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## Executive Summary

### The Jonathan Sacks Institute of Bar-Ilan University

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**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks** z"l was one of the leading public intellectuals in the world. He developed a body of thought grounded in the Jewish religious tradition that speaks to the most important contemporary social, political and moral issues for Jews and non-Jews alike. **Rabbi Sacks was deeply concerned with the threat to a free democratic society posed by rampant individualism on the one hand and religious extremism on the other.** He argued that our ability to overcome these challenges depends on a certain type of civic culture, one that engages in debates with civility and mutual respect, a moral ecology that provides hope and builds connections and trust between different communities. He offers a crucial perspective- a Jewish solution to the many problems posed by the "Clash of Civilizations" - that is sorely needed as the Jewish and non-Jewish world face great challenges.

The Jonathan Sacks Institute of Bar-Ilan University has two core interrelated objectives:

**To ensure Rabbi Sacks' ideas are integrated within academic political and philosophical thought** through research and the promotion of discussion of Rabbi Sacks' philosophy in the wider public intellectual discourse, especially as they relate to contemporary social and political ideas and practical challenges. Because Rabbi Sacks insisted that both he and his writings remain accessible, he did not focus on inserting himself into the canon of academic thinkers. Yet, **there is power in integrating his deep intellectual thoughts into the larger canon.** It will officially create a space for his ideas to be studied by religious thinkers of all creeds, as well as secular philosophers.

**To develop a uniquely diverse network of outstanding Institute alumni with leadership potential, who can impact the future of Israeli, Jewish and world society,** inspired and guided by Rabbi Sacks' vision. Israel, according to Rabbi Sacks, is a key location- a nexus of many faiths and communities- that can stand as a model to world on how to reconcile the universal and particular. Institute students will be imbued through academics, interactions with one another other and engagement with the larger civil society with a practical sense of how to implement these values.

## The Department of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University has a deep, enduring and unique bond with Rabbi Sacks.

Rabbi Sacks' uniqueness as a great Rabbinical thinker lies in the fact that his ideas - while grounded in the classical Jewish texts – are directed outward to address the major political, social and moral concerns of our age. Our department was established in the same spirit by Professors Daniel Elazar and Charles Liebman.

Professor Elazar initiated the academic study of the Jewish political tradition, while Professor Liebman - a recipient of the Israel Prize for Political Studies - was the leading political sociologist of the Jewish people of his generation. Both were extensively quoted by Rabbi Sacks.

In 2001, the department hosted and organized Rabbi Sacks' public conversation with Amos Oz, establishing the tradition of his engagement in public conversations with leading intellectuals. Rabbi Sacks continued to be connected to the department and the university, visiting and giving lectures. He also served on Bar-Ilan's Board of Trustees, signifying his support for the values he shared with the university.

There are six components to this proposal that address every academic audience, ranging from undergraduates to professors at the cutting edge of research. The programs are designed to run for a minimum of 15 years.

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### ① Limmudei Yesod: Foundation Courses in Jewish Studies

All students at Bar-Ilan must take a number of foundation courses in Jewish studies.

The Institute will develop Limmudei Yesod courses grounded in Rabbi Sacks' writings. This is an opportunity to reach both a large number and a wide array of students.

250-400 students a year would take these courses – about 5000 over 15 years.

The courses will also be adapted for a wider audience and made available online for free.

### ② BA Political Studies program in Democracy, Citizenship & Leadership

The institute will create a unique program within the framework structure of a three-year BA degree in Political Studies.

**Students will be selected on the basis of both academic excellence *and* leadership potential.**

**18 scholarships per year will be provided, including four reserved for outstanding Haredi students and four for outstanding Arab students.**

Over 15 years more than 250 students will benefit directly.

In addition to *Limmudei Yesod*, all students at Bar-Ilan must also take general courses from outside of their major studies department. The program will incorporate specially designed courses in this regard.

The *academic* coursework of the program will be composed from two major sources: works related to politics in the broadest sense, that Rabbi Sacks would have read, consulted, and quoted; and, Rabbi Sacks' writings that would greatly enrich any student of politics.

The program also has a social objective, namely, to create a network of future leaders from diverse backgrounds with an *esprit de corps*. They will **embody and advance values and ideas espoused by Rabbi Sacks, especially his conceptualization of cross-communal cooperation, with the ultimate goal of strengthening the cohesiveness of Israeli democracy.**

**This will involve a:**

- One-year Internship in a government department or relevant NGO.
- One year of volunteering
- Annual overnight retreat
- Visits to government and religious institutions, and NGOs representing diverse identity groups
- Monthly discussion group
- Alumni network with a newsletter annual event.

### ③ MA & PhD Research Scholarships

The institute will provide 2 MA (thesis) & 2 PhD students scholarship for outstanding students a year:

one each for the Department of Political Studies and the Faculty of Jewish Studies.

The objective is to **inject Rabbi Sacks' ideas, perspective, and concerns into academic and intellectual discourse in Israel and across the world**, through publications and the establishment of a network of graduates in academia and within the broader intellectual milieu.

After 15 years, there will be 30 MA and 30 PhD graduates who all focused their work on the ideas of Rabbi Sacks.

They, in turn, will produce large numbers of publications with far-reaching impact.

#### ④ International Interdisciplinary Seminar (triennial)

Building on Rabbi Sacks' unique legacy, the seminar will be structured around engagement with, and cross fertilization between, the **Jewish religious tradition and general academic writing** on issues of contemporary social, economic and political significance. Each seminar will have a different theme related to one of Rabbi Sacks' core concerns.

Participants will include academics from a variety of countries and disciplines.

There will be 8 meetings over the course of an academic year conducted via Zoom, which will culminate in an in-person workshop and conference, open to the public.

Over 15 years, there will be five seminars.

The output from the seminars will include academic publications and the development of an elite international academic network that will encourage creative research partnerships and the circulation of Rabbi Sacks' ideas and approach in academia.

The conference, as well as shorter interviews with participants adapted for a wider audience (similar in style to those produced by Rabbi Sacks), will be shared via social media.

#### ⑤ Visiting Lectureship (triennial)

Rabbi Sacks stressed the importance of engaging with those with contrasting opinions from our own. A visiting lectureship represents an opportunity for just such an **enriching engagement**.

A leading academic/intellectual will give a series of lectures/seminars over two weeks at Bar-Ilan. The series will engage with the thought and/or concerns of Rabbi Sacks.

There will be five lecture series over a 15-year period, some of which will be open to the public.

The visiting scholar may also serve as a guest speaker at the annual prize ceremony.

#### ⑥ Public-Intellectual Annual Prize Ceremony - 100,000 NIS

There will be an annual award ceremony for the book, article, podcast or video that makes a significant contribution to the public intellectual discourse in the spirit of Rabbi Sacks' outlook.

The annual prize ceremony will serve as the annual meeting for the alumni of all Institute programs.

The award will be publicized and the ceremony and accompanying lecture made available online. This should further wider recognition of Rabbi Sacks in the public sphere.