

Limits of Labels:
Addressing the Challenges to Jewish Unity

ETHNIC ORIGINS: LABELS BORN FROM EXILE

INTRO: (Read aloud)

Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews. These are deeply rooted labels that trace each one of us back to our ancestors, creating a direct link to the origin of our familiar cultural practices. This expresses itself differently for each community. For many, it meant growing up with Friday night dinners, Pesach Seders, and the celebration of Rosh Hashanah - in whatever format it took. For others it meant a mitzvah observant lifestyle, living according to the Torah laws. But embedded within these different ways of practice is a strong connection that creates the culture we all feel so automatically tied to. Judaism is not simply a religion; it's a culture; a way of life that binds us all together.

While we should all remain proud of our distinct backgrounds and way of living, it's also important to understand the common struggles we face.

Further, it's important to recognize that we all belong to the same land; Israel became a common home for Jews of all backgrounds and continues to be a place for all.

(Same as in Part 1: We are now going to assess various quotes and videos that will cultivate a greater discussion around this topic. There will be a couple of guiding questions in between the sources along with ones that create a discussion around the topic as a whole.)

QUOTES: (Read aloud)

"Shared Jewish history, rituals, laws, and values unify an international Jewish community. However, the divergent histories of Jewish communities and their contacts with other cultural influences distinguish Jewish ethnic groups from one another, giving each a unique way of being Jewish.

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Many Jews today live a multi-layered Jewish existence. Some Ethiopian Jews attend Hasidic yeshivas, and some Sephardic Jews enjoy matzah ball soup at their Passover seders. Jews from all backgrounds often borrow each other's cultural traditions. Many populous Jewish communities have a diverse range of ethnicities, and that diversity presents itself even within individual families."

Source: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sephardic-ashkenazic-mizrahi-jews-jewish-ethnic-diversity/>

Strong Together

What are some ways that you connect to your ethnic Jewish background?

(OPEN TO RESPONSES FROM GROUP - 2 to 5 minutes)

WATCH:

Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=92&v=ZUHP6ot-JPg

OVERARCHING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Do you necessarily identify with one of the above backgrounds? If so, why; and if not, why?

Do you think Jews of different origins have issues finding common ground? If yes, Why?

What are some of the positive attributes of having so many ethnicities tied into one religion?

Strong Together