

An Astonishing Story

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks tells an extraordinary story of his visit to Kosovo during the war. He interviewed Sir Michael Jackson, head of NATO forces in Pristina, Kosovo, where Serbian Christians had attacked Mosques and now feared reprisals. In the midst of this tense atmosphere, Jackson thanked him for what the Jewish community had done — they had taken charge of the 23 primary schools in the city. Because of the Jewish community, said Jackson, the children were still being educated.

How many Jews were there in Pristina? Eleven.

This tiny number, with Israeli help and support, ensured the education of the Moslem children. This is what the Jewish tradition calls a *hesed shel emeth* — a true kindness, one which can expect no recompense. Such goodness is in the highest traditions of our people, and should be better known

Such a story is not only about Jews, but about the power of religion to reach across lines and do good in the world. All over the world are countless unreported acts of generosity and kindness, done in the name of powerful faith by religious individuals who understand that God transcends division. Our kinship is not purely biological, genetic or haphazard; it is the enduring legacy of the One who brought all into being.