

Supplementary Materials for “Peoplehood and Israel”

Discussion Questions

1. The language of the Jewish people and the collective hope of the Jewish people were crucial to finding the right balance between being a part of—and apart from—the nations among whom Jews dwelled. Both were essential to the ‘Positive-Historical Judaism’ that Frankel envisioned and have remained so.” [p. 7]
 - a. How strongly do Jewish “language” and “collective hope” (understood either as “Hebrew” and “the return to Zion,” respectively—or more broadly) feature in your experience of being a member of the Jewish people today?
 - b. In what ways have you found a balance between being a part of the general American community and being apart from it? In what areas of your life do you find this balance a challenge?

2. “We tend to feel comfortable among Reform Jews and in Reform synagogues in a way Orthodox Jews do not—and vice versa. As a result of that comfort level, perhaps, and in keeping with Conservative commitment to *kelal Yisra’el*, Conservative Jews are heavily overrepresented in the ranks of Jewish communal leaders, lay and professional.” [p. 8]
 - a. Recall your personal experiences in, Orthodox, Reform or other non-Conservative settings? Did being a Conservative Jew help you “feel comfortable”?
 - b. How do you personally express your commitment to *kelal Yisra’el*? Is this influenced by your Conservative Judaism as Eisen suggests?

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3. “The State offers unparalleled scope for the teaching and practice of Torah in the public sphere, encompassing areas from education and environmental policy to health care, treatment of the poor, justice for minority communities, and issues of war and peace. Conservative Judaism has a vital contribution to make to Israel: a way of studying Judaism and applying its teachings to new conditions that is arguably unique.” [p. 8]
 - a. How do you think that the “arguably unique” contribution of Conservative Judaism could improve the State of Israel?
 - b. What would you change about the State of Israel today, if you could?
 - c. How can you, a Conservative Jew living in the Diaspora, help foster those changes?

4. “Attachment to the Jewish people is misunderstood, and denounced, as tribalism. Some younger Jews seek ‘Judaism without Jews’—heightened spiritual and ethical attainment via prophetic or mystical teachings of Judaism without the age-old responsibility linking Jews to one another in local and global community. Others, here and in Israel, seek ethnic or national Jewishness severed from the age-old search for connection with and service to the Ultimate, the Holy One, the One Who Is Good and Makes Good, God.” [p. 9]
 - a. When, if ever, have you felt discomfort with the “tribal” aspect of Judaism? Are there Jews to whom you struggle to feel connected?
 - b. Pick one of the issues: peoplehood as tribalism, Judaism without Jews, or Jews without Judaism. Brainstorm some ways to engage with someone who is caught up in one of these problematic characterizations of Judaism
 - c. Role-play a dialogue about one of these issues with a partner.