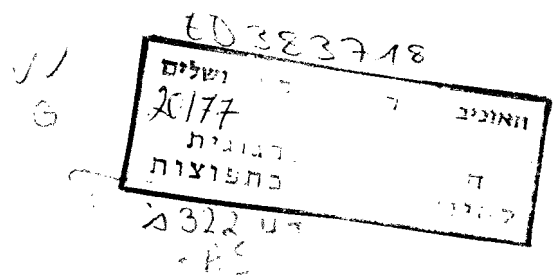


# ISRAELI AND AMERICAN JEWS

## Toward a Meaningful Dialogue

Drora Kass



INSTITUTE ON AMERICAN JEWISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS  
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE



This publication was made possible by contributions  
in loving memory of Leatrice Billig  
by her colleagues and friends.

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## PREFACE

The relationship between Israel and the rest of the Jewish world has been a subject of discussion ever since the State of Israel was created in 1948. The debate is rooted in basic Zionist ideology, which assumed that once a Jewish homeland was established and recognized, Jews the world over would abandon their "exile" and immigrate to the new Jewish state.

The past three decades have made it clear that the dream of the ingathering of all, or even most, of world Jewry in Israel, is not likely, and that Israel must learn to live with a Diaspora that, for the time being at least, remains larger than the Jewish state.

Conversely, resistance to the idea of a Jewish state, prevalent among a significant proportion of world Jewry in the 1930s, is gone. The vast majority of Diaspora Jews, while not prepared to emigrate to Israel, strongly support the Jewish state emotionally, politically and financially.

By far the largest Diaspora Jewish community resides in the United States. What do Israeli and American Jews think about one another? How do they perceive their respective situations? How do they relate to the issues confronting each other?

To get some answers to these questions, the American Jewish Committee's Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations commissioned two surveys conducted simultaneously in Israel and in the U.S., in June-July 1983. Dr. Steven M. Cohen of Brandeis University polled a nation-wide sample of 640 American Jews and 272 Jewish communal leaders, drawn from five national organizations: the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the International B'nai B'rith and the United Jewish Appeal. His survey investigated such issues as the extent of American Jewish attachment to and involvement in Israel, attitudes toward Israeli foreign policy and dissent, and perceptions of the way Americans view Jews and Israel.

The Israeli study conducted by Hanoch and Rafi Smith of the Smith Research Center in Jerusalem, was based on a national sample of 1,018 Jews. The Smith survey examined the attitudes of Israelis toward

American Jews, both in terms of their relationship to Israel and their standing in the general American community. It also dealt with Israeli views on their government's foreign policy and that policy's impact on internal Israeli issues; and with matters such as religious pluralism, emigration and the social gap.

Variations between the sample design of the two studies make precise comparisons difficult. Not only were many of the questions and the method of selecting subjects different, but the Israeli survey involved face-to-face interviews, while the American study was based on responses to a mailed questionnaire sent to a sample of people with distinctively Jewish names.<sup>1</sup> In addition, any effort to compare the attitudes and values of nations or communities must take into account the fact that all complex societies are highly differentiated in structure and belief. As the poor and the well-to-do, the highly educated and the unschooled, the native-born and the immigrant, the old and the young, and increasingly men and women, vary in their opinions, appropriate cross-cultural comparisons really require responses of comparable sub-groups, which the Cohen and Smith polls do not provide. Since I have had to rely on the reports produced by the principal investigators and have not had direct access to the data, it has also been impossible to make some further important comparisons between different generations of Israeli and American Jews and between people of varying political persuasions in the two communities.

Within these limitations, however, the Cohen and Smith surveys and a number of other polls, combined with additional relevant materials, provide a better understanding of the issues which unite and divide the Jews of Israel and the United States.

Drora Kass

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<sup>1</sup> No data are available as to the possible bias introduced by the 50 percent response rate to this questionnaire. Studies of the characteristics of persons who respond to mail surveys do suggest, however, that education, occupation and gender are correlated with the propensity to reply. It is probable, therefore, that the American sample overrepresents identified, interested, better-educated, more affluent and male Jews.

## INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

No matter how useful and stimulating may be the pilgrimages, visits, and educational activities for the presentation and development of what we have in common..., they will not be decisive for our relationship.... What matters is whether we are involved personally, whether we discover a direct connection transcending everything institutional..., whether we discover a unity in our difference, even where this unity of feeling and hope cannot yet be formulated in adequate concepts.

Gershon Shaked  
Israeli literary critic and scholar

In any decent and intellectually honest discussion of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora, it is necessary to point out that there are very real clashes, not merely between the new generation of Sabras and the new generation of Jewish people in the world, but between the Diaspora and the State of Israel. These clashes are necessary by definition...to overlook them, or not to deal with them, will not help in the establishment of a sound relationship between the two communities. On the contrary, it will diminish and do great damage to this relationship.

Rabbi Joachim Prinz  
Former Vice President of  
The World Jewish Congress

The two largest Jewish communities in the world, Israel and the U.S., have long operated under the banner of "We Are One." This slogan

is true to the extent that the future of the two communities is inextricably linked: what happens in Israel will affect the well-being and self-image of American Jews, and the degree of dedication, devotion and support that American Jews give Israel will have a significant impact on the future of the Jewish state.

Both are committed to democracy and ideological egalitarianism and are strongly oriented to achievement and to intellectual activity. The two share a common sense of history, of conflict and of oppression, and a deep feeling of difference from the Gentiles. To varying degrees, both are still defined by the outside world. Yet their continued qualitative existence hinges on the extent to which each will be able to redefine the nature of its identity from within. The major challenge facing both is how to achieve a qualitative Jewish life under conditions of freedom.

While the two communities have numerous fundamental elements in common, the many differences that separate them flow from a basic asymmetry in their respective situations. The Israelis are a majority in their own land; American Jewry is a small minority. Both American and Israeli Jews are predominantly secular. But American Jews are deeply committed to religious pluralism and oppose state involvement in religious affairs, while Israelis have accorded Orthodoxy the status of a state religion.

The Israelis are closer in time and in culture to their immigrant past than their American Jewish counterparts, making for sharp differences between Israelis of varying national origins and between those of different generations. Similar variations characterized American Jewry before World War II.

But perhaps the greatest source of cultural difference between the two communities arises from the fact that most immigrants to Israel stem not from Ashkenazi but from Sephardi Afro-Asian origin. The cultural heritage and historical memories of Sephardim who make up the majority of the Jewish population of Israel today (55 percent) are far removed from the backgrounds and origins of American Jews.

The two communities vary in political orientation as well. The early Zionist settlers, like many Jewish immigrants to America, were socialist in outlook. And while in recent years, both communities have shifted to the right, American Jews remain predominantly liberal, internationalist and dovish -- in contrast to a growing tendency toward nationalist and ultra-nationalist orientations in Israel.

There are also seemingly irreconcilable ideological differences between the two. Most Israelis still view their state as the only ultimately viable solution to the Jewish problem. Either out of a commitment to classical Zionist doctrine, or because of concern for Israel's security needs, many Israelis continue to negate the viability and value of a strong American Jewish community and to advocate



that all American Jews should emigrate to Israel. They insist that those Jews who have not made aliyah should at least acknowledge Israel's central, indispensable role in Jewish life. American Jews, on the other hand, as almost all Israelis understand, have no desire or intention of making aliyah. And while they recognize Israel as a vital component of their well-being and Jewish identity, they feel strongly that Israel should respect their choice to live a Jewish life in America.

Both sides are, to some degree, guilty of "adapting" the facts to their ideologies. Insofar as Israelis continue to adhere to classic Zionist ideology, this colors their view of Diaspora Jewry. While able to make individual distinctions, many Israelis continue to cling to a stereotypical view of American Jews, as overly materialistic, uncreative and inherently less Jewish. On the other hand, the emotional attachment of American Jews to Israel often blinds them to some of Israel's blemishes and problems.

Over half (56 percent) of American Jews consider themselves "very well informed" about Israel. Yet, despite repeated visits to Israel and close attention to media coverage of that country, American Jews, on the whole, maintain a heroic and idealized vision of the Jewish homeland, tending to exaggerate Israel's positive traits and to play down or ignore the negative.<sup>1</sup> "Diaspora concern is with Israel as a symbol," points out Bar Ilan University political scientist Charles Liebman. "Most Jews have very little concern with the real Israel. I find incredible ignorance on the part of Jews here with what is actually going on."

Further distortions are created through the two groups' dependence on each other. The relationship between the two suggests a parent-child interaction, with both roles being played intermittently by the two sides -- the financial and political dependence of Israel on U.S. Jewry, on the one hand, and American Jewry's emotional dependence and general submission to Israel's authority, on the other.

Israelis remain ambivalent about Jews abroad: They acknowledge that American Jews have provided the financial and political support which has been so vital to Israel's survival. At the same time, there is a resentment of this dependence on Jews who have given of their pocket but not of themselves to the Jewish State. Further, Israelis voice suspicion that American Jews' positions on Israeli issues are,

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<sup>1</sup> While over half of the Israelis (51 percent), including one-third of the Likud camp, feel that "Israel's commitment to democratic values has eroded in recent years," only 24 percent of American Jews think so. The majority of American Jews (52 percent) do not believe that continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank will "erode Israel's democratic and humanitarian character." Nor do they think that it will erode Israel's Jewish character.

at times, dictated by factors other than Israel's welfare, such as fear for their place in American society. Put in the position of poor relatives receiving charity, they, and particularly their leaders, have sought to emphasize the moral superiority of their own society and to denigrate any interaction with the American Jewish community other than a philanthropic one. Yet continued dependence pushes many Israelis to cling to a more positive view of the position of Jews in American life.

Israelis also acknowledge a stake in the survival, well-being and political influence of American Jewry. But the issue of Diaspora-Israel relations is not as high on their agenda as it is for American Jews. Most often, given the continued pressures under which they find themselves, they tend to view American Jews almost exclusively in relation to Israel and its needs.

Language is an added barrier to communication. The fact that most American Jews neither speak nor read Hebrew prevents them from acquiring a true sense of Israeli reality. Many Israelis feel that American Jews' refusal to invest the effort required to master the language of Jewish culture is an added example of their unwillingness to make a deep personal commitment to their joint cause.

The physical distance between the two communities serves both to provide perspective and to dim perceptions, often making the experiences of one beyond the easy conceptualization of the other.

In spite of the potential sources of conflict between the two communities, the contemporary record still shows a continued strong relationship. The quality of that relationship may be more crucial than ever as the younger generations in Israel and the United States face the common problem of redefining the meaning of Jewish life for themselves and their children. And the contribution of each community to this process may well determine the future of Jews and Judaism. "What threatens Jewish survival today is what happens inside Jews, rather than what happens outside; what Jews do and don't do, and not what non-Jews propose to do to them," explains Alouph Hareven of Jerusalem's Van Leer Institute.

By becoming integrated into American society, American Jews have come far in shedding the condition of rootlessness. That process requires them to define their Jewishness by something other than "outsiderness." Under free pluralistic conditions, the will of American Jews to perpetuate themselves has weakened substantially, reflecting the adoption of the secular norms prevalent in Western societies, by Jews and other religious groups, often at the price of abandoning traditional patterns. The major consequence of this freedom has been that a growing number of Jews have opted out of Judaism and/or Jewish life. It is increasingly apparent that what

threatens the viability of American Jewry into the next century is assimilation. Recent studies indicate that approximately 30 percent of young American Jews marry non-Jews.<sup>2</sup>

While the problem of Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors is far from resolved, there is a growing consciousness, recently articulated by President Chaim Herzog, that "the gravest danger facing Israel today is not from external forces, but from the illness within us." Given "the signs of an imminent civil war," Herzog has underlined the urgent need "to preserve the democracy for which we fought and paid so dearly."

Not since the early years before and after its inception, has there been such soul-searching in the Jewish state. Israeli political scientist Yaron Ezrahi has expressed the fear that, "we continue to build, but we have lost our blueprint, the vision of our founding fathers." And underlining the necessity to go back to basics, Hareven has questioned whether "living in a Jewish state is all there is to a Jewish way of life."

In effect, the question being raised in the two communities is whether survival can continue to be an end in itself. Both Israeli and American Jews realize that in the name of survival, fundamental issues have been put aside, but that in the long run it is only the resolution of these questions that can ensure a viable, vibrant Jewish life.

"Unless we rid ourselves massively and dramatically of the doctrine of survivalism, we shall not succeed," suggests Moment editor Leonard Fein. "A community that regards walking as a gift will never think to run or dance, and those of its members who seek to run and dance will be driven to look elsewhere. The doctrine of survivalism has taught us to resist the challenge of quality...."

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<sup>2</sup> Although, at least for one generation, intermarriage actually increases the numbers, through conversion by the non-Jewish partner. Low birthrate--well below reproduction level--is, of course, another major element weakening the community. There is, unfortunately, no basis for a comparative, quantitative evaluation of the reactions of Israelis and American Jews to this phenomenon.

## THE CENTRALITY OF ISRAEL

Judaism in the Diaspora is a museum which parents take their children to and ask them to keep and maintain. Israel, on the other hand, is the only place in the world right now where live drama is at work.

Amos Oz  
Leading Israeli writer

We regard Israel with awe. We regard it as a place of sanctity and inspiration. But the question is how to concretize these feelings without undermining the legitimate authority of the Diaspora.

Rabbi Gerson D. Cohen  
Chancellor, Jewish  
Theological Seminary

The vast majority of American Jews indicate that "caring about Israel is a very important part of my being as a Jew," and agree that "if Israel were destroyed, I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest tragedies of my life" (Cohen). Israelis also see a close connection between the future of the Jewish people and that of the State of Israel. They emphasize particularly their country's special obligation to Diaspora Jewry. But while both sides agree on their interdependence, they differ sharply about its extent and direction.

Classical Zionism divides the Jewish world into two: Israel and galut (exile), the viability of which it negates. "The golah is the womb from which the Jewish people emerged. It is a viable alternative only for an unnatural life," maintains the noted Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua.

While many in Israel continue to espouse some version of this doctrine, the vast majority have revised their thinking to some degree, and agree that "a good Jew must also be concerned with the

continuity of his community abroad." This change in attitude was mainly the consequence of the overwhelming support of Diaspora Jews during the Six Day War, when Israel found itself isolated by the international community. For the first time, perhaps, most Israelis became aware of the deep commitment of Diaspora Jews to Israel and their central role in ensuring its continued survival.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that most Jews have not chosen to settle in Israel has also led most Israelis to a more realistic assessment of the attachment of American Jews to their native land. The majority (67 percent) understand that while "the focus uniting U.S. Jews is support for Israel," most "do not think of their country as galut." Fifty-nine percent of Israelis agree that "most American Jews think of themselves mainly as Americans and not as Jews." Yet, despite the injection of a measure of realism into the traditional Zionist approach, most Israelis continue to view their country as the only ultimately viable Jewish center. "Since the destruction of East European Jewry," writes Oz, "the Jews outside Israel have become almost barren.... Meanwhile Israel has produced the revival of the Hebrew language, the kibbutz and the new city of Jerusalem."

American Jews, too, have moved a long way in adjusting their views about Israel's place and role in Jewish life. Proponents of the centrality of Diaspora existence, such as Max Dimont and Gerson Cohen, assert that life as a minority in the Diaspora is an important ingredient for Jewish cultural creativity.

In the past, American Jews who opposed the notion of the centrality of Israel in Jewish life were motivated both by their sense of being an integral part of American life and by pragmatic considerations, such as fear of anti-Semitism and charges of dual loyalty. Such views came to the fore in the famous Blaustein-Ben Gurion exchange of the early 1950s. Blaustein, then president of the American Jewish Committee, pressed Prime Minister Ben Gurion to withdraw his reference to what Blaustein termed "this most un-American act" of Jewish immigration to Israel from the U.S. and to stop referring to the State of Israel as the spokesman for all Jews. In subsequent statements Ben Gurion acquiesced to Blaustein's demands, but this did not lead to any real ideological change in Israel's attitude on these issues.

1967 was a watershed year in American Jewish attitudes toward Israel. The realization that the Jewish state's very survival was at stake rallied Jews to its cause as never before, and bitter disappointment at the Left's anti-Israel stand pushed many liberal Jews to

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<sup>1</sup> In repeated polls, conducted by Israeli social scientists, Shlomit Levy and Louis Guttman, three-quarters of the respondents questioned agreed to the proposition that "Israel will not be able to exist without strong relations with the Jewish people." A somewhat smaller majority (68 percent) agreed to the companion proposition that the Jewish people abroad "will not be able to continue to exist without the continuation of the State of Israel."

adopt strident pro-Israel positions. Israel became what Harvard University sociologist Nathan Glazer has termed "the religion of American Jewry."

While Israel is today a major focus of Jewish organizational life and a source of Jewish identity, many Jews resent the notion that Jewish life is viable and legitimate only in Israel. "Residence and citizenship in Israel does not automatically make a Jew a better Jew or a genius," explains Philip M. Klutznick. "Nor does residence and citizenship in a nation in the Diaspora automatically make a Jew in the Diaspora something less than an Israeli."

Inherent in this debate on centrality is the question of where Israeli and Diaspora Jews should invest their energies. Israelis see their own state, its survival and growth, as the principal means of preserving the Jewish people, and a large number think the Jewish state should devote more money and energy to promoting aliyah than to Jewish education abroad. In addition, given Israel's difficult security problems, they feel aliyah should get priority as far as financial support is concerned.<sup>2</sup>

While concern and support for Israel has become an integral part of American Jewish life, many feel it cannot be a substitute for increased commitment to creative Jewish continuity in the U.S. Yet, as Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg has stressed, the distinction between those problems which are purely Israel-centered and those which belong to world Jewry is artificial. "Defending Israel is a prime objective of world Jewry. But strengthening and preserving Jewishness, wherever it might be, is an almost co-equal purpose...which requires very nearly co-equal energies."

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<sup>2</sup> According to Smith, Israelis oppose (by 70 to 24 percent) the proposal that "of the moneys collected by the UJA and other Jewish organizations in America, more than now is the case should go to strengthening Jewish life there and less to Israel."

## ALIYAH

The greatest Zionist mitzvah is aliyah. It is on the sheer numbers of Jews who make aliyah to Israel that Israel's security, development and future are based.

Arye L. Dulzin  
Chairman, Jewish Agency

The Jewish establishment is going to have to come to terms with the fact that all Jews were never in one place at one time, and even though this would be desirable, not all Jews are ever going to be in one place at one time, ever.

Liliane Winn  
Former President of the  
American Sephardi Federation

Jews continue to move all over the world. Yet only a small percentage have chosen to make Israel their home. "Zionism was right about everything," laments Ha'aretz editor Gershom Schocken, "except about the willingness of the Jews to accept the Zionist solution."

Ironically, Israel has actually made it possible for American Jews to be psychologically more comfortable in the United States. "It has made Jews everywhere proud and reinforced their sense of security, because the haven of Israel is always available in an emergency," notes Howard M. Squadron, past president of the American Jewish Congress.

While the needs of the State of Israel have increasingly shaped the work and structures of the organized American Jewish community, aliyah continues to be a fringe phenomenon, involving yearly less than

one-tenth of one percent of the American Jewish population. Repeated national U.S. polls have shown that over 80 percent of American Jews reject the statement that "Each American Jew should give serious thought to settling in Israel." According to Cohen, only one sixth (17 percent) of America's Jews have ever seriously considered living in the Jewish state. American Jews constitute over 60 percent of Jews living outside the Jewish state, but they make up only about 15 percent of the immigrants to Israel each year.

Aliyah from the U.S. reached a peak between 1967 and 1971, due in part to disillusionment with America during the Vietnam war, and the favorable political and economic climate in Israel after the Six Day War. It then fell to its current annual level of between two and three thousand. All together some 60,000 American Jews -- one out of every 100 -- have become temporary or permanent residents of Israel since its inception. (It is estimated that about half of those who came, left.)

Even very deep and continuous involvement with Israeli affairs does not necessarily lead to aliyah. American Jewish leaders are more attached to Israel than their followers. They know and talk more about it; they are more active in giving than the general Jewish public. Almost all have been to Israel; two-thirds have personal friends there. Yet they are no more likely than the other American Jews to have "seriously considered living in Israel." Conditions for substantial American aliyah, by refugees or idealists -- the kind of Jews who have peopled Israel to date -- are absent.

Most Israelis understand that there is little chance of substantial aliyah from America within the foreseeable future. Yet, a majority (58 percent) still feel that America is galut (exile) and that "Jews should come en masse to Israel"(Smith). Many continue to subscribe to classical Zionist ideology that maintains that Jews who live outside the State of Israel are in significant ways less "good Jews" than those who live there.

Israelis are further rankled by what writer Hillel Halkin, a former American, describes as "a convenient division of labor": the fact that American Jews have been generous with their time, with their money, and with their political influence, but not with themselves and their children. "While 18-year-olds here are defending their country's threatened borders, their Diaspora comrades can be picketing for Mexican farm workers or writing term papers on varieties of thermal energy," observes Halkin.

Israeli officials act out the ambivalence of their constituents on this issue. On one level, they realize that mass immigration from the West is utopian. However, decision makers continue to base many of their policies on that ideal. In practice, Israeli leaders have, as Arthur Hertzberg explains, "let American Jews 'atone' for their sins of not living there [in Israel], through pro-Israel labors." But



ideologically, they have come to terms neither with the American definition of Zionism nor with the belief of many American Jews that their Diaspora is different.

There is also little understanding in Israel of what Zionism implies for Jews of the free Western democracies like the U.S. Only a minority of American Jews (39 percent) designate themselves as Zionists; and even for most of these, Zionism means identification with and support for the Jewish state, not eventual immigration.

According to a study by Israeli social psychologist Simon Herman, the potential oleh from the U.S. tends to have a stronger identity as a Jew than as an American, a mindset true of only a small minority of America's Jews. Yet, given their unwavering commitment to a strong Jewish state, many American Jews continue to feel guilty about not immigrating to Israel. And this guilt not only affects their perceptions about Israel, it is also a crucial factor in determining the nature of their relationship with the Jewish State.

## EMIGRATION

Israel has not yet reached a period of normalization. We, therefore, consider those who left to be deserters running away from the campaign.

Yitzhak Rabin  
Former Prime Minister of Israel

To deprive an individual because he came from Israel of the rights that I fight for for one who lives in Russia or elsewhere, seems to be asking much of me.

Philip M. Klutznick  
Former U.S. Secretary of Commerce

It is estimated that close to 350,000 Israelis (including children) currently are living abroad -- the overwhelming majority of them in the United States.

The departure of Israelis is viewed by their countrymen as a betrayal of the nation's most sacred ideal: the ingathering of exiles. Emigration has been portrayed, on occasion, as ridding the land of its misfits and, at other times, as an insufferable brain drain. The subject is debated in the Knesset, on the streets and in the media. Mock trials of yordim (Hebrew for emigrants, literally "those who go down") have been held in schools and in public forums. These invariably have resulted in a verdict of "guilty of moral transgression."

In recent years, growing numbers of Israelis living abroad, and

many others who would wish to do so,<sup>1</sup> have personalized the issue. But this has had only a minor effect on public attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

While the large majority of Israelis continue to express sharp disapproval of emigrants and emigration, there are significant differences in the policies their leaders advocate. These range from castigation and name-calling, to calls for negative sanctions, such as the denial of Israeli passports, to proposals for more conciliatory gestures, including material incentives to lure co-nationals back. Former Foreign Minister Abba Eban has expressed the need to strike a balance between the emotional response to the problem and the rational one dictated by political expediency. "I think we have to find a formula [which does] not close the dialogue. One should stop calling them names, not because they don't deserve it, but because our programmatic aim is to salvage as many as we can."

American Jews, who strongly support the right to free migration, reject (by a plurality of 66 percent to 16 percent) the view that Israelis who emigrate and settle in other countries are "doing something wrong." However, while generally more accepting of emigration than Israelis, American Jews and their leaders, deeply committed to the survival and well-being of the Jewish state, are also very troubled by this phenomenon.

Numerically, Israeli emigrants are the most significant Jewish group to have reached America's shores in recent years. Yet they remain the least talked about, partly because they are not refugees,

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<sup>1</sup> One out of six Israelis, questioned in opinion polls conducted since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, have expressed the desire to live abroad. The percentage is even higher among the young and the secular.

<sup>2</sup> Still, there are marked differences between native and foreign-born Israelis. Israelis born of European parents make up the largest group (34 percent) of those who do not agree that emigration from Israel is "wrong." Perhaps this is because they are part of the group that has traveled abroad most frequently, and from whom the majority of Israelis living abroad are drawn.

It is interesting to note that Israelis regard Russian Jews who have opted for America over Israel more positively than they do their fellow citizens who have emigrated. As with other social movements, the Zionist doctrine continues to view those who have never made aliyah to Israel (the "unconverted") more favorably than those who have lived in the country and emigrated ("renegades"). Diaspora Jews, even those who have moved to another country rather than to Israel, are perceived as potential recruits; those who have lived in the Third Commonwealth and left, are seen as traitors.

but mainly because their action challenges basic Zionist assumptions. American Jews have not wanted to take steps that might encourage or facilitate Israeli immigration to the U.S. Until recently, therefore, most American Jewish organizations have regarded the Israelis in their midst as neither Jewish immigrants to be helped and guided, nor as persons whose Israeli culture and knowledge of Hebrew could contribute to enhancing the community's Jewish consciousness.

The ambiguity in reaction to Israeli emigrants also reflects American Jewry's own unresolved relationship with Israel. The guilt American Zionists experience for not putting their ideals into practice through aliyah undoubtedly influences their attitudes toward the yordim, whose presence in the U.S. threatens the often idealized American image of the heroic Jewish state toward whose welfare they contribute financially and politically. "Israelis are all heroes," explains Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress. "If one of them says he's staying here, he comes down a peg; he becomes a non-hero, like me."

In recent months, however, American Jewish organizations, and particularly Federations, have organized task forces to think through how the community might maintain and reinforce the Jewish identity of Israelis living in its midst. Communal leaders are particularly concerned about the issue since most of the Israeli newcomers are secular and not likely to affiliate with religious institutions. The community faces the dilemma of how to reach out to the Israelis without encouraging them to remain in America rather than return to Israel.

The Israeli establishment has serious misgivings about the wisdom of incorporating its emigrants into the American Jewish community. Many Israeli leaders express suspicion that the community's main motivation in reaching out to these newcomers is fear of its own dwindling numbers rather than an overriding concern about the danger of assimilation facing Israeli immigrants.

This reaction has angered some American leaders. "For the Jew, Judaism is the best way we have of being human, and if we can convey this to Jews in America, Israelis and others, then certainly, excited by their Judaism, more will return and more will choose aliyah," explains David Gordis, executive vice president of the American Jewish Committee.

Despite the strong emotions, the Israeli leadership does, in fact, recognize that the most likely source of "immigrants" to Israel from the West are Israelis and their children. All Israelis agree that children of Israelis abroad should be cultivated -- through Israel-oriented activities -- to encourage them to identify strongly with Israel and thus become candidates for aliyah.

As Israel's economic situation continues to decline, the problem

of emigration may become more acute, especially if coupled with dwindling aliyah. And as President Chaim Herzog recently emphasized, only deep introspection about the roots of the problem will provide a possible key to its solution: "Given that yerida is a symptom of an illness within us -- hopefully not a malignant one -- it is neither right nor proper to pin the blame on the yordim, without also analyzing our own failings. We must take immediate vigorous steps to diagnose this severe illness so as to prevent it from spreading."

Ironically the presence of the Israeli newcomers may also press American Jewry to confront some unresolved issues. It may force the community to reexamine its relationship with Israel, reevaluate its structures, orientations and expressions of Jewishness, and assess the extent to which these are suited for dealing with immigrants whose Jewishness and modes of Jewish expression are far removed from those of the average American Jew.

## ANTI-SEMITISM, OLD AND NEW

Experience has shown again and again that...there [is] something infectious in anti-Semitism...there still remains the fundamental truth that somehow the Jewish right to live and to exist on a basis of genuine equality, as a right, and not on sufferance or in return for some special excellence, is not yet taken for granted as natural and obvious by the world.

J. L. Talmon  
The Late Israeli  
Philosopher and Scholar

Deep down... we still believe that we depended on the pogroms and the persecutions to keep us a people, that we have not the fiber to withstand the lures of a genuinely open society....We have sought to tell those whom we lead that...the openness of this land is only superficial, that anti-Semitism lurks just around the corner.

Leonard Fein  
Editor, Moment Magazine

Today, the classic manifestations of anti-Semitism in the U.S. are at a low ebb.<sup>1</sup> Jews in America have risen to top-level positions

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<sup>1</sup> In their July, 1981 report to the American Jewish Committee, Yankelovich, Skelly and White noted that popular anti-Semitism in America had declined significantly since the mid 1960s, and was at the lowest point ever reported after the mid-1930s. Repeated surveys show that Jews rank close to the top, together with the English and the Irish as valued immigrants. Few Gentiles say they oppose Jews marrying into their families.

in many fields: the number of Jews currently in the Senate (8) and in the House of Representatives (30) is at an all time high. Forbes magazine reports that between a fifth and a quarter of the 400 wealthiest Americans are Jewish. Roughly 10 percent of American university faculty are Jewish, and in major elite universities, the percentage is three times as high.

These facts are interpreted very differently by Israeli and American Jews, who view them through the prism of their own unique experiences, fears and anxieties. Thus, Israelis are much less worried about anti-Semitism in America.<sup>2</sup> Close to three-fifths (59 percent) believe all opportunities are open to American Jews and that they wield significant influence in the U.S. But while 65 percent of Israelis say that "anti-Semitism in America is currently not a serious problem for American Jews," only one-third (37 percent) of American Jews voice such an optimistic appraisal, and almost twice that number (69 percent) feel threatened by potential anti-Semitism. Only 27 percent of American Jews believe that "virtually all positions of influence in America are open to Jews."

Historic memories of persecution passed on through the generations -- from Haman to Hitler, to discriminatory quotas which lasted in the U.S. through World War II -- have left their mark. In recent decades American Jews have seen that the presence of Jews in high places does not necessarily erase the threat of anti-Semitism. They are also aware that Israel has become a factor in the relations between Jews and non-Jews.

Many Jews believe that the attitudes of their fellow Americans toward them is a function of American perceptions of Israel; that anti-Semitism has often come to take the form of antagonism toward Jews because of their identification with the Jewish State and its policies.<sup>3</sup>

Public opinion polls in the U.S. show that an overwhelming majority of Americans (81 percent) say the existence of the State of Israel has not affected the way they feel about American Jews.<sup>4</sup> Only 18 percent of the general American population feel that the close ties of American Jews to Israel are bad for America. Moreover, most

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<sup>2</sup> Among Israelis, the foreign-born, are, of course, more concerned with anti-Semitism than the Israeli-born.

<sup>3</sup> To take an extreme example: In a September 1982 Newsweek Gallup poll, following the massacres in Sabra and Shatila, 77 percent of Jews polled thought that anti-Semitism would be likely to rise as a result of the recent events; 51 percent of the national sample agreed with this assertion.

<sup>4</sup> Yankelovich poll conducted for the American Jewish Committee, July 1981.

Americans do not feel that American Jews are more loyal to Israel than to the U.S. Yet, while generally sympathetic to strong ethnic support of one's homeland, many Americans are concerned about how Jews would react if there were a serious conflict of interest between the two countries. Only one third of non-Jews polled agreed that "if the U.S. ever broke off relations with Israel, most American Jews would side with the U.S."<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore understandable that over half of American Jews (54 percent) express the fear that "when it comes to the crunch, few non-Jews will come to Israel's aid in its struggle to survive."

These misgivings about the depth and durability of American commitment to the Jewish state have led close to three-quarters of American Jews to state that Jews ought not to vote for candidates "unfriendly to Israel."

While Israelis are less likely than American Jews (79 to 91 percent) to believe that support for Israel is purely in America's interest, they are also less worried about the firmness of American commitment than are American Jews, and less insistent that American Jews put Israel's needs ahead of all other considerations when assessing a political candidate.

The Israelis' views may result in part from their conviction (67 percent) that American Jews constitute "a very powerful force in influencing American foreign policy." Evidently Israelis find it rewarding to believe that American Jews are prosperous and politically influential; that American non-Jews are friendly; that anti-Semitism is not a serious problem in the U.S. Such conditions bode well for continued economic and military support for Israel from its only important foreign ally. Yet, given the challenge that a prosperous American Jewry poses for Israeli national ideology, only a minority (36 percent) agree that "for the Jews there, life in the U.S. is very good."<sup>6</sup>

Paradoxically, American Jews, who in many respects are more anxious about their situation, assert (61 to 17 percent) that "there is a bright future for Jewish life in America." While they worry about the threat of anti-Semitism, about Americans in high places who are unfriendly to Israel, and about positions of influence that are still not open to them, the knowledge that they will remain in America impels them to believe that American galut is different.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Sephardim are more likely to think life in America is "good" for the Jews than are the more affluent and those of European origin.



## RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

The debate concerning religious pluralism in Israel is not about religion; it is about pluralism. The issue as perceived by non-Orthodox groups in the U.S. and in Israel is not whether the Orthodox or the non-Orthodox are right in their religious views, but whether it is proper for the Jewish State to establish a single religious ideology as normative.

David M. Gordis  
Executive Vice President,  
The American Jewish Committee

In ancient times...there was a working system that enabled the adaptation of religion to reality. This adaptive ability has been largely lost, at least since the establishment of the State of Israel. If Orthodox Jews do not adapt religion to changing realities, then in five or fifteen years there will be a clash, from which no one will emerge victorious. It is the Jewish people that will be the loser.

Yitzhak Rabin

Ironically, the historic role of Orthodoxy in preserving the Jewish people has become a source of tension between Israel and American Jewry. Eighty-five percent of world Jewry are non-Orthodox. Orthodox Jews constitute a small minority of Israel's population. Yet the Jewish homeland has accorded Orthodox rabbis sole authority to perform marriages, grant divorces and conduct other religious functions. This means that the majority of American Jews who belong either

to the Conservative or Reform denomination cannot enjoy equal religious rights in the Jewish State, and that their rabbis' authority is not recognized there.

The varying experiences of the two communities have made for a very different approach to the issue of religious pluralism. American Jews are a small minority living in a country where separation of church and state is a basic constitutional tenet, carefully guarded by the courts and the government. They have retained their Jewish identity by adjusting religious practices to modern conditions, in the form of Conservative and Reform Judaism. Such accommodations, however, had not occurred in Eastern Europe and the Arab world, the societies from which most Israelis came. There, the only forms of Judaism were variations of Orthodoxy. The Israelis also inherited a long-standing practice in the Middle East of state support for religious groups.

But an even more fundamental element underlies Israeli support of Orthodoxy. The emergence of the new state created whole new sets of circumstances. The country's early socialist leaders, including David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir, defended their support for religious institutions and practices by arguing that it was primarily Orthodoxy that was responsible for the preservation of the Jewish people through the ages, and that secular Jews owed it a historic debt, which should be repaid by state support in Israel. In addition, the country's leaders were afraid to enter into open conflict with the Orthodox elements and unwilling to take responsibility for determining the nature of Jewishness in the new State. This was one of the major reasons that a constitution was never drawn up. It was also the reason why the ruling Labor Party decided, in 1951, to form a coalition government with the religious parties, even in the face of other potential partners. In subsequent years, coalition agreements with the religious bloc became a matter of political necessity.

The debate on pluralism also stems from the two communities' differing perceptions of what it means to be Jewish. The Israeli, as Charles Liebman explains, sees himself as a Jew simply by virtue of living in Israel. "His primary culture, the songs which he sings, the plays he sees, and all the rest of his spiritual ties, on the first primary level of his everyday normal existence -- all these are included in the pattern of his Jewishness."

For a minority living in a free and open society, the maintenance of Jewishness requires a special effort, an active identification. Most American Jews, therefore, think of Judaism primarily in religious terms. They deeply resent the refusal of Israel's government and Orthodox establishment to grant equal status to their religious movements. Overwhelmingly (79 percent to 9 percent) they believe that "Israel should grant Conservative and Reform rabbis the same status as Orthodox rabbis."

Israelis -- most of whom are secular and non-observant -- also reject the religious status quo in their country, but by a much smaller margin. A plurality (47 percent to 29 percent) agree that Conservative and Reform groups should be accorded equal treatment. Not surprisingly, three-fifths (61 percent) of the secular respondents favor equal status for all Jewish denominations, while only 19 percent of religious Israelis support such pluralism. At the same time, most Israelis are convinced that Orthodoxy represents the major bulwark against Diaspora Jewry's assimilation.<sup>1</sup> This view is held not only by the overwhelming majority of Orthodox Israelis, but by a sizable portion of the secular as well. Given years of Orthodox monopoly on many aspects of Israeli life, Orthodoxy and Judaism have become synonymous in the minds of most Israelis.

Although the discontent of American Jews over the issue of religious pluralism is expressed in opinion polls and in resolutions passed by both secular and religious organizations, it has not become a visible source of conflict between the two communities. American Jews have accorded higher priority to the need for uncritical support of the embattled State.

Israeli leaders have also postponed resolution of the issue of separation between religion and state. A decision on the subject has been made more difficult by the multitude of concessions to the Orthodox bloc, as part of the coalition agreements over the years, resulting in the ever-tightening stranglehold of clericalism on almost every aspect of Israeli life. And the Likud's advent to power has brought a new alliance between the ultra-nationalists and religious zealots. Thus, Israelis now find themselves in a catch-22 situation: on the one hand, they first want to resolve the problems with their Arabs neighbors so as to ensure their nation's continued survival. On the other hand, it has become obvious that progress in this direction is greatly impeded by the political power of elements among the Orthodox who cling on to a messianic vision of Judaism.

A growing number of Israelis are aware of the disastrous consequences that could result from the absence of a written constitution especially when some citizens invoke the Bible to justify their actions. Many Israelis are coming to agree with the observation of Amnon Rubinstein, Israel's Minister of Communication, that Israel's long-term survival rests on the issue of "What is a Jew" rather than "Who is a Jew."

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<sup>1</sup> Fifty-five percent of Israelis questioned agreed that "only strong Orthodox religion can save American Jews from assimilation."

## CONFLICT AND CONSENSUS

While I do not question the legal right to do so of those who say and write much that is unkind to Israel, it seems to me that they either are unfair or unmindful of Israel's problems and internal and external security. In fact, I would say that Jews who engage in such public criticism of Israel act immorally, even if they affirm that they are as aware as Israel's government of the security problems involved.

Rabbi Emanuel Rackman  
President of Bar Ilan University

I consider [it] not merely my right, but also my sacred duty not to be silent for the sake of Zion. The basic issue is not whether dissent is legitimate, but in light of Israel's peril, how much dissent should be expressed.

Rabbi Joachim Prinz

Israeli and American Jews both feel passionately about the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state, militarily secure, living within defensible borders. Both stress the importance of continued American political, economic and military aid to Israel. Nevertheless, American Jews and Israelis differ greatly in their attitudes toward the policies of the Israeli government and their assessments of that country's political leaders.

Jews in the U.S. are, on the whole, more "dovish," and more critical of hard-line policies. One persistent pattern of disagreement concerns Israeli policy pertaining to the West Bank ("Judea and Samaria"), and the repeated declarations by former Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his adherents that they will not give up these territories.

The Cohen study, as well as a number of earlier regional surveys conducted in the U.S., document broad Jewish leadership and grassroots support for suspension of further settlements on the West Bank, direct negotiations with the PLO, a Palestinian right to a homeland, and territorial compromise in exchange for peace. In the Smith poll, however, Israelis rejected by a slim plurality (46 to 43 percent) the proposal that "Israel should offer the Arabs territorial compromise in Judea, Samaria and Gaza in exchange for credible guarantees of peace"; close to half (45 percent) rejected the view that "Israel should suspend the expansion of settlements in Judea and Samaria in order to encourage peace negotiations."

Fully 70 percent of American Jews and almost half (48 percent) of the Israelis polled feel that "Israel should talk with the PLO, if the PLO recognizes Israel" and "renounces terrorism." But while a plurality of American Jews (46 percent to 26 percent) agree that "Palestinians have a right to a homeland on the West Bank and Gaza, as long as it does not threaten Israel," a majority of Israelis (56 percent to 33 percent) disagree.

Most American Jews who differ with Israeli policies argue that they are not only wrong in substance but also harm Israel's image and support in the U.S. By a 2 to 1 margin, American Jews express concern about the way the Israeli government has been handling relations with the U.S. and agree that "Israeli leaders have sometimes been unnecessarily tactless in their dealings with American officials."

### The Right to Dissent

Differences of opinion over Israeli policy issues have led to widespread debate over the right, legitimacy, appropriate channels, and potential contribution or harm of public criticism to the well-being of Israel and the American Jewish community.

In their country's brief history, Israelis have experienced six wars, repeated denials of legitimacy by its neighbors and constant terrorist attacks. In light of this, it is not surprising that Israelis are not very tolerant of criticism, even when it comes from fellow Jews or other friends of Israel. Thus, Smith reports that Israeli Jews think (51 to 42 percent) that American Jews "should not publicly criticize the government of Israel's policy." But surprisingly, an even larger majority (60 percent to 35 percent), agree that Israelis who strongly criticize some of their government's policies are "bad for Israel."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Variation in opinion correlated with support for or opposition to the Likud government. Coalition supporters opposed the expression of criticism by both foreigners (55 percent) and by Israelis (78 percent). But, while the majority of opponents approved of dissent, both by their co-religionists abroad (61 percent) and by their fellow Israelis (62 percent), as many as one third opposed it.

The unwillingness of many Israelis to sanction free expression of disagreement by individuals and groups in or out of Israel relates in large part to their perception of security threats and to their feeling that they have few channels by which they can express their views to the authorities. A study of commitment to democratic political norms, in Israel and other countries, conducted by a group of Israeli and American social scientists in the early 1980s, found that Israeli Jews had a high level of belief in abstract democratic norms. But they scored comparatively low in their willingness to accept the right of political groups whose views they strongly opposed to enjoy democratic rights (e.g., the right to hold public rallies, to make speeches on TV, to teach in the public schools). These scholars concluded that "the political context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the threat it involves, seems to be the major source for Israel's high [intolerance] score...."

Conversely, despite the widespread impression that most American Jews oppose public expression of dissent, a plurality in the Cohen study (37 to 31 percent) rejected the position that "American Jews should not criticize the government of Israel's policies publicly."

The willingness of most American Jews to support overt criticism of Israeli policies may reflect a deeper commitment to and understanding of the norms of democratic society. Most Israelis are, at most, one generation away from life in non-democratic political systems of Eastern Europe and the Arab world. Variations in political outlook between a minority and a majority community, as well as differences in educational levels -- the Americans are much more likely to be college graduates -- may also contribute to the differing attitudes toward dissent.

More probably, however, these differences result from the fact that American Jews as a community are generally more liberal and dovish than the Israelis in their approach to international affairs. For many Americans, liberalism, universalism and egalitarianism are an inseparable part of their Jewish commitment.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is probable, however, that further analysis of the Cohen data would show that American Jews divide internally as much as Israelis do. A comparison of the views of Israelis in the Labor bloc and those who back the Likud group reveals that the former are much more dovish than American Jews as a whole.

While Israelis show less tolerance toward views diverging from government policies, a study by Israeli social scientist Sam Lehman-Wilzig, indicates they are far ahead of the Americans in support of and participation in public protest on their own side of an issue. Israelis 18-22 years of age, people who have attended university, those who consider themselves more privileged and Israelis born of European-American parents are the most likely to participate in protest activities.

The majority of American Jews who favor public criticism of particular policies espoused by the Israeli Government feel that whether Israel will and should retain its character as a democratic and Jewish state is a question for all Jews; that if Diaspora Jewry has no share in that discussion, the notion of Jewish peoplehood and the slogan "we are one" have no real meaning. They also maintain that a supportive, but critical, approach to Israel enhances the community's credibility with the American people and its government. If American Jews blindly followed dictates from Jerusalem, it is argued, they would be regarded simply as agents for a foreign power.

Proponents of dissent also believe that Diaspora Jews who are not caught up in Israel's day-to-day decisions are sometimes in a better position to view the overall situation in clearer perspective. In addition, many underscore the importance of independent thought. Stifling debate -- so fundamental to Judaism -- will ultimately weaken the community, they believe.

Most Israelis, however, continue to feel that as long as American Jews do not share the army service, reserve duty and high taxes that are every Israeli's daily burden and responsibility, and do not have their own lives on the line, they have no right to a voice on issues that relate to Israel's security and well-being.

This classical view is resented by many American Jews. "The right and duty of American Jews to involve themselves in disputation with Israel cannot be dismissed by the argument that they do not live there and do not face the dangers," asserts Stuart Eizenstat, chairperson of the AJC's Institute for American Jewish-Israeli Relations.

Israelis often also argue that American Jews do not have all the facts necessary to assess situations and options accurately. They further believe that the first loyalty of most American Jews is to the U.S. rather than to Israel.<sup>3</sup> And some Israelis suggest that American Jewish criticism of Israeli actions and policies are motivated less by concern for Israel's welfare than by concern for their position in American society.

There are Israelis, however, who reject efforts to impugn the motives behind criticism and argue that attempts to stifle ideological debates benefit neither the Zionist movement nor the State of Israel. Jews who are prevented from speaking their minds, they point out, may well turn their backs on the organized community, withdrawing both from support for Israel and from their overall ties to Judaism.

American Jews who object to public criticism maintain that "it feeds into the hands of the enemies of Israel" and subscribe to what Earl Raab, executive director of the Community Relations Council of San Francisco, has called the "Off the Hook Law." (When there is dissent on an issue within a constituent group, even by a small

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<sup>3</sup> Yankelovich et al. have, in fact, found that seven out of ten American Jews say they feel closer to the U.S. than to Israel.

minority, elected officials typically consider themselves "off the hook" with respect to the issue.) Those who oppose public dissent also point to what Raab calls "the unbalanced consequences phenomenon" whereby "criticism might be translated into the kind of withdrawal of American support that far outweighs the circumstances of the Jewish criticism." Thus, many American Jews feel that criticism is acceptable only "within the family."

Even among Jews who support public criticism, there is discussion over appropriate forums. "It is a debate that cannot be conducted at night, in dark underground places," maintains Henry Siegman. "Admittedly, it does not belong in The New York Times.... But if the enemies of Israel overhear the debate and derive comfort from the differences, that is a price that must be paid...the alternative is for Diaspora Jews to renounce their share in the great Jewish enterprise."

Many Israelis agree. "Send your letters to the Jerusalem Post, to be quoted by The New York Times," says Amos Oz. "Are you talking to us or about us?" Some American Jews take issue with this position and maintain that in this day and age of modern communications there is no such thing as an "internal" debate. "In the global village, there are no secrets, and while open diplomacy, openly arrived at, has proved to be a romantic Wilsonian illusion, the prospect of limiting issues of regional life or death to the Yiddish press is far more illusory," points out Rabbi David Polish.

While a plurality of American Jews are critical of the present Israeli government's policy, surveys indicate no erosion in their financial support or emotional commitment. Regardless of their position on dissent, the overwhelming majority of American Jews oppose the expression of criticism through financial pressure on Israel. By a margin of 3 to 1 (61 percent to 20 percent), they reject the view that "those who stop giving to the UJA because they oppose Israeli government policies are right to do so." And 85 percent report that they like Israel "as much," or "more," than they have in the last few years.



## CONCLUSION

We must talk in full mutuality. Failures and successes are each the reciprocal work of Israeli and Diaspora Jewry. We can achieve nothing without each other, and we have no salient shortcomings that are entirely "made in Israel," or purely consequences of Diaspora Jewish defects.

Abba Eban  
Former Foreign Minister of Israel

There will remain a tension between Israeli particularism and American Jewish pluralism, between Israel's orientation toward Judaism and that of the American experience, between Israeli Zionism and the Zionism of American Jews. The tension will remain, for it is inherent in our reality. What must go are Israeli condescension and American Jewish self-consciousness.

Philip M. Klutznick

The nature of relations between Israel and American Jews will continue to dominate the agenda of the Jewish people as long as there are a Diaspora and a Jewish State. The future of the two communities is inextricably linked. They have a great deal in common; they also have many differences, some inevitable, others exacerbated by mutual misperceptions. The latter stem from a lack of information, a clinging to unrealistic assumptions, and the tendency of each group to be more critical of the other than of itself.

Both in Israel and in the Diaspora there is need for a new

approach, for frankness, for recognition of the facts as they are, rather than wishful thinking and dangerous illusions. The two communities must be prepared to abandon outmoded concepts in favor of those which mesh with today's reality.

Israel cannot continue to be a Jewish Disneyland for American Jews where everything is rosy, beautiful and exciting. American Jews need to be made more aware of the many different internal issues confronting the Jewish State, so they can make a constructive contribution to the discussion and analysis of these issues.

Israel must also be prepared for a change in state of mind. It must recognize that the Jewish people chose more than one route to survival. "While aliyah remains an important objective of the State of Israel, it can no longer be regarded as a central solution to the question of Jewish survival," points out (Col.) Mordechai Baron, former head of the Jewish Agency's Youth and Hechalutz Department. Recognition of this fact will permit a more fruitful Diaspora-Israel exchange. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin emphasizes that "the time has come for us to consider not only what Jews in the Diaspora can do for Israel, but what the task of Israel is vis-a-vis the Jewish communities."

While Jews abroad continue to accord high priority to Israeli issues, Israel can play a major role in strengthening the community in the U.S., especially in the field of Jewish education. In the same vein, American Jewish creativity can nurture and enrich the Jewish State. The problems of both the Diaspora and Israel can be alleviated by greater reciprocity and cooperation between the two, and by mutual recognition of each other's weaknesses and strengths.

American Jews, with their extensive experience in intergroup relations, can help Israelis confront their relations with their Arab neighbors and Israel's own Arab citizens. American Jews can also provide religious and non-religious Jews in Israel with models of how the two can work together. Pluralism, voluntarism, and deep respect for difference are attributes American Jews are in a unique position to nurture in Israel over the years.

Israelis, on the other hand, can take greater responsibility for the maintenance and reinforcement of Jewish identity and a knowledge of Hebrew among American Jews. This can be achieved through stepped-up exchange programs involving both personnel and written materials. Increased translation and dissemination of the best writing by American Jews into Hebrew and of Israeli writing into English would be a major contribution in this direction. Enhancing existing programs that bring Americans to Israel and Israelis to the United States, with follow-up mechanisms to assess the impact of these exchanges, could do much to improve the value of such programs.

And finally, more American Jews should be encouraged to treat

Israel as a second home -- to lay down roots there without necessarily abandoning ties abroad. Rather than emphasizing aliyah as an either-or decision (since in reality it is revocable in any case), semi-aliyah and other programs which deepen Diaspora involvement in Israel should be promoted.

These are but a few suggestions. The range of options and formats for Diaspora-Israel interchange is extensive.

#### Final Note

Historically, it has been more convenient for the Israeli establishment to have American Jews remain passive: no questions, no hard policy arguments. To some degree, American Jewish leaders have also had a vested interest in the status quo.

The relationship of Israelis and American Jews has been powerfully affected by the reality and the rhetoric of crisis. In face of years of external threat to Israel's survival and well-being, unity has been the guiding principle. For the sake of unity, many issues in both communities have been left unresolved. Today "solidarity," not "unity," may be the more constructive slogan. Such a change requires enormous psychological, political and perhaps even material costs. Yet, unless both sides are ready to make the necessary efforts, we will find ourselves repeating the same formulations over and over again without contributing to the issues themselves.

American Jews and Israelis are tackling their problems in a period in which religious ties, practice and belief have reached a new low, and the cords of Zionism have weakened considerably. In the minds of millions of young Jews throughout the world, born less than 35 years ago, Auschwitz and the birth of Israel are both by-gone history. The emotional ties between the Diaspora and Israel must, therefore, be strengthened by the creation of new bonds.

It is imperative for the Jewish people to find new ways of meshing old values and new realities, to provide content that is meaningful and relevant to the new generation growing up on both sides of the ocean.

