



# **JEWISH UNITY AND DIVERSITY**

A Survey of American Rabbis and Rabbinical Students

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## FOREWORD

The American rabbinate forms a critical component of Jewish intellectual and communal leadership. Rabbis are charged with spearheading Jewish renewal, safeguarding continuity, and representing the community to clergy of other faiths. Historically, rabbis have formulated and subsequently maintained communal norms and standards. Today, many are engaged in identifying the salience of Judaism to contemporary existential and social concerns.

These functions reflect a pronounced change in the nature of the profession. The scholarly functions of the rabbi as sage and scholar have receded in favor of the rabbi as communal leader, ambassador-at-large, and spiritual counselor. The political and pastoral duties of the rabbinate today far outweigh the classical concerns with Jewish scholarship. "Ask your rabbi" today connotes more often a question concerning a wedding or funeral than a question of adjudicating Jewish law. Indeed, precisely because of the complexity of today's rabbinate, the Wexner Foundation identified programs to enhance recruitment, training, and development within the profession as a core target area for the foundation's program.

More recently, certain religious questions have been flash points of tension within the community. At times, these disagreements have featured not only healthy intellectual debate but also harmful delegitimization of particular sectors within organized Jewry. Given the centrality of these issues to the American Jewish Committee's concerns with the Jewish family, intermarriage, religious pluralism, and Israel-Diaspora relations, AJC commissioned Professor Samuel Heilman to study the attitudes of rabbis and rabbinical students on a range of questions pertaining to pluralism and unity within the Jewish community.

Heilman's findings are, in many ways, striking. First, despite considerable publicity concerning intra-Jewish tensions, one can detect considerable unity and cooperation within the rabbinate. For example, two-thirds of today's Orthodox rabbis are prepared to officiate at weddings together with non-Orthodox rabbis. The rabbis themselves maintain they do cooperate with one another, and that Jewish unity remains intact.

Conversely, Heilman indicates considerable divisions between the rabbis of the respective movements and within the movements themselves. To some extent, Orthodox rabbis are divided from non-Orthodox rabbis over questions of commitment to religious pluralism -- often a code word for heresy within the Orthodox community -- and over the issue of women's ordination. In other areas, for example, patrilineal descent, the fault-lines often divide traditionalists from liberal rabbis across movements rather than between Orthodox and non-Orthodox. This suggests that it is a mistake to understand such questions consistently as those of "the Orthodox vs. the rest of the community."

Even more strikingly, Heilman uncovers divisions within each movement's rabbinate, suggesting that these movements are by no means monolithic. For example, approximately one-third of Reform

rabbis oppose the patrilineal-descent decision. Conversely, Orthodox rabbis are split over questions of Israeli foreign policy, challenging the commonly held stereotype equating American Orthodoxy with the Gush Emunim movement in Israel. More strikingly, nearly 40 percent oppose the monopoly of the chief rabbinate in religious matters and prefer a moratorium on future religious legislation in Israel -- a position suggesting stronger support for religiously pluralistic positions within Orthodoxy than outsiders have commonly assumed. Regrettably, one does not detect the same degree of pluralism among Orthodox rabbinical students, who generally reflect greater insularity and isolation from senior rabbis currently in the field. In general, the report underscores the need for greater interaction among rabbis and rabbinical students from all of the religious movements -- such as, for example, the programs initiated under the auspices of the Wexner Foundation and the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership (CLAL).

Several conclusions flow from this analysis. First, the divisions over laws of personal status are quite serious -- both between the movements and between Israel and Diaspora Jewry. Questions concerning the Law of Return, divorce, patrilineal descent, and the absence of a uniform conversion procedure acceptable to all of the movements will, doubtlessly, continue to dominate the communal agenda and warrant communal solutions. Failure to address these issues will engender greater divisiveness in the future.

Moreover, the community must recognize that for Judaism to be vital, it must be able to speak normatively and make demands upon its adherents. Rabbis of each of the movements must be empowered to articulate the serious commitments to Jewish life their movements entail. In that sense, rabbis must combat the widely held perception -- even among rabbis -- that being a Conservative or a Reform Jew necessitates a weaker commitment to Judaism than does Orthodoxy. All forms of Judaism must be able to place demands upon and communicate a language of norms with their followers.

This last point leads to the need for a redefinition of what we mean by religious pluralism. Religious pluralism cannot and should not be equated with relativism, in which all values are inherently equal. It should connote a recognition that different Jews will require plural entry points to the Jewish heritage and that various movements within Judaism can learn from and support one another in their common and respective efforts to enhance Jewish community and continuity. This redefinition of pluralism along lines which recognize the integrity and principles of each of the movements -- including the right to disagree with one another -- suggests models of how we can co-exist with one another both in America and in Israel and would also strengthen relations and solidarity between these two primary Jewish communities. It is our hope that the material contained in this report will promote appreciation of the need for greater pluralism and enhance understanding of the American rabbinate in both Israel and America.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s, still reeling from the Holocaust and no longer swept up in the heady confidence that followed the founding of the modern State of Israel, American Jews began to worry about their survival as a people. Demographic decline and rampant assimilation, along with warnings about their ultimate disappearance from an Israel that stressed *aliyah*, made American Jews wonder whether they would indeed soon be swallowed up by America and history. The cover story in a 1964 *Look* magazine, then still a mass-market publication, trumpeting the "Vanishing American Jew" jolted American Jews because now the non-Jewish public was saying aloud what had become a growing source of anxiety for many Jews. But despite all the upheavals of the 1960s, the Jews did not disappear. And while concern about Jewish survival still reverberates in the American Jewish consciousness and while demographic decline and assimilation continue, those who predicted that Jews would be gone by the end of the century have been proved wrong.

To be sure, there has been what sociologist Calvin Goldscheider has called "the transformation of the Jews." Jews are not getting as much Jewish education as they once did, intermarry more with non-Jews, give less to Jewish causes, live in less Jewishly dense neighborhoods, observe less ritual, and do not always identify unqualifiedly with Israel and its policies. But they have not vanished as a people -- nor do they appear about to in the near future.

All this does not mean that American Jews do not worry about their future. If survival was the concern of the sixties, Jewish unity became the *angst* of the eighties. In recent years, pundits and Jewish leaders have entered into far-reaching debates over the future, some arguing that within less than ten years the Jews will no longer constitute a single people but be divided by matters of religion as never before. Alarmed by headlines like one on the front page of the February 28, 1986 *New York Times* which proclaimed "Split Widens on a Basic Issue: What Is a Jew?" and pronouncements from the then president of the New York Board of Rabbis, Haskell Lookstein, that "the extremism that manifests itself on both sides threatens to isolate Jew from Jew and to rend the fabric of Jewish peoplehood so that we will no longer be one people," Jews began to be troubled about "Jewish unity." The theme "Will there be one Jewish people in the year 2000?" became a part of the Jewish agenda everywhere. It was a prominent element of outreach programs like Rabbi Irving Greenberg's *Am Echad* program. Everywhere, it seemed, Jewish leaders sought to examine whether in fact such schism and division really existed.

For most of their history, American Jews had been denominationally divided into three major movements. Indeed, American Jews, at least since the end of the Second World War -- if not for most of this century -- had begun to think of themselves not simply as "Jews" but as "Orthodox," "Conservative," "Reform," and an emerging fourth denomination -- "Reconstructionist." By the end of the 1980s each of these movements had a well-established set of institutions (including rabbinical schools, synagogues, educational organizations, and summer camps) and most American Jews could locate and identify themselves through them. Yet, while these denominations existed and evolved,

many Jews harbored an often unexpressed belief in the unity of the Jewish people even as their lives and affiliations demonstrated diversity.

In the last fifteen years this unspoken assumption and tacit unity seemed to be increasingly tested by a number of developments. Among them were growing differences over matters of personal status, including such basic questions as who is a Jew and who is properly converted, how marriages are begun and how they are terminated, and the position of women in Jewish life. Precedent-breaking decisions and structural changes related to these issues were made by some movements but not others. These intensified the sense of schism. Among the more prominent were the decisions by the Reform and Reconstructionist movements early in the 1980s to define as Jewish the offspring of mixed marriages in which *either* the mother or the father was Jewish. No less striking were the decisions by all the non-Orthodox rabbinical schools and associations to accept women for training as rabbis.

A growingly assertive Israeli rabbinate that operated by and large according to orthodox standards at times served to underscore these differences among American Jews, essentially offering full legitimacy only to those who were affiliated with orthodoxy. As American Jews intensified ties with the Jewish state, Israel served not only as a unifying element for Jews but also as a divider of them.

### The Present Study

Against the background of these developments, the present author, at the urging of Dr. Steven Bayme, director of Jewish communal affairs at the American Jewish Committee, embarked upon a study intended to examine the extent of the divisions as well as the elements of unity that characterized American Jewry. In this way, matters that were conjectures and assumptions could be disambiguated; instead of assumptions there would be hard data with which to create an accurate portrait of American Jewry in the 1990s and on which to build policy for the future. It would also serve as a basis in the years ahead for determining whether Jews were becoming more unified as they entered the next century.

As the first step in this research, a decision was made to begin the inquiry into Jewish unity and diversity by examining those who provide religious leadership, who have vested themselves fully into Jewish life -- rabbis. The thinking here was that if we better understand where the American rabbinate stands on the issue of Jewish unity and diversity, we will have a standard against which to subsequently measure the lay population. In this way, we would not only learn about rabbis -- key players in determining the character of postwar American Jewry -- about whom relatively little is known from an empirical, sociological point of view; but we would also be able ultimately to get an idea of how closely their attitudes and opinions matched those of the general Jewish population, thus getting a sense of whether or not they were in touch with the lay community. Later, it was decided to include rabbinical students in the inquiry, asking them essentially the same questions that had been asked of the rabbis.

While the heart of the research was a lengthy questionnaire with over 230 items in it, time was also spent initially in open-ended interviews with both rabbis and rabbinical students in order to explore the issues that divide and unite American Jews. These interviews helped focus and hone the questions that made up the questionnaire. Questionnaires were mailed to approximately 1000 rabbis of all denominations. Only rabbis who were affiliated with one or another rabbinic organization were included in the target population. The assumption was that those who would elect to belong to such an organization would consider their being a rabbi an important feature of their identity. These were not only pulpit rabbis but rabbis working in Jewish education, various forms of communal work, outreach, college campus ministries, and even some who spent only part

of their time as rabbis. No significant differences were found in the responses of pulpit and nonpulpit rabbis.

While over 60 percent of the target population returned questionnaires, quite a few failed to complete the entire schedule of questions and others sent in letters instead of completed surveys. After removing these, the final number of usable responses was 525. Considering that samples of this size are used by pollsters such as Gallup and Roper to make generalizations about the entire American population, there should be no hesitancy about reaching conclusions concerning the American rabbinate -- a far smaller universe -- from a sample of 525 respondents.

The survey and its analysis cover a wide range of topics. Included are general questions about: (1) the bounds of Jewish unity and grounds of cooperation; (2) attitudes toward pluralism; (3) the nature of divisions and schism; (4) interdenominational and interreligious dialogue; (5) friendships and contacts among American rabbis; (6) mutual perceptions of the Orthodox, (7) Conservative, (8) Reform, and (9) Reconstructionist Jews and Judaism; (10) attitudes toward and ties with non-Jews; (11) opinions about *halakhah*, modern life, and (12) God; (13) varying outlooks on matters of personal status, with particular reference to (14) the "Who is a Jew?" question and (15) the matter of patrilineality; (16) opinions and attitudes about intra-Jewish marriage; (17) identity; (18) Jewish outreach; (19) Jewish education; (20) attitudes toward and opinions about rabbinic authority; (21) egalitarianism and the question of women in Judaism; and finally (22) Israel.

The data were reviewed and analyzed from a variety of points of view. Preliminary evaluation of the findings indicated that denomination served as the single most comprehensive way of distinguishing among the rabbis in the population. Accordingly, all the results were correlated with denomination. While in most cases each of the movements displayed undeniable differences from one another, in some instances -- as the report will document -- the difference was between the Orthodox rabbis on the one hand and all the non-Orthodox (regardless of denomination) on the other. Finally, in still other cases, the responses were divided between those who may be referred to as the traditionalist rabbis -- Orthodox and Conservative -- and the liberal or progressive ones -- Reform and Reconstructionist. These three distinctions appear in almost all respects to be the key ones in differentiating the rabbis. They are more important than, for example, sex, age, marital status, and other matters of background. Or, to put the matter most simply, denominations or movements are not just labels; they are expressions of a syndrome of attitudes and worldviews. They are now ineluctably a part of Jewish identity in America.

### The Sample

The composition of the sample on which this study is based is indicated in the accompanying

Composition of the Sample Denomination	Rabbis		Students	
	N	%	N	%
Orthodox	99	19	40	29
Conservative	147	28	47	34
Reform	196	37	25	18
Reconstructionist	65	12	26	19
Other	18	3	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Percents have been rounded, resulting sometimes in totals other than 100.

table. The percentage distribution of the rabbis reflects fairly closely the affiliations of the general Jewish population. The disproportionately large number of Orthodox rabbinical students reflects the large number of Orthodox seminaries and yeshivas.

#### *Age*

The Orthodox rabbis tended to be older than the others. Forty-six percent were in the 51-64 age group and 19 percent were 65 or over. Only 10 percent were in the 25-40 age group. The Reconstructionist rabbis tended to be younger than the others; 76 percent were in the 25-40 age group.

Orthodox rabbinical students tended to be younger than other students; 85 percent were aged 20-25. More than half of the Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist students were in the 25-30 age group.

#### *Sex*

Twenty-eight percent of the Reconstructionist rabbis were women; all the other rabbis were men. Half of the non-Orthodox students were women.

#### *Marital Status*

The overwhelming majority of the rabbis were married. Practically all those widowed were over 65. Most of the small number of divorced rabbis were in the Reform and Reconstructionist groups. No Orthodox rabbis were divorced.

Eighty-five percent of the rabbinical students were single. About half of the Conservative and Reconstructionist and more than two-thirds of the Reform students were single.

#### *Denomination in Which Raised*

Ninety-four percent of the Orthodox rabbis and 85 percent of the Orthodox students were raised in Orthodox homes. About a third of Conservative rabbis were raised as Orthodox, as were a quarter of the Reform rabbis. About 57 percent of Conservative rabbis and 53 percent of Reform rabbis were raised in those denominations. Sixty percent of Conservative students and 73 percent of Reform students were raised in the same denominations.

#### *Parents*

Generally, the rabbis were not children of rabbis. About 27 percent of the Orthodox rabbis, 19 percent of the Conservative, 10 percent of the Reform, and 5 percent of the Reconstructionist reported that their fathers had been rabbis. The proportions were similar among the students.

#### *Kashrut*

All the Orthodox rabbis and the great majority of Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis but less than a third of the Reform rabbis reported that they kept kosher homes. The figures were similar for the rabbinical students, except that a greater percentage of Reform students than of Reform rabbis kept kosher homes.



*Occupation*

About 70 percent of the rabbis in the sample served in pulpits. Only a third of the Orthodox students planned to seek pulpits; for students in the other denominations, the percentages of those planning to have pulpits were: Conservative, 53; Reform, 62; and Reconstructionist, 40. Eighty-one percent of the Reform students were already serving in pulpits.

was found among the rabbis. That is, in general, the students too were willing to cooperate on *klal yisrael* matters. Topping the list of such matters were activities on behalf of Soviet Jewry and Israel.

Where the students differed most markedly from their rabbinic counterparts was in the Orthodox group. While the Orthodox rabbis were the least enthusiastic about cooperation with other rabbis in these activities, the Orthodox rabbinical students were even less enthusiastic -- about 10-20 percentage points lower on communal/social cooperation and 15-50 percentage points lower on religious cooperation.

**American Jews Not Unified**

**1.3 Were American Jews ever unified and are they unified today?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Never unified	55	45	65	70	68	81	72	72
Not unified today	82	85	74	74	79	89	72	76

While few rabbis believed that the American Jewish community was ever united, even fewer believed it is unified today (table 1.3). On the whole, the students shared the rabbis' opinions.

**A Divided Future**

**1.4 Do you believe that ultimately the divisions among Jews will**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Become deeper	35	30	18	13	10	8	13	12
Remain same	23	10	44	36	53	54	41	36
Diminish	15	25	14	11	17	12	17	8
Not sure	21	35	23	38	20	27	30	44

While the non-Orthodox rabbis believed that matters would remain more or less the same, Orthodox rabbis thought the divisions would get deeper (table 1.4). The level of Orthodox despair about the future, one might suggest, was greatest of all the groups.

Only a minority of the students thought the divisions among Jews would diminish. There was no clear sense of optimism that would distinguish them from the rabbis; neither group looked for a great coming together in the days ahead.

**A Special Responsibility**

Overwhelmingly, all the rabbis "strongly" agreed that as Jews they had a special responsibility to help their fellow Jews (table 1.5). They did so in descending order from Orthodox to Reconstructionist. The concept that all Jews are responsible for one another was unquestionably confirmed in this population.

**1.5 As a Jew, I have a special responsibility to help other Jews.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Agree	4	8	14	32	16	27	30	36
Strongly agree	95	93	84	68	83	65	70	56

Like the rabbis, the students felt a sense of responsibility for fellow Jews. Again, the intensity of this belief was greatest among the Orthodox.

**Anti-Semitism and Jewish Unity**

**1.6 Do you believe anti-Semitism fosters Jewish unity?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
No	5	0	9	11	5	8	5	8
Slightly	16	15	24	24	19	31	27	16
Not important	7	0	5	4	4	8	12	8
Yes	78	85	66	62	76	58	69	72

Every group overwhelmingly thought anti-Semitism fostered Jewish unity, regardless of denomination or age (table 1.6). This doesn't mean they supported it, but they knew a little hate goes a long way.

Like the rabbis, the students believed that anti-Semitism fostered unity. The major difference here was in the responses of the Reform rabbinical students. Fewer of them than of their rabbinic counterparts thought that anti-Semitism played a major role in fostering Jewish unity.

**Praying Together**

**1.7 Are there circumstances when you would pray in a(n) (Answer: No)**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox service	0	0	0	2	2	4	2	4
Conservative service	64	70	0	0	1	0	2	0
Reform service	82	88	2	2	1	0	0	0
Reconstructionist service	78	88	4	6	2	0	0	0

If not for the Orthodox, these rabbis and rabbinical students would overwhelmingly participate in one another's denomination's services (table 1.7). However, the Orthodox rabbinical students, even more so than the Orthodox rabbis, proved in great numbers unwilling to participate in non-Orthodox services. This once again demonstrated the comparatively greater particularism of the Orthodox rabbinical students.

**Co-Officiating at Weddings with Other Rabbis**

1.8 Have you officiated (or would you officiate) at a wedding with a rabbi from another denomination?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
No	33	42	11	4	17	0	33	0

This question examined the extent to which rabbis had cooperated in a religious capacity across denominational grounds (table 1.8). A majority of all the rabbis -- including the Orthodox -- had done so, although the Conservatives had done so more than any other group, perhaps because they fill the spectrum between the Orthodox and the Reform and thus are more likely to be called upon when a couple consists of individuals from different movements. It is interesting that, although the Orthodox would not participate in synagogue services of other denominations, they did co-officiate at interdenominational weddings.

Except for the Orthodox (45 percent of whom claimed they "don't know" what they would do), most rabbinical students would officiate at a wedding with a rabbi from another denomination. One guesses that the students who don't know will, upon taking a pulpit, soon find out.

**Co-Officiating at Weddings with Other Clergy**

1.9 Have you officiated (or would you officiate) at a wedding with clergy from another religion?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
No	97	93	96	100	90	96	92	76

This question was to see if the same degree on interdenominationalism that exists *within* Judaism exists between rabbis and non-Jewish clergy (table 1.9). We would expect the Orthodox to have never done this, and only a small minority of the others to have done so. It is, however, the minorities that interest us.

Only about 3 percent of the Orthodox and Conservative rabbis claimed to have done so, but nearly one in ten of the Reform had co-officiated with a clergy of another religion. Among the students as among the rabbis, interdenominationalism across religious lines was infrequent. Few seemed willing to officiate with non-Jewish clergy. To be sure, 20 percent of the Reconstructionist students said they were not sure, a number greater than that for any other group of students. Still, this was not a prodigious endorsement for those who are hoping that the current crop of rabbinical students might be more open to interreligious marriage.

## 2. PLURALISM AND ANTIPLURALISM

As already noted, pluralism is a deeply held value of American life, particularly in the closing decades of the century when the homogenized "melting pot" ideal has been rejected in favor of the diversity of the "salad bowl," in which everyone can do and be what he wishes while still belonging to the society. This American pluralism has been underscored by the American Jewish experience, which has been one of decentralized organization. There was never a universally recognized chief rabbi in America, nor was there ever one community or brand of Judaism that represented the whole. No real *kehilla* ever emerged in American Jewish life as in Europe or the Middle East and North Africa. Thus American Jews are doubly pluralist: first as Americans and second as Jews in America.

This pluralism displays itself in the rabbis' responses to a number of questions. First, it is seen in their limited ethnocentrism and religious chauvinism. When asked if they agreed with the proposition that "in most ways, Jews are no better than non-Jews," a majority of the liberal rabbis (Reform and Reconstructionist) agreed, taking a pluralist stance. The Conservatives remained divided on the question, and among the Orthodox, who in all respects scored highest on Jewish insularity and solidarity, only a slim majority disagreed with the proposition.

Yet if there were strong signs of pluralism in the responses of these rabbis, there were also important differences in their enthusiasm for the pluralist position. Thus, while a majority disagreed with the proposition that there is no real advantage to mixing and socializing with Jews of movements other than their own, the Orthodox were not as fervent in their disagreement. They might see some advantage, but not much.

Some observers have suggested that the attitudes favoring unity or diversity as well as openness or antagonism to pluralism are formed in the process of rabbinical training. Whether this is true is difficult to say. However, from this data it is clear that the rabbis themselves do not subscribe to this view. Only a very small minority believed their attitudes toward Jews of other denominations were formed in rabbinical school. Most thought instead that these were fixed either before or after such training. Still, their rabbinical training did affect their attitudes. A majority of the non-Orthodox rabbis agreed that their commitment to pluralism was increased by their rabbinical-school training. For the Orthodox, however, a majority felt this was *not* the case.

Leaving aside the question of where attitudes toward other Jews were formed, only a minority of the rabbis felt that during the last decade they had gotten worse. This does not mean that these rabbis thought matters were fine; it only means that they did not overwhelmingly believe that attitudes had deteriorated in the last ten years, all the warnings about the growing disunity of the Jewish people notwithstanding.

The propluralism attitudes of these rabbis display themselves in a number of specific stands.

For example, majorities of all groups believed that Jews who are severely critical of Israel should nevertheless be allowed to speak in synagogues and Jewish community centers. To be sure, fewer Orthodox and Conservative rabbis endorsed this pluralism than Reform and Reconstructionist ones -- but in all cases a majority did.

Yet a willingness to allow for divergent views to be heard did not mean that these rabbis favored public Jewish squabbling. Indeed, a majority agreed that Jewish leaders should not publicly rebuke or delegitimize other Jews. This finding also reflects an implicit pluralism, assuming as it does the legitimacy of a variety of views or at the very least a willingness not to take disputes over legitimacy public. At the same time, it also reflects a fundamental Jewish solidarity. Not only do they discourage delegitimizing other rabbis; they also agree that being a rabbi had made them feel closer to Jews of *all* movements.

Perhaps the most dramatic reflection of intra-Jewish pluralism, however, is in the rabbis' responses to the question of which Jews they believed best assure the continuity of the Jewish people. Here, the Orthodox rabbis distinguished themselves strikingly from all the others. While a majority of the non-Orthodox rabbis (though in varying proportions) felt that no single denomination best assured the continuity of the Jewish people -- a most pluralist point of view -- over two-thirds of the Orthodox rabbis said they thought that Orthodox Jews best assure that continuity. Moreover, when asked how they felt about the idea of "a single authentic Jew," majorities of all the rabbis agreed there was no such thing -- although again the Orthodox agreed by a far smaller majority than all the other rabbinic groups.

Jews and Non-Jews

2.1 In most ways, Jews are no better than non-Jews.

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	5	10	10	10	9	19	5	8
Disagree	54	70	37	17	26	15	25	8
Agree	41	20	43	73	66	66	70	84

This is perhaps the ultimate question of pluralism (table 2.1). To say that in most ways Jews are no better than non-Jews is to oppose the tribal notion of a special and favored people. The idea of a chosen people, a superior people, is, however, deeply ingrained in traditional Judaism and its worldview.

Clearly, the two liberal denominations embraced the pluralist point of view more than the two traditionalist denominations did. Yet the traditionalists were not strongly antipluralist. Even the Orthodox rabbis were divided on the matter. Nevertheless, there were rabbis in all denominations who believed that Jews are indeed better than non-Jews.

On this ultimate question of pluralism, the Orthodox rabbinical students were even more particularistic than their rabbis. On the other hand, the non-Orthodox students showed themselves to be far more pluralistic than their Orthodox peers. Conservative rabbinical students were almost twice as pluralist as the Conservative rabbis. Reform and Reconstructionist rabbinical students generally paralleled their rabbinic counterparts.

**Jewish Unity and Pluralism**

**2.2 Jewish unity is not as important as pluralism.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	59	73	22	25	14	8	11	28
Agree	30	2	69	52	78	84	78	56

Agreement with the proposition that unity is not as important as pluralism constitutes at least a tacit endorsement of pluralism (table 2.2). This is something that the Reform students overwhelmingly were ready to do -- as were their rabbinic counterparts. Similarly, a majority of the other non-Orthodox rabbis were also (though somewhat less so) ready to endorse pluralism over unity. Generally, non-Orthodox rabbis and rabbinical students were more concerned with protecting Jewish pluralism than with Jewish unity. In contrast, almost three-quarters of the Orthodox rabbinical students (a greater proportion even than among the Orthodox rabbis) did not value pluralism over unity.

**Socializing with Jews of Other Denominations**

**2.3 There is no real advantage in mixing and socializing with Jews of movements other than my own.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree strongly	13	--	53	--	60	--	64	--
Disagree	58	60	41	98	36	92	31	96
Agree	13	30	2	2	1	8	3	0
Agree strongly	8	--	2	--	2	--	3	--
Not sure	--	10	--	0	--	0	--	4

The argument has often been made that American Jews are sectarian and that the divisions among Jews that people worry might come about in the future already exist. As table 2.3 demonstrates, while there may be denominational divisions among these rabbis, a majority disagreed with the proposition that there is no real advantage in interdenominational mixing. While this is admittedly a rather weak way of affirming the benefit of such association, it at the very least indicates the absence of strong hostility to the idea of intermixing.

Yet while majorities in all denominations did not see disadvantages in intermixing, if we look at those who "strongly disagreed" with the proposition, we get a somewhat different picture. Yes, the Orthodox were for mixing, or at least did not see any disadvantage in it, but they were not for it with the same degree of enthusiasm as the other rabbis. Indeed, they were the only group with a significant minority (almost a quarter) who agreed in some way with the proposition.

The students here took positions almost identical with those of the rabbis. The majority thought there was some advantage in mixing with denominations other than their own. However, the majority was smallest among the Orthodox -- as was the case with the rabbis.

**Where Attitudes Were Formed**

<b>2.4 Where have your attitudes toward Jews of other denominations been primarily formed?</b>	<b>ORTHODX</b>		<b>CONSERV</b>		<b>REFORM</b>		<b>RECONST</b>	
	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>
Rabbinical school	12	8	13	96	15	9	4	
On the job	46	--	51	--	57	--	42	--
Before rabbinical school	35	--	27	--	29	--	39	--
Don't know	7	--	10	--	9	--	9	--

As table 2.4 makes clear, the largest single group of rabbis of all denominations claimed that their attitudes toward Jews of other denominations had been primarily formed "on the job." The second largest group in each denomination responded that these attitudes were formed in their early years, before rabbinical school. Very few of the rabbis -- or of the students -- believed that these attitudes were formed in rabbinical school. Hence, if changes are to be made in these attitudes, rabbinical schools may not be the best place to make them.

**Rabbinical Training and Pluralism**

<b>2.5 Commitment to Jewish pluralism was increased during rabbinical training.</b>	<b>ORTHODX</b>		<b>CONSERV</b>		<b>REFORM</b>		<b>RECONST</b>	
	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>	<i>Rab</i>	<i>Stu</i>
Disagree	56	70	25	17	15	27	18	12
Agree	31	10	65	66	74	69	75	64

Whether or not rabbinical school is the place where pluralism is inculcated, the students -- like the rabbis -- had opinions about the extent to which they had become more committed to pluralism during their time in rabbinical school (table 2.5). Here the perceptions of the students followed the same lines as those of their rabbinic counterparts. Only in the case of the Orthodox were the differences outstanding. While slightly more than half of the Orthodox rabbis did not think their rabbinical-school training committed them to greater pluralism, 70 percent of the Orthodox students did not think their training committed them to greater pluralism.

**Sympathy for Jews of Other Denominations**

By and large, the majority of these rabbis saw themselves as more pluralist -- or "sympathetic" -- to Jews of other movements than they believed the general Jewish population was (table 2.6). In this sense they did not seem to view their attitudes as representative of the lay population.



**2.6 (Rabbis only) Comparing your sympathies toward Jews of other movements with those of the general Jewish population, are you generally**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
More sympathetic	59	--	59	--	59	--	69	--
Less sympathetic	4	--	8	--	5	--	5	--
Just as sympathetic	19	--	23	--	19	--	13	--
Don't know	18	--	10	--	17	--	14	--

**2.7 (Rabbis only) Comparing your sympathies toward Jews of other denominations with those of other rabbis in your movement, are you**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
More sympathetic	48	--	40	--	42	--	45	--
Less sympathetic	8	--	10	--	11	--	8	--
Just as sympathetic	34	--	40	--	36	--	34	--
Don't know	10	--	11	--	11	--	13	--

Many of these rabbis also viewed themselves as slightly more pluralist and sympathetic to Jews of other movements than were other rabbis of their own denomination (table 2.7). And if they are not more sympathetic, they are at the very least *as* sympathetic.

**2.8 (Students only) Comparing your sympathies toward Jews of other denominations with those of teachers in your rabbinical school, are you generally**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
More sympathetic	--	5	--	2	--	8	--	16
Less sympathetic	--	30	--	26	--	19	--	4
Just as sympathetic	--	60	--	40	--	38	--	64
Don't know	--	5	--	32	--	35	--	16

Among the Orthodox students, a majority saw themselves as sympathetic to Jews of other movements as their teachers were, but nearly a third saw themselves as less sympathetic (table 2.8). Among Conservative and Reform students, minorities thought they were in line with their teachers, and almost as many were confused or less sympathetic. This suggests that, of all the seminaries, the Orthodox and Reconstructionist are most in tune with their students.

**2.9 (Students only) Comparing your sympathies toward Jews of other movements with those of your fellow students in rabbinical school, are you generally**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
More sympathetic	--	5	--	6	--	8	--	12
Less sympathetic	--	20	--	32	--	31	--	12
Just as sympathetic	--	63	--	38	--	38	--	60
Don't know	--	12	--	23	--	23	--	16

The replies to this question more or less parallel the previous one (table 2.9). This is in contrast with the rabbis, most of whom -- in all movements -- saw themselves as more sympathetic than their peers. The implication here is that students tend to see themselves as less sympathetic to Jews of other movements than do rabbis when comparing themselves to their rabbinic peers.

**Critics of Israel**

**2.10 Jews who are severely critical of Israel should nevertheless be allowed to speak in synagogues and Jewish community centers.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	38	52	22	15	9	4	3	8
Agree	55	43	71	81	91	92	92	92

Non-Orthodox rabbis and students overwhelmingly supported a free expression of views on the subject of Israel (table 2.10). That is, they took a highly pluralist position. However, the Orthodox were less likely to endorse this point of view, and the Orthodox students least likely.

**Rebuking Other Jews**

**2.11 Jewish leaders should not publicly rebuke or delegitimize other Jews.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	21	45	10	25	20	26	36	52
Agree	73	40	82	68	78	58	61	32

Overwhelmingly, the rabbis believed that Jewish leaders should show unity in public and not delegitimize other Jews (table 2.11). Rabbis apparently don't like public disputes -- even though

they are often the ones who make them.

Only among the Reconstructionists -- a marginal group by most other measures -- do we find over a third who disagreed with this proposition.

Several points jump out at us when we compare the students' responses with those of the rabbis on this question. While large majorities of the rabbis agreed that Jewish leaders should not publicly rebuke or delegitimize other Jews, the students were not nearly as tolerant. A majority of Reconstructionist students favored public rebukes and delegitimations of other Jews -- a very anti-establishment point of view from this newest seminary and movement whose students have been reputed to carry a great many anti-establishment views.

**Feeling Closer**

2.12 Has being a rabbi made you feel closer to Jews of all movements?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Yes	75	35	71	19	67	23	73	48

The responses to this question reveal a difference between students and rabbis (table 2.12). While a majority of the rabbis claimed that being a rabbi had made them feel closer to all Jews of all movements, the students did not feel this. In fact, a majority of the Conservative and Reform students said they did not feel closer as a result of their rabbinical training; the Orthodox were evenly divided on the matter, and only in the case of the Reconstructionists was there a plurality that said they felt closer -- this in spite of the fact that the Reconstructionists also felt readier to publicly rebuke and delegitimize other Jews.

**Assuring Continuity**

2.13 Which of the following Jews do you believe best assure the continuity of the Jewish people?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox	68	88	21	9	18	4	6	4
Conservative	3	0	21	17	5	4	3	0
Reform	3	0	2	0	12	12	3	0
Reconstructionist	0	0	1	0	0	0	11	12
No single denomination	26	12	54	74	64	81	77	84

Pluralism and Orthodoxy appear to be the alternative answers to this question, with more rabbis and students opting for the former than the latter (table 2.13). A majority of the Orthodox believed that their movement best assured Jewish survival, while a majority of the non-Orthodox claimed that "no single denomination" best assured the continuity of the Jewish people. That is, they took a pluralist stance on continuity.

**The Authentic Jew**

**2.14 There is really no such thing as a single authentic Jew.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	40	67	6	0	4	0	4	4
Agree	56	26	94	98	96	99	95	96

The responses here (table 2.14) reaffirm what we have seen in the data from the previous question. The non-Orthodox students, who were pluralist in their attitude about Jewish survival, were also pluralist about their definition of a Jew, admitting there is no single authentic Jew.

However, two-thirds of the Orthodox students disagreed; obviously for them there *is* a single authentic Jew, and it is probably Orthodox. In this the Orthodox students are to be contrasted with their rabbinic counterparts, a majority of whom (though about half as many as non-Orthodox ones) agreed that there was no single authentic Jew.

To sum up then, pluralism and tolerance are alive and well among the rabbis, although they are not quite as robust among the Orthodox as among the others.

### 3. DIVISIONS

That there are divisions among rabbis -- as indeed among Jews in general -- cannot be denied. But what are the lines of fracture and who is responsible for them? Having already seen some of the divisions, I turn now to look at whom the rabbis and rabbinical students hold responsible for these rifts.

#### Responsibility for Divisions

**3.1 Which movement do you consider most responsible for the divisions among Jews?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox	29	2	61	30	67	57	55	48
Conservative	45	33	23	2	28	4	9	0
Reform	70	55	37	15	32	12	8	4

More than any other group, the Orthodox rabbis held the Reform movement responsible for the divisions among Jews (table 3.1). Concomitantly, the Reform by about the same proportion held the Orthodox responsible. In this opinion they were joined (in somewhat smaller numbers) by the Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis. A majority of the rabbis of all the non-Orthodox movements thought the Orthodox most responsible for the divisions among Jews.

On the matter of accepting blame for divisions, the Conservative rabbis thought themselves less to blame than did either the Orthodox or Reform but more so than did the Reconstructionists. Yet in no case did a majority of any of the rabbis single out the Conservatives to be at fault. Obviously, one of the benefits for Conservative Jews of being in an intermediate position is that none of the other groups hold them most to blame for religious rifts.

While a majority of the rabbis were ready to single out the Orthodox as most responsible for divisions, the students seemed reluctant to point a finger at any particular movement. Orthodox students were an exception, pointing primarily at the Reform and secondly at the Conservative movements.

#### Refuse to Recognize

Notwithstanding the fact that a majority of the rabbis agreed that Jewish leaders should not publicly delegitimize other Jews, when asked if they believed that Orthodox rabbis who refused

**3.2 Orthodox rabbis who refuse officially to recognize Reform and Conservative rabbis are right to do so.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Strongly disagree	2	0	44	72	53	65	70	68
Disagree	14	2	22	19	9	31	17	20
Agree	20	15	25	2	33	0	6	0
Strongly agree	57	78	4	2	3	0	4	4

officially to recognize Reform and Conservative rabbis were right to do so, over three-quarters of the Orthodox agreed -- most of them strongly -- while similar majorities of the non-Orthodox rabbis disagreed -- most of them strongly.

The students' responses to this question paralleled the rabbis', except that the numbers were more extreme. While an overwhelming majority of the Orthodox students agreed that the Orthodox rabbis were right to refuse to officially recognize other denominations' rabbis, majorities of the non-Orthodox students disagreed.

#### 4. DIALOGUE

The denominational divisions among Jews have often been seen as something that dialogue could remedy. Among the rabbis, there was far from universal agreement on this point, nor was dialogue always viewed as even desirable. While most of the rabbis did not think dialogue hazardous for Jewish life, about a third (slightly more among the Orthodox) agreed that talk about Jewish unity was dangerous because it highlighted problems rather than solved them. Indeed, the rabbis were even divided on whether dialogue was easier with non-Jews than with Jews.

##### Highlighting Problems

#### 4.1 Talk about Jewish unity is dangerous because it highlights problems rather than solves them.

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	56	73	66	81	61	81	90	88
Agree	40	20	32	8	37	15	8	4

#### 4.2 (Rabbis only) Dialogue with Jews of other movements is dangerous.

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	60	--	76	--	66	--	97	--
Agree	34	--	24	--	34	--	2	--

Majorities of both rabbis and students rejected the idea that talk about Jewish unity was dangerous because it highlighted the problems rather than solved them (table 4.1). This does not mean that they favored dialogue, only that they did not consider it dangerous to Jewish unity. However, the rabbis were far more likely than the students to see risks in dialogue (table 4.2).

##### Converting Others

Other rabbis thought that the Orthodox used dialogue to try to convert them to the Orthodox point of view (table 4.3). On the other hand, no majority among the rabbis believed that the Con-

**4.3 In intrafaith dialogues, Jews from the following movements are primarily interested in converting others to their own points of view. (Agree)**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox	45	53	58	56	73	62	57	48
Conservative	33	33	18	11	14	8	14	12
Reform	26	33	10	10	7	8	6	12

servatives used dialogue to convert others. Indeed, even the Orthodox were less likely to believe this of the Conservatives than they were to believe it of themselves.

The students repeated the pattern of their rabbis. Non-Orthodox students believed that dialogue with the Orthodox would be used by the Orthodox to seek to convert them. As for the Orthodox students, they -- like the Orthodox rabbis -- had a significant minority (a third) who thought that, in dialogue with Reform and Conservative groups, these other groups would try to convert them as well.

**Dialogue with Non-Jews**

**4.4 Dialogue with non-Jews is easier than with Jews.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Agree	41	42	46	55	55	58	47	40

Clearly the rabbis were divided on this question with the Orthodox tending toward disagreement and the Reform toward agreement (table 4.4). The students were about evenly divided.



## 5. FRIENDSHIPS AND CONTACTS

The issues dealt with here have to do with cooperation and integration across movements on the one hand and solidarity and insularity within movements on the other. As the data make clear, all the rabbinic groups tend toward denominational solidarity and insularity. First examined are friendship patterns and then rabbinic contacts. Comparisons are made between professional rabbinic contacts and friendships. The matter of identification is also raised.

### Friendships

5.1 (Rabbls only) Friends who are	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox Jews								
Few or none	10	--	41	--	66	--	61	--
Some	18	--	54	--	34	--	39	--
Most	80	--	5	--	0	--	0	--
Conservative Jews								
Few or none	18	--	2	--	14	--	15	--
Some	79	--	33	--	81	--	67	--
Most	3	--	65	--	6	--	19	--
Reform Jews								
Few or none	51	--	17	--	1	--	22	--
Some	49	--	77	--	27	--	77	--
Most	0	--	5	--	73	--	2	--
Nondenominational Jews								
Few or none	47	--	35	--	37	--	17	--
Some	50	--	59	--	53	--	66	--
Most	3	--	7	--	11	--	17	--
Non-Jews								
Few or none	58	--	53	--	39	--	50	--
Some	40	--	45	--	59	--	50	--
Most	2	--	2	--	3	--	0	--

One of the more striking findings is the evidence that friendship does not cross denominational boundaries (tables 5.1, 5.2). Nevertheless, these rabbis and rabbinical students endorse the idea of friendships with *all* sorts of other Jews, even as they admit that at present the reality of such con-

tacts is limited. Only the Reconstructionists (perhaps owing to the relatively small number of them) did not list their own movement as the source of most of their friends. A majority of the Orthodox reported few or no Reform friends, while most of the liberal rabbis reported having few or no Orthodox friends. Over 40 percent of the Conservative rabbis reported few or no Orthodox friends.

**5.2 Most friends are**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox	80	98	5	2	0	0	0	0
Conservative	3	0	65	79	6	4	19	12
Reform	0	0	5	4	73	65	2	4
Nondenominational	3	0	7	6	11	12	17	20

**Professional Contacts**

**5.3 Much contact with**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox rabbis	85	98	17	9	13	0	6	16
Conservative rabbis	11	5	79	100	38	4	36	28
Reform rabbis	6	0	34	13	88	100	34	20
Reconstructionist rabbis	3	0	14	4	13	4	84	92

Here, too, there is evidence of denominational insularity among both the rabbinical and student groups (table 5.3). All had "much" contact mostly with rabbis from their own movement. Moreover, the figures here are greater than those of their friendships within the movement, suggesting that the professional element (i.e., being a rabbi) intensifies these ties.

**Similarity**

**5.4 Consider myself "very similar" to**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox rabbis	81	85	5	6	1	0	0	0
Conservative rabbis	3	0	73	55	19	8	22	20
Reform rabbis	1	0	9	4	81	77	20	8
Reconstructionist rabbis	1	0	13	0	44	38	89	72
Orthodox lay people	77	60	11	13	3	0	0	0
Conservative lay people	5	0	36	23	27	15	16	16
Reform lay people	5	0	4	4	63	38	13	4
Reconstructionist lay people	5	0	5	2	38	31	59	56

The question of similarity is in essence a question of self-perception and identity. By examining those to whom the various respondents felt "most similar," one discovers with whom they most identified. *The higher the number, the greater was the identification.*

Table 5.4 reveals: (1) The rabbis most identified with other rabbis of their own movement. (2) The Reconstructionists were most solidary in their identification with rabbis of their own movement, Orthodox and Reform rabbis next, and Conservative rabbis last. (3) When asked how similar they were to Jews "in general" or lay people, the rabbis gave their highest rating ("very similar") to lay people of their own movement. However, the degree of identification with the lay people was lower than with the rabbis of one's own movement.

By comparing the percentage of rabbis feeling "very similar" to the lay people in their movement to the percentage feeling "very similar" to other rabbis in their movement, we can obtain a ratio of solidarity or estrangement of the rabbis for this movement:

$$\frac{\text{"very similar" to lay people}}{\text{"very similar" to other rabbis}} = \text{ratio of solidarity/estrangement}$$

A number approaching 1 indicates a high degree of solidarity; a number less than .5 suggests a measure of estrangement.

Employing this formula with the data in table 5.4, we get the following ratios:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Orthodox rabbis: } & 77/81 = .95 \\ \text{Reform rabbis: } & 63/81 = .77 \\ \text{Reconstructionist rabbis: } & 59/89 = .66 \\ \text{Conservative rabbis: } & 36/73 = .49 \end{aligned}$$

Clearly, the Conservative respondents hovered on the border between solidarity and estrangement. This is not surprising since their movement includes the broadest spectrum of Jews. As rabbis who received rigorous traditionalist training, they are often confronted with a laity that does not have nearly as intense a Jewish background or commitment. This leads them to feel estranged from the laity.

Similarly, by comparing the percentage of rabbis "most" of whose friends are in the same movement with the percentage who have "much" contact with other rabbis of that movement, we obtain a ratio of insularity or integration:

$$\frac{\text{most friends}}{\text{much contact}} = \text{ratio of insularity/integration}$$

A number approaching 1 indicates a high degree of insularity; a number less than .5 suggests a measure of integration.

Employing the data from tables 5.2 and 5.3, we get the following ratios:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Orthodox rabbis: } & 80/85 = .94 \\ \text{Reform rabbis: } & 73/88 = .83 \\ \text{Conservative rabbis: } & 65/79 = .82 \\ \text{Reconstructionist rabbis: } & 17/84 = .20 \end{aligned}$$

On measures of both solidarity and insularity, the Orthodox rabbis scored high with the Reform a fairly close second. On the other hand, while Conservative rabbis scored high on insularity, they did not score quite as high on solidarity, suggesting that these rabbis felt estranged from their laity and indeed most others. While no definitive conclusions can be reached about Reconstructionist rabbis because we did not ask about their friendships with Reconstructionist lay people, the figures suggest that they lie somewhere between the Conservative and Reform on the scale, feeling similar to their own rabbinate but not always in great solidarity with the laity.

There is an interesting and significant difference between the students and the rabbis in these areas. The differences between the students' sense of similarity to rabbis of their own movements and their sense of similarity to lay people of their own movements tended to be greater. That is, students were less likely to feel close to the lay people of their movement than were their rabbis. This suggests a kind of separatist attitude on the part of the students -- even vis-a-vis the lay people of their own movement.

**Future Contacts**

5.5 Hope for greater future contact with	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox rabbis	80	95	12	70	16	69	19	68
Conservative rabbis	31	30	67	66	68	85	67	68
Reform rabbis	26	23	61	75	68	54	70	68
Reconstructionist rabbis	21	20	57	66	71	88	73	64
Orthodox lay people	82	98	57	60	59	46	55	64
Conservative lay people	60	65	71	77	65	69	61	72
Reform lay people	56	63	59	55	65	69	66	76
Nondenominational Jews	64	65	61	72	58	61	70	92

*Every group of rabbis wanted more contact with the Orthodox, but the Orthodox wanted more contact only with themselves.* However, significant minorities -- in descending order -- wanted more contact with Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist rabbis.

Every non-Orthodox group wanted increased contact with Conservative rabbis, and Conservative rabbis wanted contact with them -- but to a lesser degree.

Reconstructionist and Reform rabbis wanted more contact with one another in about equal proportions. There was apparently a greater desire on the part of the less traditional/observant to have contact with the more observant than the reverse.

The students' responses paralleled those of their rabbis. Non-Orthodox groups wanted more contact with the Orthodox than the Orthodox wanted with them. In general, there was as much thirst for interdenominational contact by the non-Orthodox students as by their rabbis. Orthodox students were more interested in greater contact with non-Orthodox lay people than with rabbis or rabbinical students from these other movements -- probably with the goal of making these other Jews more Orthodox.

## 6. PERCEPTIONS OF ORTHODOX JEWS

Behind all these opinions about unity, diversity, pluralism, friendship, similarity, and contact there are varying perceptions that the rabbis have of their own and other denominations.

Respondents were asked which of a series of adjectives accurately characterized each of the movements. The adjectives were: narrow-minded, intolerant, principled, pragmatic, inconsistent, religiously committed, permissive, liberal, assimilationist, compassionate, progressive, revolutionary, heretical, and isolationist. These adjectives had come up in the open-ended interviews. They did not, however, mean the same thing to all the respondents. Thus being "pragmatic" was positive as far as the Orthodox were concerned only when this was attributed to the Orthodox movement. In all other cases, it was viewed as a negative characteristic. To Conservatives, "progressive" and "liberal" were negative characteristics, while the Reform perceived them as positive, except in the case of the Orthodox, for whom they recognized these attributes as negative. In this, the Reform respondents were like the Reconstructionists.

Of all the movements, the responses from the Orthodox were most uniform and consistent. Least uniform and consistent, and not always clearly differentiated from one another, were the Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis.

### Characterizing Orthodoxy

While a majority of non-Orthodox rabbis thought that Orthodox Judaism was (in descending order of agreement) not revolutionary, not liberal, not assimilationist, not permissive, religiously committed, not progressive, not heretical, isolationist, principled, intolerant and inconsistent, the Orthodox rabbis and students saw Orthodoxy differently (table 6.1). For them it was above all religiously committed, not assimilationist, and not heretical. Moreover, far more of the Orthodox saw their form of Judaism as principled, and nearly as many saw it as compassionate -- a characteristic that only a small minority of the non-Orthodox were willing to grant it. Finally, while majorities of the other groups saw it as isolationist, intolerant, and inconsistent, less than 15 percent of the Orthodox saw it that way. Clearly, there was a difference in perceptions here, one that could account for tensions and strains.

**6.1 The following adjectives accurately characterize Orthodox Judaism.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Narrow-minded	9	5	61	55	57	50	48	48
Intolerant	14	8	65	62	68	73	58	60
Principled	89	93	63	74	69	69	70	72
Pragmatic	46	68	34	30	28	12	27	24
Inconsistent	12	18	54	43	51	65	53	40
Religiously committed	98	88	84	89	87	81	89	84
Permissive	4	8	3	2	2	12	3	0
Liberal	12	13	3	0	1	0	2	0
Assimilationist	2	10	2	2	2	8	5	0
Compassionate	88	80	31	19	20	31	19	40
Progressive	44	38	5	2	2	8	6	4
Revolutionary	10	0	4	2	3	0	0	0
Heretical	2	0	8	4	5	4	5	8
Isolationist	13	18	71	62	67	81	67	56

**An Authentic Jewish Life**

**6.2 Orthodox Jews are the only ones who lead an authentic Jewish life.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	10	5	95	98	95	100	100	100
Agree	88	95	4	2	4	0	0	0

In spite of the fact that -- as was noted earlier -- a majority of all the rabbis (including the Orthodox) agreed there was no such thing as a single authentic Jew, the Orthodox were overwhelmingly certain that they were the only ones who led an authentic Jewish life (table 6.2). Their non-Orthodox counterparts did not agree.

**6.3 Most American Jews think Orthodox Jews are the only ones who lead an authentic Jewish life.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	34	61	51	45	66	57	51	60
Agree	45	33	42	53	28	31	41	28

While a majority of the rabbis and students disagreed that only the Orthodox lead authentic Jewish lives, significant minorities thought that the laity believed in Orthodox authenticity (table 6.3).

**Recognizing Reform**

6.4 (Rabbis only) The Orthodox will never recognize the religious legitimacy or authority of the Reform movement.	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
	Disagree	0	--	16	--	25	--	24
Agree	99	--	76	--	65	--	57	--

Almost all the Orthodox rabbis agreed (and most of them strongly) that they would never recognize the legitimacy or authority of the Reform movement -- the same movement they held responsible for most of the divisions among Jewry (table 6.4). A majority of the non-Orthodox rabbis agreed, although there were some optimistic minorities.

**Recognizing Conservatism**

6.5 (Rabbis only) The Orthodox will never recognize the religious legitimacy or authority of the Conservative movement.	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
	Disagree	8	--	23	--	24	--	28
Agree	89	--	62	--	63	--	44	--

Orthodox rabbis overwhelmingly agreed that they would never recognize the legitimacy or authority of Conservative rabbis (table 6.5). Far too few diverged from this opinion to constitute an influential minority. Again, a majority of the non-Orthodox rabbis agreed -- with the exception of the Reconstructionists, who view themselves as an offshoot of Conservative Judaism, which they found "too Orthodox."

**Domination**

Table 6.6 suggests that many Orthodox rabbis and students have a sense of being dominated by elements they are not altogether in tune with. The non-Orthodox see Orthodoxy overwhelmingly in these terms.

From the perspectives of all the respondents, the Orthodox are a denomination set apart from the others, and a rapprochement seems unlikely. The Orthodox themselves agree with this view, as much or more than the other groups. Nevertheless, the non-Orthodox still were prepared to have

**6.6 The Orthodox are generally dominated by their intolerant and isolationist wing.**

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	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	53	78	24	21	23	39	26	32
Agree	41	16	71	71	71	35	58	44

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greater ties with the Orthodox, above all other groups. Thus, the breach -- such as it is -- is not absolute or final.



7. PERCEPTIONS OF CONSERVATIVE JEWS

Characterizing Conservatism

7.1 The following adjectives accurately characterize Conservative Judaism:

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Narrow-minded	12	23	3	11	9	0	22	36
Intolerant	24	33	5	11	7	8	27	20
Principled	5	15	60	68	60	38	34	40
Pragmatic	73	45	78	66	74	58	61	56
Inconsistent	81	98	78	85	77	92	84	80
Religiously committed	19	10	62	79	79	81	61	60
Permissive	81	85	59	66	31	31	25	24
Liberal	74	85	74	70	37	23	28	28
Assimilationist	36	65	14	23	8	19	11	8
Compassionate	63	58	85	75	68	54	42	56
Progressive	42	50	71	83	48	27	30	36
Revolutionary	36	40	8	15	2	0	5	0
Heretical	46	70	3	4	0	0	0	0
Isolationist	6	8	2	0	4	8	5	4

Both the rabbinical and student respondents expressed a generally positive view of Conservative Jews and Judaism (table 7.1). Among the non-Orthodox rabbis, majorities ranging from 96 down to 71 percent saw Conservative Jews and Judaism as not heretical, not isolationist, not revolutionary, religiously committed, inconsistent, not assimilationist, not narrow minded, not intolerant, and pragmatic. To these attributes, the Conservative rabbis themselves added compassionate (85 percent), liberal (74 percent), progressive (71 percent), principled (60 percent), and permissive (59 percent).

Too Ready to Compromise

There were essentially three possible responses to this question: agreement, ambivalence, and disagreement (table 7.2). The Orthodox rabbis were almost universally in agreement, most of them fervently so ("strongly" agreed). Majorities of the Reform and Reconstructionist disagreed, the latter most fervently. Finally, the Conservatives themselves were ambivalent, a slight majority disagreeing but a large minority agreeing.

**7.2 The Conservatives are too ready to compromise Jewish principles to accommodate to secular society; they should remain more strictly attached to Jewish law and tradition.**

Disagree  
Agree

---

ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
2	10	51	55	63	81	91	88
97	85	45	43	30	4	3	8

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8. PERCEPTIONS OF REFORM JEWS

Characterizing Reform

8.1 The following adjectives accurately characterize Reform Judaism:

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Narrow-minded	38	33	12	17	3	4	9	20
Intolerant	50	38	13	19	3	8	9	24
Principled	9	3	54	57	77	65	55	60
Pragmatic	73	48	79	81	90	81	81	72
Inconsistent	66	93	61	57	58	50	64	64
Religiously committed	12	0	36	34	71	65	45	44
Permissive	88	93	94	87	86	88	88	80
Liberal	87	95	98	94	96	96	97	88
Assimilationist	84	98	57	62	19	35	48	52
Compassionate	51	48	86	89	91	81	81	80
Progressive	48	50	82	94	96	88	86	76
Revolutionary	55	63	37	49	36	35	20	32
Heretical	79	85	22	13	4	0	3	8
Isolationist	17	18	12	4	4	8	8	12

Majorities of all rabbinic groups agreed that Reform Jews and Judaism are liberal, permissive, not isolationist, pragmatic, compassionate, and inconsistent (table 8.1). Of the terms that a majority of the Reform rabbis applied to their own movement, one finds one that no other majority agreed to: religiously committed. Clearly the Reform, no less than the Orthodox, have a view of themselves that is at odds with the views that others have of them.

Minimal Observance

A majority of the traditionalist rabbis agreed while a majority of the liberal rabbis disagreed with the proposition that Reform Judaism is basically a Judaism of minimal Jewish observance and involvement (table 8.2). That the Orthodox agreed to this in greater numbers than any other group should of course come as no surprise.

What is noteworthy, however, is the extent to which the Reform rabbis were conflicted and

ambivalent; while 57 percent disagreed, 43 percent agreed with the proposition. Among the Reform rabbinical students, there was far greater support for Reform as an expression of more than minimal observance and involvement.

**8.2 Reform Judaism is basically a Judaism of minimal Jewish observance and involvement.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	2	5	37	43	57	92	69	72
Agree	96	95	62	46	43	3	26	28

**Ready to Compromise**

**8.3 Some of the Reform movement are too ready to compromise principles for the sake of Jewish unity.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	27	45	28	53	5	19	17	56
Disagree	48	20	52	36	48	43	50	36
Agree	24	35	20	10	49	39	43	8

All the groups were unsure about this matter (table 8.3). Their uncertainty is exhibited not only in the relatively high percentages who were "not sure" but in the fact that no clear majorities chose to either agree or disagree with the statement. Among the Reform themselves there were the same number agreeing and disagreeing.

**The Liberal Wing**

**8.4 The Reform are generally ruled by their most liberal wing.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	38	38	25	45	3	19	30	40
Disagree	12	13	40	34	76	54	58	48
Agree	50	50	34	21	21	27	13	12

Asked if they believed that the Reform movement was generally ruled by its liberal wing, the non-Reform rabbis appeared uncertain (table 8.4). While half the Orthodox rabbis tended to agree that this was the case, the other half either disagreed or were not sure. Among the Conservatives, the numbers shifted slightly in the other direction. Even the Reconstructionists, a majority of whom disagreed with this proposition, had nearly a third who were not sure.

As for the Reform rabbis themselves, three quarters were clearly in disagreement. Here again, the Reform perception of themselves was not consistent with the perception that others had of them.

**Performing Conversions**

**8.5 Reform rabbis are often too quick to perform conversions to Judaism.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	--	3	--	28	--	19	--	28
Strongly disagree	0	--	7	--	34	--	20	--
Disagree	0	10	26	23	45	69	38	48
Agree	30	88	34	49	14	12	23	24
Strongly agree	64	--	24	--	6	--	0	--

Repeatedly in interviews, non-Reform rabbis, particularly those of the traditionalist movements, identified the Reform rabbis' readiness to perform conversions to Judaism as a major point of division. Of the respondents to the questionnaire, the largest majority agreeing with this perception came from among the Orthodox, but more than half of the Conservative rabbis also agreed (table 8.5). As one might expect, most of the liberal rabbis took an opposing point of view, suggesting that the matter of conversion does constitute a dividing line among the rabbis. Interestingly, a fifth of the Reform rabbis thought their own movement too quick to perform conversions to Judaism.

## 9. PERCEPTIONS OF RECONSTRUCTIONIST JEWS

The group in this survey most difficult to describe is the Reconstructionist rabbis. As one prominent rabbi of the movement put it during a conversation: "Reconstructionism is a movement in search of an ideology." Whether or not this is in fact the case, many of its own rabbis perceive this to be true (as do many rabbis of other movements). Moreover, most of the rabbis in this survey who characterized themselves as Reconstructionist were raised in other movements, the largest segment of them as Conservatives. Indeed, as already noted, analysis of their responses indicates that Reconstructionist rabbis in this sample were the least uniform and consistent of the groups, sometimes acting like Conservative rabbis and sometimes acting more liberal than Reform.

### 9.1 The following adjectives accurately characterize Reconstructionist Judaism:

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Narrow-minded	12	25	7	9	1	0	3	0
Intolerant	31	25	10	6	2	0	6	0
Principled	17	8	54	53	71	69	91	84
Pragmatic	56	30	79	55	76	62	84	76
Inconsistent	58	73	63	47	46	42	55	56
Religiously committed	14	5	49	49	71	77	73	92
Permissive	80	78	89	81	70	69	75	76
Liberal	71	85	92	85	84	85	94	92
Assimilationist	63	73	35	28	10	15	11	8
Compassionate	38	30	86	77	79	70	88	88
Progressive	48	48	86	81	85	92	100	92
Revolutionary	58	68	57	62	35	46	61	64
Heretical	70	78	30	24	8	8	8	4
Isolationist	13	18	7	9	2	0	3	8

Of the list of characterizations, majorities of all the groups agreed that Reconstructionist Jews and Judaism were liberal, not isolationist, permissive and pragmatic (table 9.1). Removing the Orthodox respondents from the mix, we find a far longer list of generally perceived characteristics which the Reconstructionist rabbis themselves endorsed.

10. ATTITUDES TOWARD NON-JEWS

Contact with Non-Jews

10.1 Ideally, one ought not to have any contact with non-Jews.

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	65	63	74	100	64	92	100	100
Agree	33	28	26	0	35	8	0	0

Asked how they felt about the proposition that "ideally, one ought not to have any contact with non-Jews," majorities of all the rabbis disagreed (table 10.1). However, a closer look at the responses reveals important qualifications to this general attitude. Between a quarter and a third of the rabbis of the three major denominations endorsed an isolationist, almost tribalist stance (under ideal conditions). The responses of the students differ from those of the rabbis in the absence -- in all except the Orthodox -- of minorities endorsing a separatist stance.

Contact with Other Clergy

10.2 How much ongoing contact do you have with clergy of other religions?

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Little or none	68	90	32	64	16	38	30	72
Some	26	10	46	34	49	58	48	12
Much	5	0	23	2	36	4	22	16

Most of the Orthodox reported little or no ongoing contact with non-Jewish clergy, while for the other groups the most common response was "some" (table 10.2). Interreligious contact seemed to be the province of the non-Orthodox rabbinate.

Non-Jewish Friends

Half or more of all the rabbinic groups except the Reform reported few or no non-Jewish friends (table 10.3). In spite of the non-Orthodox rabbis' endorsement of an ideal of contact with

non-Jews, they did not in fact have friendship patterns that differed from those of the Orthodox.

**10.3 How many of your friends are non-Jews?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
None	11	43	8	9	4	4	5	0
Few	47	48	45	55	35	31	45	40
Some	40	10	45	34	59	62	50	56
Most	2	0	2	2	3	4	0	4

Among the students, the Orthodox claimed even fewer non-Jewish friends than did the Orthodox rabbis.

**More Contact with Non-Jews**

**10.4 Would you like to have more contact with non-Jews?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	39	15	18	19	19	23	19	4
No	36	55	35	13	28	23	23	24
Yes	24	30	47	68	53	54	58	72

About twice as many non-Orthodox as Orthodox rabbis and students said they wanted more contacts with non-Jews (table 10.4). The difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox on this point was primarily one of attitude rather than of present reality.

**Intermarriage**

**10.5 During the coming century, will fewer marriages in your denomination occur with non-Jews?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Yes	69	78	19	21	20	15	--	--

Most Orthodox rabbis felt that intermarriages involving members of their denomination would decline in the future (table 10.5). Conservative and Reform rabbis believed otherwise. As one Conservative rabbi put it, "Our people will have more and more non-Jewish relatives in the years ahead."



**Feeling Close**

Overwhelmingly, all these rabbis and students evinced a stronger feeling of closeness to Jews over non-Jews (table 10.6). On the basis of those who "strongly agreed" with the survey statement, the Orthodox were the most fervently tribal, the Reconstructionists the least.

**10.6 Despite all divisions,  
I feel closer to Jews  
than non-Jews.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	3	3	3	6	2	8	3	12
Agree	5	95	18	88	29	85	31	84
Strongly agree	91	--	78	--	68	--	61	--

## 11. HALAKHAH AND MODERN LIFE

Traditionalist and liberal rabbis are ideologically divided over the matter of halakhah (Jewish law). Nominally, the Orthodox accept all halakhah as binding; Conservatives see it as binding but subject to change based upon consensus and contemporary practice; Reform Jews deny the validity of halakhah, seeing it as the husk rather than the kernel of Judaism; and Reconstructionists consider halakhah as a good idea but one that needs a total reconstruction resulting in a new set of legal structures based upon contemporary social and cultural realities. To what extent do these ideological distinctions display themselves in the results of this study?

### Compromising Halakhah

#### 11.1 Halakhah must sometimes be compromised to preserve the Jewish people.

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	55	70	15	47	6	4	5	12
Agree	38	23	82	43	89	88	93	84

More than any other group, the Orthodox support the idea of halakhic inviolability (table 11.1). This sets them apart from all the other groups, who are overwhelmingly ready to make compromises. And yet over a third of the Orthodox rabbis were ready to make halakhic compromises.

Although the Reform and Reconstructionist students echoed their rabbis, the traditionalists (Orthodox and Conservative) were more distinctive. The Orthodox students were far less willing to compromise halakhah than even their rabbis. Among the Conservative students, the proportion willing to compromise halakhah was half that of the Conservative rabbis.

### Ignoring Halakhah

#### 11.2 Halakhah must sometimes be ignored for the sake of Jewish unity.

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	86	88	44	79	22	23	20	16
Agree	8	8	46	9	65	58	65	76

Presented with the proposition that halakhah must sometimes be ignored for the sake of Jewish unity, the Orthodox disagreed and the liberal rabbinate overwhelmingly agreed (table 11.2). The Conservative rabbis, however, were perfectly divided. Their attitude toward halakhah is one of the most ambiguous elements of their Judaism.

All the students except the Conservatives echoed the responses of their rabbis. The attitude of the Conservative students probably reflects the fact that they were living a far more traditional Jewish life in the seminary than they would encounter when they left that environment. It also suggests that -- at least with reference to Jewish law -- Conservative rabbinical students think that considerations of Jewish unity are not paramount.

#### The Middle Road

**11.3 In Jewish observance, the middle road is the best.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	11	12	15	30	25	23	25	20
Disagree	56	48	29	40	45	58	44	72
Agree	32	40	56	30	30	19	31	8

A majority of the Orthodox rabbis disagreed with the proposition that "the middle road" in Jewish observance was best, while a majority of the Conservative rabbis -- who in a sense more than any other group hold the middle road -- agreed (table 11.3). Both Orthodox and Conservative students were more evenly divided on this question than their rabbis. On the other hand, the Reform and Reconstructionist students took stands more extreme than those of their rabbis. Most noteworthy are the significant minorities of students who were simply not sure how moderate or flexible they must be.

#### Adapting to Contemporary Reality

**11.4 There's nothing in Judaism that cannot be adapted to contemporary reality.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	28	35	29	52	20	42	23	36
Agree	71	55	69	42	76	38	69	54

Clear majorities of all the rabbis agreed that Judaism was adaptable to contemporary realities (table 11.4). The students were less sure.

#### Religious Values in Modern Society

Nearly all the rabbis saw working and living in modern society and culture as endowed with special religious meaning and value to them (table 11.5). The students generally followed their rabbis here, but with less agreement to the proposition.

**11.5 Living and working with-  
in modern society and  
culture has special  
religious meaning and  
value to me.**

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	<u>ORTHODX</u>		<u>CONSERV</u>		<u>REFORM</u>		<u>RECONST</u>	
	<u>Rab</u>	<u>Stu</u>	<u>Rab</u>	<u>Stu</u>	<u>Rab</u>	<u>Stu</u>	<u>Rab</u>	<u>Stu</u>
Disagree	14	38	13	11	5	12	6	20
Agree	81	53	84	75	92	76	80	72

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## 12. BELIEF IN GOD

What could be more basic to rabbis than belief in God? Do they all believe, and with the same fervency? Or is this a matter which separates -- if not divides -- them?

12.1 Would you say that God exists?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	<i>Stu</i>	Rab	<i>Stu</i>	Rab	<i>Stu</i>	Rab	<i>Stu</i>
Yes	98	100	94	92	93	89	80	84

While the rabbis and students overwhelmingly claimed to believe in God, the majorities were largest among the Orthodox, smallest among the Reconstructionists (table 12.1).

### 13. DIVORCE AND ILLEGITIMACY

#### Divorce

Among the most potentially divisive halakhic issues confronting the Jewish people in general and rabbis in particular is that of Jewish divorce and remarriage. According to halakhah, a valid Jewish marriage is not dissolved until the husband gives his wife a *get* or Jewish bill of divorce. Without a *get*, any subsequent remarriage would be adulterous and any offspring would be illegitimate, *mamzerim*, not allowed to wed other Jews. Thus widespread failure to secure *gittin* has the potential of creating two classes of Jews: those who can get married to other Jews and those who cannot.

**13.1 Do you believe a *get* is absolutely indispensable to a divorce?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
No opinion/Not sure	0	0	6	6	9	19	16	24
No	1	2	10	6	84	65	36	24
Yes	99	98	85	87	7	15	48	52

Nearly all the traditionalist rabbis believed that a *get* is absolutely indispensable to a divorce, while only a handful of Reform rabbis thought so (table 13.1). The Reconstructionists were divided.

#### Illegitimacy

**13.2 Would you consider as *mamzerim* the children of a second marriage whose mother's first marriage was dissolved without a *get*?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Yes	60	83	25	30	17	4	5	8
Maybe	6	0	10	9	7	4	5	4
No	28	3	44	23	68	88	78	72
Don't know	3	8	3	4	2	0	2	12
Would avoid the issue	3	7	17	34	6	4	11	4

Most Orthodox rabbis agreed that they would consider such children illegitimate, although more than a quarter said they would not (table 13.2). This latter number can be explained in two ways. First, since being a *mamzer* is so onerous a personal status (in effect, being ostracized for an act committed by one's parents), many rabbis, including Orthodox ones, are reluctant to label anyone as such without careful scrutiny of the circumstances of the first marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Second, these rabbis may be supposing that divorces that take place without a *get* are divorces of non-Orthodox Jews. In a now-famous decision, the late rabbi and widely respected adjudicator Moshe Feinstein declared that all non-Orthodox marriages -- that is, marriages in which the two formal witnesses to the marriage contract were not fully observant Jews -- are not legally binding according to halakhah. Accordingly, he reasoned, a *get* is not needed to dissolve such unions. In Jewish law, offspring born of unwed couples do not have the status of *mamzerim*. While many saw Feinstein's decision casting aspersions on the legitimacy of non-Orthodox rabbis and marriages, it was in effect an ingenious decision which enabled Orthodox Jews to continue to intermarry with most non-Orthodox Jews who were the offspring of second marriages.

While majorities of both the Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis did not consider such offspring *mamzerim*, the Conservative rabbis were equivocal. A larger proportion than in any other group said they would avoid the issue. This is even more strikingly noticeable in the replies of the Conservative rabbinical students.

## 14. CONVERSION

14.1 An authentic convert is one	Method of Conversion							
	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Converted by an Orthodox <i>beit din</i>	99	93	97	100	97	92	97	100
Converted by any halakhic <i>beit din</i>	26	30	97	100	98	92	98	100
Converted in a nonhalakhic ceremony	1	0	18	4	89	73	69	64
Committed to a Jewish life	1	0	8	1	28	--	19	--

Perhaps no matter of personal status has more charged the atmosphere among Jews than the deceptively simple question of who is a Jew. While all the rabbis and rabbinical students agreed with the halakhic definition that a person born of a Jewish mother is a Jew, there were differences about the status of converts to Judaism. Rabbis and students judged the authenticity of a conversion variously, depending upon whether the convert (1) was converted by an Orthodox *beit din* (Jewish court of law), (2) was converted by any halakhic *beit din*, Orthodox or not, (3) was converted through some formal ceremony but not on the basis of halakhah, or (4) had expressed a commitment to a Jewish way of life and a shared destiny with Jews, had lived actively as a Jew for many years, but had not undergone a formal conversion ceremony.

While almost all the rabbis accepted the authenticity of an Orthodox conversion, only a quarter of the Orthodox rabbis would accept the authenticity of even a halakhic conversion that was not conducted under Orthodox supervision (table 14.1). Almost none of the Orthodox rabbis and few of the Conservative would accept any kind of nonhalakhic conversion.

### Requirements for Conversion

The requirements for conversion were not perceived to be the same across all denominations (table 14.2). Among the Orthodox, large majorities regarded all the elements listed in the table as essential. The Conservatives agreed on all these points -- except Orthodox supervision. While almost all the rabbis and students testified to their own belief in God, many -- particularly among the Reform and Reconstructionists -- did not regard such belief as a requirement for conversion.



14.2 The following are requirements for conversion:	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Circumcision	99	98	95	94	35	35	67	60
Ritual bath	100	98	95	98	27	38	78	76
Commitment to commandments	97	98	82	91	66	62	47	56
Period of Jewish study	84	75	92	96	90	100	97	96
Faith in God	95	93	80	60	68	50	33	20
Supervision by Orthodox rabbi	89	90	3	6	3	0	0	0
Interest in religion	89	88	79	81	86	85	65	68

#### Performing Conversions

14.3 (Rabbis only) Have you performed a conversion to Judaism?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Yes	79	--	94	--	98	--	89	--

Most of the rabbis had performed conversions (table 14.3). The large proportion of Reform rabbis who had done so suggests a serious problem about the acceptability of the numerous Reform converts to the traditionalist denominations.

#### Identifying with Converts

14.4 I don't feel as much of a sense of identity with converts as with born Jews.	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	63	83	63	86	63	76	81	72
Agree	35	13	35	9	36	15	19	24

In the three principal denominations, about two-thirds of the rabbis claimed to identify with converts as with born Jews while about a third did not (table 14.4). The Reconstructionists professed an even greater degree of identification.

#### Converts in the Family

For all the differences among the rabbis on conversion procedures, when it came to bringing converts into their own families even the liberal rabbis showed a marked preference for those converted under the more traditional standards (table 14.5).

**14.5 I would approve my  
son's marrying a**

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	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Reform convert	28	0	60	32	77	96	83	92
Conservative convert	36	0	89	94	84	96	89	100
Orthodox convert	86	73	94	98	92	77	88	92

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## 15. PATRILINEALITY

In the last few years no other personal-status issue has divided rabbis more than the decision by the Reform and Reconstructionist movements to include in their definition of a Jew one whose mother is a non-Jew but whose father is a Jew. To be sure, this "patrilineal" definition of a Jew includes the requirements that the subject desire to be included in the Jewish people and that he or she actively participate in Jewish life. To what extent was this definition of a Jew accepted by the rabbis in this survey?

Asking the question in a number of different ways, especially because the term "patrilineal Jew" is not always universally understood, the survey revealed that not only are there undeniable divergences in the degree of acceptance of this definition among the various movements, but even within those movements that have officially accepted the definition there are significant minorities who, if not disagreeing with the majority point of view, are at the very least unsure about it.

### A Jewish Father

15.1 Is the child of a Jewish father and non- Jewish mother a Jew?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	1	0	7	17	26	35	31	24
No	97	100	84	83	7	8	14	32
Yes	2	0	9	0	67	58	55	44

The line was drawn between the traditionalists and the liberals (table 15.1) Yet, while a majority of the liberal rabbis said they would accept a patrilineal Jew, over a third of Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis could not bring themselves to unequivocally endorse this stance. The large number of "not sure" responses cannot fail to impress. The patrilineal definition was even less popular among Reform and Reconstructionist students than among their rabbis.

### Favor or Oppose?

Perhaps the failure of the Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis to wholeheartedly endorse this definition was due to their reluctance to give blanket approval without the requisite declarations of Jewish commitment and evidence of active participation in Jewish life that are formally part of the patrilineal definition. Yet when asked outright if they "favor or oppose the patrilineal definition of the Jew," nearly a third of the Reform rabbis said plainly that they opposed it and about the same proportion of the Reconstructionists said either that they opposed it or that they were unsure

**15.2 Do you favor or oppose the patrilineal definition of a Jew?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	11	10	10	15	7	38	20	12
Oppose	70	85	63	83	32	4	17	36
Favor	19	5	27	2	61	58	63	52

(table 15.2). On the other hand, significant minorities among the Orthodox and Conservative rabbis either favored the definition or were unsure. In interviews, some rabbis expressed a desire to find ways to accept those children of mixed marriages who had made their ways into Jewish community life on the assumption that they were Jews.

**Jewish Survival**

**15.3 Patrilineality helps Jewish survival.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	0	2	6	9	11	23	17	16
Strongly disagree	85	93	46	51	1	0	5	8
Disagree	12	5	37	34	4	12	16	16
Agree	1	4	8	4	39	42	30	32
Strongly agree	2	2	3	2	45	23	33	28

On the proposition that patrilineality helps Jewish survival, the traditionalist rabbis disagreed while the liberals in the main agreed (table 15.3), suggesting that the debate over patrilineality is moved by a concern over Jewish survival.

**A Divisive Act**

**15.4 The patrilineal decision is one of the most divisive acts in contemporary Jewish life.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	6	8	18	13	44	54	54	52
Agree	93	85	81	81	52	23	41	40

It is not surprising that Orthodox and Conservative rabbis found the patrilineal decision divisive (table 15.4). What is surprising is that a majority (albeit slim) of Reform rabbis, whose movement took the initiative on this issue, also found it divisive. How the Reform rabbis can reconcile their views that patrilineality contributes to Jewish survival and that it is also divisive is a puzzle. The fact that significant proportions of the Conservatives disagreed (but not strongly) and of the Reform and Reconstructionist agreed (but not strongly) suggests the possibility of movement on this issue.

**Similarity**

**15.5 How similar do you think you are to patrilineal Jews?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Hardly or not similar	92	88	75	68	23	24	23	28
Somewhat or very similar	2	3	11	11	57	50	58	48

Large majorities of the traditionalist rabbis did not identify with patrilineal Jews, the Orthodox distancing themselves more than the Conservatives (table 15.5). Much smaller majorities of the liberal rabbis did identify with these Jews, but the fervency of their identification ("very similar") was far weaker than the fervency of the distancing ("not similar") of the traditionalist rabbis. This suggests that while patrilineal Jews have acquired legitimacy among the liberal rabbis -- of that there seems little doubt -- their acceptance is not ardent.

**Marriage**

**15.6 Would you approve your son's marriage to a patrilineal Jew?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	2	7	7	17	9	15	11	20
No	76	93	59	75	25	4	14	12
Yes	22	0	34	9	66	81	75	68

On the question of marriage, patrilineality again divided the traditionalist and liberal denominations, although in both cases there were similar minorities that took opposite views (table 15.6). The numbers hint at a greater leniency here than on the definitional question -- at least insofar as the Orthodox and Conservatives are concerned. But perhaps that leniency only reflected the rabbis' unspoken calculations that the prospective patrilineal family member would undergo an appropriate conversion.

16. MARRIAGE

Marriage is one way in which groups integrate with one another. Conversely, marriage prohibition indicates a group's unwillingness to mix with another.

16.1 I would approve my son's marrying a(n):	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Orthodox Jew	99	95	95	94	94	65	89	88
Conservative Jew	62	15	97	94	92	96	94	100
Reconstructionist Jew	49	8	91	94	88	96	94	100
Reform Jew	48	8	91	94	87	96	94	96
Patrilineal Jew	22	0	34	9	66	81	75	68
Reform convert	28	0	60	32	77	96	83	92
Conservative convert	36	0	89	94	84	96	89	100
Orthodox convert	86	73	94	98	93	78	88	92
Hasid	82	78	66	53	56	35	56	68

Asked if they would approve a son's marriage to someone of the same or different Jewish background, all the rabbis except the Reform gave the highest favorable rating (most saying yes) to a spouse from the respondent's own movement (table 16.1). Surprisingly, among the Reform rabbis the spouse with the highest favorable rating was Orthodox. In fact, the Reform rabbis gave higher approval ratings to Orthodox converts, Conservative Jews, and Reconstructionist Jews than to Reform Jews. Barely two-thirds approved marriage to a patrilineal Jew.

While all the rabbis approved their sons' marrying Orthodox Jews, the Orthodox rabbis were not ready to reciprocate. Indeed, Orthodox rabbis were more ready to have a son marry an Orthodox convert than they were to have him marry a Jew from any other movement. In sharp contrast to this attitude, all the non-Orthodox rabbis were quite prepared to have their sons marry children from any of the other Jewish movements. While generally converts who entered via one's own movement were deemed acceptable for marriage -- indicating the degree of their legitimacy -- they were less acceptable as spouses than born Jews.

There is clearly a hierarchy of acceptable marriage partners for each of the movements. Calling someone an acceptable marriage partner only if a *majority* of the rabbis of a particular movement approved such a marriage, the following table may be formulated:

<u>Orthodox</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Reform</u>	<u>Reconstructionist</u>
Orth. Jew (99%)	Conserv. Jew (97%)	Orth. Jew (94%)	Reconst. Jew (94%)
Orth. convert (86%)	Orth. Jew (95%)	Orth. convert (93%)	Conserv. Jew (94%)
Hasid (82%)	Orth. convert (94%)	Conserv. Jew (92%)	Reform Jew (94%)
Conserv. Jew (62%)	Reform Jew (91%)	Reconst. Jew (88%)	Orth. Jew (89%)
	Reconst. Jew (91%)	Reform Jew (87%)	Conserv. convert (89%)
	Conserv. convert (89%)	Conserv. convert (84%)	Orth. convert (85%)
	Hasid (66%)	Reform convert (77%)	Reform convert (83%)
	Reform convert (60%)	Patrilineal Jew (66%)	Patrilineal Jew (75%)
		Hasid (56%)	Hasid (56%)

Because rabbis make Judaism a large part of their lives, they naturally would prefer to have their offspring marry those who also make Judaism a large part of their lives -- thus the acceptability of Orthodox Jews as partners and the relatively lower acceptability of converts, particularly converts who entered Judaism under less than the most rigorous standards, and patrilineal Jews. The exception seems to be Hasidim. Perhaps the Hasidim were viewed as too far from the mainstream of Jewish life by all but the Orthodox (who had their own reservations about them) to make them attractive as marriage partners.

The Orthodox students were far more particularist than their rabbis. The Conservative students differed most markedly from their rabbis in their attitude toward Reform converts and patrilineal Jews. The Reform students differed from their rabbis in their hostility to Orthodoxy and their acceptance of patrilineal Jews. The views of the Reconstructionist students closely paralleled those of their rabbis.

17. IDENTITY

An Important Aspect

**17.1 Being a Jew is one of the most important aspects of my life.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Agree	3	0	9	9	10	15	6	8
Strongly agree	96	100	88	91	88	85	92	84

People who choose to be rabbis can be expected to agree that "being a Jew is one of the most important aspects of my life," and indeed all the respondents did (table 17.1). But what distinguishes the rabbis and students of the various movements was the fervency of their agreement. As on all other measures of Jewishness, the Orthodox scored highest.

Political Stance

**17.2 In American politics do you consider yourself:**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Liberal	24	0	44	53	54	88	63	84
Moderate	56	43	45	38	39	12	31	16
Conservative	14	30	10	6	4	0	3	0
Apolitical	6	28	1	2	2	0	3	0

Given that American Jews in general tend to be more liberal than most other religious groups, it is not surprising that only a small minority of the rabbis chose to identify themselves as politically conservative (table 17.2). Indeed, those who eschewed the liberal label were more likely to call themselves "moderate." The data suggest a correlation between attitudes and practices in the realm of religion and political identity. The more traditionalist one is, the less liberal.

The Orthodox students were more apolitical than their rabbis and the other students. They were also less liberal and moderate politically and more conservative. The Conservative students were more politically liberal than their rabbis. The Reform and the Reconstructionist students were by far the most liberal groups.



## 18. OUTREACH

While rabbis presumably act as spiritual leaders and Jewish educators, the survey demonstrates that by and large they do not engage in much religious outreach (table 18.1).

**18.1 I have worked with the following Jewish outreach programs:**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
CLAL	21	--	32	--	30	--	44	--
Kiruv	22	--	9	--	5	--	3	--
Other	60	--	42	--	52	--	23	--

In only one case did the majority of any movement claim to do Jewish outreach. And even this case -- the 60 percent of Orthodox rabbis who claimed to be engaged in some unnamed programs of Jewish outreach -- the assertion was nebulous and undefined. Only between about a fifth of the Orthodox to about a third of the Conservatives and Reform rabbis and about 40 percent of the Reconstructionists had worked for Rabbi Irving Greenberg's Center for Learning and Leadership, one of the most popular outreach programs. Even smaller numbers worked in the Orthodox-sponsored Kiruv program.

19. JEWISH EDUCATION

Surely Jewish education is a core value of Jewish life, and central to any rabbi's *raison d'etre*. Yet here too the survey allows us to see clear dividing lines.

**Educating the Child**

**19.1 The more Jewish education a child receives the better.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Agree	10	7	16	30	26	31	25	36
Strongly agree	89	93	79	64	69	62	69	52

While nearly everyone agreed with this statement, the fervency of their agreement differed among the groups (table 19.1). Nevertheless, the responses were a ringing endorsement of Jewish education.

**Secular Education**

**19.2 Those who receive a secular education cannot express authentic Torah views.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	62	86	71	90	57	92	96	88
Agree	34	10	28	8	41	8	3	8

Secular education is a firmly established value in American Jewry, over 80 percent of whom attend college. Thus a majority of the rabbis and students disagreed with the proposition that a secular education prevented expression of authentic Torah views, and most of those did so strongly (table 19.2). Yet a minority of about a third in each the three major movements agreed with the proposition, acknowledging that there is an essential conflict between secular and Torah views of the world.

That the Reconstructionists departed from the other groups in the fervency of their disagreement with this proposition was undoubtedly a reflection of their general ideology (inherited

from Mordecai Kaplan's notion of "Judaism as a civilization"), which emphasizes the integration of secular, civil culture with Judaism. For them to disagree with this proposition would be to undermine one of the essentials of their ideology.

The Orthodox and Conservative students were markedly more supportive of secular studies than their rabbis. The Reform and Reconstructionist students by and large agreed with their rabbis.

**Hebrew Fluency**

19.3 Are you fluent in Hebrew?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Yes	78	78	78	74	40	54	56	32

Clearly, knowledge of Hebrew is more characteristic of the traditionalist than the liberal groups (table 19.3). That only a minority of Reform rabbis claimed Hebrew fluency reflects the fact that much of Reform Judaism's liturgy is not in Hebrew. One suspects that with the strong emphasis on a year in Israel in the Reform education, this figure will change in the years to come.

**Disunity and Intolerance**

19.4 Increased Jewish education leads to less disunity and intolerance.	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Strongly disagree	7	--	10	--	7	--	11	--
Disagree	14	15	28	32	25	16	27	60
Agree	33	76	33	73	31	65	25	28
Strongly agree	41	--	18	--	24	--	19	--

Except for the Reconstructionists (who were divided on the question), a majority of all the rabbis and students thought that increased Jewish education led to less disunity and intolerance (table 19.4). The Orthodox felt this most strongly -- in spite of the fact that they received the most Jewish education and were in fact the least tolerant. This suggests that perhaps these opinions are as much the product of rhetoric and partiality to a particular point of view than they are the products of experience.

## 20. RABBINICAL AUTHORITY

Traditionally, rabbis are ordained by their rabbinical predecessors and symbolically derive their authority from them. In the past, the process of exercising that authority was a gradual one in which the new rabbi deferred to the judgment of his teachers and elders. This traditional pattern of rabbinical authority is still practiced in many precincts of Orthodoxy, particularly in the yeshiva world.

Opposed to this traditional pattern is the more egalitarian contemporary notion that ordination endows a rabbi with the requisite wisdom and skills to make independent decisions.

**20.1 I would go to a superior rabbinic authority for advice and guidance before making any fundamental decisions of religious significance.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	13	8	35	23	48	38	66	68
Agree	24	88	43	70	36	38	25	28
Agree strongly	63	--	20	--	11	--	3	--

With respect to the matter of rabbinical authority, the survey reveals the traditional/liberal division that has emerged in other situations (table 20.1). The Orthodox rabbis overwhelmingly agreed (and most did so strongly) with the proposition. For these extreme traditionalists, fundamental decisions are not to be made independently. Each rabbi sees himself as part of a great chain of interpreters, always looking to those who came before to provide guidance.

For a majority of the Conservative rabbis this was also the case, although by a smaller and less fervent majority. But about a third were more independent, creatures of the modern age who depend on themselves and their own devices.

The Reform rabbis and students were ambivalent on this matter, dividing about evenly. The Reconstructionists manifested the most extreme degree of self-reliance on matters of rabbinical authority.

21. WOMEN

**Judaism and Egalitarianism**

**21.1 Judaism is in principle opposed to egalitarianism.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	47	25	72	70	88	81	89	92
Agree	42	55	22	23	7	15	9	4

Since egalitarianism is one of the "sacred" values of contemporary American civil religion, a rabbi who asserts that Judaism opposes it identifies with a religion that is in some sense anti-American and antimodern. The Orthodox rabbis in the survey were uncertain and divided on this point (table 21.1). Most of the Conservative rabbis were definitely in the modernist camp, although a significant minority recognized the difficulty of reconciling egalitarianism with traditional Jewish law. With no commitment to halakhah, the Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis had no difficulty understanding and presenting Judaism as a moral system entirely compatible with contemporary life and values.

**Women Rabbis**

**21.2 Do you believe that women should be rabbis?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	1	15	15	12	5	0	2	0
No	94	85	16	9	2	0	0	4
Yes	5	0	70	79	94	100	98	96

If the Orthodox rabbis were uncertain where Judaism stands on egalitarianism, they were certainly opposed to the idea of women rabbis (table 21.2). Majorities of all the non-Orthodox rabbis favored it, although the Conservative rabbis were a bit less in favor and a bit more uncertain than those of the two liberal movements.

**Pressing for Recognition**

**21.3 Demands for Orthodox recognition of women rabbis can never be met and therefore should not be pressed because they cause division.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	4	8	50	60	68	85	80	92
Agree	93	80	40	21	21	12	11	8

The Orthodox rabbis agreed that there was no point in pressing them to accept the legitimacy of women rabbis (table 21.3). This is a clear negation of any egalitarian pretensions, since the basis of the Orthodox objection to women rabbis is their conviction that Jewish law prohibits women from taking on this role. For the Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis, the issue was sufficiently important to continue pressing the case for women rabbis, even at the risk of Jewish disunity. The Conservatives, again, were of two minds.

**Contact with Women Rabbis**

**21.4 Do you have ongoing contact with women rabbis?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
None	74	87	23	4	9	0	2	0
Little	14	10	27	6	16	0	5	0
Some	7	3	34	30	45	31	34	12
Much	5	0	16	60	30	69	59	88

The Orthodox rabbis had little or no ongoing contact with women rabbis (table 21.4). On the other hand, over three-quarters of the Reform and even more of the Reconstructionist rabbis had such contact, making it clear why they view it as imperative for these women rabbis to gain legitimacy. The Conservative rabbis had less contact, but since half the new students in the Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Reform seminaries are women, it is likely these figures will change markedly in the years ahead.

22. ISRAEL

Significance of Israel

**22.1 The State of Israel is significant for Judaism only because so many Jews live there.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	62	95	72	92	63	85	91	88
Agree	35	3	29	4	36	12	8	8

Most of the rabbis and students in the survey believed that the significance of Israel transcends its importance as a center of Jewish population (table 22.1). The Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform students were far more emphatic about this than their rabbis.

Aliyah

**22.2 Do you favor or oppose many more Jews moving to Israel?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	12	10	15	23	28	31	23	36
Oppose	1	0	5	4	2	0	0	0
Favor	87	90	80	72	69	69	77	64

Overwhelmingly, the rabbis and students favored increased *aliyah* -- and when they did not, they did not categorically oppose it (table 22.2). The more traditionalist they were, the more they favored it.

Visiting Israel

Although a majority of the rabbis had visited Israel more than twice -- a fact distinguishing the rabbis (the elite) from the Jewish laity (of whom only about 37 percent have ever visited Israel) -- it is clear that Orthodox rabbis had visited more than any other group (table 22.3).

22.3 How many times have you been to Israel?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
More than twice	79	75	71	72	68	62	63	48
Twice	16	15	17	15	17	23	17	28
Once	3	5	10	6	11	15	14	12
Never	1	5	1	4	3	0	2	12
I am an Israeli	1	0	0	2	1	0	5	0

**Moving to Israel**

22.4 Do you plan to move to Israel permanently?	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Not sure	35	35	38	45	31	19	44	54
No	35	3	49	34	59	54	48	40
Yes	29	63	12	21	9	27	8	8

Despite their close connection to Israel, the rabbis were not prepared to commit themselves to moving there permanently (table 22.4). A greater proportion of the Orthodox rabbis planned to move than of the rabbis of the other denominations. Still, except for the Reform rabbis, no group had a majority that categorically rejected the move. Saying "not sure" was a way of avoiding an ideologically uncomfortable choice. The students' responses may reflect the now-well-established practice of the seminaries requiring their students to spend some time in Israel.

**American Jewish-Israeli Divisions**

22.5 Divisions between American Jews and Israelis are greater than the divisions within American Jewry.	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	63	78	46	43	39	46	36	16
Agree	23	15	42	43	48	46	55	76

Only among the Orthodox rabbis and students did majorities disagree with the proposition. This undoubtedly reflected their closer ties to Israel and to the Orthodox establishment there. A plurality of the Conservative rabbis also disagreed, but the Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis, with more tenuous ties to Israel, tended to see a wider gap between American and Israeli Jews than between American Jewish denominations.



**Orthodox Domination**

**22.6 Do you favor or oppose exclusive domination of the Israeli chief rabbi by the Orthodox?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Oppose	36	0	90	96	85	100	94	100
Favor	57	85	5	2	11	0	6	0

This question clearly divided the Orthodox from all the others (table 22.6). Nevertheless, what is striking here is that the Orthodox did not favor the domination of the chief rabbinate by Orthodox rabbis as much as the non-Orthodox opposed it. Indeed, over a third of the Orthodox opposed the present state of affairs -- far more than any of the minorities of the non-Orthodox who claimed to favor the status quo. Perhaps the American pluralist environment has had an effect even on the Orthodox rabbinate. The students, as on other occasions, revealed themselves as far more extreme than their rabbis.

**Coercive Legislation**

**22.7 Should there be a moratorium on coercive religious legislation in Israel?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
No	43	53	2	2	3	4	5	4
Yes	44	25	94	83	96	93	92	96

While practically all the non-Orthodox rabbis agreed that there should be a moratorium on coercive religious legislation in Israel, the Orthodox rabbis were divided, again reflecting the pluralist religious environment in which they have learned to live (table 22.7). The Orthodox students were more emphatic in their support for coercive legislation than their rabbis.

**Who Is a Jew?**

**22.8 A change in the definition of who is a Jew that excluded Conservative and Reform conversions should result in reassessment of American Jews' attitudes toward Israel.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Agree	34	5	68	73	81	66	75	64

The Orthodox rabbis -- more than two to one -- believed that a change in the "who is a Jew" law to exclude Conservative and Reform conversions should *not* result in a reassessment of American Jewish ties with Israel (table 22.8). It is striking that a third of the Orthodox believed it should. On the other hand, majorities of the non-Orthodox rabbis (especially the Reform) felt strongly that it *should* lead to such a reassessment.

Occupied Territories

**22.9 Do you believe that the State of Israel should hold onto the occupied territories?**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Yes	38	73	20	13	20	12	8	4
No	34	7	59	51	61	69	80	76
Not sure	27	20	20	34	20	19	13	20

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, the Orthodox rabbis, while more supportive of the occupation than other groups, were actually divided and unsure (table 22.9). Only a minority were unequivocal about holding onto occupied territory. On the other hand, not all of the non-Orthodox rabbis were categorically in favor of territorial compromise.

A Divine Promise

**22.10 God promised Judea and Samaria to Israel.**

	ORTHODX		CONSERV		REFORM		RECONST	
	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu	Rab	Stu
Disagree	5	3	52	53	51	92	88	80
Agree	9	90	25	28	36	8	5	16
Strongly agree	84	--	17	--	6	--	2	--

While the Orthodox rabbis demonstrated some equivocation about holding onto the territories, they overwhelmingly believed that God had promised the Jewish people the entire land of Israel (table 22.10). Moreover, not only did they believe in the divine promise; they believed in it "strongly," more fervently than any of the other groups by far. Among the non-Orthodox rabbis, large minorities of both the Conservatives and the Reform also believed this, but not quite as strongly. Thus, at least among rabbis, the Greater Israel movement would probably find theological (though not necessarily political) support among all groups save the Reconstructionists. The non-Orthodox students were significantly more skeptical of the divine promise than their rabbis.

## 23. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although by and large the findings of this survey -- the first of its kind in over twenty-five years -- must speak for themselves, some brief and very general conclusions are in order.

While a majority of all the respondents -- rabbis and students alike -- considered the matter of Jewish unity to be important, most did not see it as a top priority. Indeed, majorities of both rabbis and rabbinical students did not think that American Jews were *ever* unified (although they believed that anti-Semitism would make them so). On the contrary, most respondents believed that Jewish unity is not as important as pluralism (the notable exceptions here being the Orthodox, and particularly Orthodox rabbinical students). A majority of all respondents, except the Orthodox, believed that no single denomination best assures the continuity of the Jewish people.

This pluralism does not negate the important bonds that tie Jews of all sorts together. On the contrary, majorities of all groups (with the largest proportions among the Orthodox) strongly agreed that as Jews they had a special responsibility to help other Jews. Indeed, on matters related to the community -- for example, helping Jews in distress, supporting Israel, or even commemorating the Holocaust -- there was a broad willingness to cooperate.

Interreligious contact was endorsed by a majority of the rabbis, but the actual extent of reported contact was small. Majorities of all groups endorsed the idea of mixing and socializing with Jews of movements other than their own but they seldom did so.

Such hostility as does exist between movements was most acutely reflected between the Orthodox and Reform respondents, who held the others most responsible for the divisions among Jews. In general, the Reform rabbis were joined in this opinion by smaller majorities of the other non-Orthodox rabbis and rabbinical students, while among the Orthodox minorities held the other movements most responsible for Jewish divisions.

While all the respondents displayed a strong commitment to Jews and Judaism -- far higher than the general Jewish population, as was to be expected -- the Orthodox constituted a group apart. On all measure of Jewishness, they scored highest. Nevertheless, significant minorities among the Orthodox displayed willingness to compromise and some acceptance of pluralism.

Most of the rabbis did not think that dialogue was dangerous, but most also believed that intra-Jewish dialogue was often little more than one group trying to convert another to its point of view -- particularly when that dialogue involved the Orthodox.

Most rabbis and rabbinical students found their friends within their own movements and felt most similar to Jews of their own movements. Thus, even though most of respondents endorsed pluralism, in their friendships and identification they displayed particularism. They also

demonstrated that the three major movements of Judaism not only reflect varying religious outlooks, they also define separate social groupings. Within the movements, the rabbis often experienced degrees of estrangement from the laity.

Rabbis and students professed a desire for more contact across movements. Everyone wanted more contact with the Orthodox, but the Orthodox wanted contact only with their own. Relations with non-Jews were more a matter of rhetoric than reality. Even the liberal movements (Reform and Reconstructionist) supported it more in the ideal than in practice.

### General Recommendations

The recommendations that follow rest on the assumption that Jewish survival is important and necessary. Those who would advance or abet greater assimilation of the Jews by the dominant American culture might -- indeed, would -- make very different recommendations based upon the identical findings.

1. While unity is important to most rabbis, pluralism seems at least as important and much more a fact of Jewish life. A general policy that allows for pluralism will likely receive greater support. Denominationalism is an undeniable aspect of American Jewish existence: the various movements will not disappear, and programs aimed at some unified American Jewry are unlikely to be successful.

This does not, however, mean there can be no joint activities or unified strategies for Jewish survival and cooperation. On the contrary, rabbis do display a willingness to come together on certain matters, and these should be stressed when trying to assert themes of unity. Those issues that rabbis are most likely to work together on are social and communal matters, Jews or Jewish communities in distress, and Israel. There is nearly universal agreement that Jews have a special responsibility to help other Jews. This theme and associated activities should be stressed in a variety of settings and circumstances to emphasize matters that unite Jews.

Since religious practices, on the other hand, are major sources of division among the rabbis, efforts to share prayer, law, and ritual would only exacerbate differences.

2. Problems arising from Jewish divorce and remarriage have the potential for immensely complicating Jewish communal life. This is a subject which should be explored by rabbis so that all groups understand the full social consequences of their positions.

3. The matter of *aliyah* is becoming a point of difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. Among rabbis there is some hint that *aliyah* may become a predominantly Orthodox phenomenon. Were this to be the case, it could serve to further separate the bulk of American rabbis (and through them American Jewry) from Israel. Efforts must be made to provide other rabbis with incentives for *aliyah*. Finding a role for a non-Orthodox rabbinate in Israel should thus become an agenda item for the American rabbinate.

### Recommendations for Rabbinical Students

1. Few rabbinical students had much contact with students of other movements, nor did they display much familiarity with other denominations. Increased contacts among rabbinical students is recommended, including joint activities in such areas as Jewish social action, outreach, communal support -- or even the study of Jewish texts.

Absent such contacts, a continuation of current antagonisms and hostilities may be expected.

As hostility seems most concentrated between the Orthodox and Reform rabbinical students, those two groups should look for increased common ground. One cannot be sanguine about the possibilities for success in overcoming this particular antagonism, but increased efforts are certainly in order.

2. There is an increasing tendency for each movement to draw its rabbinical students from its own ranks. While this is probably going to continue to be the case, efforts to recruit students from other movements has the potential for increasing understanding across groups and should be encouraged.

### **Recommendations for Particular Denominations**

1. There is a need to raise the level of Hebrew fluency among Reform and Reconstructionist rabbinical students.

2. The role of rabbinical authority in the Reform and Reconstructionist movements is relatively weak. This is a subject that should be explored by each of these movements.

3. Egalitarianism is one of the major social developments of the twentieth century. In social, political, and religious domains equality regardless of sex or creed is increasingly becoming normative. This presents a particular problem for the Orthodox, who oppose this norm. The matter will continue to challenge Orthodox Judaism in the years to come and the movement would do well to confront and develop a policy that comes to terms with it now so as to avoid the difficulties in the future.

4. The estrangement from their laities that Reform and Conservative rabbis and students expressed is striking. These two movements need to create programs that will diminish these feelings or risk a rabbinate that is remote from its congregations.

5. There is a need to emphasize more outreach work among all rabbinic groups.

6. The Reconstructionist rabbinate and especially its students need enhanced contact with Israel.