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Erzbischof Dr. Rowan Williams –
Sir Jonathan Sacks, Oberrabbiner der United Hebrew Congregations of
the Commonwealth

**Archbishop Williams and Chief Rabbi Sacks and Rabbi Bayfield
on Holocaust Memorial Day 2009**

In einem auf YouTube veröffentlichten Video führen Erzbischof Rowan Williams, Oberrabbiner Sir Jonathan Sacks und Rabbi Dr. Tony Bayfield ein Gespräch anlässlich des Gedenktages für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus (Holocaust Memorial Day) 2009. Sie reflektieren dabei ihre gemeinsame Reise nach Auschwitz-Birkenau (vgl. E.IV_2008_11_13 / CJ.2008_11_13).

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The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks and Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield, Head of the Movement for Reform Judaism unite to reflect on their recent visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau and give their message for Holocaust Memorial Day

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks: Could I just say, Tony, that I wonder what your thoughts are at the sheer fact that we could come together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, with people of all faiths to experience this human, brutalizing environment where one faith was persecuted. Isn't that a measure of how far we have come for the good?

Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield: It was one of the most moving experiences of my life, and it reflects exactly what you just said. And the most moving thing for me was being with you and knowing that you knew so much and had read so much and cared so much and yet seeing the impact of actually being there on you...

Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams: Well, nothing prepares you, nothing really makes it easy when you get there. You may think you know and yet there's an element in which you experience just a little from the inside and feel it's not someone else's issue, it's not someone else's history. And that's not to try and rob the Jewish people of their memory, it's just to say in some way it shows what can happen to us all. It shows the potential for evil, it shows the depth of suffering.

Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield: We've got a piece in our prayer book written by a Shoah survivor called John Heimler who said that the experience of going through Auschwitz was that it taught him that he was just one small part of suffering humanity. And that he was actually underneath no different from anyone else. I'm sure you need have no fear of trying to appropriate a Jewish experience. It is paradoxically a uniquely Jewish experience. It is paradoxically a uniquely Jewish experience and at the same time, an experience for all humanity.

Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams: And isn't that in a sense what the Jewish experience has always been thought to be by Jews?

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks: We certainly feel that the tears and the sadness and the grief have the power, if we preserve them and then we let them touch us, to move us not to be silent in the face of others' suffering, whoever suffers and whoever causes that suffering. And in that sense I think it's important for us to realize that this really is a universal message that speaks to us now.

One of the things that I can't fully get over is how this was a crime that was meant to be concealed and denied as if the perpetrators realized that Holocaust remembrance would defeat what they were trying to do. And that in itself tells me that we are right to remember and to encourage everyone to remember.

Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams: There's a story about, I think it was Anna Akhmatova, the Russian poet, standing in Moscow in the middle of the trials in the 1930's with a woman trying to find her husband who had disappeared in one of Stalin's jails, turned to Akhmatova, knowing she was a poet, and saying, "Can you describe this?" And Akhmatova said, "I think so." And the woman said, "Good. It's got to be spoken."

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks: Yes. One of the things that they discovered at Auschwitz many years later was how many people buried messages to the future in the grounds of Auschwitz. Above all, they wanted people to remember. And to remember for the future, not the past. For life, not for death. For love, not for hate. And that does seem to me that when we are able to come together as we did on this wonderful and moving occasion, we have won a certain victory. And we must keep winning because the danger never goes.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks: The Holocaust has the power, if we can face it without fear, to change our lives forever. To teach us that we must not be silent in the face of oppression. We must not stand idly by when people are being persecuted for their colour or their culture or their creed. We must stand up and protest because every one of us can make a difference. Individually and collectively, we can act to prevent future tragedies and to stand hand in hand with the sacred image of God which is in every single human being.

Rabbi Dr Tony Bayfield: We have somehow to rescue from that inhumanity and depravity a message of hope. And the message being that we, through our humanity and through our lives, can redeem something of the past and redeem that meaningless suffering by turning that experience of inhumanity and evil into one of humanity and good.

Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams: One of the most deeply shocking things about the Holocaust, which comes home to you when you see Auschwitz and Birkenau, is that so many people thought that this was natural. So many people worked in the system without noticing what they were doing. And the question that faces all of us is how do we preserve for ourselves an image of human life together and human behaviour that is truly natural, truly in accord with the will of God when all sorts of pressures around us, commercial, political, ideological, lead us to the temptation to de-humanizing or demonizing other human beings and thinking that is natural. So the call

is to rediscover the depths of real humanity as held in the hand of God with all the dignity, all the capacity that goes with that.

Quelle:

<http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/986/holocaust-memorial-day-2009-video.html> (2024-05).