



**From Election to Inauguration and Beyond: Part III – Jewish Peoplehood and How We Heal**  
**Featuring Dr. Tal Becker and Dr. Erica Brown, moderated by Gil Preuss**  
**March 11, 2021**

**Post-Webinar Educational Toolkit and Questions for Discussion**  
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Part I: Reflection Questions on the Program:

1. What is one idea that Tal Becker, Erica Brown and/or Gil Preuss gave that resonated with you? Is there something they said that surprised you? What about these ideas resonated with you or surprised you?
2. Are there specific tools or frameworks the speakers offered that you found helpful for understanding this moment? How might you further apply those tools or frameworks?
3. Did the program inspire you to learn more about a specific topic? What topic would you like to further pursue?

Part II: Discussion Questions – Jewish Identity, Jewish Peoplehood and Civic Responsibility

*Jewish Identity and Peoplehood:*

1. What impact have the pandemic and political developments in the US, including the 2020 election cycle, had on Jewish identity in America?
2. What impact have the pandemic and political developments in Israel, including the Abraham Accords, had on Israeli identity?
3. How would you describe the relationship between American Jews and Israelis right now? In what ways may we be closer or understand one another better than we did pre-pandemic? In what ways are we further apart?
4. What is one word that encapsulates for you the **current state** of Jewish Peoplehood? What one word encapsulates the **future** of Jewish Peoplehood?
5. What wish do you have for America and Israel and for the global Jewish community in this moment and why?

*Civic Responsibility:*

6. What does it mean to be a responsible Jewish American or Israeli citizen right now?
7. What lessons can we apply from our text and tradition that would help us move beyond the polarization that is gripping America?
8. Are there steps we can take to educate our children and ourselves to resist this polarization?

*Where We Go from Here:*

9. What are ways in which we have grown as a community this past year? What lessons have we learned that we should take with us into the future?
10. Is there a Jewish teaching, lens or metaphor that is calling to you when you think about this moment and the Jewish future? Why does it call to you? What perspective does it offer?

Part III: Related Materials: The following are materials from the Shalom Hartman Institute and from Dr. Erica Brown that relate to the program, and thought questions associated with them:

1. In [Identity/Crisis Ep. 48](#) (released March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021), a podcast of the Shalom Hartman Institute in partnership with JTA, **Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer**, President of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America spoke with **Felicia Herman** (*Natan Fund, Jewish Community Response and Impact Fund*), **Hindy Poupko** (*UJA Federation of New York*), and **Andres Spokoiny** (*Jewish Funders Network*) about Jewish institutions and the role philanthropy has played in the Jewish community throughout the pandemic. The speakers mention several positive trends they have seen in the Jewish organizational world since the pandemic began including institutions stepping forward to increasingly take care of fundamental human needs, increased collaboration, more intentionality to mission, and a robust response from philanthropic enterprises to the needs of the community.

Do you agree with the conclusions of the speakers? How have Jewish institutions played a role in your life and your community since the start of the pandemic? What do you hope Jewish institutions retain post-pandemic from how they operated during the pandemic? What would you most like to see restored regarding Jewish institutions from pre-pandemic life?

2. **Dr. Erica Brown**, in her essay, [Friendship After Covid](#), published on the website *First Things* (January 5, 2021), detailed the blessings found in the Talmud that one says when seeing a friend after a prolonged period of physical absence. The Talmud instructs one who sees a friend after not seeing them for over a year to say, “Blessed [are you, God] ...Who Revives the Dead.” What is your reaction to this instruction and to Dr. Brown’s exposition? Why do you think the Talmud used this language? Does that language resonate with you today? Why, or why not? What has the pandemic taught us about the interplay between proximity and interpersonal relationships? What will we need to do to revive our relationships post-pandemic with those from whom we have had a prolonged physical absence?
3. In the recorded program, [Our Changed World: The Need for Religious Voices](#) (March 4, 2021), **Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman**, President of the Shalom Hartman Institute, spoke with **Rabbi David Steinhardt**, senior rabbi of B’nai Torah Congregation in Boca Raton Florida, about what we have learned during the global pandemic. Donniel Hartman posited that the instability, insecurity, fear, and brokenness that we experienced has caused us to ask ourselves what is most important in our lives and to focus more on our values and moral responsibility. Donniel further stated that “humanity in many ways has gotten thicker.”

Do you agree with these statements? Can you give an example on the communal or public level and on an interpersonal level of where you have seen an increased focus on values and moral responsibility? Are there places where you have seen the opposite? A year into the pandemic,

what answers resonate most with you personally to the question of what is most important in our lives?

Part IV: Moving Forward:

1. What should our top priorities as individual Jewish Americans, as a Jewish community, and as Americans be as we seek to heal after a tumultuous year?
2. What future conversations and initiatives do we want to create in our community to strengthen Jewish peoplehood, encourage civic responsibility and rebuild a vibrant interconnected Jewish future?