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National Variations in
JEWISH IDENTITY

Implications
for Jewish Education

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מכון תולדות אברהם
המרכז הלאומי לתולדות
לחינוך ולמחקר בתפוצות

Chapter 3



Arthur Ruppın Revisited: The Jews of Today, 1904–1994

Sergio DellaPergola

“The structure of Judaism, once so solid, is crumbling away before our very eyes. Conversion and intermarriage are thinning the ranks of Jews in every direction, and the loss is the heavier to bear, in that the great decrease in the Jewish birth-rate makes it more and more difficult to fill the gaps in the natural way.” To many a reader, these words will probably sound familiar. They would seem, indeed, to have been picked up from the debate that in recent years has unfolded between two camps of supposedly “optimists” and “pessimists” over the present and future of American Jewish demography and identification, and more generally of the future of Jewish population worldwide. While the English style of the prose just quoted, in spite of the translator’s efforts, would fit the widely known notion that some of the leading pessimist analysts of contemporary Jewish society are European-born Israeli intellectuals with a special predilection for the German (or maybe Italian) language, these words come out of another epoch. They are the opening paragraph of the first version of Arthur Ruppın’s major sociological work (Ruppın 1913: 3).

Ruppın’s *Die Juden der Gegenwart* first appeared in 1904 in Berlin. Two revised editions, published respectively in 1911 and 1920, were translated into English as *The Jews of To-day* (1913) and into other languages (e.g., Ruppın 1922). *The Jews of Today* carried the

fundamental structure, scientific approach, and initial data base out of which would emerge Ruppín's major work *Die Soziologie der Juden* (1930–31), and its later elaboration *The Jewish Fate and Future* (1940). It was a carefully researched analysis of the sociodemographic and cultural conditions of the Jews a hundred years after emancipation. It called attention to the endangered continuity of a Jewish people that for the first time in modern history was facing the challenges of large-scale assimilation, and provided scientific foundations to the claims and programs of the Zionist movement that had just emerged to offer a new solution to the Jewish people's problems.

This chapter has no pretension of providing an even superficial profile of the life and work of Arthur Ruppín. Very interesting elements can be drawn from his own *Memoirs, Diaries, Letters* (published in English in 1971), which provide fascinating background to his many other publications. Rather, the main purpose of this chapter is to provide some historical-sociological perspective to the present discussion of Jewish identity. Some of the major structural characteristics of world Jewry will be examined at a distance of ninety years through a comparatively similar approach. By looking in social scientific perspective at the *Jews of Today*, then and now, we may draw some comparisons about the sociodemographic profile of world Jewry at the beginning and the close of the twentieth century. We may also contribute to the initial development of a history of the study of Jewish sociology and demography (see Bachi 1993). Perhaps more importantly, we may help evaluate whether and how a certain basic view of the world—in our case, the main paradigm of Jewish sociology and demography—is still actual and relevant, or perhaps has become superseded by new facts and by new ways of understanding those facts.

In the process, we may be able to review, validate, or reject, the analytic work of our predecessors, thus gaining added insights on the strengths and weaknesses of the sociodemographic approach; and, enriched by a perspective from the past, we may be able to improve our current understanding of the complexities and implications of changing Jewish identity patterns.

The Man and His Work

Arthur Ruppín was born in 1876 in Posen, a province perched geographically and culturally between Poland and Germany, in a moderately traditional Jewish family. His family, although rooted in

German society and culture, displayed relatively recent Eastern European origins. Thus Ruppin, while tending himself to a quite enlightened and rationalistic approach to Judaism, also was conversant with traditional Jewish culture. His principal professional training was in the legal field, and as such he filled in his young adulthood some positions with the Prussian administration. At the same time, he developed a major interest in economics, particularly the agricultural aspects in which he managed to acquire an early practical experience. To the field of sociology and demography he basically arrived as an autodidact, first through the very process of writing his first major book, and soon later by joining Alfred Nossig (who had founded in 1902 an Association for Jewish Statistics) and by becoming instrumental in the development of the *Bureau für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* and of its periodical publication, the *Zeitschrift für Demographie und Statistik der Juden* in Berlin (1905).

While the quantity and quality of Ruppin's work are remarkable, the statistical methods he employed were neither very innovative nor technically very sophisticated. Nor do his published works display massive doses of conventional scholarship, through the use of heavy footnoting and systematic bibliographic references. Indeed, Ruppin did not particularly insist on incorporating his analyses into a body of supposedly universal social-scientific theory, unlike contemporaneous European scholars who were also devoting attention to Judaism and Jewish society—such as E. Durkheim, M. Weber, and W. Sombart—or the later mature sociological elaboration in which American social scientists—notably the Chicago school—were to play the leading role. It was the special case of the Jews that polarized Ruppin's attention; the examination of such a special case from all possible relevant angles fulfilled the unique, very solid, and relevant product of his work.

Ruppin's main contribution to an innovative layer of scholarship is, on the one hand, a massive and systematic effort of documentation, based on large-scale multinational compilations from the many sources of statistical data on Jewish population and society; and on the other hand, his fresh, insightful, well-reasoned, and coherent interpretations of those data. The one central assumption, which represents a general theoretical postulate that not all general scholarship would take for granted, is that *there exists one Jewish people*. Hence the different data, characteristics, and trends observable about Jews in different geographic places and historical times can be meaningfully incorporated into a unified analysis and interpretation. As such,

the descriptive data that abound in Ruppin's work transcend the local and the particularistic and add up to a picture of far greater analytic significance. The development of conceptualizations intended to apply to a wide range of different environments creates a far more exciting and challenging sociology than would be the case if we accepted the widespread assumption that local situations are unique, do not bear comparisons, and have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Furthermore, Ruppin usually tied his analytic conclusions to a further body of action- or policy-oriented considerations and suggestions. Indeed, a central aspect of Ruppin's work concerns his simultaneous involvement with scientific-analytic work, on the one hand, and with practical-political work, on the other. Throughout the entire course of his professional life, Ruppin played a central role in the development of Palestine, as the chief emissary of the World Zionist Organization between his arrival in 1907 and the end of World War I, and as an influential member of the Zionist directorate during long portions of the interwar period, until his death in 1943. By his explicit admission, Ruppin never believed that only one of the two worlds, the scientific and the practical, deserved his exclusive devotion. During different periods of his life either type of interest absorbed most of his time, but never was the other totally neglected.

Ruppin, the strategically located participant-observer, was highly praised during his time. The kind of integrated scholarly practical approach to contemporary societal issues that Ruppin impersonified would later become the object of some questioning within that very Hebrew University that he had so much contributed to promote (and much of the land of whose campus, incidentally, he had managed to purchase). Eventually, another pivotal figure in the development of contemporary Jewish sociology, Marshall Sklare, would recognize that Ruppin's pioneering work was being continued by the scholars of the Hebrew University's Institute of Contemporary Jewry (Sklare 1993: 189).

The Question and the Answer

At the very core of Ruppin's concern stand two key and complementary aspects. On the one hand stands what is normatively perceived as a dangerous transformation of the Jews: the emerging process of *assimilation* into the surrounding non-Jewish society. On the other, stands the answer to be provided through a movement of

national revival: Zionism. These are the two major parts in the volume *The Jews of Today*, and the same basic twofold approach will coherently continue to constitute the backbone and trademark of Ruppin's later work in the field of Jewish sociology. It does not change fundamentally throughout the nearly forty years of its analytic elaboration, although numerous revisions naturally emerge out of his developing a more mature understanding of the topic, in response to the very dynamic trends of his time, and out of a sincere effort to come to terms with some of the more complex issues. Among the latter—one should stress at this particular time—the most elusive appeared to him the question of the emerging relationship between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

Ruppin's Zionism never departed from a fundamentally practical path. Based on his acute sociological conceptualization of Jewish societal needs, the major strategy would be one of radically changing the actual existential conditions of the Jews. This would include three fundamental elements: (a) the creation of an autonomous and self-supporting economy of Jewish producers and consumers, the cornerstone of which would be the return to Jewish agricultural work in Palestine; (b) revival of the Jews' own national language, Hebrew; and (c) territorial segregation of the Jews (Ruppin 1913: 238). A fourth crucial condition for the furtherance of Jewish culture, the establishment of a Jewish school system, would naturally develop once the three first conditions are met.

There seems to be in this analysis an analogy with the idea of Ruppin's contemporaneous and fellow compatriot, Martin Buber, that "culture is not a matter of will; it did not come into the world as a preconceived act, but has always . . . fed parasitically on the flow of life" (Buber 1929, quoted in Shapira 1993). While Buber—also deeply interested in Jewish sociology—was referring to a deeper layer of religious experience, it was in Ruppin's more pragmatic sense, too, that the more profound aspects of social life really mattered, rather than the intellectual constructs that could be built upon them. Success in achieving the major structural transformations in the current situation of the Jews would then be instrumental in making the *yishuv* in Palestine viable and attractive for further immigration; and it would eventually bring the *yishuv* to a position and level where it could serve as a major cultural center and source of inspiration for world Jewry.

Creating these new real facts appeared to Ruppin far more relevant and feasible than pursuing recognition within the international political community, or focusing on the internal political institutions

of the Jewish *yishuv* (society in the Land of Israel) to be, which characterized the efforts of most of his contemporaneous Zionist leaders. Ruppin's Zionism was practical, sociological, and in a sense apolitical—more in line with *Ahad Ha'am* than with Herzl; but Ruppin was acutely aware that the very essence of Zionism meant politics.

One of the most intriguing conclusions reached in rereading Ruppin is that he did not seem to fully appreciate the short-term feasibility of the creation of an independent Jewish state. Until very shortly before his death, he expressed doubt—definitely a scholar's more than a politician's trait—about the amount of success that would crown his lifelong efforts with promoting a sounder Jewish future, through vision, action, and scholarship. The sociological and demographic implications emerging from the new existential situation of Jews growing to form the majority of population in a sovereign State of Israel would eventually provide an illuminating test of the relevance of Ruppin's Jewish sociology.

Jewish Assimilation: The Basic Typology

Ruppin sought to provide a concise typology of the major processes shaping the current transformation of the Jews. Along with specifying the major variables at work, Ruppin tried to provide a quantification of the composition of the Jewish population worldwide according to its relationship to these main processes (see table 1). The main variables involved in such typology concern socioeconomic aspects (economic condition, educational attainment, and urbanization), religious attitudes, demographic behaviors (birthrate), and identificational correlates of demographic trends (rates of intermarriage and conversion). By collating the relevant indicators for Jews in different countries, Ruppin suggested a fourfold partition, clearly implying a sequential-chronological evolution from the more traditional to the more assimilated types of Jewry. Each section, or stage, was typically represented by Jews in a particular geographic area or social class within geographic partition.

In general, a typology offers a parsimonious descriptive as well as a predictive tool aimed at understanding some central feature in society. A synthetic presentation of the kind shown in table 1 tends to reflect the obvious trade-off of depth and complexity for the advantage of compression within limited space. Ruppin's typology may be interpreted as an attempt to assess the chances of Jewish continuity in a later generation in relation to the observed circumstances in the

Table 1
The Four Sections of World Jewry According to Ruppin

Variable Number	1st Section 6 million	2nd Section 3 million	3rd Section 2 million	4th Section 1 million
Typical Representatives	The great mass of Jews in Russia and Galicia	Settlers in England and America, and Roumanian Jews	The mass of German Jews	Rich Jews and Jews of university education in all the big towns
Economic Condition	Workers, artisans, and shopkeepers without means and of uncertain livelihood	Artisans and merchants with modest but settled income	Well-to-do bourgeoisie	Wealthy bourgeoisie
Religious Outlook	Orthodox	Liberal	Freethinking	Agnostic
Education	Cheder	Jewish elementary schools	Christian elementary and secondary schools	Public school and university
Birthrate per 1,000 souls	30-40	25-30	20-25	15-20
Percentage of Mixed Marriages*	0-2	2-10	10-30	30-50
Conversions per 10,000 souls	0-2	2-5	5-15	15-40

Source: Adapted from Ruppin (1913: 15).

*As originally published. Ruppin's *percentages of mixed marriages* were in reality *percent ratios between the number of mixed marriages and the number of endogamous marriages*. Based on his method, frequencies are higher, and become greater than 100% once there are more mixed than endogamous marriages, which in the usual notation is described as over 50% of mixed marriages. Ruppin's percentages are easily converted into conventional percentages through the following simple arithmetic:

$$f_c = f_r / (100 + f_r)$$

where f_c are conventional percentages and f_r are Ruppin's percentages.

present generation. Belonging to each section in the typology implies different probabilities of Jewishness at a later time—both for the population involved and regarding transmission to a next generation—evidently not on a case-by-case basis but on the aggregate.

Besides its substantive interest, Ruppin's model represents a significant statement of the unidirectional and fundamentally irreversible nature of assimilation. His position does not basically differ, in fact anticipates other sociological formulations of assimilation theory, prominently among which stands Milton M. Gordon's influential work (1964). Ruppin sees all major demographic, socioeconomic, and identificational characteristics to be forming one cluster in which change in one major aspect tends to be synchronized with changes in each other aspect. Geographic mobility, particularly movement from Eastern Europe to Western societies and from smaller settlements to larger urban places, appears to go hand in hand with general socioeconomic embetterment, secularization, educational promotion, declining birthrates, and increasing rates of intermarriage and of conversion from Judaism. A gradual transition is involved from the one extreme of an ecologically segregated, poorly trained, and economically marginal, religiously observant, and universally inbreeding Jewish community with high rates of demographic growth, to the opposite extreme of a wealthy, highly educated, geographically dispersed, agnostic, and assimilated group with low or negative population growth.

The main Jewish identificational parameter chosen by Ruppin to evaluate the Jewish quality of a community is *religious outlook*. Of the several different dimensions that might be taken to define the overall nature of Jewish identity (Herman 1977), religion is taken as the more powerful and comprehensive one, consistent with the leading role of religion in the historical evolution of Jewish society and its interplay with the non-Jewish societal environment. Sociologically, the Jewish religion is not only a matter of creed; it also inseparably involves a set of individual practices and community institutions. At least as an ideal type, Judaism as a religion does provide a highly intense and multiform basis for Jewish collective life. Some of the alternatives for primary identification between Jews as individuals and as a collective, such as ethnicity, community, or culture can be chronologically and functionally derived from a paradigmatic model of Jewish religion. Ruppin sees the Jewish involvement with religion to evolve from orthodox practice through a more liberal and selective religious stance, toward freethinking and agnosticism. The ultimate station of this possible chain is conversion out of Judaism.

Ruppin's typology of world Jewry at the beginning of the century leads to the quantification shown in table 1. Of the twelve million Jews at that time, about half (six million, mostly in Eastern Europe) belonged to the first and most traditional sector; about one in four (three million, including the new immigrants in England and America) had reached the second transitional stage; and about one in four belonged to the more modernized sectors, of which two million (typically represented by German Jews) still displayed some attachment to Jewish culture, while one million (mostly associated with upper urban social strata, regardless of country of residence) appeared on the verge of losing contact with any sense of Jewish identification. In Ruppin's view, left to its own internal dynamics, the whole Jewish population would undergo the whole four stages of his assimilation cycle, down to complete disappearing. Besides a major reversal in the world societal conditions, which Ruppin considered unlikely, the major force able to reverse such a process would be Zionism.

Ruppin did not or could not launch a full-scale discussion of the status and characteristics of American Jewry. At the time of his early writings, America was still in the process of absorbing its mass immigration, and therefore Jews in America still carried many of the traits of the respective communities of origin in Eastern Europe. Yet, Ruppin included Jewish immigrants in America (and England) in the *second* and incipiently modernizing section of his basic typology, thus implying that by the very process of geographic mobility and environmental change something becomes irreversibly modified in the original sociodemographic and cultural patterns of migrants. Ruppin was well aware of the importance of the new centers of Jewish life in the United States and made a point in visiting them in the early 1920s. Writing in the early 1930s (Ruppin 1931: chap. 38), he grasped some of the distinctive organizational and identificational traits of what then already was the largest Jewish community in the world. While recognizing the elements of diversity between the experience of American and European Jewish communities—most significantly German Jewry that constituted the fundamental platform of his analyses—Ruppin did not reserve to America a fundamentally different path in his assessment of the expected sociological evolution of Diaspora Jewries. By that he was taking an analytic stance that would become the object of a lively and still continuing debate.

Notably, all of the examples in Ruppin's early typology refer to European Jews and to their descendants overseas. Lack of reference

to Jews in Asia and Africa, most of whom would easily fit the first of Ruppin's four sections, possibly reflects their comparatively lesser numerical weight at the beginning of the century, and Ruppin's naturally better acquaintance with the situation of European Jewries. Ruppin appeared to be much affected by the nineteenth-century school of thought that had postulated a connection between physical traits, or race, and human character. Ruppin's thinking in this direction is characteristically reflected in his quite sanguine statements about the commercial predisposition of the Jews, and probably a similar frame of mind would apply to his understanding of the causes for the much underdeveloped social status of Jewish communities in Muslim lands. To be true, he argued that "Heredity determines what may become of a human being; the environment determines what *does* become of him" (Ruppin 1971: 261). But he obviously undervalued the fact that North African and Asian Jews—allowing for time lags in transitional processes—were essentially affected by the same large-scale sociohistorical processes that applied to the numerically more important branches of European Jewry.

Ninety years since its first formulation, past the Shoah and the independence of the State of Israel, Ruppin's Jewish sociology may well serve as a baseline for assessing what has become of the contemporary Jewish people along the continuum he outlined, between identification and assimilation.

Jewish Assimilation: Structural and Cultural Variables

Definitions and Data

Any attempt to develop a contemporary typology of world Jewish population similar to the one originally conceived by Ruppin is bound to meet significant challenges. The first fact to be noted is the radical change in the available data base. Whereas Ruppin could count on a nearly complete coverage of world Jewry's main socio-demographic characteristics through national population censuses and vital statistics, today's documentation has to come primarily from a sustained effort by Jewish organizations. The 1990 NJPS (National Jewish Population Survey) in the United States provides a case in point of the respective advantages and disadvantages, involving high costs and tremendous technical problems in the definition, identification, and actual coverage of the target population.

Research on Jewish communities in numerous countries is problematic if existent at all, and comparability of data tends to be far from ideal because of the different definitions and techniques implemented in each effort of data collection. On the other hand, one conspicuous advantage over Ruppin's data base has emerged whenever new sources of data have incorporated a selection of Jewish identificational variables together with general sociodemographic variables. The complex interplay between social-structural and sociocultural aspects in Jewish population can thus be better appreciated than by mere juxtaposition, as was the case in the past.

Problems involved with the accumulation of empirical evidence add up with the growingly complex and elusive character of Jewish identity. The deepening process of assimilation, becomes increasingly manifest in the development of what Herbert J. Gans (1979) has called "symbolic ethnicity" and what Peter Y. Medding (1987) has called "segmented ethnicity." The ethno-religious group's formerly cohesive and multifaceted identificational complex tends to break down into several different components, parts of which can be freely and selectively picked up and recombined with elements taken from other traditions and cultures. A greater variety of eminently customized, individual identities are thus created, in contrast with the more standardized identificational norms of the past. Consequently, the sharp hiatus that once prevailed between Jews and "non-Jews"—with the possible intermediate category of the religiously disaffiliated—has now turned into a near-continuum. In this new context of an increasing "subjectivization" or even "flux" of ethnicity (Lieberson & Waters 1988; Waters 1990), a growing number of individuals will have experienced more than one religious or ethnic identification in the course of their lifetimes, or even at any given point in time. Decisions on where to put the cutting points between groups have become increasingly arbitrary.

To clarify matters, if not to overcome the issue, a new terminology has been developed to cover the range of alternative statistical definitions of a Jewish population (Kosmin et al. 1991; Goldstein 1992; DellaPergola 1991). Thus, in the recent practice, the concept of *core Jewish population* refers to all those who currently (at the time of a given survey) define themselves as Jewish, including persons who were not born Jewish and Jews who do not identify their religion as Jewish. The *extension* consists of former Jews or immediate descendants of Jews who currently identify with another religion. Together, the core and extension form what we define the *extended Jewish population*. The latter, together with any other

members of the respective households that never were Jewish or of recent Jewish origin, form the *enlarged Jewish population*. Jewish population figures that will be mentioned in the following section consistently refer to the *core* definition.

Matters are more complicated with regard to individual patterns of Jewishness. Cases of the total lack of any Jewish identification among members of a core Jewish population may be found along with cases of partially Jewish behaviors and attitudes among persons who belong to the extended or enlarged population but not to its core. Studying the Jews does not coincide anymore, as it once did, with studying those who display any interest in Judaism.

Social-Structural and Cultural Variables

One immediately apparent fact concerning the Jewish Diaspora is that some of the evolutionary trends devised by Ruppin do seem to have run their full course. The near totality of contemporary Jewish populations now live in urban places. Levels of secular education have greatly improved, leading to academization of well above one-half, and in some countries over 80 percent of the present young Jewish adult generation. Most of the Jewish labor force has been gradually—but massively—moving from crafts and commerce, to management and the liberal professions. One of the most significant changes over the last century concerns the widespread improvement in health conditions and longevity. A further diffused transformation concerns the declining universality of the nuclear family, and has resulted in a generalized decline in birthrates. Jewish populations have consequently become markedly aging. By and large, world Jewry (at least in the Diaspora) has become rather homogeneous with regard to its demographic patterns and socioeconomic characteristics.

The relationship between socioeconomic and ideational characteristics is a central aspect of the whole development of Jewish societies, and can involve significant mutual feedbacks. While the contemporary sociodemographic characteristics of Jews basically conform the third and fourth stage of Ruppin's typology, the amount of ideational-cultural differentiation within the Jewish population of the 1990s is still substantial. The deep and diffused transformation of Jewish social structure does not always or necessarily imply a parallel transformation in Jewish identification. Patterns of social mobility have exerted visible effects on Jewish identification over time, but the relationship has worked the other way around, too. As noted,

many sociodemographic characteristics of Jews worldwide have undergone a considerable homogenization, which has prompted the expectation that social-structural similarity should enhance other forms of communal cohesiveness among the Jewish population (Goldscheider 1986). This tends to be true regarding Jewish social class concentration and a persisting distinctiveness in Jewish occupational distributions. However, for the purpose of the present discussion of Jewish societies in the perspective of an assimilation typology, social class is not an efficient variable, precisely because of its substantial lack of internal differentiation.

A considerable amount of diversity still persists in the *Jewish ecological density* of the proximate residential environment. Throughout Jewish populations, the full range of situations can be observed, from virtually complete segregation to complete dispersal among non-Jews. Jewish ecological density influences the frequency and quality of social interaction, hence directly or indirectly affects a variety of other processes, from availability of Jewish community services to choice of spouse. It is true that in contemporary societies, sophisticated communication systems make possible interaction at a distance. Nevertheless, no real substitute can be reasonably assumed for the range of opportunities and experiences created by physical proximity and community density. While Jewish ecological density has probably declined in the course of time, in conformity with Ruppin's expectations, Jewishness of the environment is not an irreversible property, being sensitive to manipulation by concerned individuals or communities. In different places and under changing circumstances the density of Jewish environment has declined or increased (Della-Pergola 1989). Therefore, the quest for an efficient, sufficiently diverse indicator of the Jew's *social-structural* distinctiveness versus assimilation can be effectively served by a measure of ecological density reflecting Jewish residential patterns.

Turning now to the assessment of the *cultural* dimension of Jewish assimilation, we earlier mentioned religion as Ruppin's fundamental criterion for defining and measuring the intensity of Jewish identification. The sociocultural transformations that have occurred since Ruppin's early writings demand that we move beyond the concept of one variable displaying different amounts of intensity, from highest to lowest. In the context of widespread modernization and secularization, Jewish identification might possibly have evolved from one pattern, religion, to other patterns of a more secular nature, yet of no lesser intensity and significance for Jewish individual and collective continuity. Therefore secularization—in

Ruppin's view the typical correlate of Jewish assimilation—should not be automatically assumed to exert that effect.

It seems essential to consider that a person's Jewish identification can be expressed through *individual* beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as by being part of a *collective* or community. Taking this into account, we define the two major alternatives to *religion* that have emerged for a positive and meaningful Jewish identification as *ethnicity/community*, and *cultural residue*, each of which deserves a brief review.

Attachment to Judaism mainly defined through *religion* implies holding a complex of particular beliefs, norms, and values as well as the consistent performing of ritual practices that are in a sense unnatural—a burden one takes upon oneself not immediately and functionally related to some materially defined (or economic) benefit. Judaism involves complying with relatively rigorous behavioral rules coupled with submitting oneself to possible sanction by a recognized authority or by the whole community. Numerous Jewish ritual acts require the presence of a quorum of other Jews. Active Jewish identification through religion necessarily involves the simultaneous presence of a unique complex of values, norms, and behaviors, and by belonging to an exclusive community.

Attachment to Judaism through a sense of shared *ethnicity*, typically consists of maintaining patterns of association that include a far greater amount of spontaneous and nonspecific contents than would be the case with religion. Such an involvement with a Jewish community, while expressing empathy for Judaism, does not necessarily involve peculiar beliefs and behaviors, nor clearly defined sanctions in case of a lack of compliance with such normative standards. A case in point is affiliating with a given Jewish Landsmanshaft (immigrants' association), or in a more recent context, the Jewish Community Center. While participants will tend to be exclusively or mostly Jewish, the contents of that participation will often incorporate a vast amount—if not a majority—of nonuniquely Jewish symbols and information. Jewish ethnic/communal identification may often involve the persistence of some element of religiosity, as shown by the diffuse though inconsistent presence of traditional observances among Jewish populations that on many accounts one would define as secular. This is why it seems justifiable to include in the *ethnicity/community* type of identification many Jews whose main attachment to Judaism is through a religious congregation. When the contents of the Jewish congregation's collective interaction have been transformed to incorporate large amounts of symbols

and concepts taken from the outside, nondistinctively Jewish world, the sense of community has been preserved, but the element of religious, or in broader terms, cultural *exclusiveness* has been lost.

Attachment to Judaism may still persist independently of a clearly recognizable pattern of personal behavior or functional involvement in the collective life of a Jewish community. A person may display interest and some knowledge in one's own Jewish historical past, tradition, and culture. Knowledge of a Jewish language, extensive interest in Jewish scholarship, or even a sense of "home" nostalgia—which once acquired may be indelible—may be cases in point. We define this further main mode of Jewish identification as a *cultural residue*. Viewed in this particular context, culture is a looser and subaltern concept, especially when considering that most of those who display this mode of Jewish identification actually are illiterate in Jewish philosophy, Jewish literature, and out of Israel, the Hebrew language. A *cultural residue* therefore provides a more ambiguous and less binding parameter for defining Jewish identification—typically to the communally unaffiliated. It does not provide a mutually exclusive bond with regard to outsiders, as may be the case with *religion* and *ethnic community*, and can be more easily acquired, shared, or lost. In this case too, sporadic elements of religion and of ethnicity/community involvement may accompany the *cultural residue* mode of Jewish identification which, however, is mostly expressed through individual intellectual attachment—no matter how intense.

Each of the three major modes of Jewish identification (*religion*, *ethnicity/community*, and *cultural residue*) may be manifested through the whole gamut from most to least intensive. Therefore, in terms of the typical weakening inherent in the assimilation process, each could theoretically be rated as a parallel, equally significant pattern. Passages of Jews from one mode to another, which have occurred to a large extent in the course of the process of modernization and secularization, might be equated with a mere transformation of formal contents without impact on overall intensity. We shall nevertheless posit here that the different major patterns of Jewish identification can be arrayed on a hierarchical ranking. Identification according to *religion*, involving an exclusively Jewish individual practice and an exclusively Jewish community of orientation, appears to be a stronger mode of Jewishness than *ethnicity/community*, which involves a (largely) exclusive community but no particular individual practice; the latter, in turn, overpowers a Jewish identification that is manifested through a *cultural residue*, where

neither element of particularistic individual practice or community of orientation is present.

The preceding discussion yields the following tabular classification of the major modes of Jewish identification:

Exclusively Jewish Individual Beliefs and Practices	Exclusively Jewish Community of Orientation	
	Yes	No
Yes	<i>Religion</i>	
No	<i>Ethnicity/Community</i>	<i>Cultural Residue</i>

In this scheme, an active expression of exclusively Jewish beliefs and practices at the individual level is not considered a realistic possibility in the absence of an exclusively Jewish community of orientation.

To these three major positive categories of Jewish identification, a fourth and weakest one should be added to take account of those Jews for whom *none* of the preceding modes and patterns of Jewish identification consistently apply. Some remnants of either three major modes may be present among Jews who belong to this fourth group. In practice, declining intensities of Jewish identification often tend to be compensated for by increasing identifications with alternative religious, ethnic, communal, or cultural frames of reference; otherwise, a weakened Jewish identification may simply be an indicator of a weaker overall sense of group identification among the relevant individuals. Many, indeed, while still formally belonging to a core Jewish population, display weak or no attachment to Judaism coupled with a substantial presence of distinctively non-Jewish ritual behaviors and/or attitudes. The latter may reflect a person's increasingly non-Jewish proximate relational networks, or the active attempt to create a syncretic identificational solution. The existence of such *dual Jewish-non-Jewish* identities has been clearly documented in America through the 1990 NJPS (DellaPergola 1991). It has its counterpart among those non-Jewish members of an extended or enlarged Jewish population who display some traits of Jewishness. The latter, however, are beyond the concerns of the present chapter.

While our discussion so far, with several but after all not crucial modifications, replicates and extends Ruppin's own conceptualization, one macroscopic development makes the contemporary global picture significantly different from Ruppin's time: it is the emergence

of Israeli society alongside the Jewish Diaspora as a new component of world Jewry. How can we typologically reconcile the substantially different parameters of a Jewish majority in a sovereign state with those of relatively small and dispersed Jewish minorities?

Interestingly, the major change introduced by Israel's presence in the sociology of the Jews seems to operate via the social-structural rather than via the cultural side. In fact, each of the four different modes of Jewish identification we have recognized, may and if fact does exist in Israeli society. While specific elements of the identificational and cultural experience of Jews in Israel and elsewhere may be different (Liebman & Cohen 1990), the main typological distinctions just discussed equally apply in Israel and in the Diaspora. Differences, as we shall see, may concern the relative weight of each identificational type rather than the existence in Israel of an entirely innovative type of identity that could not be deduced from the previous Diaspora's Jewish experience. What appears to be decisively innovative and mutually exclusive toward situations known from the Diaspora's experience is an entirely new level of what we have called "ecological density." Jews in Israel not only have achieved a status of majority at the local level, which can be observed as well in several Diaspora communities in the past and present, but they add to it the fundamental dimension of political sovereignty. For the purpose of our discussion, the critical manifestation of statehood is an all-inclusive, integrated, pluralistic, competitive political system that provides the sole existing opportunity whereby a mode of active interaction is achieved among the whole Jewish population in a given country or locale. Such a measure of total participation in an activity of specifically Jewish or generally civic relevance cannot be ever achieved in the partial, sectorial, and voluntaristic Jewish community's organizational structure that prevails in the contemporary Diaspora setting. In fact, the overwhelming diversity of existing Jewish organizations to a large extent reflects the different modes of identification (religious, ethnic/communal, or cultural-residual) that were just described, and the separate needs of the respective Jewish constituencies.

An Updated Typology

Before turning to descriptive data on the variation of contemporary Jewish populations according to the criteria of identification or assimilation now outlined, a cautionary statement is in order.

The attempt to compare past and present on one dimension of Jewish society cannot ignore the contextual differences on other dimensions. When using certain definitions of Jewish identification, there will be no pretension that the intensity of those identifications is the same today as it once was, rather that the current *significance* of those definitions fairly corresponds to what it was at another historical time. Moreover, the essentially *continuous* nature of distributions along the two assimilation-identification ranges discussed here should be emphasized. While the attempt to create discrete categories may be justifiable for the sake of presentation and comparisons, it clearly constitutes a simplification of an actually more complex and very fluid reality, which might equally well be described through alternative categorizations.

Frequencies of Mixed Marriage

A first attempt to compare the changing levels of Jewish assimilation in the course of the twentieth century is illustrated in table 2. Estimated frequencies of mixed marriage—one of the key indicators in Ruppin's typology—are shown together with estimates of the combined Jewish populations in all countries where the respective levels of heterogamy were observed. A mixed marriage in this analysis is a current, new union in which the non-Jewish-born partner keeps his or her original religious identification after marriage. For the earlier date, the estimates are Ruppin's (adjusted for some necessary data manipulation; see the notes to tables 1 and 2). Estimates for the mid-1930s and late 1980s are our own, based on as systematic as possible a scan of the available evidence (DellaPergola 1993).

The process of assimilation, as operationalized through mixed marriage, appears to have greatly advanced nearly without exception in most countries. At the beginning of the century, the largest segment of world Jewish population was located in countries where the rate of intermarriage was less than 2%. By the mid-1930s, the largest segment included Jews in countries with a rate between 2% and 9%, and the second largest was in countries with a rate of 9% to 23%. By the late 1980s the situation had radically changed, with over one-half of the total world Jewish population living in countries where the rate of mixed marriage was estimated at between 45% and 55%. This category included the two largest Jewish populations in the Diaspora: the United States and the former USSR. The second largest group, dominated by the Jewish population in Israel, was the one displaying extremely low rates of mixed marriages.

Table 2
World Jewish Population Distribution, by Estimated
Frequencies of Mixed Marriages, 1900s–1980s

Percentage of Mixed Marriages	1900s ^a	Mid-1930s ^b	Late-1980s ^b	Late-1980s revised ^c
Total	12,000,000	16,600,000	12,979,000	12,979,000
0–2	6,000,000	4,130,000	3,659,000	3,659,000
2–9	3,000,000	6,700,000	54,000	54,000
9–23	2,000,000	5,725,000	161,000	761,000
23–33	1,000,000	45,000	944,000	994,000
33–45			818,000	2,743,000
45–55			7,186,000	686,000
55–75			156,000	4,081,000
75–95			1,000	1,000

Sources: 1900s, adapted from Ruppin (1913) (see table 1); 1930s and 1980s, adapted from Della Pergola (1993).

^aThe Jewish population distribution reflects Ruppin's four sections in table 1. The data refer to a combination of geographic locations and social strata within the Jewish population. Mixed marriage frequencies differ from those reported in table 1, because of the reasons explained in note a to table 1. We recalculated Ruppin's percentages of mixed marriages to make them compatible with the conventional use in the literature.

^bOur estimates are based on countrywide or regional total frequencies of mixed marriages. Specifically, countrywide averages were used for the frequencies of mixed marriages in the United States and in the (former) USSR.

^cRevised estimates of Jewish population distribution, were obtained by allocating the respective frequencies of mixed marriages to four different strata of Jewish population in the United States, by denomination (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, or none), and to the (former) USSR.

Actually, the data reported in table 2 are not fully comparable because of the different calculation methods. Ruppin tried to construct homogeneous strata by combining geographic locations and social strata within the Jewish population of different countries, while our estimates for the 1930s and 1980s are based on country-by-country total frequencies of mixed marriage, thus losing the internal diversity that exists between different Jewish subgroups within each country. This may explain why in the estimates for the 1930s the stratum with highest frequencies of mixed marriage (23%–33%) has such a smaller Jewish population than at the beginning of the century. Another reason may be that Ruppin overestimated the size of his fourth section (the most assimilated). In an effort to improve the comparability of more recent estimates with earlier data, we disaggregated the two largest Diaspora populations—the United States and the former USSR. Jewish population was redistributed according

to the frequencies of mixed marriages within four Jewish denominational groups in the United States—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and none (Kosmin et al. 1991)—and within the fifteen former Soviet republics (Tolts 1993). The revised estimates show that the prevailing 45%–55% mixed marriage frequency in the late 1980s resulted from averaging quite different behaviors within U.S. and former USSR Jewries. In the revised estimates (see the last column of table 2), the Jewish population characterized by comparatively lower frequencies of mixed marriages is substantially larger than in the original version. At the same time, however, the largest Jewish population group worldwide shifts from the 45%–55% to the 55%–75% mixed marriage category, thus pointing to an even stronger progression of the assimilation process.

Quite interestingly, by the late 1980s, over half of the world's Jewish population, and nearly 80% of Diaspora Jews were intermarrying at a rate substantially above the highest value in Ruppin's original range. Yet, at least in the short term, the Jewishness of such Jewish population would not be discounted. On the other hand, by the early 1990s Israel's Jewish population had increased to over 4.3 million—mostly due to immigration from Eastern Europe. At this point, the section of world Jewish population with the *lowest* rates of mixed marriage had also become the longest, partially recreating the global situation that prevailed at the beginning of the century. Israel's influence had effected a true quantum leap in the history of Jewish assimilation.

Jewish Ecological Densities and Modes of Identification

A more complex, and sociologically sounder, attempt to evaluate the progress of Jewish assimilation is presented in table 3. A bivariate typology is developed that tries to give account of the simultaneous but not necessarily identical changes that have occurred in the social-structural aspect of *Jewish ecological density* and in the sociocultural aspect of the *main mode of identification with Judaism*. Recalling our previous discussion, four levels of Jewishness of the immediate residential environment are defined: *Israel*, where Jews are the majority nationally and typically form the near totality of inhabitants at the neighborhood level; and three types of neighborhoods in Diaspora communities where Jews constitute dense, medium, or thin minorities, or respectively, *more than 35%*, *5% to 35%*, and *less than 5%* of the total inhabitants. While the densities selected are clearly arbitrary, the inherent continuum

Table 3
A Structural-Cultural Typology of World Jewish Population,
1990s–1990s—Tentative Evaluations (Core Jews)

Jewish Ecological Density ^a	Main Mode of Jewish Identification				
	Religion	Ethnicity/ Community	Cultural Residue	Dual Jewish- Non-Jewish	Total
	1900s				
Total	6,000,000	3,000,000	2,000,000	1,000,000	12,000,000
Israel	0	0	0	0	0
Dense (>35%)	4,500,000	1,500,000	500,000	0	6,500,000
Medium (5%–35%)	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	500,000	3,500,000
Thin (<5%)	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
	1990s				
Total	2,000,000	5,900,000	4,100,000	900,000	12,900,000
Israel	1,000,000	2,700,000	500,000	100,000	4,300,000
Dense (>35%)	500,000	100,000	100,000	0	700,000
Medium (5%–35%)	300,000	1,700,000	1,700,000	300,000	4,000,000
Thin (<5%)	200,000	1,400,000	1,800,000	500,000	3,900,000
	Difference 1900s–1990s				
Total	–4,000,000	+2,900,000	+2,100,000	–100,000	+900,000
Israel	+1,000,000	+2,700,000	+500,000	+100,000	+4,300,000
Dense (>35%)	–4,000,000	–1,400,000	–400,000	0	–5,800,000
Medium (5%–35%)	–700,000	+700,000	+700,000	–200,000	+500,000
Thin (<5%)	–300,000	+900,000	+1,300,000	0	+1,900,000

Sources: 1900s, adapted from Ruppin (1913), see table 1; 1990s, adapted from Schmelz and DellaPergola (1994). Cell distributions are our estimates.

^aPercent of Jews among total population residing in immediate surrounding area.

involves passing from an environment that is predominantly Jewish, or where at least Jews constitute a highly visible component of the total social environment, to a thin Jewish presence in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish environment. On the cultural side, the four main modes of identification with Judaism, just defined as *religion*, *ethnicity/community*, *cultural residue*, and *dual Jewish-non-Jewish*, are suggested to express a ranking of intensities from strongest to weakest. Each combination of ecological density and mode of identification being possible, the result in Table 3 and in the attached graphs is a 4×4 classification in which persons may be found in consistently strong or weak Jewish structural and cultural modalities, or in inconsistent combinations of the two.

The upper part of table 3 refers once again to Ruppin's original typology, which we modified in an attempt to account for both structural and cultural aspects. The four categories of Jewish identification repeat Ruppin's four sections, adapting—or possibly forcing—them into our Jewish identificational classification. Keeping in mind that when Ruppin wrote *The Jews of Today*, Palestine's Jewish population barely reached fifty thousand persons; the three categories of residential density in the Diaspora at the beginning of the century were estimated from detailed listings of Jewish population distributions by localities that are available for the relevant years (a processing for Eastern European localities first appeared in DellaPergola 1983). The single largest group reported in table 3 for the 1900s is formed by Jews combining a religious mode of identification with living in neighborhoods with high Jewish densities. In fact at that time not only did Jews constitute large minorities, but often constituted the absolute majority in the respective residential environments, reflecting past limitations on the Jews' residential opportunities, or even the persistence of such constraints.

In the central panel of table 3 a similar bivariate classification is attempted for the early 1990s. The data on residential density in the Diaspora are based on a careful scan of available Jewish population distributions by small areas—such as postal codes in the United States—or inference based on the total number and percent of Jews in different cities where such more detailed data were not available. In this respect, it is interesting to note that in the United States such detailed inspection of residential characteristics provides an overall distribution that strictly matches the perceived Jewishness of residential neighborhoods of NJPS respondents. Notably, more respondents consider Jewish residential concentration to be important than actually live in a densely Jewish environment.

This indicates that residential diffusion, or more generally structural assimilation, does not necessarily reflect a deliberate choice to move away from a Jewish environment, but rather is the product of socioeconomic and other practical constraints. The fact remains that, although the residential characteristics of Jews are still remote from indifferent diffusion among the non-Jewish population, a clear tendency toward declining Jewish ecological densities can be detected in the more recent data. We grossly estimated that around 1990 about the same numbers of Jews in the Diaspora (4 million) lived in moderately Jewish neighborhoods (5% to 35% of Jews among total inhabitants) and in thinly Jewish environments (less than 5% Jewish). Some 700,000 were estimated to live in densely Jewish neighborhoods (above 35% Jewish).

With regard to estimating the distribution of contemporary Jewish populations by modes of identification, data for Jews in the Diaspora were obtained by compiling the recent evidence from NJPS in the United States, from a variety of other similar surveys in other countries, and from Jewish institutional sources. Special attention was paid to the substantial range of variation that prevails between Jewish communities worldwide. Our typology is based primarily on the frequencies reported in such sources regarding a variety of *actual Jewish behaviors*, especially observance of religious traditions and membership in Jewish organizations. Evidence on Jewish attitudes served as a complementary source for assessing the overall variation in modes of Jewish identification among the Jewish public. Available data on ritual and on other religious observance provide useful information to evaluate the number of the religiously identified. Significant country-by-country differences appear, although the ranking of Jewish rituals by observance frequencies tends to be quite similar in the various countries. Clearly the presence of organized religion in Jewish community life tends to be greater in the United States than in the majority of other Diaspora communities, although this does not necessarily imply a particularly high frequency of religious behaviors (Liebman & Cohen 1990; Kosmin & Lachman 1993). The presence of religion also tends to be greater in Great Britain than in France or in most Latin American communities, with Eastern Europe at the lowest end of the continuum. Concerning formal community affiliation—an important element in evaluating the number of Jews who mostly identify through an ethnic/communal mode—the percentages affiliated may be as high as 90% in Mexico, about 70% in England, less than 40% in France, between less than 20%, and more than 70% in

different cities in the United States, and—until recently—close to nil in the former USSR.

Our analysis tried to assess the presence of different combinations of religious observance, community affiliation, and other cognitive or attitudinal aspects of Jewishness among each major contemporary Jewish population. In the case of the United States, which numerically dominates the Diaspora totals, preference for, and affiliation with, the major denominational movements was carefully considered in relation to actual religious practices and to other aspects of Jewish identification. The respective estimates were obtained by carving out of each denomination the subpopulation that appeared to fit better with each mode of identification according to our typology (Rebhun 1993). Thus, for example, our estimate of the religiously identified in the United States includes persons who identify with the Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform denominations, but with different and declining proportions of each group. Interestingly, our overall classification of the modes of Jewish identification in the United States conforms—*ex post facto*—with the 1990 NJPS finding that American Jews believe they are, in descending order, a cultural, ethnic, and religious group (DellaPergola 1991).

Recent evidence on the modes of Jewish identification in Israel was provided by a national survey of family formation and fertility (Peritz & Adler 1993) and by a national survey on beliefs, observances, and social interaction among Israeli Jews (Levy, Levinsohn, & Katz 1993). Additional evidence was gathered through data on enrollment in the different religious and lay sectors of the Israeli educational system, and by analyzing the returns at recent Israeli political elections in conjunction with the stance of each party concerning religious and national issues (Schmelz, DellaPergola, & Avner 1991). The dual Jewish-non-Jewish category in Israel is meant to reflect the presence of the more marginally identified sections among recent immigrants from the former USSR.

By the 1990s, based on these admittedly tentative evaluations, the largest number of Jews globally appeared to identify through a mode of ethnicity/community, as just defined. Within this subtotal, possibly approaching six million Jews worldwide, the largest section is represented by the mainstream Jewish population in the State of Israel which, while tendentially secular, has maintained some traditional practices and has incorporated them into a predominantly ethnic/national mode of Jewish identification. We may evaluate at about another two million the number of Jews whose main mode of

identification is through active religious participation—half of which in Israel; over four million those—mostly communally unaffiliated Jews in the Diaspora—who appear to keep at least some residual elements of a cultural attachment to Judaism; and close to one million those Jews whom we have defined as carriers of a dual Jewish-non-Jewish identity.

By comparing the estimates for the beginning of the century and the 1990s in table 3 and in figures 1 and 2, it becomes clear how greatly the religious mode of Jewish identification coupled with dense Jewish residential environments has declined in the Diaspora. Conversely, both the intermediate and weaker modes of Jewish identification *and* the thinner Jewish ecological environments have become substantially more typical. The Shoah, with its disastrous Jewish population cuts, accounts for most of these changes. Further significant changes are related to gradual transformations in the Jewish identification of contemporary communities. The emergence of Israel's presence in the contemporary world is felt through the distinctive Jewish environmental conditions it has created, and through the reinforcement of an essentially ethnic/national/communal mode of Jewish identification, rather than by enhancing the religious mode of Jewish identification that predominated in the past.

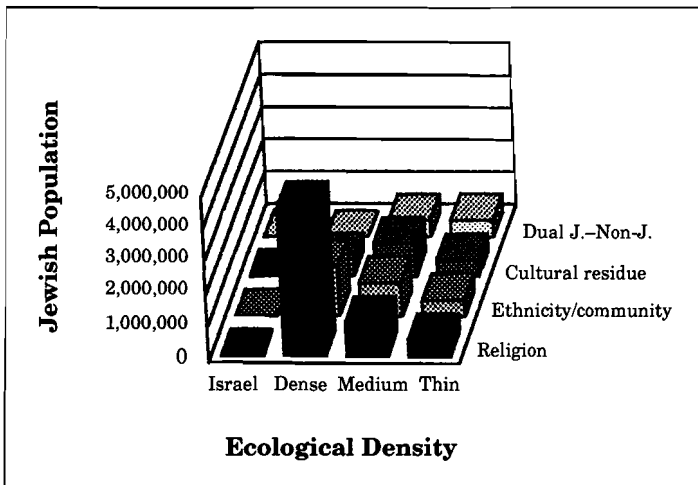


Fig. 1
Structural-Cultural Typology of World Jewry, 1900s

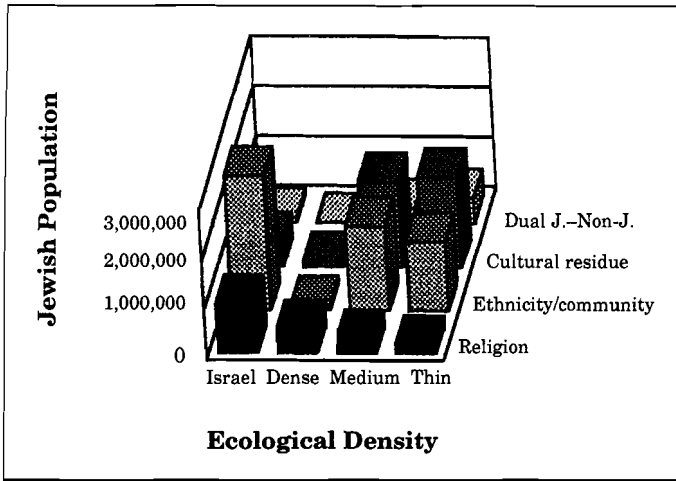


Fig. 2
Structural-Cultural Typology of World Jewry, 1990s

Summarizing the major changes between the 1900s and the 1990s, on balance world Jewry lost 4 million people belonging to the densely settled religious type, and another 1.3 million densely settled ethnic/communal Jews; it acquired 2.7 million ethnic/communal Israelis, and 1.3 million thinly settled Jews of the cultural residue type. The comparatively modest change in the estimated size of the Jewish population in the dual Jewish-non-Jewish identificational mode may be explained by the inherent instability of what constitutes for many a stage of passage toward ceasing from being part of the Jewish population altogether. Finally, world Jewry in the 1900s could be described in the form of an inner core of the more strongly identified and less socially mobile, surrounded by a gradually less Jewishly identified and more socially mobile semiperiphery and periphery. In the 1990s, the global picture pointed to growing polarization between the Israeli main (ethnic/communal) mode of Jewish identification, and the Jewishly thinned, culturally residual peripheries among Diaspora communities.

It is quite obvious that taxonomic exercises like the one attempted here cannot pretend at any degree of precision and only can be suggestive of very broad trends. Moreover we have emphasized, and we reiterate here, that Jewish society is not separated into discrete categories, but rather constitutes a very fluid continuum. Passages from any category to another may be easy and

frequent, occur in any direction, and in fact may be repeatedly experienced by the same individual over a life cycle. Different ways of handling the concepts and data we tried to muster may certainly produce somewhat different results (see, e.g., Cohen 1991). It is unlikely, though, that the overall estimates obtained would result in a picture substantially different from the one suggested here.

Looking at the Future

Arthur Ruppin, while proposing a powerful theory of Jewish societal evolution, was rather cautious with regard to anticipating the future course of Jewish history. In the preface to the second edition of *Die Juden der Gegenwart* (Ruppin 1904) he wrote, "I make no claim to being a prophet, but the signs of the time demand an interpretation and I have given mine." Later, in 1932, Ruppin wrote in his diaries that "The history of the world knows no laws, not even of probability. It is therefore senseless to prophesy about it" (Ruppin 1971: 261).

These words sound a healthy warning signal to those—like ourselves—who have been interested in developing and analyzing Jewish population projections. Indeed, the typical initial assumption of those who elaborate such computational exercises is that the basic conditions in the system will supposedly remain more or less as they are known to be at the time of the elaboration of such projections. The assumption of a gradual progression of a given process, such as assimilation, is tantamount to forecasting a linear evolution of history and society. But the last decades of Jewish history illustrate a strikingly nonlinear experience: the destruction of European Jewry, Israel's independence, and the continuing large-scale geographic redistribution of Jews through mass international migration, all constitute major exceptions to the linearity hypothesis.

What in fact should be centrally considered in any prognosis of the future development of Jewish society, whether at the beginning or the end of the twentieth century, is the Jews' belonging in, and to a significant extent dependence on a complex and integrated political/socioeconomic world system. The latter's capacity for change and sometimes revolution has consistently defied the best analytic minds and systematization efforts. Predicting the Jewish future amounts first of all to predicting the world system's future—an objective definitely beyond the scope of a reasonable agenda for a sociology of the Jews.

Looking back, Ruppin will have been proven wrong on several important accounts. In spite of his assumption that beyond certain levels of modernization and secularization there would be no Jewish existence, large, modern, and sophisticated Jewish populations and communities continue to persist today. Some of his assumptions about the relationship between race and character would be dismissed by a contemporary scholarship which, nevertheless, was able to carefully assess the genetic similarities and dissimilarities among Jews of disparate geographic origins (Bonné-Tamir & Adam 1992). And he could not foresee that only five years past his death stood the realization of Zionism's capital goal: a large, politically sovereign, Jewish settlement in Palestine.

But, consistently with Ruppin's expectations, assimilation, measured through the frequency of mixed marriages, Jewish ecological density, and the main mode of identification with Judaism, would continue its progression. The new highs reached would raise new questions about the contents, viability, and transmissibility of an increasingly stretched Jewish identity in the longer term. Zionism, through the independent State of Israel, would exert a deep effect in slowing down or even reversing the assimilation of the Jews. Interestingly, in the new Israeli context, Jewish assimilation would be at least partially set back by way of a structural process—the creation of an entirely new dimension of ecological density able to significantly reduce the interaction between Jews and non-Jews—more than by radically changing the mode and quality of Jewish identification. The effect of adding the new Israel category in a typological classification of world Jews would be felt through an expanded set of *social-structural opportunities*, rather than through a different range of *cultural choices*. Such a result sounds like a vindication of Ruppin's views about the role of Zionism in creating the essential facts to enhance continuity of the Jewish people.

All things considered, ninety years after his first *Jews of Today*, Arthur Ruppin is alive and well. The complexities of an ever-evolving Jewish identification are not over. Nor are the challenges confronting those who try to elaborate a viable sociology of the Jews.

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