One of the most admired religious thinkers of our time issues a call for world Jewry to reject the self-fulfilling image of “a people alone in the world, surrounded by enemies” and to reclaim Judaism’s original sense of purpose: as a partner with God and with those of other faiths in the never-ending struggle for freedom and social justice for all.

We are in danger, says Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, of forgetting what Judaism’s place is within the global project of humankind. During the last two thousand years, Jews have lived through persecutions that would have spelled the end of most nations, but they did not see anti-Semitism written into the fabric of the universe. They knew they existed for a purpose, and it was not for themselves alone. Rabbi Sacks believes that the Jewish people have lost their way, that they need to recommit themselves to the task of creating a just world in which the divine presence can dwell among us.

Without compromising one iota of Jewish faith, Rabbi Sacks declares, Jews must stand alongside their friends—Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and secular humanist—in defense of freedom against the enemies of freedom, in affirmation of life against those who desecrate life. And they should do this not to win friends or the admiration of others but because it is what a people of God is supposed to do.

Rabbi Sacks’s powerful message of tikkun olam—using Judaism as a blueprint for repairing an imperfect world—will resonate with people of all faiths.

My Personal Review:
Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes about personhood and peoplehood (in that order), of the particular and the universal, as a means of exploring the
story of the Jews - the oldest surviving People of the Book. The message of 'Future Tense' seems to be the necessity of every person and every people to have sanctuary and sovereignty and that there is enough room in this world that they should. Rabbi Sacks writes of two lodestones of Jewish momentum and identity - 'fate' and 'faith' and tries to uncover the reasons why, little more than fifty years after the British troops marched into Bergen-Belsen, and the Russians Auschwitz, anti-Semitism is rising at an alarming rate against Jews and against the tiny State of Israel - "Today there are 120 countries in which the majority of the population is Christian. There are fifty-seven member states of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. There is only one Jewish state, a tiny county, one quarter of one per cent of the landmass of the Arab world." He argues that it is illogical to blame the political or military actions that have taken place in Israel in the new millennium for the rise in anti-Semitism as most Jews are not Israelis. He reminds his readers of the Jewish religious, historical, intellectual and artistic contributions to humanity which are phenomenal for such a small people. All of these contributions are investigated by the means of positing the 'particular' as Jewish and the 'universal' as non-Jewish. He speaks of an historical 'Greek wisdom' (Imperialist imperatives) as a form of attrition when brought into contact with Judaism. In contrast general 'wisdoms' found in the university are put forth as a sort of universalism which yeshiva students are encouraged to engage with. The Rabbi urges that if the contributions of Judaism to the universal are to continue, this wisdom must be understood and explored by the yeshiva student. There are some statements that dismiss certain teachings which he sees as belonging the aforementioned 'imperialist' kind which I don't agree with, but, as Rabbi Sacks puts forth, there is a dignity in dissent. As part of the overarching thesis of the book Rabbi Sacks compares the Septuagint translation of the name of God to the Masoretic understanding, contrasting 'I am what I am' with 'I will be what I will be' as the real force of his argument that Judaism and the God of Israel belong to the 'Future Tense', and therefore Judaism plays a crucial part in the forward movement of the universal and thus the progression of human society. A compelling and often moving read. Highly recommended.

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:

Future Tense: Jews, Judaism, and Israel in the Twenty-first Century by Jonathan Sacks - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!