



SHALOM HARTMAN מכון
INSTITUTE שלום הרטמן

iEngage Together & Apart


Session Seven

Dual Loyalty

The Paradox of Dual Loyalty

The Jewish People believe essentially the *same thing* that forms the basis of our enemies' accusations!

1. We are a transnational people, spanning national borders
2. We cross ethnic, racial, ideological and political lines
3. We feel a sense of loyalty to the Jewish people across these boundaries



The difference is that we believe it does not come at the cost of being loyal citizens of the places in which we live.



Dual Loyalty: Ancient Feature of Jewish Belonging

Philo of Alexandria, *Flaccus*

For no one country can contain the whole Jewish nation, by reason of its populousness; on which account they frequent all the most prosperous and fertile countries of Europe and Asia, whether islands or continents, looking indeed upon the holy city as their metropolis in which is erected the sacred temple of the most high God, but accounting those regions which have been occupied by their fathers, and grandfathers, and great grandfathers, and still more remote ancestors, in which they have been born and brought up, as their country.



Dual Loyalty in Modernity

1. Emancipation

2. Modern State of Israel



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The Brandeis Model: “No Daylight”

- If a Jewish community has a broadly consistent and shared set of values, and a set of dominant institutions that represent the community, it can ensure that a loyalty to Israel *and* a loyalty to America remain consistent commitments.
- But as American Jews pull apart from one another politically and institutionally, there are now significant competing understandings of what it means to be loyal to America, and vastly different arguments about what is best for Israel.

Aligning Loyalties:

Compatibility of Americanness and Zionism

Does this work today?



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Loyalty and Disloyalty

As internal Jewish debates intensify, other Americans will start to interpret Jewish arguments about America and Israel through the framework of disloyalty.



There is no broad consensus any more about the nature of American Jewish loyalties, either among Jews or non-Jews.



YEHUDA KURTZER: REDEFINING ZIONISM

We have to find ways to ensure that Zionism does not become a platform for pronouncing loyalty! There are a lot of generative ways for Diaspora Jews to belong to the project of the national homeland of the Jewish people – through spiritual connections, activism, philanthropy, tourism, culture, and religion. Too much of our communal conversation about Israel revolves around implicit and explicit pronouncements of loyalty.

On the reverse side, Diaspora Jewry must acknowledge that sometimes Israel will act in its own state interests, and that sometimes those interests will conflict with the ideological or political interests of world Jewry.



**Practices of Ethical
Communal Discourse**



We as Jews should be
the last people casting
aspersions on one
another about the
nature of our loyalties.



The better we are at managing this conversation *internally*, the better equipped we will be to resist the ways that it becomes a means of indictment of the Jewish community *externally*.

This is especially critical in a **partisan landscape** when it is clear that other political actors *gain* when they can claim the loyalties of the Jewish community on their side.

When Jews become complicit with this rhetoric, we undermine our collective capacity to resist these arguments when used *against us*.

Jews should be especially circumspect about not casting the accusation of dual loyalties to *other* groups as well, especially vulnerable populations.



Enduring Understandings:

1. Dual loyalty is a site for Jews to consider their multiple political and moral commitments as members of a transnational people *and* citizens of the countries in which they live.
2. These multiple commitments have been complicated by the use of dual loyalty as an antisemitic accusation throughout history.
3. These multiple commitments are further complicated by Zionism and American Jewish political identities in a polarized age.
4. We need to redefine Zionism in a way that makes space for both the Diaspora and Israel to act in their own interests without being labeled as disloyal to Jewish Peoplehood.
5. We need to better manage our internal Jewish conversations about loyalty so that we are not complicit in external rhetoric of dual loyalty.



Thought Questions

Do you ever feel conflicted between your loyalty to your country of citizenship and your loyalty to the Jewish People?

Is there a red line in which you would no longer feel loyal to your country of citizenship? If so, what would you do about it?

Is there a red line in which you would no longer feel loyal to Israel as a project of the Jewish People? If so, what would you do about it?

