

Israel and American Jewry: A Search for New Relationships

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The values that writers bring with them may condition their analyses and almost always affect their recommendations. Accordingly, we wish to make our own values clear.

Our primary commitment is to the Jewish people, an obligation that precedes our concern for Israel, Israeli Jews, or American Jews. We have no doubt that the Jewish people are entitled to a state of their own, and that Israel, therefore, should properly remain a Jewish state. We also believe that the good of Israel and the Jewish people is best served by the existence of a strong and vibrant American Jewish community with close links to Israel. These ties, not *aliyah* per se, are our primary concern. They should be strengthened by enriching the cultural relationships between Israeli and American Jews. In such associations, Israelis are likely to serve as senior partners, giving more than they receive. But American Jews also have an important contribution to make. They constitute crucial allies in the battle to preserve a Jewish state, and in defining what the Jewishness of Israel should mean.

In the past, the fear that animated Israeli policy-makers was that American Jews would refuse to support Israeli policies. Such concerns emerged most dramatically when such positions were opposed by the American government; for example during the Sinai War and the intifada. Drawing, perhaps, upon classic Zionist images of *galuti* (exilic) Jews, Israeli policy-makers feared that their American brethren were insufficiently committed to Israel or lacked the courage to support her in the face of U.S. governmental opposition and negative public opinion. On the other hand, many Israelis continue to perceive American Jews as troubled by issues of "dual-loyalty."

Although this concern may have had its justification in the past, the "dual-loyalty" perception is no longer helpful in understanding American Jews' relationship with Israel. In focusing on such matters as support or

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loyalty, Israeli leaders have centered their attention on the wrong matter: The real issue is not whether American Jews would oppose Israel, much less support U.S. government policy in opposition to Israel, but the level of interest that American Jews express toward Israel. Opposition to Israeli policy, as reflected for example in the "Who Is a Jew?" issue, or opposition to Likud policies during the intifada, or opposition to the peace process in the Rabin-Peres years, or anxieties after the Netanyahu victory, are signs of a healthy interest in and commitment to Israel. In a series of surveys of American Jews conducted by the American Jewish Committee during the 1980s, those who were most critical of Israeli policies were also most attached to Israel. Israel would be fortunate if it could sustain the kind of interest that characterized American Jewry at its most critical historic moments. It should prefer, however, informed, but engaged, opposition rather than uncritical, if at times, tepid support.

Unfortunately, what we are observing today is growing indifference on both sides. Despite evidence from surveys of relative stability in attachment to Israel, at least until the early 1990s, Israel now occupies a smaller and narrower place in the consciousness of American Jews. This is also true of Israeli concern about American Jews though, as we shall see, it takes a somewhat different form.

WHY IS THE RELATIONSHIP TROUBLED?

An analysis of the problem has by now become commonplace. In broad strokes, since the inception of the Zionist movement, Diaspora Jews in affluent societies (of which American Jewry is the outstanding case), have pursued a largely two-dimensional relationship with the Jewish community in Israel (first the Yishuv, and then the state). One dimension consisted of lobbying their national leaders to extend economic, military, and diplomatic support to the Jewish homeland. The other dimension was expressed through fund-raising to support social welfare needs that largely flowed from the rescue of Jewish refugees and their re-settlement in the country. More generally, the funds were meant to lend material support to a society perceived as having to expend a disproportionate share of its resources on security needs. We refer to this relationship, which embraces political advocacy and philanthropic activism, as the "mobilized model."

This model now appears to be in steady erosion that is unlikely to be reversed in the near future. Objectively, Israel no longer requires the financial and political assistance it once did; and, subjectively, American Jews no longer feel compelled to offer it.

THE PASSING OF THE "GOLDEN AGE"

To gain some perspective about the mobilized model, and to begin to understand why it now seems to be running out of steam, one needs to turn back to what may be its "golden age," the decade immediately following the Six-Day War (1967-1977). For it was then that the level of American Jewish political advocacy and philanthropic activity on behalf of Israel reached its zenith. Israel became — and remains until this day — the number one item on the Jewish public agenda, surpassing liberal politics and the fight against anti-Semitic discrimination. Israel's rise to prominence in Jewish affairs occasioned a dramatic turnabout in the political mobilization of American Jewry and signaled their willingness to confront American political leaders in a forthright manner.

The impact of Israel on fund-raising is also well known. In the early years of statehood, the Jewish state was in dire need of financial aid. In the absence of large-scale assistance from other governments, contributions from American Jews constituted an important source of support. But the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War propelled levels of giving to UJA/Federation campaigns to unprecedented heights.

Social concerns about Israel also enhanced the relationship between her officials and American Jewish philanthropic leaders. During the early years of the state, the Israeli government feared political intervention from American Zionist leaders. Philanthropists, unlike the Zionists, were less intimately involved in domestic Israeli politics, and were quite content to contribute money that Israel desperately needed in return for status rewards. When, beginning in the late 1960s, Israel assumed an increasingly important place on the agenda of American Jewish public life, the status rewards that Israel was able to confer increased in value.

During this very special period, several interrelated factors served to enhance Israel's prominence in the consciousness of American Jews. A quick review of them will illustrate the special character of that era, and the unlikelihood of its return. The key factors included:

1. The emergence of the Holocaust as a central symbol of Jewish life. This phenomenon was embodied in the slogan of "never again," the sense that the Holocaust threat was a constant of Jewish history, and that Israel was the obvious location for its recurrence.

2. The traumatic fears for the future of Israel that emerged in the period immediately preceding the Six-Day War, the war itself, the exhilaration that followed the victory, and the Yom Kippur War. American Jews, including many of their leaders, discovered that they harbored deeper emotional links with Israel and its survival than they had heretofore realized.

3. The blatant Jew-hatred that energized the Arab enemies, and the un-

ambiguous character of the Arab-Israel conflict. After 1967, Israelis seeking peace were publicly threatened by violent Arab neighbors. Moreover, the apparent isolation of Israel in a world that appeared to range from hostility to indifference also evoked strong emotional resonances.

4. The erosion in the U.S. of the liberal political coalition that had provided a context of meaning for many American Jews and their major organizations. We must recall that the central force that energized American Jewish organizations until the end of World War II was the defense against anti-Semitism. But following the end of the war, doors which heretofore had been closed to Jews — at universities, large corporations, financial institutions, and even in social clubs — were now opened. Jewish organizations that had been created to oppose anti-Semitism required new programs and a new rationale for existence. They centered around the notion of Jewish liberalism in general, and the struggle for Black equality in particular, as a mandate of the Jewish tradition and the first line of defense against a potential re-emergence of anti-Semitism.

But in the late 1960s, the Black struggle took on an anti-white and anti-Semitic turn. Black organizations turned their attention — and their protests — to the economic disparity between Blacks and whites, rather than to legal discrimination alone. They protested not so much the lack of equal opportunity (an agenda congenial to the Jewish worldview), but the lack of equality in results — an agenda in tension with the traditional civil rights orientation of most Jewish organizations.

In the space of a few years, the older moderate Black leadership that had emphasized coalitions with Jews and other liberals was replaced by younger militants. Some Jews who had held prominent positions in Black organizations were displaced. The new Black leaders tended to dismiss the Jewish contribution to legal desegregation and the assistance which Jews had accorded Blacks. In addition, some of the new Black organizations and leaders were strongly anti-Israel.

5. The early 1970s witnessed a surge of interest in European (white) ethnicity, partly as a response to Black militancy, that undoubtedly overflowed into Jewish precincts. As one prominent Federation leader said, "If Black can be beautiful, surely Jewish can be beautiful." This individual, who was heretofore identified with near-assimilationist tendencies, became actively engaged in aggressive, pro-Israel programs.

6. The awakening of the Soviet Jewry movement provided American Jews with yet another important Israel-related objective and focus of mobilization.

7. A highly educated, relatively affluent, third generation of American Jews came of age, so secure in its Americanism that it harbored little fear of charges of "dual loyalty" which had dissuaded a prior generation from pursuing an assertive pro-Israel stance.

These factors coincided at a moment in history when American Jews had started wondering who is a Jew and what is a Jew. Israel, beyond everything else, filled a symbolic vacuum. The factors that made for a focus on the Jewish state operated synergistically to propel Israel to the top of American Jewish consciousness, to an extent, that for a time it came to dominate, if not re-shape, that consciousness. We do not anticipate a re-emergence of the passionate political and philanthropic activism that characterized the mobilized model in its golden age.

ANOTHER REASON: A STRONGER ISRAEL

In addition to the factors listed above, the decline of the mobilized model can be traced to developments that have occurred during the last decade in Israel itself. Most important among these is that, objectively, Israel is less in need of the financial and political support that American Jews had provided.

Politically and militarily, Israel is perceived as basically secure. The collapse of the USSR, the subsequent agreements with the PLO, the treaty with Jordan, and recognition by other Arab states, have significantly lessened the level of international hostility and the likelihood of significant, sustained violent clashes. The long-term prospects for Israel's security may not be as sanguine as some on Israel's left believe, but it is perception that counts.

In addition, the image of Israel's economy is one of steady and even dramatic growth in the last several years. With relatively moderate inflation, increased foreign investment, declining unemployment, and abundant signs of conspicuous consumption, it is difficult for Israel's advocates to argue on behalf of economic assistance to absorb the diminished flow of new immigrants. Hence, the case for Israel as a beneficiary of Jewish largesse and of Jewish political support has never been more difficult.

PHILANTHROPIC DECLINE

From the American Jewish side, several factors have conspired to reduce in absolute and relative terms the share of philanthropic funds designated for Israel. The most significant constraint in the U.S. has been the stagnant levels of donations to local Jewish Federations (which may, in fact, reflect declining passions for Israel). In contrast with the golden age of mobilization when donations grew substantially, the past twenty years and more have witnessed declines in contributions in real, inflation-adjusted terms, to the central Federation-sponsored philanthropic campaigns. In addition, as noted, the share of these funds directed to Israel has declined as well.

The American Jewish Federation-sponsored philanthropic pie may be seen as divided into three parts: one destined for Israel and other overseas

needs; another devoted to what has been termed, of late, "Jewish continuity" (formal and informal programs of Jewish education, camping, trips to Israel, etc.); and the third designated for a variety of domestic Jewish human services (hospitals, nursing homes, family and children's agencies, etc.).

Advocates of more money to Israel are currently at a relative disadvantage. "Jewish continuity" proponents have at their disposal a powerful issue, recently identified, that strikes at the core of concerns for the very survival of the Jewish philanthropic system itself. Those who focus on human services point to huge cutbacks in U.S. and local government support of all social service agencies, of which the Jewish-sponsored agencies have been receiving close to \$2.5 billion annually before the 1995-6 cutbacks came into effect. Backers of these two sectors — Jewish continuity and human services — then, can point to newly realized, legitimate, and pressing crises in their spheres, while arguing that Israel is better able to make up the shortfall in funds for what are essentially nation-building tasks that ultimately benefit the Israeli taxpayer.

Supporters of a larger Israeli share of the philanthropic pie suffer another disadvantage: the "Jewish continuity" and human service agencies are locally based, clearly visible, and are a constituent part of the community. Israeli social needs and agencies, and those responsible for funding them, are several thousand miles away. They lack the informal contacts and associations with those who decide on how the American Jewish philanthropic dollar will be divided.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPHERES

Another factor that has diminished the significance of the mobilization model relates to the distinction between the public and private spheres of American Jewry. The public sphere refers to Jewish organizations, politics, and fund-raising. Its rhetoric is sprinkled with such themes as community, solidarity, and peoplehood, or such slogans as, "Keep the Promise," and "We are One." In contrast, the private sphere of Jewish identity relates to family, ritual, synagogue, religiosity, and education. Its rhetoric is characterized by such terms as spirituality, meaning, search, and journeys. Its language is softer, more comforting, non-judgmental, and, these days, more personally engaging.

Obviously, Judaism encompasses both spheres. It is composed of an ethnic dimension that evokes a sense of common history, communal obligations, even a national or quasi-national identity. The private dimension is the more spiritual and narrowly religious dimension encompassing aspects of Jews' relationship to God. Whereas Jewish tradition insists upon and socializes Jews to both public and private commitments, the decline of this tradition

has been accompanied by the bifurcation of the two spheres, and they have become increasingly distinctive, separate aspects of Jewish life.

Of primary importance for our immediate concern is that over the last several years, the public sphere has declined in Jewish life, whereas the private sphere has been holding its own. Thus in the private realm, day-school enrollments are up, as are Jewish studies courses, and the publication of Jewish books. Ritual levels are increasing among Orthodox and committed Conservative Jews. Softer evidence points to continued ferment and creativity in Jewish feminism, and in what has been called the Jewish spiritual renewal movement.

Jewish life in the public sphere seems to be in decline. It involves fewer and fewer Jews whose commitments seem to be increasingly tenuous. In addition to the stagnation or reduction in contributions to Jewish Federations, there is less mobilization around political causes (of all sorts); a rapidly-aging membership in large Jewish organizations; and a decline in volunteerism, particularly when comparing women born after World War II (now middle-aged and younger) with their older counterparts.

Links between American Jews and Israel, one might argue, have been hitched to the wrong horse. Because involvement with the Jewish homeland has been primarily political and philanthropic, the historic links of American Jews with Israel have been undermined by the declining interest in Jewish politics and philanthropy. In turn, because much of the American Jewish agenda has been linked to Israel, the fatigue associated with the declining mobilization model may have dragged down the entire Jewish public sphere with it. In any event, because Israel has had little real meaning in American Jewish religious, spiritual, or cultural life, the recent relative vitality in these areas does little to renew interest in things Israeli.

WHO NEEDS AMERICAN JEWS?

American Jewish policy-makers need not turn to theoretical analyses by social scientists to learn that their political and philanthropic contributions are no longer prized by Israelis as they once were. They need only listen to the leaders of Israel who have been telling them in loud and clear voices: "We don't need you." The voices expressing disdain for American Jewish assistance were heard most clearly after the 1992 Labor Party victory.

In his first visit to the U.S. after his election as Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin told AIPAC officials that Israel no longer required their help in lobbying Congress and the Administration. He announced that, from now on, Israel would handle her own lobbying. Shortly thereafter, Finance Minister Avraham Shochat commented that Israel no longer needed over-priced Israel Bonds — that Israel could (and soon would) borrow more cheaply in the

open markets. Yossi Beilin, Deputy Foreign Minister, observed on several occasions, that Israel no longer required Diaspora contributions for social needs. And, in repeated statements, President Ezer Weizmann announced that Israel wants nothing at all from the Diaspora, with the single exception of young Jewish bodies coming on *aliyah*.

These statements reflected an underlying mood of self-confidence, even triumphalism, bred by personal, economic, political, military, and diplomatic achievements. As Israeli leaders came to see their country as more secure and successful, they rejected the old model of Israel-Diaspora relations which, in retrospect, is somewhat humiliating to both partners. On the one hand, it implies an Israeli dependency on Diaspora Jews for their survival, thereby denying that Israel is a secure and independent state. On the other hand, it attributes only a utilitarian or instrumental role to Diaspora Jews in that partnership. They are partners with Israel only because of their contributions to the latter's wellbeing. The title of Matti Golan's recent book, *Money for Blood*, blatantly expresses this point of view.

It is not at all clear that the mobilization model will be replaced by a healthier one. Those Israelis who are popularly identified as post-Zionists, while numerically few, occupy influential positions in the country's cultural life. They prefer a less pronounced Jewish state for several reasons. One consideration may be their personal alienation from Judaism; another may be their feeling that dissociating the state from its Jewish roots is necessary to provide its Arab citizens with full equality. To them, rejecting ties with American and other Diaspora Jewries does not constitute a problem. Their voices, increasingly strident in the last several years, will gain further ascendancy if the peace process continues, security problems abate, and Israeli Arabs demand a greater voice in shaping the meaning of Israeli nationhood.

But even today, when post-Zionist voices are confined to academia and culturally elite forums, Israeli leaders have advised American Jewry that the Jewish homeland has less need of their philanthropy and political support. Therefore, if the most involved American Jews are to remain linked to Israel, if the Jewish state is to play a significant role in the consciousness of a substantial number of American Jews, additional models of connection — and new expressions of Israeli need — will have to emerge. These must be based on an understanding of the currents in American life that mold the culture of American Jews and the divisions among them.

CURRENTS IN AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE

American Judaism, like American religion in general, is adaptationist rather than radical. That is, American Judaism takes its cultural environment as a

given, rather than as something to be rejected. It is, as a rule, non-judgmental about broad social and cultural norms. The values which American Jews have adopted, mostly unconsciously, are those of the professional, intellectual, upper-middle classes who also dominate the media — the values of the “new class.”

This adaptationist stance has two important implications for Israel-Diaspora policies. First, American values and culture have helped forge a domestic Judaism that is, in many respects, unlike its counterpart(s) in Israel. Second, policies seeking to enhance the relationship of American Jews with Israel must take these values, which tend to undermine American Jewish ties to Israel and to Israeli Jews, into account. Hence, if such links are to be strengthened, those responsible for projecting Israel to American Jews must seek a delicate balance: They need to acknowledge the attractive nature of these values, yet simultaneously seek to challenge and even transform them.

THE VALUES OF AMERICAN JEWS

American Judaism is characterized by four distinctive features: universalism, moralism, personalism/individualism, and voluntarism. Each feature merits elaboration.

1. *Universalism* means that the Jewish tradition contains a message for all humans, not only for Jews, that Judaism is open to select messages of other traditions and cultures, and that Jews should be involved with improving the lot of all people, not only their own. This impulse finds expression throughout the public rhetoric of American Jewry. One example is found in the most recently published Sabbath and Holiday prayer book of the Conservative movement which states that: “From one group to one humanity has been our goal.”

The vast majority of American Jews are only comfortable in supporting Israel when Israeli policies are perceived as consistent with universalist and moralist values (moralism is described below). This helps explain one reason why philanthropic and political support for Israel was historically projected as support for needy Jews, refugees from oppression, or support for a state under siege. Nonetheless, when unconstrained by Jewish particularist values, a certain brand of universalism undermines the idea of a special relationship between American Jews and Israel, Israeli or indeed, any other Jews. After all, if all people are to be treated equally without regard to race, religion, national origin, sex, (and, most recently, sexual preference), how can American Jews feel comfortable in maintaining a special relationship with, let alone granting preference to, Israelis?

2. *Moralism*. Moralism was defined by the sociologist Marshall Sklare as the idea that “religious man is distinguished not by his observance of

rituals but rather by the scrupulousness of his ethical behavior." In its ideal-typical form, moralism is the opposite of ritualism, a perspective that finds significance and transcendence in the performance of certain religiously or culturally ordained acts for their own sake.

A recent survey of members of Conservative congregations asked for reactions to the statement, "A Jew can be religious even if he or she isn't particularly observant." Note that the statement refers not to what it means to be a good Jew, but what it means to be a religious Jew. Although, with the exception of Orthodox adherents, Conservative synagogue members are generally the most traditionally observant group within American Jewry, seventy six percent agreed that a Jew could be religious even if he or she wasn't particularly observant. *Hiloni* Israelis would respond very differently. For them, religious Jews are identified with observance, which, problematically, is one reason why non-observant Israelis say they are not religious.

In an interview with the editors of *Yahadut Hofshit*, a publication of the Secular Israeli Movement for a Humanist Judaism (*Tnuah Hilonit Yisraelit L'Yahadut Humanistit*) Dr. Yair Auron, lecturer on Contemporary Jewry at Seminar ha'Kibbutzim, stated:

One of the great failures of Jewish-Zionist education is [that] ... we hardly ever affirm the legitimacy of different contemporary religious expressions. The young secularist has only a faint knowledge of non-Orthodox expressions [of Judaism]. He generally adopts the perspective of Israeli Orthodoxy with regard to these movements.

This observation helps explain why American Jews have such difficulty in appreciating the virtual monopoly that the Orthodox exercise over the meaning of Judaism in Israel. It also explains why, for the most part, Israelis hesitate to take the non-Orthodox denominations in the United States seriously. Israelis' disdain for non-Orthodox religious movements constitutes a formidable obstacle to stronger links between Israeli and American Jews.

3. *Personalism and individualism* are reflected in the observation that "the modern Jew selects from the vast storehouse of the past what is not only objectively possible for him to practice but subjectively possible for him to identify with" (Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum). Personalism is the tendency to transform and evaluate the tradition in terms of its utility or significance to the individual. It provides the basis for innovations, such as those undertaken by American Jews, which the more conventional Israelis find outlandish or disturbing. Such innovations can come in the

form of inventing new Jewish rites, ceremonies, and symbols, conceivably without the sanction of any religious movement, and with little regard to the preservation of traditional forms or meanings. For example, an elaborate folder advertised a weekend retreat, "The Living Waters Weekend," under the direction of Rabbis Phillip and Shoni Labowitz, co-rabbis of Temple Adath Or in Ft. Lauderdale, and "creators of healing rituals in Jewish Renewal." The Saturday program consisted of an

Optional Sunrise Walk and Meditation. Musical Worship. Service at the Ocean. Guided Conscious Eating at Breakfast. Water Exercises for Body Toning. Yoga with Kabbalah. Relaxation Time. Luncheon Recalling Our Heroes. Outdoor Games, Informal Talk, Time for Massage. Sacred Gatherings for Men and Women. Poetry Reading and Pre-dinner Music. Sunset Barbecue with Folk Dancing. Havdalah Ritual on the Beach. Kabbalistic Meditation.

The Sunday program: Sunrise Co-ed Mikvah Ritual in the Ocean. Breakfast Celebration with new Affirmation. Sacred Sharing and Closing Ceremony.

This kind of program is extreme in its departure from conventional mores; it and similar ones may touch few American Jews, but do represent the personalist and individualist tendencies that have come to characterize much of American Judaism. Personalism emerges clearly in the shift of authority from the "outside" to the "inside" of a person, from God or the collective to the individual. It undermines a central assumption of Zionism and makes it difficult to speak of peoplehood and one's obligation to Israel. Large numbers of American Jews are unlikely to relate seriously to the Jewish homeland unless they find a personally significant meaning to that relationship.

Some observers attribute these and related changes to the impact of television viewing, pointing to a flight from organizations into individual activities. One researcher notes that in the last two decades, the number of American bowlers has grown, but the number affiliated with bowling leagues has dropped by half. Even ethnic identities are sustained, albeit in a most superficial manner, without ongoing contact with a particular group. Sociologist Richard Alba writes:

Ethnic identities are not typically anchored in strongly ethnic social structures. Such structures still do exist, although they have been weakened by powerful currents of assimilation. Intermarriage is widespread; friendship circles are typically quite diverse in ethnic terms; membership in ethnic organizations is quite rare; and so

forth. As a consequence, many whites who identify in ethnic terms, even intensely so, have only limited contact with persons of the same ethnic background.

4. *Voluntarism* is closely related to personalism. It refers to the voluntary nature of Jewish identity and the manner in which it is expressed. Jews in the United States are free to identify or not to identify as Jews; there is no fixed national registry of the population by religion or ethnicity. Research on other ethnic groups, especially among those members with multiple ancestries, demonstrates that group identity in the United States is fluid and situational. Ethnic identity changes from one time to the next are in part dependent upon the needs of the moment, the social context within which an individual finds him or herself, or the holiday calendar.

Evidence from the recently conducted National Jewish Population Study indicates that a significant number of respondents who identified themselves as Jewish in 1990 denied such an identity when they were re-surveyed in 1993. Not only are individuals free to decide whether to be Jewish, but they are free to choose the intensity of their Jewishness. They can be more or less Jewishly involved, generally with little social sanction attached to their choice; and they can vary the intensity in the short term or throughout their lives.

DIVERSIFICATION IN GROUP IDENTITY

Any policy aimed at strengthening American Jews' relationship with Israel must contend not only with the values of American Jews, as described above, but with the varieties of Jewish commitment they display.

Summary statistics, such as the estimated 52 percent of American Jews who intermarry, can be misleading. Many policy-makers — both in Israel and the United States — formulate policies under the implicit assumption that there is only one type of American Jew. But common sense would suggest that the nearly six million Jews who are scattered throughout the country constitute a heterogeneous population. The proportion of American Jews who intermarry for example, may be on the rise for one set of Jews, but not among others. Indeed, there may even be an increase in commitment to Jewish norms and values in other segments of the community.

We reject the widely shared image of a uniform American Jewish population whose Jewish loyalties and commitments are, in the short run, steadily eroding. (We are less confident in our assessment of the long run.) Rather, we believe American Jewry is becoming increasingly fragmented as it responds in diverse ways to the temptations and the challenges posed by contemporary American culture and society to Jewish identity, Jewish

family formation, and the sense of Jewish peoplehood. These challenges are expressed in increased intermarriage, but also in increased day-school enrollments; in adopting patrilineal descent by the Reform — a decidedly non-traditional policy — but also in the call, by a new brand of Reform leaders, for increased ritualism; in the trivializing of Judaism, but also in greater spiritual search; in institutional disaffiliation, but also in the growth of Jewish studies at universities; in population dispersion, but also in an explosion in the number of Jewish discussion groups on the internet; etc. The contradictory trends in Jewish demographics and institutional behavior both reflect and provoke contradictory trends in patterns of Jewish identification at individual and local levels. We believe that virtually all American Jews have absorbed the values of universalism, moralism, personalism, and voluntarism, but they have done so in different measures, and interpreted them in multiple ways.

Our analysis of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey identifies four groups of American Jews. We label them: the actively engaged, the moderately engaged, the loosely engaged, and the disengaged. Each group contains about a quarter of American Jews. The intermarriage rates for the four run from 4% (the actively engaged) to 10%, 19%, and 49% respectively.

In particular, we take exception to outreach policies and funds that are devoted to disengaged Jews. We have argued that Jewish continuity and outreach efforts should focus on strengthening the most active, and augmenting them by aiming at the moderately or loosely engaged. By extension, proposals for strengthening relations between Israel, Israeli Jews, and American Jews, require the formulation of targeted policies rather than those geared for an entire, undifferentiated mass of American Jews.

Jews who have remained actively engaged in Jewish life are resisting, unconsciously if not consciously, many of the American values to which we have alluded. One reason, we suspect, that Israel continues to be important in their lives is precisely because, almost by definition, relationships with Israel run contrary to the values which the majority of American Jews espouse. With respect to the remaining Jews, policies that explicitly contradict values of universalism, personalism, and voluntarism are unlikely to attract more than a small constituency. On the other hand, these values diminish ties between American Jews and the Jewish people, and the stronger they become, the more marginal Israel becomes. What we are suggesting is that in formulating policy in these spheres, Israel must project itself as a source of resistance to prevailing American values — (moralism aside) — while at the same time appreciate that head-on confrontation is counter-productive.

OPTIONS FOR MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ISRAEL

We cannot dismiss the possibility that the relationship of American Jews to Israel will be increasingly characterized by irrelevance. Israel already evokes little meaning to many American Jews. Indeed, even some active and involved Jews conduct their Jewish lives in ways in which Israel is largely divorced from their Jewish concerns. About a third of American Jews now find Israel clearly irrelevant (and they say so, almost in so many words). Israel is not all that important for their sense of being a Jew. They don't even express an interest in visiting there.

Among other American Jews, Israel is little more than a tourist attraction, an interesting place to visit, a country whose historical sites evoke some romantic and even nostalgic associations, but little else. About half of American Jews find Israel an exciting tourist country; a minority of this group has actually visited there, and the remainder report that they would like to do so when they can afford the time and money. To the extent that Israel projects itself only as a tourist land, it serves to strengthen a model which undermines meaningful relationships between Israel, Israeli Jews, and American Jews.

The paradigms that strengthen such relationships are the mobilized model, and one that we call the "source of personal meaning," which we discuss below. (We do not suggest that these are the only plausible options for re-invigorating the Israel-American Jewry relationship.)

Although in decline, the mobilized model characterizes the manner in which most actively engaged Jews still relate to the Jewish state. Israel is seen as a needy country and American Jews are obligated to come to its defense. The model does not demand that they relate to Israeli society in religious, educational, cultural, or social depth. Indeed, we already indicated that this model is ill-suited to the changes within American Jewry, especially as the private sphere of Jewish life becomes stronger at the expense of public reality. But this model has by no means vanished and there are several valid reasons for its continuation.

First, it is foolish to believe that because Israel is no longer as dependent on the financial and political support of Diaspora Jewry as it once was, this dependency will not recur, or that even today it is of no value. It is true that philanthropic contributions to Israel represent a declining proportion of the country's national income. But when considered as a contribution to a targeted need, for example, funds given to Israel for Diaspora education or aspects of immigrant absorption, the Diaspora's financial input may represent an important source of income. It is a mistake to believe that the Government of Israel picks up the slack represented by diminished contributions; programs that the contributions underwrite suffer. Even some

Israeli leaders who deny the importance of philanthropic and political support by American Jews know their remarks are exaggerated. They do so mainly to score political points with their domestic constituency.

Second, the mobilized model is still geared to tens of thousands of highly active, albeit generally older, American Jews. It has not only served the interests of Israel, but of Diaspora Jews whose ties to Judaism are primarily ethnic rather than religious. As early as twenty years ago, we recall attending a meeting at which the Israelis told American Jews that their philanthropic contributions were increasingly marginal to the Israeli economy. An American Jewish leader replied, "We don't care if you burn the money we send you, but we have to keep on raising money if we are to involve American Jews with Judaism." The mobilized model may appeal to fewer and fewer Jews, but it has by no means disappeared.

Finally, the mobilized model isn't necessarily an alternative to other paradigms. Indeed, it has served as a vehicle for personal meaning. Many American Jews, especially the elite group of contributors and political activists, became involved with Israel through their public-ethnic concerns and then discovered personal, even spiritual, meaning in this effort. As a result, they built richer Jewish lives for themselves and their families. In a clear way, public-sphere activity enriched the private sphere meaning.

The "source of personal meaning" model envisions and is inspired by, a community of American Jews with strong personal ties to Israel and to its Jews. A significant number of them visit, call, and write regularly to their friends and family members in Israel. They follow news of Israel in the Jewish as well as in the general press. They know some Hebrew, and are at least somewhat familiar with Israeli society and culture beyond the question of Israel-Arab relations. They maintain direct relations with Israeli people, not just formal ties with institutions. They may have business relationships as well. Many of them envy American Jews who make *aliyah*, and would be satisfied, if not pleased, were their own children to do so. Such Jews may be characterized as those who spend the major portion of their lives in the United States, but who have significant emotional ties to Israeli society. While not unknown among Conservative and Reform Jews, these relationships are more typical of many Orthodox communities where, for example, spending a year in Israel between high school and college is a norm, and where several families in local synagogues have made *aliyah*.

It is among the most committed Jews that we find the greatest number who see Israel as a source of personal meaning. What is striking, however, is that these Jews are also easily mobilized in the public support of Israel. In other words, the two models — one conducted in the public sphere, the other in the private sphere — are by no means exclusive. For the most committed Jews, the private and public spheres of Judaism reinforce one

another. This, in turn, implies that developing the private sphere of Zionist or pro-Israel identity will not come at the expense of the public sphere, where the mobilized model is played out. It also suggests that mobilized Jews may be the best candidates for new private-sphere relationships.

About fifteen percent of American Jews fit these two models. They have visited Israel at least twice, a sign of a more than passing interest. Perhaps two thirds of this group — roughly 10 percent of all American Jews — are, or have been, heavily involved in fund raising or political work on Israel's behalf, but only a third of this group — about five percent of all American Jews — can be classified as deeply personally attached to Israel in the manner we described.

In our view, given the relative strength of the private sphere in Jewish life, and given the cultural influences of modernity on contemporary Jewish identity, the most fruitful policy for enriching American Jews' relationship with the Jewish homeland lies in expanding the number who draw powerful, enduring, and compelling personal meaning from their relationship with Israel and its Jews. This means adopting policies aimed at augmenting the meaning of Israel for those who are now in the "mobilized" mode, and trying to elevate erstwhile "tourists" to a more serious and personal engagement with the country.

Is such a policy feasible? The answer is positive if we concentrate our efforts on that segment of American Jews which is already involved in Jewish activity. These are Jews who are seeking a focus that can assist them in constructing a meaningful Judaism. They are anxious about the threats to their Jewish roots and are likely, therefore, to respond to a message that subtly and tactfully challenges the values of universalism, personalism, and individualism.

POLICY DIRECTIONS

Projecting Israel in this manner is no simple task. If the Jewish homeland is to become a focus of personal meaning, American Jews will have to take serious interest in Israeli life. The image of Israel and Israelis must become more realistic than what presently exists. And the question American Jewry must ask is whether Israelis are really interested in them as Jews rather than as philanthropic contributors or political lobbyists.

Recent work by Daniel Elazar points to a useful direction. He notes that the Jewish people are now engaged in a world-wide struggle between what he calls "Judaizers" and "normalizers" — a struggle that is taking place in both Israel and the Diaspora. He calls upon the Judaizers in all countries to unite in efforts to assure the Judaic character of the Jewish people. Such an alliance would provide a common ground for Israeli-Diaspora interaction.

The Israeli Judaizers will need Diaspora support. Their constituency is predominantly the Orthodox, *edot hamizrah*, and ultra-nationalist secularists. This constituency's influence is limited by its under-representation in the academic, cultural, industrial, and bureaucratic establishments, and is situated, predominantly, in one part of the political spectrum (the right). It is also identified in the public mind with *dati* political parties and *haredim*, associations that do little to enhance the reputation or attractiveness of the Judaizers' positions. To succeed, this camp needs support from Ashkenazi politically-leftist Jews who have yet to involve themselves in this struggle. Their participation would strengthen democratic tendencies among the Judaizers, thereby indirectly undercutting much of the appeal of the normalizers, and directly undermining the more extreme Judaizers who are no friends of Western, modern, and democratic cultural tendencies.

In addition, the Judaizers among the non-Orthodox need one another's help in establishing models of Jewish vitality that are attractive and coherent. The battle for modern Judaism must be waged against the normalizers in Israel who seek to de-Judaize the state, and the normalizers in the United States who would universalize and personalize Judaism by ridding it of its ethnic components and ritual traditions.

There may be other bases for action as well. We need to identify other struggles where the moral, symbolic, political, and financial support of Jews in one society (the U.S.) can be utilized on behalf of Jews in the other country (Israel). Environmentalism, feminism, civil liberties, democracy, and consumers' rights are causes that might draw together small, but culturally significant, numbers of Jews from both communities. Israeli and American Jews should welcome one another's participation in their domestic struggles.

Orthodox Jews throughout the world are pioneers in advocating their particular vision of Israel, and in advancing the interests of their own communities, institutions, and programs. They also exhibit, as we suggested, the highest rates of personal involvement in Israel. The two phenomena are connected. Other Diaspora Jews and Israelis would do well to adopt the Orthodox model, not necessarily in substance, but in form. That is, they should feel free to advance their particular, ideologically driven visions of Judaism and of Israel regardless of where they live.

The endeavor to forge meaningful and enduring cultural relationships between Israel and American Jewry, and more broadly, Israel and the Diaspora is a daunting one. Yet, we remain convinced that the construction of such relationships, or the mere search for effective ways to do so, constitutes a national priority for the State of Israel in the twenty-first century, and an essential feature of the contemporary Zionist movement. □