

## Top Ten Challenges Facing Jews Today

- 1) What does it mean to be Jewish? Who or what defines if I am Jewish or not? The community, me, my family? Do I need to believe anything or do anything to be a Jew? If I do not do anything “Jewish” what does being a Jew mean for me? Rabbi Soloveitchik in “[Kol Dodi Dofek](#)”: Two different types of covenants means that sometimes Judaism is just being, and sometimes it is a verb.
- 2) How do we relate to Israel and Zionism? What does a love for Israel mean – politically, culturally? What does Zionism mean for American Jews? In some ways we are closer to Israel – so much easier to visit, or to live in Israel and work in America – and in some ways some we might be more distanced from Israel, especially politically.
- 3) Is Judaism leading or lagging morally, ethically in regards to social responsibility on issues such as immigration, global warming, and speaking up against genocide. How do we balance our concern for Israel and the Jewish community with our concern for the wider world?
- 4) Are Jewish values just either Neo-Conservatism (Tikvah?) or Liberalism (Norman Podhoretz, [Why Are Jews Liberals?](#)) or Trumpism? What is Jewish about Tikkun Olam?
- 5) Moving from Tolerance to Acceptance and new Jewish understandings regarding LGBTQ... How do we balance verses in Torah that ask us to embrace love, marriage and togetherness, with verses that seem to shun alternative relationships? And what about living in a non-binary world? Tova Hartman in [Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism](#) suggests a way of looking at masculine and feminine in a non-gendered way which may help.

- 6) Inclusion of people with disabilities in our synagogues, schools and communities – Rav Dov Linzer and Rav Ahron Soloveichik prioritized this. As a rabbi, this question came up a lot in synagogue.
- 7) Intermarriage – from shunning to tolerance to welcoming to...Ger Toshav (a non-Jewish ally)? How are the different movements dealing with this? Can same sex weddings in Conservative Judaism help us unravel this? Can Abraham's life with his non-Jewish allies – Aner, Eshkol and Mamrei – who encouraged him to circumcise himself provide some insight?
- 8) Economic and other issues of being Jewish: living in a high-priced Jewish area of town, kosher food, day schools and more cultural issues. How do we persuade kids to stay home for Friday night dinner, or to come to synagogue on Yom Kippur? How do we persuade them to marry someone who cares about Judaism? Can Judaism survive in a potent form outside of a majority Jewish culture (Israel) – if the society does not force us to live separately and distinctly? In Iran, Jews are forced to keep their stores closed on the Sabbath because their understanding of the Quran is that Jews must keep the Sabbath! But in America, and even Israel, we would not be happy with such a law...
- 9) Lack of inspiration – bourgeoisization of Judaism, of all movements, from Reform to Orthodox Jay Lefkowitz's "Social Orthodoxy". Can we compete with more exciting religious experiences?
- 10) Can we keep the Jewish community united? Should we keep the Jewish community united? Jews in America vs. Jews in Israel vs. Jews all over the world – do we feel as connected as we should? Or, perhaps, with social media, Skype, etc, we are more connected than ever?