

14 - 16 August 2026

Berlin , Germany

## Jonathan Sacks and the Ethics of Belonging

**Dr. liron hoch**

*Zefat Academic College, Israel*

### Abstract

This paper examines Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's ethical thought through the concept of the Ethics of Belonging, a central pillar of his social and political philosophy. It argues that Sacks offers a distinctive alternative to both liberal individualism, which emphasizes personal autonomy, and collectivist approaches that subordinate the individual to the community. Instead, he develops a relational ethical framework in which moral identity is constituted through relationships of belonging, mutual obligation, and shared responsibility.

The paper demonstrates that the concept of covenant serves as the foundational category of Sacks's ethical vision. For Sacks, covenant is not merely a theological idea but also a social and political framework that enables individuals to realize freedom through commitment to community, tradition, and the common good. Within this framework, responsibility is not a constraint on freedom but rather its enabling condition. From this perspective emerges Sacks's notion of shared responsibility, according to which a flourishing society depends not only on individual rights but also on dense networks of mutual obligations.

The paper further explores the contemporary relevance of the Ethics of Belonging in an era marked by the erosion of intermediary institutions, growing social polarization, and the fragmentation of collective identities. It shows how Sacks seeks to reconcile commitment to tradition with openness to pluralism, and communal identity with respect for diversity, thereby proposing a normative model grounded in dialogue, solidarity, and civic responsibility.

The paper argues that the Ethics of Belonging should be understood not merely as one theme within Sacks's thought but as a comprehensive normative framework for understanding the relationship between individuals, communities, and society. As such, it offers a significant contribution to contemporary philosophical and social debates concerning identity, social cohesion, and moral responsibility.

**Keywords:** Jonathan Sacks; Ethics of Belonging; Covenant; Responsibility; Community; Liberalism; Social Cohesion; Political Philosophy