

Discussion Questions

- A. “We Jews have always needed strong communities to help us take care of one another when no one else will, to provide meaning and comfort in the face of hostility or indifference, and to advance the agenda agreed upon at Sinai.”
1. What do you think is “the agenda agreed upon at Sinai”—that is, the shared agenda of the Jewish people that requires strong communities to advance it?
 2. In what ways has your community been there for you? In what ways have you been there for your community?
 3. Do you think you could give more or receive more from your community? What is preventing this from happening?
- B. “But the most important source of community among Jews is the Covenant to which we are summoned. A Conservative Jew has a front-row seat at Sinai, so to speak—and a seat at the tables of Jewish learning and action, where we do our best to figure out how Torah should be lived and taught here and now—in ways that have never before been imagined. Every one of us is needed for that work, not just rabbis or scholars.”
1. How does Chancellor Eisen link the ideas of the previous essay, “Covenant,” to those in this essay, “Community”?
 2. According to Chancellor Eisen, “the most important source of community among Jews is the Covenant.” In what ways is this true in your community? In what ways do you wish this would be true but isn’t yet?
 3. Why can’t we let only rabbis and scholars work at figuring out how Torah should be lived and taught here and now? In your opinion, how would that impact the general Jewish community?

Supplementary Materials for “Community”

- C. “The experience of undertaking the task [of figuring out how Torah should be lived and taught today] as part of a community enables us to understand why Torah has long been a “tree of life to those who hold fast to it.”
1. What is the task that Chancellor Eisen sees us undertaking? How is undertaking this task as in the context of Jewish community qualitatively different than undertaking it alone?
 2. In what ways—other than living in a Jewish community—do you understand Torah to be a “tree of life to those who hold fast to it”?
 3. A Jew is able to live alone. In what ways can and can’t a Jew live a full Jewish life alone?