



## Small group discussion questions

**February 2017**

A good question: Is it antisemitic to criticise Israel? (pages 20 to 23)

1. Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko talks in paragraph two about her own and other Jewish criticism of Israel. What difference do you think it makes whether a critic of Israel is Jewish or not?
2. In paragraph three, Ms Harris-Sawczenko quotes the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. Do you think this is an authoritative definition? Do you think it is a correct definition?
3. Paragraph five says: 'Jews hope ... for Israel to be treated in the way any other country and society is treated.' Could it be that critics of Israel subject it to more severe scrutiny than other countries? Is it those who object to criticism of Israel who are treating the nation as a special case?
4. Robert Cohen talks in paragraphs three and four about the Israeli/Palestinian dispute as being an unequal conflict over rights. Do you think his analysis is fair? How else might someone see the dispute?
5. Talking of the imbalance of rights, Mr Cohen says: 'Any talk of Palestinian violence ... or peace process needs to be understood within this context.' What difference does context make to our understanding of violence and the peace process?
6. Robert Cohen says on page 22: 'Israel is a nation state like any other ... not a theological entity or the reincarnation of the ancient biblical kingdom.' Conversely, David Elms talks of Israel being 'the paradigm nation, chosen by God ... existing by a series of covenantal promises'. Which do you think is right?
7. David Elms, in his third paragraph, says that Christian criticism of Israel 'seeks to delegitimise' the country. What do you take this to mean? Do you agree that this is the aim?



8. In paragraph six, Dr Elms talks of ‘the right of Israel to live in its promised land’. Do you think Israel’s rights to land are a matter of biblical promise? A matter of international law? A matter of basic human rights? And how does this relate to the rights of Palestinians?

9. Charlotte Marshall in paragraph two – like Elizabeth Harris-Sawczenko in her fourth paragraph – talks about how closely Israel is connected to Jewish identity. What difference does this make to how free non-Jews are to criticise?

10. Ms Marshall argues that criticism of Israeli policies cannot be in itself antisemitic when those policies ‘are undeniably contravening international law’. Do you agree?

11. Ms Marshall suggests that calling criticism of Israel antisemitic risks ‘devaluing the concept of antisemitism’. How might it do this? Do you agree that this is a risk?

Prayer: Father of all people, give us wisdom to understand better the complexities of the world around us, and to live well alongside those we share it with. Show us all the way to justice and peace, we pray, and give us the strength to take it. Amen