

Supplementary Materials for “Jews and Others”

Discussion Questions

1. “Judaism has always sought a balance—between inward focus and outward focus, between the particular and the universal, attention to Jewish needs and attention to human needs, standing apart from the world and being an integral part of the world.” [p. 26]
 - a. How can each of these two orientations enrich your Jewish life?
 - b. Are there people in your life who are able to strike a balance between these orientations? If so, what lessons have you learned from them?

2. “[M]any Jews have opted to embrace universalism and abandon particularism. They have abandoned the search for balance every bit as much as Jewish isolationists.” [p. 27]
 - a. What are the appeals and limitations of universalism?
 - b. What are the appeals and limitations of particularism or isolationism?
 - c. Do you find both unbridled universalism and isolationism sad, as Chancellor Eisen does? Why or why not?

3. “The need for partnerships among faith communities is especially urgent at this moment when the very survival of God’s earth is threatened as never before, and the world’s religions exercise unrivalled sway over the thinking and behavior of the world’s peoples.” [p. 27]
 - a. How can knowing about other religions or faiths affect your own understanding of Judaism?
 - b. How can the world become a better place because your life is shaped by Judaism?
 - c. How does Judaism shape your sense of your purpose in the wider world?
 - d. Do you have personal connections in other faith communities? If so, how do those relationships impact your understanding of Judaism?

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4. Re-read Chancellor Eisen’s seven suggestions for locating and maintaining the balance between “particular” and “universal” in Conservative Judaism. [pp. 28-30]
 - a. Which ones resonate the most for you, and why?
 - b. What are some clear actions that you could take in your life in order to put those suggestions into practice?