

BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

These overview questions relate to themes found throughout *Jewish History: The Big Picture*, and can guide your discussions about the book as a whole.

1. **Identity:** How have the Jewish people kept their Jewish identity strong for more than two thousand years while living in diverse communities around the world? Looking forward, what kinds of choices and decisions will Jews need to make in the future, in order to preserve the vitality of Judaism and the Jewish community?
2. **Diversity:** What are some of the different beliefs and values that caused the Jewish people to branch out into diverse groups such as the Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Orthodox movements? What are the unifying values, beliefs, and ideals that are inherent to Judaism and shared by all practicing Jews? How might various Jewish groups bond together and see themselves truly as one nation?
3. **Social Justice:** How has the core Jewish value of social justice motivated Jews to work toward building a better world? What forces help make a person willing to take risks or make sacrifices for the sake of a greater or common good? How can we help motivate and prepare the next generation of Jews to actively pursue social justice?
4. **Israel:** What kinds of connections did Jews maintain with the land of Israel for the thousands of years that Israel was ruled by others? How was the Jewish community changed by the destruction of the Second Temple and by the establishment of the State of Israel? What can be done to help Diaspora Jews maintain a relationship with Israel, and how might this help to keep Judaism and the Jewish community strong?
5. **Demographics:** How and why has the demography of the Jewish people changed since World War II? What are the positive and negative effects of Judaism having changed from a truly worldwide religion to a religion centered in a few of the world's wealthiest and most advanced countries? How might these demographic changes affect the continued vitality of Judaism and the Jewish community?