

MOMENT

WHAT AMERICAN
JEWS THINK



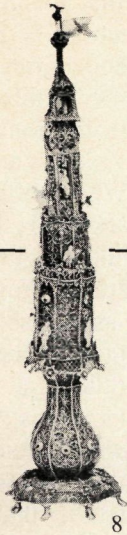
MOMENT

VOL. 8
NO. 10

N₂



27



8



40

54



61



2 Beginnings

3 Letters

8 The Spice Box

What American Jews Believe

15 The Cohen Report: Speaking Hawkish, Feeling Dovish

22 The Myth of the Rightward Turn

Alan Fisher

27 Louis Brandeis, Arthur Balfour and a Declaration That Made History

Peter Grose

40 From Ukarumpa to Broadway and 122nd Street

Leora Zeitlin

45 Religion in Israel: Where Conservative is Radical

Matthew Nesvisky

54 This Rabbi is a Clown

Marc Gellman

57 Middle East Update

Nadav Safran

61 Writing as a Subversive Activity

Rachel Eytan

64 The MOMENT Classified

Cover: "On One Leg," oil on board by Erich Brauer. Courtesy of Pucker/Safrai Gallery, Boston. Copyright ©1983 by Goldregen AG Baumgartner Galleries, Inc.

Editor and publisher:
Leonard Fein
Managing editor:
Carol Kur
Associate editor:
Nechama Katz
Consulting art director:
Frank Glickman
Associate art director:
Marjorie Millhon
Promotion director:
Esta Joross
Subscriber services:
Michael Hantman
Administration:
Kristine Brown
Israel representative:
Hayim Goldgraber

Contributing editors:
Bernard Avishai
Thomas J. Cottle
Paul Cowan
Rachel Cowan
Marc Gellman
William Novak
Mae Rockland
Aaron Rosenbaum
Harold Schulweis
Danny Siegel
Steve Whitfield
Bill Aron (photography)
From Israel:
Abba Eban
Yossi Klein
Matthew Nesvisky

MOMENT (ISSN 0099-0280) is published monthly except January/February and July/August, when bi-monthly, by MOMENT Magazine, a division of Jewish Educational Ventures, Inc., 462 Boylston Street, Suite 301, Boston, Massachusetts 02116. Second class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts.

POSTMASTER: Send address change to MOMENT Subscription Department, P.O. Box 922, Farmingdale, New York 11737, where all subscription and circulation queries should also be directed. Subscriptions: \$22 for one year, \$36 for two years for United

States; single copy \$2.50; Foreign, including Canada: surface mail add \$6 per year, air mail add \$12 per year.

Copyright © 1983 by MOMENT Magazine, all rights reserved. Unsolicited manuscripts should be sent to Editorial Office, 462 Boylston Street, Suite 301, Boston, Massachusetts 02116, and must be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope. MOMENT is indexed in *Index to Jewish Periodicals* and is available on microform through University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Dept. P.R., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

MOMENT



**HURRY!
CHANUKAH
BEGINS AT
SUNDOWN
NOVEMBER 30!**

Our fabulous
MOMENT 6/13 PLAN—
where *current sub-*
scribers only can give
up to 6 gift subscrip-
tions for only \$13*
each—is in full
swing.

MOMENT



By taking advantage
of this opportunity
now—before the De-
cember 31 deadline—
you can solve your
gift giving problems
for months to
come—and *save \$9*
every time you give a
gift.

MOMENT



Just think of the peo-
ple and occasions you
may need gifts for
anytime during 1984.
Then order as many
gift subscriptions as
you think you'll need
(sorry, no more than
six to a customer at
this special low price)
and we'll send you
the handsome gift
certificates right
away. No more last
minute wondering
what to give; you'll
have the certificates,
and you can use them
whenever you
choose.

Watch your mail for
complete details and
an order form, or call
for more information
and to place your
order.

MOMENT



There's even time to
send a MOMENT gift
subscription for Cha-
nukah. With our same
day service, you just
call toll-free—800-
225-7626**—and
we'll send out a gift
card in your name
immediately.

MOMENT



You may charge your
gift subscription or-
der to your American
Express, VISA, or
Mastercard or you
can send us your or-
der *with a check*. But
sorry, no billing on
this special offer.
Remember: This of-
fer is valid for current
subscribers only,
through December
31. So act *now!*

Send your order to:
MOMENT
462 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116

* Outside U.S.A.: add \$6 per
subscription for postage.
** Massachusetts residents call
617-536-6252.

THE COHEN REPORT: SPEAKING HAWKISH, FEELING DOVISH

A new study shows that American Jews love Israel—but not its current policies

Despite the very widespread and frequent use of public opinion polls in the United States, relatively little data are available regarding the beliefs and opinions of American Jews. National surveys are based on samples that only rarely exceed 2,000—and that means they typically include less than 60 Jews. Now and then, Jewish organizations sponsor surveys specifically designed to learn something of their own constituents, but most often these are intended to gather basic demographic figures rather than information about opinions. Moreover, they are almost always locally based, so at best they tell us something of the Jews of Baltimore, or Minneapolis, or Los Angeles, rather than of the Jews in general. And often, they are methodologically problematic, since it is exceedingly difficult to draw a reliable random sample of Jews.

In mid-September, the findings of a major new study sponsored by the Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations of the American Jewish Committee and conducted by Professor Steven M. Cohen were released. The methodology is sophisticated, the results reliable—and the findings fascinating. They created a stir among those who attended the press conference where they were announced, and the stir continues, for the Cohen study deals with some of the most sensitive and controversial issues that Jews confront.

We have Israel on our minds, and in our hearts, and even in our blood, and some of us have it—potentially, at least—in our legs.

Cohen reports on two different groups: First, we have 640 Jewish respondents drawn from a random sample of Jews across the country. (To most lay people, that sounds like far too small a number to permit conclusions about the opinions of millions of people—in this case, of all American Jews. Yet refined sampling techniques enable social scientists to do exactly

that, and to know quite precisely how likely it is that their results are “off.” The Cohen study falls well within the limits of conventional survey research. To put it somewhat differently, all sampling techniques raise some possibility of error; the Cohen study may be “wrong,” but if it is, it is quite unlikely to be wrong by much.) Second, we have 272 Jewish “leaders,” with “leader” being defined as a member of the board of any of five national Jewish organizations—the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the United Jewish Appeal and B’nai B’rith. In general, the “public” sample proves quite similar in its composition to the Jewish community at large, and Cohen estimates that the findings from that sample are accurate within a plus-or-minus five percent range. As to the leadership sample, it represents about half of all board members of the five organizations, and is most likely also accurate within a five percent range.

The first and perhaps most predictable finding of the Cohen Report is that American Jews feel a profound attachment to the State of Israel. Agreement with the statement, “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew,” runs to 78 percent among the Jewish public and to 90 percent among Jewish leaders; 43 percent of the public and 63 percent of the leaders identify themselves as “very pro-Israel,” and another 43 percent of the public and 35 percent of the leaders say they are “pro-Israel”—for totals of 86 and 98(!) percent who are “for” Israel. Perhaps the most revealing statement is the one that asks whether the respondent agrees or disagrees that “if Israel were destroyed, I would feel as if I had suffered one of the greatest personal tragedies in my life.” Here, 77 percent of the public and 83 percent of the leaders agree.

We are, plainly, an Israel-oriented community. Indeed, 93 percent of the public and 99 percent of the leaders “pay special attention to newspaper and magazine articles about Israel,” 75 percent of the public and 97 percent of the leaders “often talk about Israel with friends and relatives,” 40 percent of the public and 94 percent of

the leaders have visited Israel at least once, and 17 percent of the public and 78 percent of the leaders have visited Israel twice or more.

We have Israel on our minds, and in our hearts (35 percent of the public and 69 percent of the leaders have personal friends in Israel), and even in our blood (over a third of both groups have family in Israel), and some of us even have it—potentially, at least—in our legs (17 percent of both groups say they have “seriously considered living in Israel”). We contribute financially to Israel (almost half the public, 97 percent of the leaders), we contribute to political candidates because of their support for Israel (30 percent of the public, 76 percent of the leaders) and we write to elected officials on Israel’s behalf (20 percent of the public, 70 percent of the leaders).

There is little surprise in these statistics, although the levels of involvement may be rather higher than one might have thought, and here and there the differences between public and leaders are quite striking. In that connection, we should bear in mind that the public and the leaders differ not only in their formal responsibilities in Jewish life, which in itself helps account for the differences between the two with regard, say, to visiting Israel or charitable contributions; they differ as well in income, with the public reporting a median annual income of \$37,000 while the leaders’ median annual income is estimated at [gulp!] \$135,000.

It is interesting to note that despite the extraordinary sense of connection to and involvement with Israel, most American Jews do not regard themselves as Zionists: Asked, “Do you consider yourself a Zionist?” only 50 percent of the leaders and 39 percent of the public answer in the affirmative. It may be that very many American Jews agree with those Zionists who assert that the only real Zionist makes his home in Israel. Knowing that they themselves are not prepared to consider moving to Israel (recall that only 17 percent of each group has ever seriously considered such a possibility), they do not feel the term appropriately describes them. They draw a distinction, in other words, between support for Israel and Zionism.

Is there any connection between the Israel we love and the anti-Semitism we fear?

The real surprises of the Cohen Report are in Cohen’s findings regarding Jewish perceptions of America and Jewish assessments of Israeli policy. Let us look first at responses to a series of questions that deal with Jewish perceptions of America. [See Table 1.]

In Table 1, note first the fact that a far higher proportion of leaders thinks that anti-Semitism is today not a serious problem for American Jews. Others have reported this discrepancy before, though there has been and continues to be serious disagreement regarding its meaning. We might think that the leaders are more sophisticated, the public more visceral—or we might suspect that the leaders are more insulated, the public more realistic. We do know from other reports that when American Jewish leaders try to persuade their publics that anti-Semitism is a relatively contained problem in this country, they encounter vehement opposition. And here we have a bit of statistical confirmation, for nearly two-thirds of the leaders dismiss anti-Semitism as a currently serious problem, while only a bit over a third of the public joins them in that view.

In both groups, there is slightly greater apprehension regarding future anti-Semitism; a majority of both reflects the Jewish sense of vulnerability. Again, the public feels less secure than the leaders, perhaps because so large a proportion of the leaders (44 percent) is evidently insulated from the personal experience of anti-Semitism; that seems to be the implication of their acceptance of the statement that “virtually all positions of influence in America are open to Jews.”

So we are a community with powerful ties to Israel, and we continue to fear anti-Semitism, even in America. Is there any connection between the Israel we love and the anti-Semitism we fear?

We don’t see any contradiction between our interests and the larger

American interest: Ninety-one percent of the public and 96 percent of the leaders believe that “U.S. support for Israel is in America’s interest.” But we are not nearly so sure that other Americans see it that way. [See Table 2.]

About half the Jewish public, and slightly fewer of the Jewish leaders, regard American support for Israel as undependable. So we now have three separate pieces of data which, when taken together, suggest that American Jews—or, more accurately, large numbers of American Jews—may feel considerable strain arising out of their commitment to Israel. First, we know how profound that commitment is; second, we know how convinced almost all Jews are of the “rightness” of that commitment, and of its consonance with American interests; finally, we see that most Jews feel some apprehension regarding American attitudes towards both the Jews and Israel.

Only one question in the Cohen study deals directly with the consequent strain. Respondents were asked whether “there are times when my devotion to Israel comes into conflict with my devotion to America.” This statement, which deals with only one source of anxiety, elicits agreement from 24 percent of the public and 17 percent of the leaders. That aside, we have little information on the conflicts or anxieties Jews feel in connection with their commitment to Israel. What we do know, quite decisively, is that if, as seems likely, they do experience conflict and anxiety, these are not sufficiently disabling to cause them to abandon their commitment. On the contrary—we may say that there is in these answers considerable proof of the seriousness of the American Jewish commitment to Israel. For after all, it is not an “easy” or cost-free commitment. American Jews evidently believe that it may separate them from other Americans—and they nonetheless persist in giving it expression.

Table 2 hints, as well, at something we noticed back in Table 1—the relatively greater confidence in America displayed by Jewish leaders. By and large, they are not as apprehensive as is the Jewish public, not about anti-Semitism in America, present or future, and not about the solidity of the

American commitment to Israel. This difference is highlighted in Table 3, where we see how respondents in both groups assess specific American groups.

For all the talk of the collapse of the traditional alliance, Democrats and liberals and labor unions score high, especially among the Jewish public.

It is immediately apparent from the information summarized in Table 3 that the leaders' assessment of the friendliness of various American groups towards Israel is far higher than the public's. Indeed, if we average the scores, we find that the public's average rating is 11, while the leaders' average rating is 24—more than twice as high. This once again attests to the greater confidence of leaders, of their generally more positive assessment of America. The difference is especially striking with regard to Congress (the public gives Congress a 38 rating, the leaders give it 76); President Reagan (16 compared to 55); Republicans (14 compared to 42); and, startlingly, evangelical Protestants (three compared to 63!).

Again, one may make of this what one will. Cohen, in his own text, seems to believe that the differences point to the greater sophistication of the leaders. They have, he says, "greater access to public officials" and "greater command of specialized information." No doubt some among the public would argue that the leaders have a greater vested interest in taking pro-Israel rhetoric at face-value, would insist that their own greater skepticism is the more sophisticated perception. The extraordinary discrepancy in assessment of evangelical Protestants may, as Cohen says, result from the fact that Jews, not "especially attentive to intergroup

Table 1

	Public	Leaders
"Anti-Semitism in America may, in the future, become a serious problem for American Jews."	69%	55%
"Anti-Semitism in America is currently not a serious problem for American Jews."	37	64
"Virtually all positions of influence in America are open to Jews."	27	44

Table 2

	Public	Leaders
"Most Americans think that U.S. support for Israel is in America's interest."	47%	60%
"When it comes to the crunch few non-Jews will come to Israel's side in its struggle to survive."	54	41
"I am worried the U.S. may stop being a firm ally of Israel."	55	48

Table 3

Are each of these "American groups . . . generally friendly, mixed or neutral, or generally unfriendly to Israel?"

	Friendly Index*	
	Public	Leaders
Democrats	60	76
Liberals	46	44
Congress	38	76
Labor Unions	33	58
President Reagan	16	55
Republicans	14	42
The Military	12	24
Conservatives	10	27
"Mainstream" Protestants	8	10
Evangelical Protestants	3	63
News Media	-3	-20
Catholics	-5	9
State Department	-11	-53
Corporations	-15	-29
Blacks	-41	-58

*Friendly Index = the difference between the percent who answered "generally friendly" and the percent who answered "generally unfriendly"

relations,” may be unaware of the “pro-Israel sympathies of many Evangelical Protestants”—or it may be simply that the public doesn’t trust Jerry Falwell, knows somewhere in its bones that whatever he and “his kind” say about Israel, they truly believe that God doesn’t hear the prayers of Jews.

Given all that, it is especially interesting to see where leaders are even more critical than the public. More of the leaders think the news media unfriendly; very many more of the leaders think the State Department unfriendly; somewhat more of the leaders think blacks unfriendly; and—remember the median income of the leaders, and the network of associations they may be presumed to have—twice as many of the leaders think corporations unfriendly. The State Department has long been perceived as an enemy of Israel; the surprise there is that the public is relatively neutral in its assessment. Blacks, lamentably, have lately been added to the list of perceived enemies, reflecting the serious fractures of an old and productive alliance. The media, especially in the wake of Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, are viewed with great suspicion, and if there’s a surprise here it is that they do not score lower. And corporations, we may imagine, conjure up visions of Bechtel, Aramco and so forth—no friends of Israel there. Yet one would not have expected that Jewish leaders would be more critical of corporations than the Jewish public is.

Two other elements of Table 3 deserve special mention. Congressmen who read the Cohen Report may feel frustrated. “After all we’ve done for Israel,” they may say, “look at how the Jewish public sees us; we get only a 38 percent rating.” Well, the consolation is that while the public ranks Congress “only” third most friendly in a list of 15 groups, the leaders rank it tied for first. Tied with the Democrats, who rank first in the public’s perception. That’s the other element to be noted here: For all the talk of the collapse of the traditional alliance (and the Jewish assessment of black friendliness surely reflects a serious problem in that regard), Democrats and liberals and labor unions score high, espe-

cially among the public. Leaders see liberals and Republicans nearly tied—and both way ahead of conservatives. They also give President Reagan a far higher rating than the public does. But the Jewish public, apparently, still clings to the traditional alliance. [Ed. note: In this connection, readers may wish to examine the accompanying article by Alan Fisher.]

Again, the Cohen Report in itself does not and cannot answer the questions it raises regarding these differences between leaders and public. It does, however, provide hard evidence of the Jewish capacity for differentiating among groups within the American public. It helps inform professionals of the Jewish community where the perceived trouble spots are, and who the likeliest allies are perceived to be. And we may presume that the considerable publicity that attended the release of this report will encourage its sponsors to conduct similar studies at relatively frequent intervals, for there is obvious interest in knowing how opinions and perceptions on these and related matters are affected by events and how they change over time.

The conventional wisdom is wrong in describing the attitudes of the Jewish public, and wronger still in describing leadership attitudes.

The section of the report that has generated the most publicity (including a page 1 lead story in *U.S.A. Today*) deals with American Jewish attitudes towards Israeli policies. As Cohen puts it in his text, “Although American Jews are substantially united in their concern for Israeli security, they, like Israelis, hold diverse views about how Israel should best pursue its search for peace and security.”

This is best illustrated in Table 4.

For some time now, it has been part of the conventional wisdom on these matters that American Jewry endorses

the hawkish policies pursued by the Begin government. But it is plain from the data in this table that the conventional wisdom is wrong. It is wrong in describing the attitudes of the Jewish public, and it is wronger still in describing leadership attitudes.

So far as the public is concerned, a plurality endorses permanent Israeli control over the West Bank—but a plurality of the same size endorses territorial compromise, a majority endorses suspension of settlements in the West Bank, a large majority favors talking with the PLO under specified conditions and a plurality endorses the right of the Palestinians to a homeland. These positions are not those generally associated with the Begin government. Specifically, the Begin government has repeatedly refused to halt its settlement activity and has vehemently objected to plans calling for territorial compromise, and there is obviously considerable difference of opinion on the question of the Begin government’s readiness to endorse any kind of Palestinian homeland.

The Jewish public is rather more dovish than is commonly supposed; Jewish leaders are more dovish still. They favor territorial compromise by a margin of better than four to one, they reject the notion of permanent Israeli control of the West Bank by nearly three to one, they favor a suspension of settlement activity by better than two to one.

Most American Jews think at least some aspects of Israeli policy misguided.

All this gives rise to an obvious question: If Jewish leaders are so markedly dovish, and if the Jewish public, while less dovish, still leans in a dovish direction, how is it that the Jewish community is perceived as hawkish?

There are any number of possible answers. It may be that the community, both public and leaders, was more dovish still in the pre-Begin period, and the change in a hawkish direction has captured more attention

than it merits. Or it may be that the hawks are, on the whole, noisier than the doves. Or—and this seems to us to explain a good part of it—it may be that dovish leaders have tended to keep their views to themselves, for fear of seeming to be out of step with Israeli policy, or, for that matter, with their own community.

The Cohen Report may, therefore, prove to be one of those rare social science studies that has an immediate impact on behavior. For now that the secret is out of the bag, now that all those closet doves out there know that most other American Jews share their views, that they are not part of a fringe minority, perhaps they will be more inclined to speak their piece.

The fact is that most American Jews think at least some aspects of Israeli policy are misguided. To the question, "I am often troubled by the policies of the current Israeli government," 48 percent of the public said "yes"—29 percent said "no" and 23 percent were unsure—and fully 70 percent of the leaders said "yes"—with 21 percent saying "no" and nine percent unsure. To the direct statement, "The policies of Menachem Begin and his government have damaged Israel," 35 percent of the public and 43 percent of the leaders agreed; 38 percent of the public and 32 percent of the leaders disagreed; 27 percent of the public and 25 percent of the leaders were unsure. Indeed, a substantial plurality of the leaders believes that "continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank will erode Israel's democratic and humanitarian character" (47 percent, compared to 28 percent of the public), and a comparable plurality believes that "continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank will erode Israel's Jewish character" (43 percent, as against 22 percent of the public). These data are summarized in Table 5.

Table 4

	Public			Leaders		
	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure
<i>"Israel should maintain permanent control over...the West Bank."</i>	42%	29%	30%	21%	59%	20%
<i>"Israel should offer the Arabs territorial compromise in...the West Bank and Gaza in return for credible guarantees of peace."</i>	42	34	23	74	16	10
<i>"Israel should suspend the expansion of settlements in...the West Bank...to encourage peace negotiations."</i>	51	28	21	55	25	20
<i>"Israel should talk with the PLO if the PLO recognizes Israel and renounces terrorism."</i>	70	17	13	73	17	11
<i>"Palestinians have a right to a homeland on the West Bank and Gaza, so long as it does not threaten Israel."</i>	48	26	27	51	28	22

Table 5

	Public			Leaders		
	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure
<i>"I am often troubled by the policies of the Israeli government."</i>	48%	29%	23%	70%	21%	9%
<i>"The policies of Prime Minister Begin and his government have hurt Israel in the U.S."</i>	50	22	28	68	15	18
<i>"Israeli leaders have sometimes been unnecessarily tactless in their dealings with American officials."</i>	50	24	26	81	10	9
<i>"The policies of Menachem Begin and his government have damaged Israel."</i>	35	38	27	43	32	25
<i>"Israel's commitment to democratic values has eroded in recent years."</i>	24	52	24	22	64	14
<i>"Continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank will erode Israel's democratic and humanitarian character."</i>	28	42	31	47	33	20
<i>"Continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank will erode Israel's Jewish character."</i>	22	50	27	43	36	21

Cohen, in one of his most valuable contributions, breaks the responses down into refined categories, in order to learn whether there is any relationship between defense of Prime Minister Begin's policies and perceptions of hostility to Israel in this country. And, as might have been supposed, the respondents who were most likely to see American groups as unfriendly to Israel were also more likely to endorse hawkish points of view with regard to Israeli policy. Cohen goes on to develop a composite portrait of American Jewish attitudes towards Israeli policies, and he estimates that about 45 percent of us are doves while about 30 percent of us are hawks. Among the doves, about half, he estimates, are strongly committed, while the other half only "lean" in their chosen direction. So, too, about half the hawks seem militant, the balance weakly committed to their position.

So far as the public is concerned, then, Cohen finds that 25 percent of us are staunch doves, 20 percent are flaccid doves, another 25 percent of us are ambivalent or inconsistent in our view, 13 percent of us are flaccid hawks and 17 percent of us are avid hawks.

The leaders, as might by now have been expected, turn out to be far more dovish: Some 60 percent qualify as doves, 35 percent decisively so and 25 percent tepidly so; about 25 percent are classified as hawks, with eight percent weakly committed and 17 percent strongly committed to that set of positions.

The most visible group of Jews, the group to which the media most often turn for expression of "the Jewish view," the group on whom the public most depends for its cues, is also the most inhibited.

How do the critical views of Israeli policy that are so widespread amongst American Jews relate to our feelings regarding the propriety of expressing criticism in public? This is surely one of the most controversial issues the community has wrestled with over the last several years. Or is it? For despite all the debates and symposia, all the learned disquisitions and the public vituperations, it turns out that a resounding majority of American Jews believes that it's quite all right for the critics to speak their piece.

● "Israelis who strongly criticize some of the government's policies are bad for Israel." Seventy percent of the public and 85 percent of the leaders disagree.

● "American Jews should not criticize the government of Israel's policy publicly." Fifty-seven percent of both the public and the leaders disagree. (Thirty-one percent agree; the rest are undecided.)

● "American Jewish organizations should feel free to publicly criticize the Israeli government and its policies." Sixty percent of the public agree, while 27 percent disagree; 42 percent of the leaders agree, while 37 percent disagree. (Cohen suggests that the difference between public and leaders here derives from the fact that leaders take their organizations more seriously than the public does.)

In short, very many American Jews are troubled by (at least some aspects of) Israel's policies, and most American Jews regard public expression of such criticism as acceptable. Both these findings are at odds with the conventional wisdom. Once again, we are prompted to wonder why there's such a difference between the general perception and the actual facts, as depicted in the Cohen Report.

A good part of the answer may rest with the leaders. Personally, they are substantially more dovish than the public. But they may well view themselves as unable to speak as individuals, given their organizational roles. And they are split down the middle regarding the propriety of criticism when it comes from organizations. So the most visible group of Jews, the group to which the media most often turns for expression of "the Jewish view," the group on whom the public

most depends for its cues, is also the most inhibited. As Cohen suggests, that inhibition may derive from the seriousness with which the leaders take their organizations. Perhaps they imagine that what an organization says is more likely to be used by Israel's enemies than what an individual says. Or perhaps they fear that an organization that climbs out on a critical limb will lose the support of its constituents. Whatever their reasons, it appears that the leaders—precisely those who regard themselves as best informed about Israel, as most sophisticated in their analysis—feel constrained in expressing their critical conclusions publicly. The leaders, in short, hesitate to lead.

By and large, American Jews are uncertain of the depth and durability of the American commitment to Israel, and that leads to strain.

Leaders and public alike agree that criticism of Israeli policy does not mean, and should not, any diminution of support for Israel itself. The statement, "Those who stop giving to UJA because they oppose Israeli government policies are right to do so," elicited agreement from only 20 percent of the public and 10 percent of the leaders; 61 percent of the public and 78 percent of the leaders disagreed. Quite plainly, American Jews understand the difference between policy and place, between the ephemeral government and the eternal nation.

But all these attitudes, it should be remembered, occur within a context—specifically, in an environment which the Jews view skeptically. The general impression one gets from the data is of a group that is powerfully committed to Israel and its welfare, that thinks the present Israeli government an uncertain custodian of that welfare, that is prepared to say what it thinks—but that is quite apprehensive about the reactions of Americans in general. While most American Jews

endorse the propriety of public criticism of Israel, it is quite possible that most would also have agreed that such criticism gives "aid and comfort" to Israel's enemies. The phrasing of the question is critical on such sensitive matters, and Cohen in one study could not have tested all the different ways in which the issue of public criticism is perceived and understood.

Cohen did ask two questions that suggest once again the kind of stress Jews experience in connection with these matters. One statement reads, "Jews should hold Israel to higher standards of conduct than other countries." A majority of respondents—52 percent of the public, 50 percent of the leaders—agreed. (A substantial minority—37 percent of the public, 39 percent of the leaders—did not.) At the same time, 67 percent of the public and 79 percent of the leaders disagreed with the statement, "Non-Jews should hold Israel to higher standards of conduct than other countries."

Many of us—a bare majority, but a majority nonetheless—accept that within the family, we are entitled to judge ourselves by tough standards. Very few of us accept that outsiders are entitled to employ such standards. At first blush, this looks like an interesting version of a double standard—the opposite of the usual double standard, for we are not permitting ourselves to do or say or think things we wouldn't permit others to do; instead, we are holding ourselves to a tougher standard than we hold others to, and then saying to others that they do not have the right to hold us to the standard to which we hold ourselves. On more careful examination, however, we may have nothing more here than a very common phenomenon of family behavior. Inside the family, we allow ourselves a freedom to be critical that we do not allow others. That stems from our confidence that within the family, we know where to draw the line. (In the case at hand, for example, we draw the line at withholding philanthropic support.) When "strangers" are critical, we cannot be sure that they will observe the limits; we cannot be sure that their purpose is, as ours, constructive. Given our nervousness about how Americans in general see Israel, and the case for

continuing American support, this seems the more plausible explanation.

Still, it is not easy to insist on the distinction. These days, with the Middle East a global issue, no longer a private concern of the Jews, it is essentially impossible to keep our critical observations to ourselves. Debate of Middle East matters cannot take place as a kind of communal "pillow talk." And when others hear what we are saying, they are likely to feel freer to say what they're thinking. It's not so very different from the matter of ethnic jokes: We (as almost all other groups) permit ourselves to tell certain jokes to one another that we would regard as blatantly anti-Semitic if they were told by outsiders. But if outsiders hear us telling those jokes, it's hard to blame them if they repeat what they've heard.

So there is a tension here. By and large, American Jews, knowing the depth of their shared concern for Israel, permit themselves a critical perspective. But they are, at the same time, quite uncertain of the depth and durability of the American commitment to Israel, and that leads to strain. Plainly, although the Cohen Report does not speak specifically to this matter, Jews are concerned lest their critical perceptions be regarded as an excuse by various groups in America, and by the American government, to abandon their commitment to Israel.

The Cohen Report, for all the uncertainties it describes, depicts a community, sure of its purpose and able to make critical distinctions, a community quite different from the caricature of mindlessness that has so often been reported.

The Cohen Report in itself should, if read carefully in appropriate circles, go a long way towards reducing the strain. For it makes crystal-clear that criticism of Israeli policy by American Jews takes place within a context of continuing and profound commitment to Israel's welfare. There is no evidence in the report to support the idea that such criticism causes American Jews to distance themselves from Israel, or that it would lead them to passivity were Israel's security to be threatened by a shift in American policy. On the contrary: The Cohen Report, for all the uncertainties it describes, depicts a mature community, sure of its purpose and able to make critical distinctions, a community quite different from the caricature of mindlessness that has so often been reported. It will surely be read with great interest in Israel, whose leaders have (since long before Menachem Begin) been inclined to hear what they have wanted to hear, to interpret support for the State as support for the government; it should be read carefully in Washington, where policy makers have often misunderstood the ongoing debate within the Jewish community, imagining that Jewish disagreement with this or that Israeli policy marked a decline of the Jewish commitment to Israel; it will be read by American Jewish leaders, who may want to ponder whether it is healthy to stifle their private views to the degree they do, whether such behavior is fair to the Israelis or to their own constituents, neither of whom—until now—have had reason to suppose that the leaders are so critical of Israel's policies; finally, it should be read by American Jews, by the Jewish public, which may well take heart from both the unity and the divisions it reports. The unity speaks to the heart of the Jewish commitment; the divisions reflect the fact that the workings of the heart do not require an end to intelligent and thoughtful debate. ★

Single copies of the Cohen Report are available for \$2.50 from the American Jewish Committee, 165 E. 56 St., New York, NY 10025.