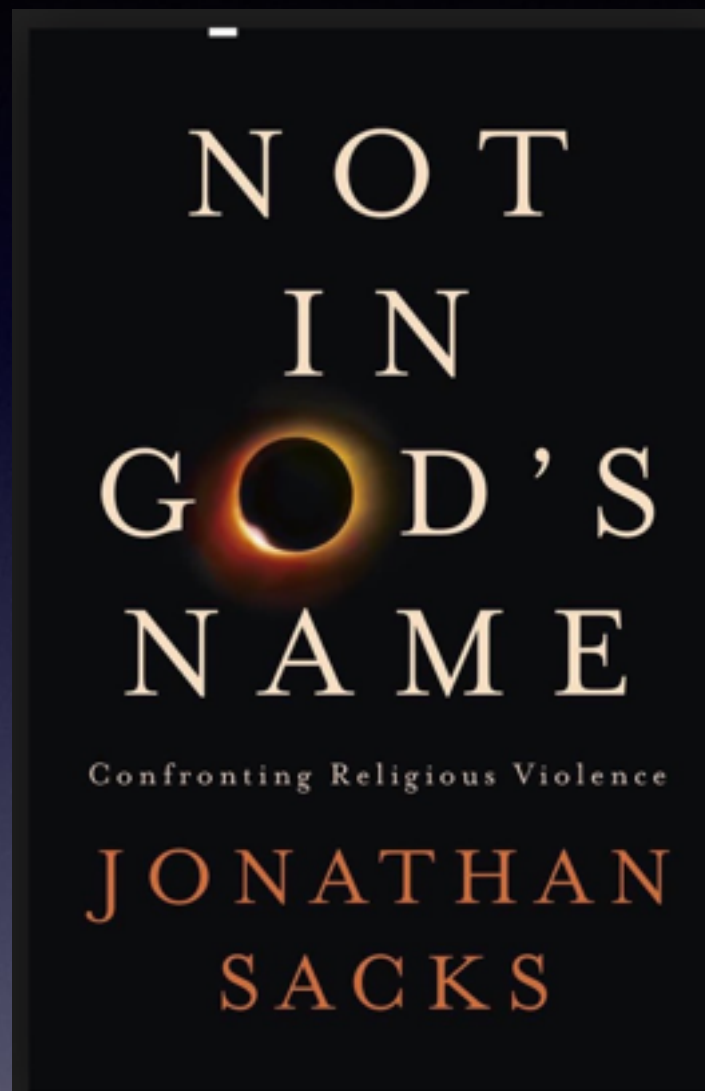
happy are those that
dream dreams;

for themselves - of
aspiration -
and for others - of
recovery.

to notice creates the
inspiration found in
difficulty;

to notice creates the
energy found in
contribution.

mar 2018



Opening:

Aileen Shewchuk

THE OPEN HEART

CHAPTER 10: THE STRANGER

CHAPTER 11: THE UNIVERSALITY OF
JUSTICE, THE PARTICULARITY OF LOVE

- **“We have, collectively, a propensity to violence... there have only been twenty-nine years since history began in which there were no wars.”**
- **“Our tendency (is) to form ourselves into groups, to think highly of our own and negatively of others... ‘morality binds and blinds.’ It binds us to others in a bond of reciprocal altruism.”**
- **“To be cured of potential violence towards the Other, I must be able to imagine myself as the other.”**

- **“It is forcing us to see that the Other, the outsider, the one who stands outside our circle of salvation, is also human - that to be human is to be a mix of good and bad - and to wrestle with that fact as Jacob wrestled with the angel.”**
- **“The humanitarian as opposed to a group ethic requires the most difficult of all imaginative exercises: role reversal - putting yourself in the place of those you despise, or pity, or simply do not understand.”**

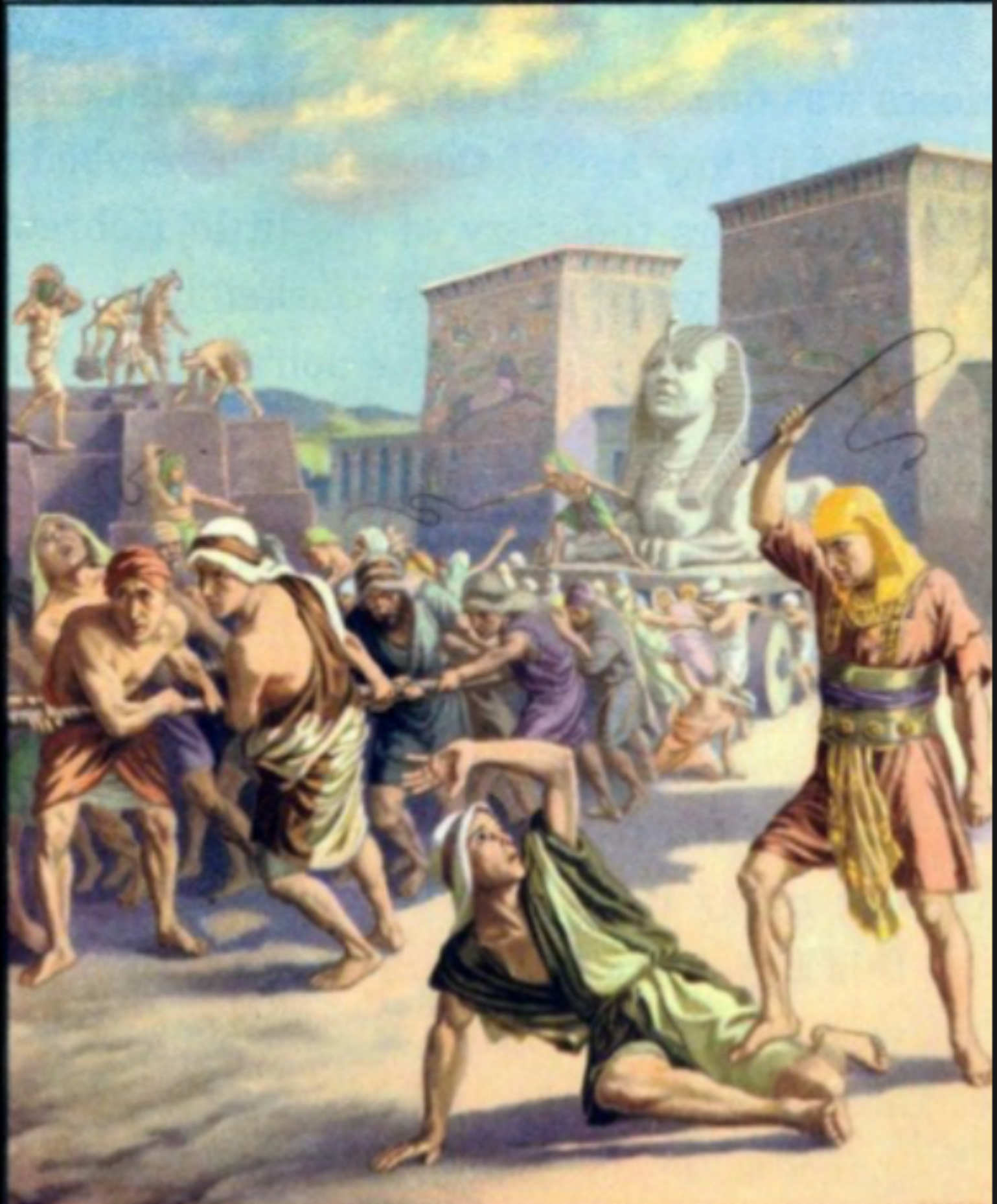
Introductory Comments

- 1. We have arrived at the point in Rabbi Sacks' argument where he believes the Torah Tradition and the Jewish Faith can make a contribution to the other faiths and to humanity as a whole in terms of containing religious violence.**
- 2. A video: "Why I am a Jew"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAbiFbpQP8o>

***"You shall
neither mistreat
a stranger,
nor oppress
him,
for you were
strangers
in the land
of Egypt."***

Exodus 22:21





The Exodus

**Elaboration on the Exodus theme:
Gandhi (India) MLK (USA)
Mandela (S.Africa)... Discuss**

WHAT DO THESE IMAGES TELL US?

- Exodus is a great covenantal story. It is more than simply “freedom for Jews.”

- Exodus teaches that you cannot be a people or a nation unless you come to know what it means to be a stranger.
- Jews are constantly admonished at key times of their annual liturgical cycle to remember the Exodus and that they too were strangers in a strange land.

- **“... the radical idea that care for the stranger is why the Israelites had to experience exile and slavery before they could enter the Promised Land and build their own society and state.”**
- **“Biblical ethics is a prolonged tutorial in role reversal.”**



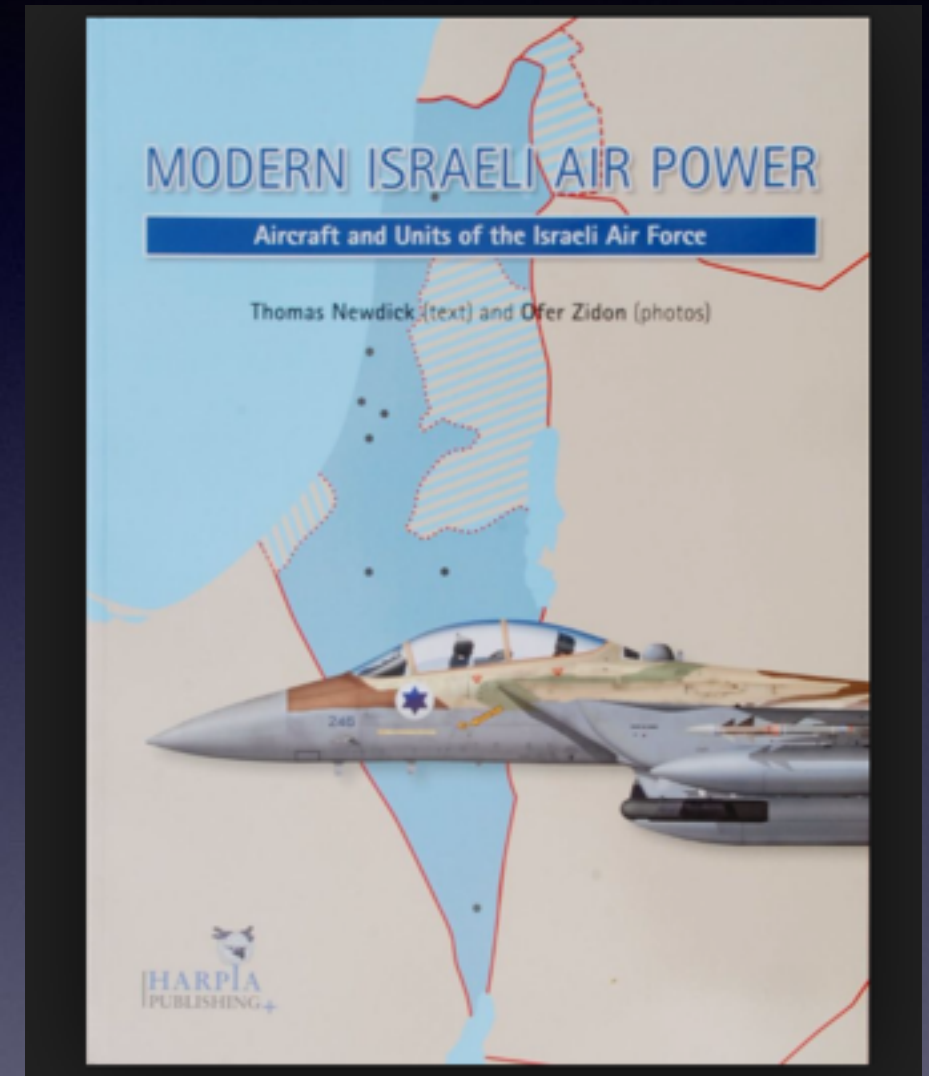
- **“Do not wrong or oppress the stranger, for you yourselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt.”**
- **Exodus 22:21**



**They must now remember
strangers and be a
blessing to them because
they know what it means to
be exiles.**

Discuss.

- **Even the Promised Land does not first belong to Israel. It belongs first to God. (186)**
- **Israel must first learn to be “the other” and then can it have an identity and be able to welcome other “strangers” into their midst. (186)**
- **Discuss the significance of this statement for history and for modern times.**





**We must base our behaviour and what God wants, not on the pragmatism of immediacy. The real test of this is when hard times come.
(187)**

“...will be the ongoing litmus tests of the moral acceptability of a civilization. Empathy, Sympathy, knowledge and rationality are usually enough to let us live at peace with others. But not in hard times...”

Discuss

Our greatest virtues (like claiming liberty for captives) can mutate into our greatest vices (like failing to allow freedom for those who have become our responsibility.)

**Bad people can turn and become good.
(181/2) This is role reversal in reverse.
Remembering our past as strangers in a strange land can help us realize how we too must treat strangers.**

Discuss



We need religion to bring a transcendent dimension to our ethics and politics. (182)
The Genesis narratives are radically tolerant. (183)

“The one outside the covenant is also beloved by God.”

Discuss what this means.

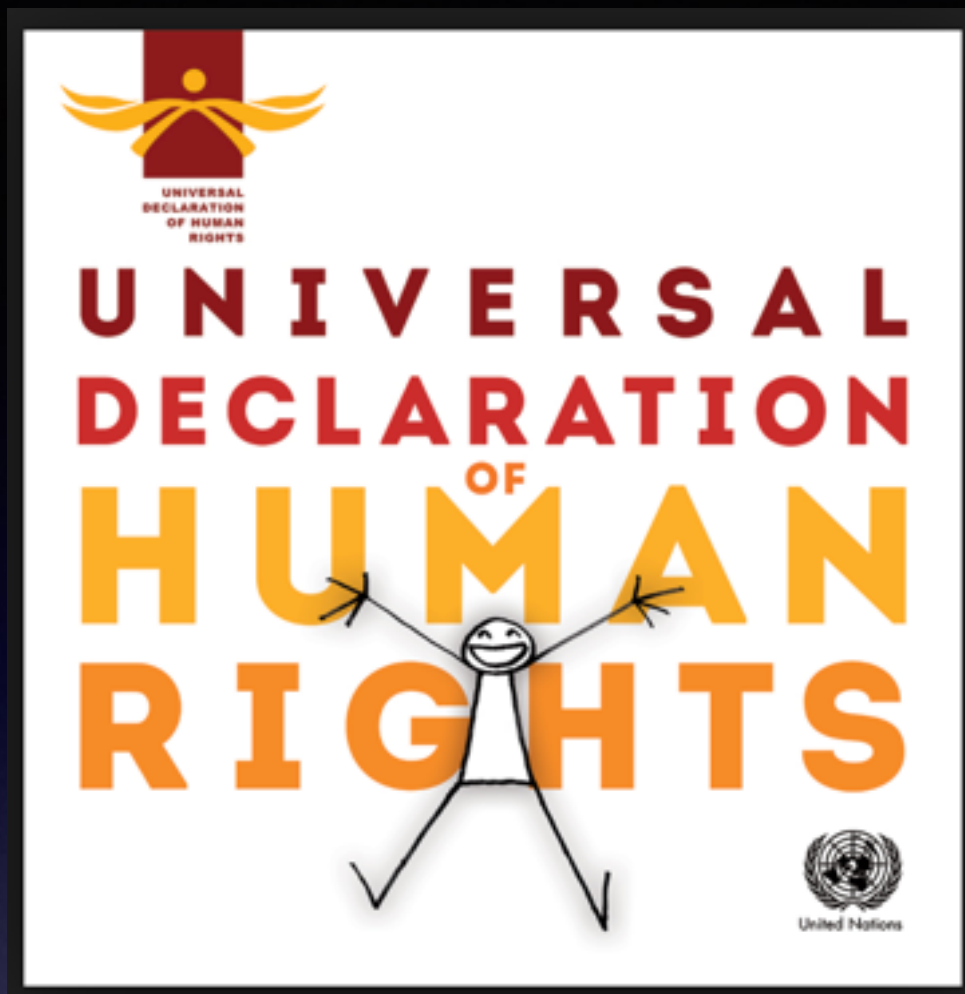
- **Rabbi Sacks remains here within the Genesis frame of reference, but the prophetic tradition is even more radical when it speaks of Israel and her enemies. These enemies, too, are servants of God. (see Isaiah, Jeremiah)**
- **The Torah tradition helps Israel to move from tribalism to universalism while retaining their identity as a people.**
- **Discuss**

Colin Outtrim and Chapter 11 to follow



A STORY TO SHARE

- Colin's input



“A universal and particular law of compassion.”



- “Perhaps one day we will all see the world, ourselves and God the same way. That is the prophetic vision. But not now, not yet.”

“The result has been the atomization of society, the collapse of the traditional family, the erosion of community and the loss of national identity, leading to the counter-reaction of religious extremism among those who still seek identity and community.”

“There is justice, and there is love. Justice is universal. Love is particular. Justice must be detached, impartial, applied equally to all. Love plays no part in it.”



“Imperialism is the necessary logical consequence of universalism.”

“The Hebrew Bible is a unique attempt to find a way out of the dilemma by showing how the unity of God can co-exist with the diversity of humankind.”

Key Learnings-Chapter 11

- 1. Human identity is plural.**
- 2. God transcends our differences.**
- 3. All share in God's image.**
- 4. Diverse people claim a common covenant.**

TWO COVENANTS

- 1. The first with humanity (through Noah) and ...**
- 2. the second with Israel (through Abraham).**

God wants to relate both to humanity and to Israel and each is not to be exclusive of the other.

- 1. God is both particular and universal. (194)**
- 2. We individually relate to God in the particular whereas humanity relates to God in the universal.**

HOW CAN THIS HAPPEN?

**We need the core value of both love and justice.
For us - Love is particular. Justice is universal.
But for God - Love and justice are both particular
and universal.**

Discuss

TORAH TRADITION

- **Abraham sought to be true to his faith while being a blessing to all. (203)**
- **Abraham did not view the “chosen-ness” of his covenantal relationship with God to become a matter of “exclusivity” over others.**

- **“A chosen people is opposite to a master race.” (198)**
- **Chosen people exist to serve God, not to master others. We are not a master people, but a servant community. (198)**
- **What have we learned?**
- **“Our task is to discover the face of God in the other.” Mary Jo Leddy**
- **In that, both Sacks and Leddy are agreed.**



Expanding our **encounter with Sacks and his book**

Jonathan Sacks: “Not in God’s Name”

A Video Presentation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oK3PK_qHkrs

18:30 - 26:00

JACK MCFARQUHAR'S CLOSING

Next Week: Session #9

Opening: Lynn Sturby

Reading Assignment: March 19

II: THE OPEN HEART

Chapter 12: Hard Texts

Chapter 13: Relinquishing Power

Closing: Janet Clare

- **Have a great week!**
- **See you on March 19th.**