

The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning
A Study of the Thought and Model of the Late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Session I: Introduction—Ways of Relating Religion and Science

Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning*, “Introduction,” 1-18; and “Part One: God and the Search for Meaning,” pp. 19-100.

Guiding Questions:

- Per Rabbi Sacks, in what ways do science and religion ask different questions?
- Rabbi Sacks argues that “The meaning of the system lies outside the system” – science being the language of the system, and religion being the language of its social, moral, and spiritual interpretation. Do you agree with this?
- How does religion endow people with freedom, per Rabbi Sacks?
- Rabbi Sacks asserts that meaning is found in the particular. In what ways are science and religion universal and/or particularistic?

Session II: God and the Search for Meaning—Why It Matters

Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning*, “Part Two: Why It Matters,” pp. 101-208.

Guiding Questions:

- Per Rabbi Sacks, the eclipse of religion by scientism comes at too great a cost. What is lost to society when religion is banished?
- What is the relationship between human dignity, human freedom, morality, and social relationships?
- What is the meaningful life, per Rabbi Sacks?

Session III: Faith and Its Challenges

Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: Science, Religion, and the Search for Meaning*, “Part Three: Faith and Its Challenges,” pp. 209-267; “Epilogue,” pp. 292-302.

Guiding Questions:

- Rabbi Sacks’ final section engages three common arguments against religion: the idea of Darwinian evolution, the problem of theodicy (i.e., why bad things happened to good people), and the history of evil perpetrated in the name of religion. How does Rabbi Sacks

turn these arguments against religion into arguments for the necessity of religion?

- Rabbi Sacks concludes *The Great Partnership* with a passionate defense for belief in God? Please outline his arguments, and then put them in the order of which arguments you find more strongly persuasive.
- Lastly, does Rabbi Sacks argue for the necessity of religion more generally, or is the argument as he develops it over the course of his book a particularly Jewish thesis? Think of Rabbi Sacks as presenting both a specific theology and representing a model of theological thinking.