

Central Themes of Peoplehood Video Lecture Series

- 1. The Meaning and Significance of Peoplehood in Jewish Life** explores the biblical and rabbinic origins of the concept of Jewish Peoplehood. Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman probes the tension between the familial, ethnic aspects of Jewish identity and the religious, behavioral content of Jewish identity. What happens when the Jewish People and the Jewish Religion come into conflict?
- 2. Genesis and Exodus: Two Models of Jewish Peoplehood** raises important questions about the nature of Jewish identity. What is the essence of Jewishness according to Jewish tradition? Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman presents two different models of what a collective Jewish peoplehood means and traces these two paradigms through biblical narrative and Talmudic debate as he reflects on the state of these two models in modern Jewish identity.
- 3. The Emergence of Jewish Peoplehood from the Biblical Perspective** examines the origins of Jewish Peoplehood in the Bible. Professor Israel Knohl explores expressions of Jewish Peoplehood in our earliest narratives. He argues that the formation of the “People of Israel” was connected to a dramatic political revolution.
- 4. Prioritizing Peoplehood: A Reading of the Book of Jonah** presents a close reading of the Book of Jonah as a powerful reflection of the priority of Jewish Peoplehood in biblical literature. Dr. Micah Goodman suggests that the character of Jonah is challenged with the conflict between his devotion to God and his devotion to the Jewish People. He argues that the Book of Jonah is a testimony to the essential tension of Jewish identity — is Judaism a nation or a religion?
- 5. The Individual and the Collective** underscores the tension between the individual search for meaning and the commitment to communal obligations and norms. Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer argues that the central institutions of Jewish prayer and Torah study are the locus of this tension today, as they were two thousand years ago. Can Jewish life and spirituality be a personal religious journey, or must we sacrifice our individual needs for the sake of community?
- 6. The Poetics of Peoplehood** explores the diverse expressions of Peoplehood in biblical and rabbinic Jewish literature. Dr. Melila Hellner-Eshed shares the imaginative ways in which Jews have defined a sense of belonging to the Jewish People. Throughout her lecture, Melila invites us to explore the ways in which the language we use to describe ourselves reflects our values.
- 7. Peoplehood and the Centrality of Place** examines the ways in which land and nationhood inform and complicate our picture of the Jewish collective. Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer questions how the dynamics of “home” and “homeland” influence Jewish belonging and identification. Are there unique models of Jewish Peoplehood in Israel and in the Diaspora? How have vibrant “Diaspora” communities reshaped our understanding of Jewish Peoplehood? Yehuda explores the differences between the Diasporic Jewish institutions and the Israeli public square.
- 8. Jewish Peoplehood and the Possibilities of Modernity: Mordechai Kaplan and Martin Buber** introduces two important modern Jewish thinkers and their understanding of Jewish Peoplehood. Rabbi Dr. Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi explores how Jewish Peoplehood takes on new meaning in the modern world. What are the challenges to collective Jewish identity in the modern world? Both Kaplan and Buber offer invaluable insights into the dilemmas of Peoplehood today and the enduring meaning of Jewish belonging.
- 9. Core Principles of Jewish Peoplehood** seeks to identify the core principles of the Jewish People. Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman argues that a dialogue about core principles can both define and create a community of meaning and purpose. How do we understand the foundation of Jewishness, and how does our understanding of core principles impact our identification with the Jewish People?