

DISSOCIATION

Pesach Milin

When was the severance
 Already then
 Before you settled your mind
 Or now
 When your mind has settled you
 And if you inquire about disruption
 Apparently there was something
 God how distant you are
 Beyond knowing a few things
 Needing clarification
 Whether it's good or bad
 To open all the locks
 Closing off answers
 What would have happened if we had asked
 The Mothers and the Fathers
 And maybe the desert wouldn't be a desert
 It all depends on the rain-dependent crops
 Raised by those who early severed
 The chain that connects Isaac to Ishmael
 Oh how God laughed
 Over the divide and rule
 And the walk along the path of loneliness
 Over the obstacles of years
 And smoking battlefields.

Translated by A.H.

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Attitudes of American Jewry Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Introduction

Since the establishment of Israel in 1948, American Jewry has played a significant role in American-Israeli relations. American Jewry functions as an important link between Israel and the rest of American society, while the Jewish lobby acts on behalf of Israel in Congress.¹ The American Jewish community has been concerned with the Arab-Israeli conflict since its inception. Naturally this concern grew in times of crisis and in times of war it was channeled into massive support for Israel. Yet, it had been suggested that the rise of

Prime Minister Begin to power, his strategy in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the 1982 Israeli war in Lebanon caused a serious rift between Israel and American Jewry. The main purpose of this article is to investigate the opinions of American Jews concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict and to determine whether they became less supportive of recent Israeli positions and policies.

This article is based on data collected and integrated from several surveys of American Jews. The design of a valid Jewish sample for these surveys has not been simple. The U.S. census does not include a question on religion which makes it difficult to define the exact size and boundaries of the American Jewish community from which a representative sample could be drawn.² However, recent technological and conceptual advancements in sampling have enabled pollsters to construct more accurate samples of American Jewry. In the early 1980s the major polling agencies, Gallup³, Harris⁴ and Yankelovich⁵ used these methods to conduct several com-

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prehensive surveys of American Jews, primarily on issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict. At the same time, Steven M. Cohen and others experimented with an innovative sampling technique: random telephone calls made to persons with distinctively Jewish names in phone books.⁶ These experiments produced three extensive national Surveys of American Jews (NSAJ).⁷

Despite the considerable effort made to identify all existing sources, research on past public opinion is inherently limited by the availability of data. Pollsters do not usually conduct surveys with a view to the future, and the lack of polls on specific issues at certain critical times is frustrating to the researcher. Thus, this work does not claim to offer a comprehensive review of American-Jewish opinion toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. Rather, it portrays a few major trends and frameworks.

The Peace-Making Process

Most American Jews have always believed that Israel sincerely wanted

peace with its Arab neighbors. This was confirmed by the conduct of Israel during the peace process with Egypt. When asked in July 1980 whether "Israel really wants peace with Egypt," 80 percent of the Jewish sample felt Israel "very much" wanted a peace agreement with Egypt, while 75 percent and 50 percent respectively felt that Israel "very much" wanted such an agreement with Jordan and Syria. In several polls between 1974-1980, Harris asked American Jews whether the leadership of Israel and the Arab countries "...is reasonable and will work for a just peace settlement."

Israel's leadership received very high scores, according to the three polls in Table 1. The table also shows a variation in results that might be attributed to significant events in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The highest score was recorded in 1976 following the interim agreement between Israel and Egypt. This agreement also may have altered Jewish perceptions of Egyptian interest in peace. The favorable score for Egypt rose dramatically after the conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in 1979. Scores, however, for two pro-Western

Table 1

Middle Eastern Leadership Working for a Peace Settlement (1974-1980)

Q. Israeli/Egyptian/Saudi-Arabian/Jordanian leadership is reasonable, and will really work for a just peace settlement?

Date	Israel		Egypt		Saudi Arabia		Jordan	
	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
1974	89%	5%	48%	31%	26%	45%	56%	23%
1976	94	3	60	25	29	47	40	36
1980	87	8	80	11	24	55	31	47

Source: Harris, July 1980, note 4.

Arab countries and U.S. allies fell in the other direction: in 1980, only 31 percent and 24 percent of American Jews perceived respectively the kings of Jordan and Saudi Arabia as interested in peace with Israel.

The 1981 and 1982 National Survey of American Jews used the "hawkish-dovish" prism to solicit views from American Jews regarding Israel's policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The question was: "In general, do you think Israel's policies in its dispute with the Arabs have been too hawkish, too dovish or about right, not too hawkish or too dovish"? About three quarters of the respondents (74 percent in 1981 and 77 percent in 1982) held the opinion that Israel's policies were neither "hawkish" nor "dovish." Twenty three percent in 1981 and 19 percent in 1982 thought such policies to be too "hawkish," while 3 percent in 1981 and 4 percent in 1982 saw them as too "dovish." These results indicate general support for Israeli foreign policy and appreciation for Israel's interest in peace.

The preceding data and analysis deals only with general perceptions. Table 2, however, determines whether American-Jewish attitudes have remained supportive vis-a-vis specific issues, such as the role of the PLO in the peace-making process, solutions to the Palestinian question and the status of Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Question

The Palestinian problem has become a foremost subject in many recent surveys of American Jewish opinion. Most questions in the this category focus on two

issues: Israel-PLO negotiations and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank.

Table 2 shows that the issue of Israel-PLO negotiations was approached from two different angles. The first question presented the actual Israeli official position in this matter and asked the respondents to evaluate it. The second question described a hypothetical situation and the answer was conditional upon one or two major changes in PLO ideology: recognition of Israel and renunciation of terrorism.

A comparison between the answers to the two questions reveals a distinct contrast. As long as the PLO adhered to the goals stated in its National Covenant, and employed acts of terrorism, American Jewry overwhelmingly supported Israel's refusal to negotiate with PLO representatives. However, as responses to the second question indicate, had the PLO recognized Israel and renounced terrorism, a sizeable majority of American Jews and Jewish leaders would have been ready to condone PLO-Israeli talks.

A similar picture emerges in relation to attitudes toward the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Table 3 shows that when the issue of an independent Palestinian state was presented in a general context with a strong pro-Palestinian bias, as in question "a", almost half of the respondents supported the idea. However, the addition of the PLO and information about Israel's security needs yielded a totally different outcome. The introduction of Arafat and the PLO created enormous opposition to a Palestinian state (86 — 6 percent). Question "c" gave the respondents a choice between Israeli annexations and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Table 2*Israel — PLO Negotiations (1980-1984)*

Date	Poll	Yes	No	D.K. N.O.	(n)
Q. (a) Israel is right in refusing to negotiate with the PLO (because it is a terrorist organization that wants to destroy Israel.)*					
July '80	Harris	90%	7%	3%	(1,030)
Feb. '81	Yankelovich	62	28	10	(174)
Dec. '81	NSAJ	74	18	8	(673)
Aug. '81	NSAJ	76	15	9	(640)
Q. (b) Israel should talk to the PLO if the PLO recognizes Israel (and renounces terrorism)					
July '80	Harris	53%	34%	13%	(1,030)
Sept. '81	Newsweek-Gallup	69	23	8	(522)
June '83	NSAJ	70	17	13	(640)
March '84	AJYLS	66	24	9	(756)

* This description did not appear in the Yankelovich survey.
Sources: notes — 3,4,5,7.

Table 3*Palestinian State (1980-1984)*

Q.	Date	Poll	Context	For	Against	D.K.
a	July '80	Harris	General Rights	49%	36%	15%
b	July '80	Harris	Under PLO	6	86	8
c	July '80	Harris	Israeli security	20	54	26
c	Dec. '81	NSAJ	Israeli Security	28	42	30
d	June '83	NSAJ	Rights & Israeli	48	26	27
d	March '84	AJYLS	Security	34	46	19

Questions:

- The Palestinian people are now homeless and deserve their own independent state, just as much as the Jews deserved a homeland after World War II.
- Arafat and the PLO should be given the West Bank and allowed to form an independent Palestinian State.
- If the alternatives are permanent Israeli annexation of the West Bank or an independent Palestinian state, then an independent Palestinian state is preferable.
- Palestinians have a right to a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza, so long as it doesn't threaten Israel.

Sources: (a,b,c,c — 1980) note 4; (c — 1981, d — 1983, 1984) — note 7.

On two different occasions American Jews preferred Israeli annexation, even, in 1980, by a substantial ratio. Question "d" included references to both Palestinian rights and Israel's security needs, but different samples produced mixed results.

Part of the confusion in opinions on this important issue is most likely a result of the subjects objective complexity, but another reason could be attributed to the contrast between wishes and realistic expectations of those interviewed. In the July 1980 Harris survey, a 59 to 25 percent plurality agreed with the statement: "There must be a way to guarantee Israel's security and also give the Palestinians an independent state on the West Bank." However, despite the emphasis on "There must be a way...", American Jewry showed skepticism toward possible future relations between Israel and an independent Palestinian state. In the same Harris survey, 63 percent agree with the following statement:

If the West Bank became an independent Palestinian state, the Russians would soon use it as a launching pad for them to destroy Israel and to take over the entire oil-rich Middle East.

A similar percentage, 64 (as opposed to 11), agreed with the following statement which was presented in the 1981 NSAJ: "If the West Bank became an independent Palestinian state, it would probably be used as a launching pad to endanger Israel." These findings indicate that about two thirds of American Jews feared that an independent Palestinian state would threaten Israel's security. These findings also correlate with the fact that 42 percent in the 1983 NSAJ

and 48 percent in the 1984 AJYLS agreed with the statement that Israel should maintain permanent control over the West Bank.

So far, the discussion of attitudes toward a possible solution to the Palestinian question has been restricted to the "independent state" option. But other ideas were suggested and their relative popularity in contrast to the independent state option was examined by the Newsweek-Gallup poll.

According to Table 4, the independent state solution attracted the least support when it appeared within the context of other proposals. This was true for the period before and after the 1982 Israeli War in Lebanon, and it should be noted that the poll of September 1982 was conducted immediately following the tragic massacre of Palestinian refugees by Christian Phalangists in Sabra and Shatila. Table 4 shows that the majority of American Jews, 61 percent in 1981 and 58 percent in 1983, favored Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, with or without civil control by local Palestinians.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem has always occupied a special place in Jewish history, and apparently there is a strong consensus both in Israel and in World Jewry, that it should remain unified under Israeli sovereignty and control. Israel will protect and enact special provisions for Christian and Muslim holy places, similar to those accorded to foreign embassies. The attitudes of American Jewry toward Jerusalem fell within this broad consensus.

Table 4

Solutions to the Palestinian Problem (1981-1982)

Q: The Camp David accords call for negotiations on Palestinian autonomy over the Israeli occupied West Bank. Which of these proposals for the West Bank would you prefer to see implemented?

Proposals	Sep. 81 n = (522)	Sep. 82 n = (258)
Israeli sovereignty with military & civil control by Israel	29	19
Israeli sovereignty with military control by Israel but civil control by the Palestinians themselves	32	39
Returning the West Bank to Jordanian sovereignty and making it a demilitarized zone	14	16
An independent Palestinian state	9	7
Don't know	16	19

Poll: Newsweek-Gallup

Source: *Newsweek* October 4, 1982

Table 5

Opinions on the Status of Jerusalem (1980-1981)

Date	Solution	Yes	No	D.K., N.O.
July 1980	Internationalization	14%	72%	14%
July 1980	Return E. Jerusalem to Arab Control	7	82	11
July 1980	Israeli Control-special provisions to holy places	66	21	13
Feb. 1981	Israel's Capital	74	14	12

Sources: July 1980 poll by Harris, Feb. 1981; poll by Yankelovich, notes 4,5.

Table 5 presents the attitudes of American Jews toward various proposals for the future of Jerusalem.⁸ A very substantial majority rejected a proposal calling for the redivision of the city and the return of the eastern side to Arab control. The proposal to internationalize the city was rejected by a ratio of 72 to 14 percent. By a ratio of 66 to 21 percent, American Jews supported the Israeli position which asserts control over the entire city while granting special provision for the holy sites. The poll by Yankelovich also found overwhelming support for Israel's right to make Jerusalem its capital.

Begin's Policies

The interest of American Jewry in the Arab-Israeli conflict has not been confined solely to issues. Personalities such as Nasser, Sadat, Hussein and Assad on

the Arab side, and Ben-Gurion, Meir, Dayan and Begin on the Israeli side, played significant roles in peace and war. Among these notables, the leadership and style of one Israeli leader, Begin, has become a source of considerable controversy both inside and outside the American Jewish community.⁹

Begin's role in Middle Eastern issues appeared in several surveys, some of which were accompanied by news articles. At times, these articles were rather sensational. For example, on 14 September, 1981, *Newsweek* published the results of a poll on the opinions of American Jews toward Begin and his policies under the title, "A Poll: Jewish Misgivings About Begin." The accompanying story was entitled, "Dilemma for U.S. Jews." In the Newsweek-Gallup poll, American Jews were asked whether Begin's policies hurt support for Israel in the United States.

Table 6

Begin's Policies (1981-1984)

Q. (a) Do you think Israeli P.M. Begin's policies have *hurt* Israel in the U.S.?

Date	Poll	Yes	No	D.K.
Sept. 1981	Newsweek-Gallup	53%	34%	13%
Sept. 1982	Newsweek-Gallup	78	12	10
June 1983	NSAJ	50	22	28

Q. (b) The policies of Begin and his government have *damaged* Israel.

June 1983	NSAJ	35	38	27
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Q. (c) The policies of the Begin Government *strengthened* Israel.

March 1984	AJYLS	48	24	26
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Sources: Notes — 3, 7.

This question was repeated by the same poll in September 1982 and by another in 1983, according to table 6. In response, the majority of American Jews, and in 1982 a rather substantial one, felt that Begin's policies indeed hurt support for Israel in the United States. The 1983 NSAJ placed Begin's favorability rating at 31 percent (which was good for the fourth place only), on a list of six Israeli leaders. (However, Begin's rate was identical to the score of Israeli Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, then chairman of the opposition Labor party.)¹⁰ Table 6 also shows that in response to a question concerning possible effects of Begin's policies on Israel (q.b), 35 percent of the American-Jewish public stated that those policies had damaged Israel. When the same issue was formulated in positive terms as in Question 'c', the results were more favorable to Begin.

In any case, it appears that Begin was not popular in the eyes of American Jewry, but was this due to his policies? And did it have any effect on this group's attitudes toward Israel? A close look at the Newsweek-Gallup poll of September 1981 reveals that a clear majority of American Jews supported Begin's policies. In response to a question on the West Bank, a majority of 61 per percent supported the proposal for Israeli sovereignty with or without Palestinian autonomy. Sixty-nine versus 19 percent of the respondents thought that the 1981 Israeli bombing of the PLO headquarters in Beirut was justified "...although it caused extensive civilian casualties." As far as attitudes toward Israel are concerned, when asked if they were more or less sympathetic to Israel than they were five years ago only 11 percent said

they were less sympathetic, while 87 percent said either they hadn't changed their sympathy toward Israel or were more sympathetic. On another significant issue, when asked about financial contributions to Israel, only 3 percent of American Jewry stated that they had decreased them, 70 percent said they had contributed the same amount as in the last five years and almost a quarter of the respondents claimed to have increased their financial support. Finally, the Newsweek-Gallup poll asked American Jews to evaluate the peace-making efforts of three leaders: Sadat, Reagan and Begin.

Table 7 shows that Sadat received the highest score. American Jews, like other Americans, admired his courage in breaking the cycle of violence in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Begin's score was also high. President Reagan was rated far below the leaders of Israel and Egypt, but it is highly questionable whether the U.S. president should have appeared on the same list with the other two leaders regarding this specific issue.

Basic agreement with Begin's strategies, yet some reservations about several of his specific policies, were also found in the July 1980 Harris survey. For example, a 43 to 42 percent plurality of American Jews criticized Begin's decision to move his office to East Jerusalem. This decision was never implemented, but the idea was described as unnecessarily provocative. Criticism was also apparent in response to a question concerning Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Only a narrow plurality of American Jews rejected the following statement. "By advocating and allowing more Jewish settlements on the West Bank, he (Begin) is making it almost impossible to

Table 7

Peace Efforts of Begin, Sadat and Reagan

Q. Overall, how would you rate the efforts of these people to bring peace to the Mideast: Excellent, good, just fair or poor?

Leader	Excellent	Good	Just Fair	Poor	D.K.
Begin	17%	39%	30%	9%	5%
Sadat	29	42	19	5	5
Reagan	3	22	40	16	19

Poll: Newsweek — Gallup, N = 522

Source: *Newsweek* Sept. 14, 1981

get a peace settlement." On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of 90 to 4 percent credited Begin with proving at Camp David that "... he is capable of making concessions that can lead to a peace settlement when he agreed to give back Sinai to Egypt." American Jews rejected the charge that Begin "seems too inflexible, unbending and unchangeable for people to really believe he really wants peace" by a ratio of 66 to 25 percent.

A comparison between answers to various queries about Begin's policies shows an interesting inconsistency. Many American Jews thought that Begin damaged support for Israel in the United States, yet they have continued to back most of his policies, presumably the same policies which were described as hurtful to Israel's image in the United States. Earl Rabb explained this by arguing that American Jews were not primarily uneasy about the *substance* of Begin's policies or actions, but were more concerned with the effects of the

policies on the image of Israel in America.¹¹ "In other words, while the Jews did not themselves become less sympathetic, they believed other Americans had."

Rabb also suggested, however, that many American Jews distrusted Begin's ultimate intentions about the West Bank, and felt that their "pragmatic approach" did not "mesh with his ideological approach." Rabb concluded, "That may be another source of the uneasiness many Jews express about Begin, even when they do not disagree with his basic foreign policy behavior."

Effects of the 1982 War in Lebanon

Begin's policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict became more controversial during the 1982 Israeli War in Lebanon. Many articles which appeared during the war carried prominent headlines describing a serious rift between Israel

and American Jewry over the war and its conduct.¹² This description became even more intense after the massacre of Palestinian refugees by Christian Phalangists in Sabra and Shatila. But as Rabb suggested as early as August 1982, the main breach was not between American Jewry and Israel, but rather inside each of these communities.¹³

Unfortunately, not much empirical data is available on the attitudes of American Jewry toward the war in Lebanon. The two polls which were conducted on the war, one in early September 1982 by Steven M. Cohen for the American Jewish Committee, and the other in late September 1982 (immediately after the massacre) by Gallup for *Newsweek*, did not include a direct question on the overall Israeli operation.¹⁴ Cohen asked; "with respect to Israel's recent actions in Lebanon, which of these four positions do you most favor?"

Positions three and four of table 8 are problematic since they deal with a

highly difficult decision which raised considerable debate in Israel — whether or not to attack the PLO in West Beirut. Even so, table 8 shows that 76 percent of the respondents agreed that Israel either had the right to or should have attacked the PLO military forces in West Beirut. Only five percent of the sample totally opposed the operation.

Another interesting result was the opposition of 75 percent of the respondents to any suspension or reduction in U.S. aid to force Israel to pull out from Lebanon. Furthermore, Jewish views on the Palestinian question and the fate of the West Bank, changed only slightly after the war. Fifty-eight percent as opposed to 61 percent in 1981 now supported Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, and 7 percent as opposed to 9 percent in 1981 supported the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank.

The lack of consensus in American Jewry about the Israeli war in Lebanon

Table 8

Attitudes Toward the War in Lebanon, 1982

Q. With respect to Israel's recent actions in Lebanon, which of these four positions do you most favor? (August 1982)

Position	Percent
Israel should have gone into Lebanon, but it should have stopped after the first 25 miles	13
Israel was right to have sent its military forces into West Beirut to try to expel the PLO military forces	49
Israel should have attacked and destroyed the PLO military forces in West Beirut	27
Not sure, no answer	7

Poll: NSAJ, 1982 Source: Note 7.

brought to the fore the question of whether publicly to voice criticism on Israeli policy and action, or to keep it inside the "family" for possible quieter exchanges. This is not a simple question since harsh criticism of Israel in America could be effectively employed against Israel and American Jewry.

Table 9 presents the results of recent surveys on the question of public criticism. It shows a substantial division in American Jewry on the issue, yet the majority of American Jews disagreed with the voicing of public criticism of Israel in three out of four polls. The only exception to this trend was registered during the 1982 war in Lebanon, when the gap between the two views narrowed to 6 percent. These results may indicate that American Jewry has been more divided on the issue of public criticism in times of war or crisis.

Pressure on Israel

In the past the United States has applied various kinds of pressure on Israel to affect its policy. Such pressure was clearly evinced during the peace-making process.¹⁵ American Jewry, however, strongly opposes this pressure. First, in 1980, when Harris presented the statement, "Israel only seems to want to make peace concessions when the U.S. puts pressure on it to agree to peace terms," 66 against 25 percent rejected it. Responses to questions which focused on a specific issue also revealed strong opposition to the use of American pressure on Israel.

Table 10 shows that by a ratio of 64 to 26 percent, American Jews rejected the use of pressure to make the Israeli nego-

tiating position more flexible. The quarter of respondents who did not object to pressure in the last question is similar in size to the number of respondents who agreed that Israel made concessions only under American pressure. However, as can be seen in table 10, when asked about specific issues such as the return of occupied Arab territory or withdrawal from Lebanon, the number of those who rejected pressure rose considerably. Logically, there could be a correlation between attitudes toward a specific issue and attitudes toward American pressure on that issue. For example, if a respondent thinks that Israel should not relinquish all of the territory it has occupied since 1967, he would naturally tend to oppose American pressure on Israel to do so. On the other hand, a person might be in favor of Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories, but for various reasons would oppose pressure on Israel to take this action. Unfortunately, no suitable data are available to ascertain a possible correlation between opinions on the issues and attitudes toward U.S. pressure in connection with these issues.

Toward an Explanation of American Jewish Attitudes

The attitudes of most American Jews toward the Arab-Israeli conflict emanate from the role that Israel plays in their lives. Several studies have shown that American Jewry is emotionally attached to Israel and considers support for Israel an important element of being a "good Jew."¹⁶ Other studies found a correlation between levels of religious observance and support of Israel. The more

Table 9

Criticism of Israel's Policies (1981-1984)

Q. American Jews should not criticize Israel's policies publicly.

Date	Poll	agree	disagree	not sure
Dec. 1981	NSAJ	38%	57%	5%
Sept. 1982	NSAJ	43	49	8
June 1983	NSAJ	31	57	11
March 1984	AJYLS	38	53	8

Source: Note 7.

Table 10

American Pressure on Israel (1980-1982)

Date	Poll	Pressure Israel to...	For	Against	D.K.
a. July '80	Harris	Give back all the Arab occupied land	6%	89%	5%
b. Sept. '81	Newsweek-Gallup	Compromise to achieve peace	26	64	10
c. Sept. '82	NSAJ	Be more conciliatory in dealing with the Palestinians	17	69	14
d. Sept. '82	Newsweek-Gallup	Pull out of Israeli forces from Lebanon	18	75	7

Sources:

(a) — note 4, (b) — *Newsweek* Sept. 14, 1981, (c) — note 7, (d) — *Newsweek* Oct. 4, 1982.

Orthodox Jews were found to be the most attached and the most committed to Israel.¹⁷ In his July 1980 survey, Harris discovered that Orthodox Jews, far more than other Jewish groups, admired Prime Minister Begin and supported his policies in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Similar results were found in the 1981-82 National Survey of American Jews.

Religion accounts for at least part of American-Jewish affinity for Israel, but even the less observant are shown to have an important stake in Israel. Steven M. Cohen among others, has

observed that fundamental features of the American society threaten the ethnic survival of American Jews. To protect this identity, they identify with Israel and strongly support its development.¹⁸

A very dramatic demonstration of the importance of Israel to American Jewry can be seen from the response to a question measuring reactions toward the hypothetical destruction of Israel. In the 1981-82 National Survey of American Jews, 83 percent of the respondents agreed with the following statement: "If

Israel were destroyed, I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest personal tragedies in my life." (emphasis added). In the similar 1983 survey 77 percent agreed with this statement.

Irving Greenberg made the following observation:

Since American Jews perceived that if Israel were to be destroyed they themselves would become highly vulnerable, there is a much stronger tendency to see the fate of both communities as inseparable.¹⁹

The evidence overwhelmingly shows that the existence of Israel has been crucial for American Jews. Likewise, they show concern about the future of Israel. In the 1981 National Survey of American Jews only 12 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that Israel's future is secure. The same survey found that of five major issues or problems which confront American Jews, "... the security of Israel" was rated "a very important issue" by the highest ratio — 69 to 19 percent.

All the Arab countries, with the exception of Egypt, have not yet recognized Israel's right to exist. Several extremist countries like Syria and Libya openly call for an all-out Arab war against Israel. Since Israel has occupied a central place in the life of American Jewry and since its existence has not yet been fully secured, most American Jews feel that they must support Israel in its struggle for recognition and peace, even at times when they do not approve of a specific policy or action.

Conclusion

The tough negotiating position of Begin and his Likud party during the Peace Process and the 1982 Israeli War in Lebanon sparked controversy in the American Jewish community. Leaders of this community and many Jewish intellectuals felt that Begin's policies damaged Israel's image in the United States and that his stand embarrassed American Jews and put them in a highly precarious and vulnerable position within the American society. The main purpose of this work was to ascertain, on the basis of reliable public opinion polls, whether American Jewry drifted away from Israel in the early 1980s.

Most American Jews were impressed by Sadat's peace initiative and consequently altered their image of Egypt. At the same time they also appreciated Begin's response to Sadat's move. Attitudes toward specific issues, such as Jerusalem, were in full accordance with the consensus on this issue in Israel and among world Jewry. Most American Jews supported a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty with special provisions for the holy places of Islam and Christianity. The approach to the Palestinian problem has been more complex. American Jews backed Israeli opposition to negotiations with the PLO and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank. Yet they were ready to revise these views should the PLO change its ideology and tactics and should the possible establishment of a Palestinian state be devoid of any threat to the security of Israel. Most American Jews also strongly opposed American governmental pressure on

Israel in connection with its stand on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The general positive attitudes of American Jews toward basic Israeli positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict are related to the role that Israel plays in their lives. Religious Jews see Israel as their spiritual center while the less observant protect their ethnic origins and express their Jewishness through their support of Israel. The Arab-Israeli conflict has been perceived by most

American Jews as a threat to Israel's survival. This perception explains their enthusiasm for Sadat's breakthrough as well as their concern about the remaining, unsettled fronts of the conflict. The course of events in the early 1980s were very difficult and challenging to American Jews and their relationship to Israel. Yet this article reveals that despite these dilemmas, the partnership between the largest Jewish community in the world and the Jewish state remains solid.

NOTES

1. Marshall Sklare, *America's Jews*, (N.Y.: Random House, 1971) Ch. 7; Charles S. Leibman, *The Ambivalent American Jew*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), ch. 4; and Edward Glick, *The Triangular Connection: America, Israel and American Jews* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).
2. Harold S. Himmelfarb, "Research on American Jewish Identity and Identification: Progress, Pitfalls and Prospects," in M. Sklare (ed.), *Understanding American Jewry* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1982), esp. pp. 66-73; Samuel C. Heilman, "The Sociology of American Jewry: The Last Ten Years" *Annual Review of Sociology* vol. 8 (1982), pp. 135-160; and Egon Mayer, *From Suburb to Shtetl, The Jews of Boro-Park*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979).
3. Gallup preferred telephone interviews. In September 1981 for example, he interviewed a sample of 522 Jews and in August 1982 a national sample of 605 adults and an additional cross section of 258 American Jews. Gallup claimed a margin of error of plus minus 5 percentage points for the September 1981 poll and a plus or minus 8 percentage points for the August 1982 survey. These margins of error are somewhat larger than those which are acknowledged for national samples. See *Newsweek*, September 14, 1981 and October 4, 1982.
4. In July 1980 Harris conducted a comprehensive survey of both Jews and non-Jews using for the Jewish section a sample of 1,030 respondents. Louis Harris, *A Study of the Attitudes of the American People and the American Jewish Community Toward Anti-Semitism and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Middle East*, Study No. 804011, August, 1980.
5. In February 1981 the Yankelovich firm conducted a major survey of Jews and non-Jews on their beliefs on Israel and other issues. It used a sample of 1,072 adults, and a supplemental Jewish sample. In all, the Jewish sample included 174 respondents. Gregory Martire and Ruth Clark, *Anti-Semitism in the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1982).
6. The DJN technique is explained in Fred Massarik, "New Approaches to the Study of the American Jew," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 8 (December 1966) pp. 175-191, and in Paul Ritterband and Steven M. Cohen, "Study Design to

Demographic Study of New York's Jews," (New York: City College and Queens College, Department of sociology, 1978).

7. Steven M. Cohen, "The 1981-1982 National Survey of American Jews," *American Jewish Year Book*, 1983, pp. 89-110, and "What American Jews Believe," *Moment*, (July/August 1982) pp. 23-27; The 1982 National Survey of American Jews, Press Release, September, 8 1982, and Steven M. Cohen, *Attitudes of American Jews Toward Israel and Israelis, The 1983 National Survey of American Jews and Jewish Communal Leaders*, (N.Y.: Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, the American Jewish Committee, 1983).
- The author wishes to thank Prof. Lipstadt for making available to him the results of The Survey of American Jewish Young Leadership conducted in March 1984.
8. Harris took his poll from 11 July to 3 August, 1980. During that period the Israeli Knesset (parliament) debated a special new law for Jerusalem. This law, which was approved by a substantial majority, was designed to enhance the status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
9. For a few examples see: Sidney H. Schwartz, "Jewish Importance — Jewish Power," *Judaism* 30 (Spring 1981) pp. 142-150; Sol Stein, "Menachem Begin vs. the Jewish Lobby," *New York* (April 24, 1978) pp. 59-63; George E. Gruen, "Solidarity and dissent in Israel — Diaspora Relations," *Forum*, 30-31 (Spring-Summer, 1978) pp. 33-53.
10. The other Israeli leaders were: Abba

Eban; Yitzhak Rabin; Yitzhak Navon; Ariel Sharon.

11. Earl Raab, "American Jewish Attitudes on Israel: Consensus and Dissent," *Perspectives*, (November 1981) pp. 14-15.
12. See for example, "Being a Jew and an American, Congruence or Conflict," Special Issue, *Judaism*, 32 (Summer 1983); Mark Helprin, "American Jews and Israel," *New York Times Magazine* (7 Nov. 1982).
13. Earl Raab, "How American Jews Have Reacted to the War," *The Jewish Monthly*, (Aug.-Sept., 1982) Vol. 97, No. 1 pp. 40-42. See also his "Is the Jewish Community Split?" *Commentary* 74 (November 1982), pp. 21-25.
14. *Newsweek*, 4 October, 1982.
15. See David Pollock, *The Politics of Pressure, American Arms and Israeli Policy Since the Six Day War*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982).
16. Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1967), ch. 6. Leonard J. Fein, et. al., *Reform is a Verb: Notes on Reform and Reforming Jews* (N.Y.: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972).
17. Charles Liebman, "The Role of Israel in the Ideology of American Jewry," *Unity and Dispersion* 10 (Winter, 1979), pp. 19-26.
18. Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, (New York: Tavistock, 1983), p. 155.
19. Irving Greenberg, "The Interaction of Israel and American Jewry After the Holocaust," in M. Davis, (ed.), *World Jewry and the State of Israel* (N.Y.: Arno Press, 1977), p. 268.