

# JEWISH SURVIVAL

THE IDENTITY PROBLEM  
AT THE CLOSE  
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Ernest Krausz  
Gitta Tulea

EDITORS

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## Acknowledgments

This volume is the outcome of the international workshop, which was organized by the Sociological Institute for Community Studies at Bar-Ilan University on the 18th and 19th of March, 1997. The workshop, which marked the twenty-five years anniversary of the Institute, dealt with the topic of "Jewish Survival—The Identification Problem at the End of the Twentieth Century."

There were participants from six countries, drawn from different areas of the social sciences, who presented papers and contributed to the discussion on the various aspects of Jewish survival in postmodern society, in Israel and in the Diaspora. The workshop was sponsored by the International Center for Jewish Identity at Bar-Ilan University and by our Institute, and was supported by the Schnitzer Foundation for Research on the Israeli Economy and Society, Bar-Ilan University, the World Zionist Organization to mark the centennial anniversary of Zionism, and by the Leon Tamman Foundation for Research into Jewish Communities. The workshop was also supported by the president of Bar-Ilan University, Professor Moshe Kaveh, by the rector, Professor Yehuda Friedlander, the director-general, Dr. Shabtai Lobel, and the dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Benzion Zilberfarb. To all of them we are most grateful.

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In the process of editing this volume, we were greatly helped by the expertise and thorough work carried out by Sarah Geiger Leslau.

This collection of presentations appears as Special Volume VI of our journal, *Sociological Papers*. The papers express the personal views of the authors.

The Editors



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## Foreword

The International Center for Jewish Identity at Bar-Ilan University was established last year to provide a framework for academic research into, and educational outreach regarding, the continuing quest for the preservation of the Jewish people and its age-old religion and culture. The Center ties technology and tradition together in a new, dynamic tapestry, and marries Internet and other state-of-the-art means with the creative skills and broad knowledge of Bar-Ilan University educators. Another Center aim is to support dialogue between Jewish youth of all origins and persuasions.

I am pleased, therefore, to support and encourage the activities of Bar-Ilan University's Sociological Institute for Community Studies. The international workshop it organized on the topic of Jewish Survival in 1997, as well as the publication of this volume summarizing the workshop proceedings, make a meaningful contribution to the academic literature on this important topic. We were particularly fortunate to have been joined at the workshop by eminent social scientists from other universities in Israel and abroad.

I salute the director of the Sociological Institute, Professor Ernest Krausz, for his leadership, as well as his ongoing advice and counsel.

Professor Moshe Kaveh  
President  
Bar-Ilan University



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# Introduction

*Julius Gould*

This volume from the Sociological Institute for Community Studies workshop on Jewish survival speaks for itself, and in that sense needs no introduction. But I am happy to introduce it to a wider audience and, in so doing, testify to the enthusiasm and scholarly zeal which marked the proceedings—qualities with which Professor Krausz and his colleagues at the Institute are richly endowed.

1. The chapters are written by experts in many disciplines, and deal with carefully chosen but diverse aspects of the subject. They illuminate most of the key questions about Jewish survival. Those questions are not matters of ghetto-angst or existential pain. They relate to the continued evolution of an ancient people, and a long-lived body of thought, as well as to the fate of a modern polity. The chapters are marked—as they should be—by a high degree of sophistication. For no historian or social scientist should need reminding of the great dangers in simplistic contrasts—not least in the sociology of religion. As is almost always the case, the observer of religious life uses a language that has its origins in the language of those who are observed: and such a language is seldom clinical or value-free. There is a constant risk of confusing theology with real or supposed social trends and of allowing beliefs or opinions to color the interpretation of evidence. There is also the omnipresent question of what constitutes evidence where the empirical or contingent levels overlap so steadily with metaphysics and spirituality.

The volatile issues of contemporary Jewish life, in Israel and within the diverse countries of the Diaspora, do not lend themselves to summary classification. Firstly, “ideal” and “material” interests (to use Max Weber’s still serviceable contrast) intersect interminably. Secondly, the peculiarity of Jewish history has long been seen to be the way peoplehood has been supported by religious faith—often in the most unpropitious settings. That the Jews maintained for so long a sense of identity while they lived within the bound-

aries of other peoples has long seemed a unique historical conjunction. In 1943, in his masterly survey of anti-Semitism, Morris Ginsberg did not seek to “explain” it, but observed that

It is difficult to account for this save by the strength of the faith in the Jewish religion as distinct and different from every other religion, a faith strengthened by persecution, upheld by a powerful religio-legal discipline, and producing or strengthening a bond of union which survives *even among those over whom religion has lost its hold*. (Ginsberg 1947: 201 [emphasis added])

This is the historical fact that makes the study of today’s Jewish acculturation and secularization so complex: and, as is by now so glaringly obvious, these complexities are found within Israeli society and have continuing implications for relations with the Diaspora. Morris Ginsberg was writing at an anguished turning-point in Jewish and world history. Of course, times have changed. As Irving Louis Horowitz said in his opening address to the workshop, “the Jewish people are no longer the people they were between the Anschluss and Auschwitz.” Yet the change is not quite total. Ginsberg’s reference, so many years ago, to “a bond of union which survives even among those over whom religion has lost its hold” may still be relevant as applied to contemporary Israel. Did not Horowitz call the workshop’s attention to “the most pronounced tendency in present-day Israeli society itself, the manifestly weak levels of religiosity and religious participation”?

Given this history, the ostensibly simplest of topics bristle with difficulties, stemming from theological currents, vested interests, and struggles for power. Controversy swirls about basic definitions. I do not, for example, expect early agreement on what an innocent observer might have thought quite simple—the question of “who is a Jew?”

The ways in which the workshop faced these matters reinforced for me the conclusions I set out in 1984 in a survey study of London Jews (Gould 1984). I sought to ventilate the issues in deliberately clinical terms—asking about “the attributes which Jews share with each other but not with those who are not Jews”—and made a vital distinction between *internal* and *external* dimensions. I argued that

[I]n an open contemporary society there is an intricate linkage between (a) what Jews do or believe that is peculiar to them and marks them off from others; (b) how (quite diverse) “others” perceive such differences; and (c) how Jews receive what others perceive. This process can acquire its own dynamic. For the Jewish perception of the perception of others may come in turn to modify such perceptions. So there can be no routine or final outcome to such a process. (Ibid.:5)

I went on to note that while the Jewish sense of difference hinges, of course, on outside benevolence or hostility, the *internal* dimension

is governed by the fact that Jews are legatees of a tradition that is religious, ethnic and moral. Changes in their circumstances make them shift the balance between the various elements in their inheritance. (Ibid.: 5–6)

I urged too that the existing variety of structures and underlying factors made it impossible

to insist upon a “religious” definition—one which would distinguish those who practice the Jewish religion (believing in certain abstract ideas and values and performing stated sets of religious/ritual observances) from all those who do not. (Ibid.:4)

This remains abundantly true today. One wishes it were not the case. Yet it could hardly be otherwise in a consumer age when theologians vie with commentators in speaking of “religious preferences” and religions are described (by their leaders) as “faith communities.”

2. It would be invidious to single out specific offerings among the workshop papers—though I found the contributions of Professors Horowitz and Poll to be especially resonant. Reading the papers, I am struck, first, by their quality, and, secondly, by their *diversity*. This is bound to be the case in such a collection. For the striking diversity of the Jews in Israel and the countries of the Diaspora (notably though not exclusively the United States) is inescapable. The content of *identity* is also bound to be heterogeneous—reflecting not only the internal dimension that I have described, but also the political and cultural histories of the societies (Israel included) in which Jews are found. Even the patterns of alienation by “born” Jews from their Jewish milieus have historically been marked (some would say marred) by motifs and passions that are authentically “Jewish.” Where Jewish self-hate actually exists, it abounds in such passions—with tragi-comical effects.

The size of the different Jewish populations is equally crucial—hence, of course, the countless contrasts to be found in the workshop papers, between the United States and Israel, as the two largest Jewish populations. It could also be argued that vigor is proportionate to size, even when much of the vigor is expressed via disputes between the groups and layers that can proliferate and flourish in such large populations. And perhaps underplayed in most of the papers, with the exception of that by Naftali Rothenberg, is the powerful role of *language*. Rothenberg notes (and it is of the foremost importance) that Jewish identity in Israel is grounded as much in the Hebrew language as in the other cultural themes and symbols of common citizenship. Furthermore, the place of religion in the Jewish state, open as it is to controversy—often of the bitterest and most uncompromising kind—is inevitably different from what is found in Diaspora countries. There, the mode and thrusts of secularization among Jews mirrors the variety of secularization that

have emerged in the general societies (British, French, Russian, and so on) in which Jews reside. And when it comes to the attitudes and attachments of Jews in such countries towards the Jewish State, it is clear that many in the younger generation do not consistently show (nor could they be expected to show) the same level or kinds of commitment to, or even interest in, Israeli problems or concerns as their parents' generation did. For example, however crucial the notion of a "peace process" conducted by a normal established but imperilled state may be, it does not have the same aura or glamour that many Diaspora Jews once found in the earlier rhetoric and symbols of the nascent Zionist experiment.

3. Much of the debate about Jewish survival turns upon the real or supposed impact of two processes: assimilation and secularization. It is important to recognize that these are complex processes. Assimilation shades into acculturation within the wider societies (and this does not entail the elimination of all or even most dissimilarities). Secularization may appear to some as a concept that applies to Jewish structures in ways other than its application to Churches. But it *is* applicable—and illuminating. No Jewish writer has written more eloquently on the contrast between secularization and modernity than Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (of Britain)—or in fuller benefit of insights drawn from the sociology of religion.

By this is generally meant the transfer of territory, property and more generally, society's institutions and culture from ecclesiastic to lay power. Modernity is marked by the fact that religion ceases to dominate the way society organizes itself, or the way individuals explain their decisions. (Sacks 1990: 4)

Drawing upon seminal and influential analyses by Peter Berger, Rabbi Sacks contrasts traditional forms of religion with their modern counterparts. These are ideal types and, to be sure, such polarities mask the differences within each polar opposite.

[P]rivatised religion is a matter of the "choice" or "preference" of the individual or the nuclear family, ipso facto lacking in common, binding quality. Such private religiosity, however "real" it may be to the individuals who adopt it, cannot any longer fulfil the classic task of religion, that of constructing a common world within which all of social life receives ultimate meaning binding on everyone. (Ibid.)

No one, myself included, feels it an easy task to conjoin the religious issues of secularization with the social stories of acculturation. Possibly none of the workshop papers tackled this systematically. But Solomon Poll put his finger on an important point. First he contrasts the two meanings of—and paths towards—assimilation: on the one hand, in a Diaspora country (the United States), and on the other hand, in Israel. We should note that he highlights the

gulf between contemporary possibilities and what he calls with justice, “the traditional meaning of being Jewish” as linked with the observance of Jewish rituals.

The concern of assimilation in the United States is that Jews gradually become non-Jews. In Israel, the concern for assimilation assumes a different dimension. Jews living in a Jewish state, serving in the armed forces, paying taxes, participating in the Jewish community, and associating with other Jews, are instinctively Jewish. They do not need to practice any traditional religious ritual in order to be considered Jewish. By definition, in Israel a Jew cannot become a non-Jew, but one may become an Israeli without the traditional meaning of Jewishness. (Poll, this volume.)

And, significantly too, Professor Poll recognizes that, in the unique Israeli reality, the religious and secular populations may, as the cant cliché puts it, constitute two rival camps. To call them “camps” is itself an oversimplification. For in tense reality they rather resemble a warring array of tents in which factional disputes, demands on public funds, attachments to (and repulsion from) zealotry all take on an extraordinary variety of forms.

Professor Horowitz also invokes the diversity of Jewish peoplehood when he urges that “the inner reality of Jewish life is tripolar, it is not simply manifested in choices dictated by statist considerations.” The case of the Jewish State is, by definition, unique. Putting matters in a theologically very controversial order, Professor Horowitz, in a rather striking phrase, talks of Judaism’s “special religious Trinitarianism: Israel, the Torah, and God” with three secular correlates: the *State of Israel*; *peoplehood* (in which the Torah belongs to the Jewish people as a whole, a legal entity without a physical nation, but a national people; and thirdly “there is *the Hebrew God*, in which a collection of moral sentiments, legal precepts, and cosmological concepts are joined and fused to make Judaism a religion” (Horowitz, this volume).

He sees our age as a period of intellectual ferment and cross-fertilization bringing with it the need to scrutinize “the foundations of Zionism.” That remains a task for Israeli and Diaspora scholars for years to come. Such scrutiny can clarify, without solving, issues of key importance. It would be wise to acknowledge that such issues are never solved for all time—but that temporary, often wounding solutions, are imposed by *events*. It is a waiting game, calling for endless patience—an existential game at which Jews have had long practice.

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# 1

## *Keynote Address* **Minimalism or Maximalism: Jewish Survival at the Millennium**

*Irving Louis Horowitz*

By common consensus, the two most extraordinary events of twentieth-century Jewish history were the destruction of European Jewry in the Holocaust, and the construction of the State of Israel. They bracket the 1940s, and they define Jewish parameters in the 1990s. Whatever the interpretations of these events, they clearly conjure up powerful and contradictory emotions: defeat and victory, peripheries and centers, helplessness and heroism, and of spirit and matter itself. The purpose of this article is to identify Jewish survival prospects in a post-Holocaust world, and in a world in which Israel is soon to celebrate the first half-century of its existence as a modern nation-state.

How the Jewish religion, national integration, and cultural identity are forged in light of these two immense events is at the core of this analysis. It is evident from any close examination of the subject of Jewish survival that contradiction is far more characteristic of Jewish life than consensus. This was the case in the past and remains so in the present. Struggles between orthodoxy and reformism, nationalism and cosmopolitanism (for want of a better word), Israeli national interests and Jewish universalistic claims, and capitalist individualism and socialist collectivism, have all hardened into postures rather than been resolved over the course of the century. Add to this mix such volatile private concerns as intermarriage, conversion, ethnic heritage, secular-

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ization, and the task of analysis appears daunting, while that of synthesis seems well nigh impossible.

Policy makers repeatedly claim that even were Israel not to exist, conflict among Arab and Moslem interests would continue to fester. Dare one add in reverse that even were Arab hostilities toward Israel and Moslem animosities toward Jews magically to dissolve, conflict among Jewish interests—political and religious—would continue in force? Urgent questions have been raised about generational concerns: the evolution of Israel as a national entity with “normal” state proclivities to monopolize force, and the prospect that Judaism may become a minority religion even within Israel, much less within the context of most open societies. It behooves the social science community to answer whether Judaism is any different than other world class religions, and what constitutes Judaism as a frame of reference in national and cultural terms with nominal regard to issues of religious observance or theological discourse.

There is also the thorny, if largely unspoken, issue of how strategies of becoming Jewish enhance or impede principles of scientific research. Concerns for Jewish survival strongly imply that such survival is a positive value. But whether a moral center of gravity, much less a teleological purpose, can be deduced from the history of religions as a sociological concern merits examination. Within these heavy domains of relevance I should like to consider minimal and maximal approaches to Jewish survival. To be sure, the topic of Jewish survival in the period ahead is so broad and pervasive that the potential for saying something new, much less presenting a startling set of findings or conclusions is more presumptuous than ambitious. Yet, it is in the nature of human nature to persist in lurching forward, no matter how slightly, and to seek closure no matter how tentative.

I take as my text a highly personal point-counterpoint: the collection of my essays published a quarter century ago under the rubric: *Israeli Ecstasies and Jewish Agonies*, and the work I have pursued in the intervening years called *Taking Lives*. Risking a digression before addressing the wider issue of Jewish survival directly, I ask the reader's indulgence on how I view my own work in tandem, as book-ends separated by a quarter century.

The purpose of *Israeli Ecstasies and Jewish Agonies* was to explain how a dialectical set of relationships emerged as a result of a new centrality for Jewish life, Israel; and the evolution of a new periphery

as well, in North America. For what seemed to be at stake in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the serious weakening of Jewish life as an entity of value apart from the existence of Israeli society. Now, the situation is curiously reversed. There is a widespread recognition of the work of Jewish life and a growing skepticism of the centrality of the Israeli center! My intentions in *Taking Lives* were somewhat less global: to develop a social scientific framework for understanding the Holocaust in terms of state legitimacy, or more specifically, variables of class, status and power familiar to those who work in the Weberian tradition. Curiously, we have a huge literature based on personal testimonials and biographies, and only a slightly smaller amount of writings exploring theological and religious considerations that emerged from the Holocaust. Yet the social analysis of this monumental tragedy is only now receiving its proper due.

What makes the study of Jewish identity complex is that we are not dealing with a unilinear phenomenon, but one more akin to a multiplexed phenomenon moving in a variety of historical as well as structural directions. To discuss the Jewish condition is to examine religiosity, nationality, and culture all at once as well as one at a time. Indeed, to separate these elements of Judaism, results in distortions and reductions that can, and sadly enough often does, lead to little light and much heat.

To be sure, the arguments between those who emphasize issues of class stratification on one side, and cultural identity on the other, indicate that exaggerated claims for any one sort of social scientific method are likely to result in frustration and futile argumentation. I turned from a study of Israeli-Jewish relations to an examination of the deeper roots of the Jewish condition as such, because the explosion of literature on the Holocaust led to serious distortions in the intellectual landscape; and no less important, the social scientific accounts, while attempting to repair distortions resulting from a variety of reductionists in the popular literature, introduced a few new sins of their own.

We have an astonishing amount of personal narratives (some serious, others self-serving) providing eyewitness reports of horrors and human degradation, but failing to place the Final Solution in any larger context. So what we are left with is a series of uplifting or depressing stories of living with the past, or getting beyond horror and degradation. On the other extreme are what might be called the theological

exegeses, in which issues of an ultimate sort are examined: from questions like, “Can we believe in God’s goodness after the Holocaust?” to a variety of messages, intentional or otherwise, that serve as Providential warning signals for those who fall from grace. Again, the quality of such human examinations of Providential intentions shift from profound to trivial—and worse.

Because they constituted a collective unit, the Jewish people, were uniquely singled out for total and complete annihilation; Christian and Hebrew scholars alike have tried to interpret the Nazi war on the Jewish people in Biblical, revelatory terms; frequently laced with reflections on the historical status of Jews living in a Christian world, and extending into the particular economic drives, political motives, and cultural longings of each world religion in relation to the other.

In the midst of these larger trends—what we may call the biographical and the theological, respectively—a third trend has emerged: the empirical study of how the Holocaust took place, what happened when, where it did, and why it surfaced in relation to the Jews of Europe. The major and admittedly bowdlerized answers given are: first, Germans have a unique propensity for racial purity and animus toward strangers in their midst who do not share in the national value system; and second, it is not the nation but the system, the Nazi-Fascist system that created the foundation for implementing the final solution.

I do not want to enter a polemic with other viewpoints, or argue issues examined at length in the text of *Taking Lives*. Rather, I want to note emphatically, that my own view is that however multiple the sources of anti-Semitism, and however broad the base of emotive support for the Final Solution, the actual implementation and execution of the Holocaust was a function of state power, of the legal and military monopoly of power that resided in the hands of the National Socialist state, which allowed for the Holocaust to move ahead in its grinding, vicious wholeness. The emergence of Israel as a state implicitly recognized as much. It made Jew and non-Jew alike aware of the modern as well as ancient sources of power and authority. The monopoly of power rather than the beneficence of rulers became the touchstone of Jewish life after the Holocaust. It provided the grounds of legitimacy for the Jewish State of Israel.

However “banal” the perpetrators of the Holocaust may have been as private persons, they acted in concert as part of a killing machine,

comprised of a hugely expanded and swollen bureaucracy dedicated to surveillance, a military establishment that dwarfed anything hitherto known in the annals of European armed force, and a disciplined political party apparatus that had as its exclusionary membership mission the extirpation and destruction of Jewish life wherever Nazism held sway, including occupied zones and lands not known in earlier eras for anti-Semitism as national preoccupation. In this sense, *Taking Lives* is an effort to concretize the work of political sociology, of the interaction between state and society. It is also a way to lay claim to the fact that the very act of taking lives and counting bodies is the sociological equivalent to locating the essential variable by which a society and a state are to be judged.

The analysis of Jewish survival in post-Holocaust terms is immediately made complex by its triadic nature. We must simultaneously deal with the state of Israel, its model of democratic rule rooted in Westminster; a divinely inspired Torah passed on to Jews over centuries and millennia as a guide to ethical and legal behavior; a Jewish culture filtered through many nations and conventions and languages that are encapsulated in an adherence to some form of community living; and certain personality characteristics. Add to this mixture the relationship between persons who claim a common adherence to Judaism in philosophic terms, and any ensuing analysis of the Jewish condition becomes numbingly complex. But we have set ourselves the task of clarifying these relationships; we are seeking to establish an analytical model rather than a clerical muddle. Essentially, I do this by taking a minimalist, rather than maximalist view of the Jewish-Israel relationship. Along with Abba Eban, I assume that being a Jew implies commitment to the fate and fortune of Israel, and to a community of like-minded souls. Whether being an Israeli implies, in reverse, a commitment to the fate and fortune of world Jewry, is a question perhaps best left in abeyance for the present. Let me immediately note that this minimalist approach carries risks. Marginalization within Jewish religious life can, and often does, readily translate into complete secularization, or as is sometimes the case, into varieties of alternative civil religious persuasions.

Before we examine current struggles, it might be useful to remind ourselves how military matters stood only a quarter century ago. It might help explain why I entitled my work *Israeli Ecstasies and Jewish Agonies*. In the period that followed the euphoria of the Six-Day

War in 1967, it is understandable that a dominant wing of Israeli leaders could argue, as David Ben-Gurion had earlier, that commitment to Zionism could have no validity without Jewish immigration to Israel. Without such a pioneer vision, Jewish life in the Diaspora was bankrupt.

I don't know how long it will take, whether ten years or fifty years, but in time, America will be a unitary nation, just like any other nation. It is entirely different with Jews in Israel. The roads in this country are Jewish roads, they were built by Jews. The houses that you see here were built by Jews. The trees are Jewish trees; they were planted by Jews. The railway is a Jewish railway; it is conducted by Jewish workers, by Jewish engineers. The papers are Jewish. We do not live a group life. Here we are living a national life. There is another difference between Israeli Jewry and Diaspora Jewry. We are also an independent factor in international life. We appear like any other free people at the United Nations. We meet with representatives of large and small states on an equal footing. We do not need *shidlanim* (intercessors) any more.

Those amazingly proud words uttered in the glowing aftermath of military victory now appear quaint, inspiring more response than regard. As a consequence of military struggle, one which resulted in a political stalemate, redefinitions of Israeli realities topped the agenda. Claims of sovereignty and autonomy have been tempered by a renewed realization of the special relationship between Israelis and Jews, without much outward concern for who is preeminent in this interaction network. Thus, in a new book by Geoffrey Wheatcroft on *The Controversy of Zion* we have a summary of arguments against Zionism that have become as strident as they are commonplace.

It is the very absence of the kind of ethnic nationalism and cultural homogeneity exemplified by Israel which has made possible their own triumphant story. What Jews outside of Israel have come to recognize very clearly is not only that Israel is not their home, but that the Israelis, however much they admire them, are no longer their people. . . . The final paradox might be that Zionism has succeeded in everything but its ostensible purpose; to resolve the Jewish Question by normalizing the Jewish people and to end their chosenness. . . . And yet the Jews remain in some manner chosen. . . . Today there is a Jewish state which is a source of healing pride for millions of Jews, but also a source of anxiety. Should they defend the religious zealots and right wing settlers who play an ever larger part in Israeli life? Or is Israel increasingly irrelevant to the fabulous success story of the Jews of America?

More contradictory general propositions on Israeli-Diaspora relations are hard to envision. But we need to determine whether such varied sentiments represent something deeper than the changing fortunes of warfare and statecraft. Do these two ideological frameworks

define, not only the limits of Israeli existence, but the survival capacities of the Jewish people as a whole? In exploring this question, we must confront a reality in which a center (Israel) remains relatively weak while a periphery (American Jewry) is relatively powerful.

Israel's geographical rationalization, in the current period, and the Arab countries' own continuing struggles between tradition and modernity, have led to a renewed search for religious, ethnic, and cultural elements within Judaism. Do the political and social structures that divide Jews along national lines permit unity or fusion in religious and cultural terms? I suspect that even posing the issue in this way makes a positive answer possible. Definitive political and theological responses cannot be concluded with respect to Israeli-Jewish relationships. Dialectical people have a habit of maintaining long-standing differences, broken in moments of crisis by tactical synthesis. This certainly characterizes the present condition of Jews and Israelis. The state of Israel is an irreducible fact, one that Jews must live with—even those who might not celebrate such a fact. In this sense, Zionism and anti-Zionism are less policies than postures in present-day Israel. National realities now seem indifferent to internationalist ambitions.

In a broad series of stages, the Arab effort to convert Jews into a pariah people, and Israel into a pariah state, have failed. This is no small accomplishment in its own right. Beyond these, a series of issues within Judaism were also resolved in the past quarter century. Arabic adversaries, by ceaselessly questioning the legitimacy of Israel as a "settler state," provided the foundations for wide-ranging reexamination of the contemporary state of Jewish affairs, culminating in relatively successful efforts by Israel to come to terms with its position in the Middle East. Again, no small achievement for a land that felt far more tied to Europe than the Middle East only a quarter century ago. Such self-exploration might be a constant in Jewish affairs without external pressures, but with them, the sense of immediacy takes on dramatic proportions.

The repudiation of the Zionist-as-racism canard, not without the firm support of Western democracies, was coupled with a series of negotiated arrangements starting with Egypt and Jordan, and now expanded to include Palestinians and Syrians. A variety of diplomatic as well as military arrangements have modified the sense of Israeli estrangement. The question however remains whether weakening the threat to Israel as a pariah State translates into a weakening sense of

identification of Jews with the fate and fortune of Israel. More bluntly, do Jews now view Israel as a place to visit archaeological sites and go scuba-diving rather than a place to restore political commitments or make an issue out of vigilant support?

Debate about whether Israel is central or peripheral to the Jewish experience in the United States or elsewhere in the Diaspora is only one half the essential paradigm. The other half is whether Judaism is central to Israeli political integration. It might well be that underlying these questions is whether Judaism is central to Jews wherever they are. Posing the issue in these admittedly harsh terms is not an exercise in dialectics, but an effort to examine the empirical state of affairs that makes the issue of Israeli sovereignty profoundly meaningful. For example, if migration from Israel to America far exceeds Jewish-American immigration to Israel, does this weaken or strengthen world Jewry? If one believes in the organic incompleteness of Jewish life outside Israel, the answer is self-evident. But for those who believe that the Jewish nation resides wherever a Jewish congregation exists, temporal problems of the state of Israel are of only limited significance to what Herzl called “the Jewish company.” The extent to which orthodox positions on Israeli centrality have broken down is best illustrated by the current demographic situation. At least 10 percent of Israelis, or approximately 450,000 of Israel’s citizens, are currently living in the United States on a relatively permanent basis. Beyond that, new migrants to Israel from Russia are often interested in moving to the United States, Canada, New Zealand, or Australia, what might be referred to as the Anglo-democracies, rather than staying in Israel. Whatever the explanations offered—hardships of settlement in Israel, limited knowledge about or interest in Jewish religious life, fears of new military hostilities, oppression of tax burdens, or limits to upward mobility and career opportunities—Jewish dedication to Israel remains highly questionable under present-day circumstances.

Whenever the existence of Israel has been threatened by hostile, military dominated states, and the survival of the Jews of Israel is clearly imperiled, Jewish solidarity has been evident and made near total by the “facts on the ground.” Witness the outpouring of international Jewish support for Israel in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli conflicts or, most recently, the solidarity of Jews against Iraq, Libya and Iran—the so-called terrorist states. Ultimate questions about survival always obviate niceties of discussion and disputation. The choice

between social life and death, like individual life and death, makes intellectual hairsplitting seem fatuous. To the extent that the Jewish state has, from its inception, been engaged in a survival-crisis-response syndrome, one can speak with confidence of the centrality of Israel to the Jewish experience.

However, when minimum conditions of Israeli security are met and, in consequence, the needs of a large portion of Jewish peoplehood are met, the question of the centrality of Israel to Jewish life becomes thorny. When Israeli survival is not in jeopardy, but to the contrary, relatively normalized, conventional distinctions between socialism, nationalism, and religiosity, slip back into the rhetoric ordinarily employed by Jews inside and outside of Israel. The state of normality thus unleashes national rather than overseas concerns. The relative lack of such normal, peaceful, conditions in the Middle East since the founding of Israel has obscured real differences between Jews in the Diaspora and in Israel with respect to a variety of issues affecting the international Jewish community. The data indicate some clear guidelines in this respect.

First, Reform Jews, adults and youth, who are presumably representative of American Jewry as a whole, rate the relationship of American Jews to Israel as very important; but only a quartile agree with the statement that Israel is the center of contemporary American Jewish life. As orthodoxy continues to hold sway in Israel, and Reform and Conservative religious movements inside Israel are confronted with problems of legitimacy, even that figure may be inflated. Second, regional studies of American Jews reveal noticeable differences in the strength of Zionism between fathers and sons. Fathers scored significantly higher on indicators of Zionist persuasion. For the most part, all available data support the argument that the Zionism of American Jews, is less an intent to migrate than a general belief in Israeli claims. Pro-Israel sentiment is directly linked to perceived threats to the survival of the Israeli state. Third, American Jewish attitudes vary significantly depending on whether Middle East wars are perceived to have negative consequences for the United States. Thus, the reaction of American Jews to the Six-Day War of 1967 was more favorable than their attitudes toward the Yom Kippur War of 1973 or the Lebanese adventure of 1982 precisely because the synergy and consistency of American and Israeli interests in the earlier war did not hold true for the later conflicts.

Israel has registered genuine achievements in various spheres of life—science and medical research, cyberspace technology, humanistic education in *kibbutzim*, folk music and dance, basic agricultural self-sufficiency, army efficiency and *esprit*, and so forth. Beyond these areas, the caliber of Israeli society is not notably higher than say, Western Europe. In politics, academic life, industry, labor leadership, religion, *belles lettres*, the media, the dramatic and fine arts, Israel, while surely not lagging too far behind other developed countries, is far from producing standards of excellence sufficient to inspire its own citizens or the Jewish Diaspora. As long as the relationship of the Diaspora to Israel is strictly financial, with no genuine joint responsibility in planning for Israel's development, or real accountability to contributors abroad for the funds collected, one cannot (outside the religious clusters) expect thoughtful Jews around the world to express a sustained sense of personal involvement in Israel at the intimate, or subjective level.

It may be argued that an adequate reexamination of Israeli-Diaspora relations should begin by understanding Israel as both a Third World entity and a European democracy operating in an unique context. Perceived in this way, tendencies toward growing separation of Jewish life in the Diaspora from identification with Israeli society might be seen as part of a long-term secular trend distinguishing nationhood from religiosity and ethnicity. Diminishing Jewish involvement with Israel may have long-term benefits as well as costs for center and periphery alike. For Israel, such secularization could lessen overseas pressure in the formation of national and international policies, and hence permit Israel greater flexibility in its decision-making processes. For Diaspora Jews, such a distinction might compel greater attention to Judaism as such, to the role of religion, culture, and ethnicity in the contemporary West, apart from concerns about military annihilation currently shrouding Middle Eastern affairs. Evolution of the debate over Israeli centrality and Diaspora marginality has moved a considerable distance beyond inherited Zionist and anti-Zionist shibboleths.

The question of Israel's centrality to Jewish life cannot be resolved by the wave of a magic wand. The inner reality of Jewish life is tripolar, it is not simply manifested in choices dictated by State considerations. Judaism has had its own special religious Trinitarianism: Israel, the Torah, and God. Corresponding to that, in secular terms is first, Israel as a state (in the Hobbesian sense of retaining a monopoly