

READING GUIDE

Bronfman outlines a path to Jewish renaissance in his book: a plan for how to invigorate the Jewish community, and forge a new way for Jewish life in North America. Although the book focuses on the Jewish community, many faith traditions can learn from how Mr. Bronfman proposes to revitalize the American Jewish community, and we hope that these questions can help you reflect on those lessons and consider how to bring back them to your own individual communities. The questions that follow are intended to give readers a way to start on that path by beginning conversations about the issues the book explores. These conversations might take place within families, faith communities, book group members, classrooms, or participants in an intergenerational dialogue.

- 1) Bronfman writes about a generational change in Jewish life in North America, from the early immigrants for whom Judaism was “a condition of life” to young Jews who may choose whether or not to identify as Jewish. Consider your own family, and trace attitudes toward religion across generations. How does your grandparents’ understanding of religion and identity differ from yours? From that of your parents?
- 2) Does intermarriage help or hurt the Jewish people? The world? Consider your own views, then argue the opposite side.
- 3) In discussing the notion of how Abraham’s tent was open on all sides, Bronfman conveys the idea that Judaism is enriched by its exposure to other cultures and ideas. How has being exposed to other cultures and ideas enriched or challenged your own experiences and understanding of religion and cultural identity?
- 4) To reach all Jews, Bronfman calls for an approach to Jewish education that helps people find the relevance of Judaism to their own lives. What do you find in Judaism or own culture or religion to be most relevant to you?
- 5) Bronfman writes about learning from teaching. Think of a moment when you had to teach someone about your religion. What do you remember about what you said? About the person’s reaction?
- 6) Bronfman writes that an open, welcoming Judaism can offer an important alternative to religious zealotry and violence. Why might a new embrace of Judaism be important in the face of increased religious and cultural zealotry?
- 7) What programs make a difference? Reflect on your own or your children’s experiences with organized religion or programming. What do you think the programs were supposed to convey? What did you actually get out of them?
- 8) Bronfman and Beth Zasloff present ideas on how to keep youth engaged beyond just their early years. How can other faiths and cultures model these examples?

What programs exist that keep youth engaged that the Jewish community could learn from?

- 9) The authors discuss how overcoming ignorance is part of the key to creating a more committed Jewish community. What knowledge base do you believe is essential for every Jew to have in order to feel connected to and literate in the Jewish community?
- 10) Bronfman calls for Jews to take responsibility for healing the world. Can an embrace of Judaism help make the world a better place? What is to be gained by seeking social justice as a particularly Jewish, rather than universal, value?
- 11) Bronfman writes about connecting to Judaism through study rather than prayer. How do you connect with Judaism or your own identity, religion, culture or ethnicity?
- 12) Finding joy in Judaism is a central theme for Bronfman. Where do you find joy in Judaism or religion? Or do you find joy most in other spiritual or cultural outlets?