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RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS AWARDED 2016 TEMPLETON PRIZE

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth who has spent decades bringing spiritual insight to the public conversation through mass media, popular lectures and more than two dozen books, has been awarded the 2016 Templeton Prize.

Rabbi Sacks, 67, first gained attention by leading what many consider the revitalization of Britain's Jewish community during his service as Chief Rabbi from 1991 to 2013, a feat he accomplished in the face of dwindling congregations and growing secularization across Europe. During his tenure he catalyzed a network of organizations that introduced a Jewish focus in areas including business, women's issues and education, and urged British Jewry to turn outward to share the ethics of their faith with the broader community.

Central to his message is appreciation and respect of all faiths, with an emphasis that recognizing the values of each is the only path to effectively combat the global rise of violence and terrorism.

In his most recent book, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence*, Rabbi Sacks writes: "Too often in the history of religion, people have killed in the name of the God of life, waged war in the name of the God of peace, hated in the name of the God of love and practiced cruelty in the name of the God of compassion. When this happens, God speaks, sometimes in a still, small voice almost inaudible beneath the clamor of those claiming to speak on his behalf. What he says at such times is: 'Not in My Name.'"

He also boldly defends the compatibility of religion and science, a response to those who consider them necessarily separate and distinct. "Science takes things apart to see how they work. Religion puts things together to see what they mean," he wrote in his book, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning*.

The Templeton Prize, valued at £1.1 million (about \$1.5 million or €1.4 million), is one of the world's largest annual awards given to an individual and honors a living person who has made exceptional contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works. The announcement was made at a news conference today at the British Academy in London by the John Templeton Foundation, based in West Conshohocken, Pennsylvania. The Prize anchors the Foundation's international efforts to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to human purpose and ultimate reality.

That catalyst includes presenting each year's Prize Laureate with a series of what the foundation calls *Big Questions*, a tradition that echoes the legacy of founder Sir John Templeton, the legendary investor and philanthropist who sought to foster and recognize spiritual progress. In videos on the Prize website, www.templetonprize.org, Rabbi Sacks tackles many issues, including the recent spread of religious violence which he argues has been sparked by the export of Western secularization.

Unfortunately, he says, that secularization has failed to provide guidance on core issues of human identity, creating a vacuum being filled by religious fundamentalism that often stokes hatred. The parallel rise of social media has engulfed an ever larger swath of the population, especially youth.

The solution, he contends, is to match the violence with "a message of love as powerful as the message being delivered by the preachers of hate," adding, "it really has to speak to young people and we have to use the same social networking, the same technology as the extremists and we've got to do it as well and better than they do."

In remarks prepared for today's press conference, Rabbi Sacks says: "Religion, or more precisely, religions, should have a voice in the public conversation within the societies of the West, as to how to live, how to construct a social order, how to enhance human dignity, honour human life, and indeed protect life as a whole Each religion, and each strand within each religion, will have to undertake this work, because if religion is not part of the solution it will assuredly be a large part of the problem as voices become ever more strident, and religious extremists ever more violent."

Jennifer Simpson, Chair of the John Templeton Foundation Board of Trustees, notes that Rabbi Sacks epitomizes future-mindedness, a characteristic revered by her grandfather, Sir John Templeton and father, the late Foundation president and chairman Dr. Jack Templeton. "After 9/11, Rabbi Sacks saw the need for a response to the challenge posed by radicalization and extremism and he did so with dignity and grace," she notes. "He saw the need for the strengthening of ethics in the marketplace long before the financial crisis."

She adds, “He has always been ahead of his time and, thanks to his leadership, the world can look to the future with hope, something we are very much in need of right now.”

In nominating Rabbi Sacks for the Prize, former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord George Carey wrote: “There are public intellectuals and religious leaders, but few who are both at the same time. There are academic scholars and popular communicators, but he is both, reaching out far beyond his own constituency through the spoken, written and broadcast word.”

Rabbi Sacks joins a distinguished group of 45 former recipients, including Mother Teresa, who received the inaugural Prize award in 1973, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1983), and philosopher Charles Taylor (2007). Last year’s Prize winner was Canadian theologian Jean Vanier, the founder of L’Arche, an international network of communities where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together as peers. The 2014 Laureate was Czech priest and philosopher Tomáš Halík, following Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, in 2013 and the Dalai Lama in 2012.

Rabbi Sacks was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2005 and awarded a Life Peerage in the British House of Lords in 2009. He has been married to the former Elaine Taylor since 1970. They have three children and eight grandchildren.

He will be formally awarded the Templeton Prize at a public ceremony in London on May 26.

Notes to Editors

- Still pictures and video highlights of the Templeton Prize press conference are available from <http://filetransfer.ctn.co.uk> User ID: tp2016 Password: accessTP2016
- Further information including biographical information on the 45 previous Templeton Prize Laureates is available at www.templetonprize.org
- Videos of Rabbi Sacks answering several Big Questions and the press conference webcast highlights are available at www.templetonprize.org and www.youtube.com/user/TempletonPrize/
- Follow the Templeton Prize on Twitter using @TempletonPrize and the hashtag #TempletonPrize2016
- Further information on Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks’ work can be found on his website, www.rabbisacks.org. He can also be followed on Twitter using @RabbiSacks

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Jonathan Sacks was born on March 8, 1948 in London, the eldest of four children of Louis, a businessman who sold cloth in London’s East End, and Louisa “Libby” Frumkin, who worked in her family’s wine business. His parents instilled in him devotion to education, Judaism and wider society, a blend of secularism and religion that would become the template of his lifelong pursuits.

He attended Saint Mary’s Primary School in the Finchley area of North London, and, from 1959 to 1966, Christ’s College School in Finchley. Although a Christian institution, half of the students were Jewish yet none of the school’s teachers were, so he helped organize and lead assemblies for the Jewish students. He later credited this role as instrumental in preparing for a life of outreach. The teachers’ respect for his faith also proved influential in his understanding that difference does not have to mean division.

Sacks entered Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, in 1966 and studied for a philosophy degree focused on Moral Science, a discipline that applies scientific methodology to the understanding of morality.

A visit to the U.S. in 1968 led to life-changing encounters with Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik at Yeshiva University in New York, and the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who urged him to seek rabbinic ordination. Soloveitchik enlightened him to the ability of Judaism to not only withstand the challenges of modern thought but to thrive within that environment. He was influenced by Schneerson's emphasis on sharing the lessons and values of Jewish faith not just with Jews but with all of humanity. He later summed up these encounters as: "The Rebbe challenged me to lead. Rabbi Soloveitchik challenged me to think."

Sacks was awarded 1st Class Honours Degree in Moral Science (Philosophy) from Gonville & Caius in 1969 and was awarded a Rhonda Research Fellowship in Moral Philosophy, studying under Prof. Bernard Williams.

In 1970 he married Elaine Taylor, a radiographer (no longer practicing). They have three children: Joshua (b. 1975), Dina (b. 1977), and Gila (b. 1982).

Sacks earned a masters in Moral Philosophy from New College in 1972. He was appointed Lecturer in Jewish philosophy at Jews' College, London, in 1973, and received rabbinic ordination from Jews' College and Yeshiva Etz Chaim, London, in 1976.

He was appointed Rabbi of Golders Green Synagogue in North West London in 1978, and, in 1983, Rabbi of Marble Arch Synagogue in Central London. He received a Ph.D. in Collective Responsibility from the philosophy and theology department of King's College London in 1981, and became Principal of Jews' College in 1984, serving until 1990.

In 1990, Sacks delivered the BBC Reith Lectures on "The Persistence of Faith," challenging the view that religious faith in Europe was in a state of terminal decline.

In 1991, Sacks was named Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, the sixth since the role was formalized in 1845, and the tenth since the office was created in 1704. He followed in the footsteps of Lord (Immanuel) Jakobovits, who had won the Templeton Prize earlier that year.

He called for a "Decade of Renewal" aimed at revitalizing "British Jewry's great powers of creativity." During the next ten years, he established a set of initiatives to foster this renewal, including the Jewish Association for Business Ethics, Women's Review, which tackled issues such as the role of women in prayer, and Jewish Continuity, a foundation focused on maintaining Jewish identity.

In 2001, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rt. Hon. Rev. George Carey, awarded him an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree at Lambeth Palace, only the second time such an honor was bestowed upon a Jewish leader. He began his second decade as Chief Rabbi by calling for "Jewish responsibility," a renewed commitment to the ethical dimension of Judaism.

One of Sacks' most notable books, *The Dignity of Difference*, was published in 2002, one year after the 9/11 bombings. It was awarded the Grawemeyer Prize for Religion (USA) in 2004. *The Jonathan Sacks Haggada*, a fresh take on the text for the Passover Seder, was published in 2003. In 2004 he began a weekly commentary on Torah readings in the publication, *Covenant and Conversation*.

Sacks was made a Knight Bachelor in the 2005 Queen's Birthday Honours "for services to the Community and to Inter-faith Relations." *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book* was published in 2006 and became the leading prayer book for Jewish communities in the UK.

He addressed a plenary session of the Lambeth Conference in 2008, the first rabbi so honored. In 2009, he was awarded a Life Peerage in the House of Lords where he sits on the cross benches as Baron Sacks of Aldgate in the City of London.

Covenant and Conversation: Genesis, the first in a series of books from his weekly Torah commentaries, received a National Jewish Book Award (USA) in 2009. *The Koren Sacks Siddur*, also published in 2009, has become a leading prayer book for Jewish communities worldwide.

In 2010, Sacks delivered the keynote welcome address on the occasion of the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Great Britain.

The Koren Sacks Rosh Hashana Mahzor was published in 2011 and *The Koren Sacks Yom Kippur Mahzor* followed in 2012. For the UK, this represented the first time in a century that a new set of *Mahzorim* (festival prayer books) had been published.

In June 2013, at a gala dinner in advance of the completion of his time as Chief Rabbi, Sacks was honored by the presence of HRH The Prince of Wales as guest of honor, together with video messages from UK Prime Minister Rt Hon David Cameron MP and the three previous prime ministers (Gordon Brown, Tony Blair and Sir John Major), The Most Reverend and Rt Hon Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the two previous Archbishops of Canterbury (Lord Williams, Lord Carey), and The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster. At the dinner, HRH The Prince of Wales said: "As a valued adviser, your guidance on any given issue has never failed to be of practical value and deeply grounded in the kind of wisdom that is increasingly hard to come by.... Your counsel reminds me of that of Solomon. 'Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love.'"

Sacks stepped down as Chief Rabbi on September 1, 2013, and was succeeded by Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. That fall he was appointed Professor of Judaic Thought at New York University; Professor of Jewish Thought at Yeshiva University, New York; and Professor of Law, Ethics and the Bible at King's College, London.

Sacks' most recent book, *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* became a top-ten *Sunday Times* bestseller in 2015. A whiteboard animation video on Jewish identity, "Why I Am a Jew," also created in 2015, has logged more than one million views online.

The Templeton Prize

The Templeton Prize each year honors a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension, whether through insight, discovery, or practical works.

Established in 1972 by the late global investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton, the Prize is a cornerstone of the John Templeton Foundation's international efforts to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality.

The monetary value of the Prize is set always to exceed the Nobel Prizes to underscore Templeton's belief that benefits from discoveries that illuminate spiritual questions can be quantifiably more vast than those from other worthy human endeavors.

Everyone is a potential nominator for the Templeton Prize. Visit <http://www.templetonprize.org/nomination.html> for nomination details.

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