

Jewish Identities in a Changing World

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Close and Distant: The Relations between Israel and the Diaspora

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A Brief Demographic History

The major features of contemporary relationships between the world's two largest Jewish communities—one in the United States and the other in Israel—bear directly upon any assessment of the state of “Jewish peoplehood” during the first decade of the twenty-first century. How do members of the two communities relate to each other and to the Jewish people? To put this discussion into a historical context, we first turn to a brief account of the major demographic and related developments that took place between the Jewish communities in Israel and the diaspora over time.

Jews have lived in the Diaspora since biblical times. During most of that long history, the Jewish population in “the Land of Israel” comprised a small, or more precisely, a very small minority of the entire world Jewry. Over the centuries, the Jewish Diaspora has continuously strived to keep alive its connection and devotion to Zion, though most of that effort was essentially symbolic, based on adherence to traditions and rituals but with little concrete action. The renowned Jewish medieval poet from Spain, Yehuda Halevi, expressed those sentiments in the following line from one of his most famous poems: “My heart is in the East but I am far in the West.” He himself had realized his dream and left Spain in order to settle in the home of his ancestors, but his act was a rare exception, that only a few followed. Indeed for the bulk of the Jewish Diaspora, the connection to the land of Israel was expressed mostly spiritually and ritualistically, as in the traditional blessing, “Next year in rebuilt Jerusalem,” that was seldom acted upon.

To borrow from migration theories, the underlying reasons for the centuries-old history of the demographic imbalance between Jews living in the Diaspora and in Israel can be understood in terms of “pull” and “push” factors. Thus, except for its spiritual and emotional attractiveness, Israel (renamed “Palestine” by the Romans, after the destruction of the Second Temple), became over time an impoverished and backward country, having little to offer to its residents with respect to living conditions and opportunities for progress.

As vividly described by Mark Twain, who visited Palestine in 1867, “[a] desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds—a silent mournful expanse. . . . A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action. . . . We never saw a human being on the whole route. . . . There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of the worthless soil, had almost deserted the country” (Twain, 1997 [1881]).

Complementarily, ever since they were exiled by the Romans or left the country voluntarily, Jews were not always allowed to settle in Palestine, and when they could, they were discriminated against in various ways by often changing rulers, especially during the period of the Crusades. This is not to say that Jewish life in the Diaspora was not frequently subjected to various forms of persecution, particularly in Europe, where most of the Jews were concentrated over time. The massacres of whole Jewish communities by the Crusaders, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and the ensuing Inquisition by the Catholic Church in Spain and in other countries where it was present, the pogroms in Russia during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and finally, the Holocaust—all of these are reminders of the predicament of living as a Jew in the diaspora until just a few decades ago.

Nevertheless, Jewish communities were treated with tolerance and benevolence during long periods of their history in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. They flourished most notably throughout the “Golden Age” in Spain under Muslim rule, and during the Renaissance in Italy and in other parts of West Europe. A more significant change in the quality of Jewish life in Western Europe began with the Enlightenment, whose liberal spirit gradually freed the Jews from legal discrimination and granted them full equal rights as citizens in their countries of residence. For many Jews, that change opened the gates of the ghettos and paved the way for an unprecedented mobility in most spheres of life, as exemplified by Moses Mendelssohn, one of the earliest pioneers of that era.

Yet Jewish assimilation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did little to solve the “Jewish Problem” in Europe. Along with traditional, religiously anchored antisemitism, Jews have become victims of various form of “modern” antisemitism. In the case of German Jewry, the tragic end of the tireless efforts to become fully integrated into the German society was vividly captured by the Hebrew title of Amos Elon’s book—“*A German Requiem*” (Elon, 2002). Theodore Herzl, himself an acculturated Jew, who was born in Budapest and moved later to Vienna where he developed a career as a journalist and a playwright, was among the first to grasp the mood of antisemitism in Europe under the influence of the Dreyfus Trial (1894–5). This experience convinced Herzl

that the only solution for the Jewish problem would be the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, that would be molded on the pattern of newly formed liberal nation-states in Europe. Soon after, he founded the Zionist movement that held its first Congress in Basel 1897—an event received with enthusiasm by many Jews across the world.

Indeed, the establishment of the Zionist movement was a turning-point in the evolution of relationships between the Jewish communities in the Diaspora and Palestine. Though the sphere of influence of this ideological movement was relatively limited, it was able to build in a few years an effective institutional infrastructure, that was aided by its success in the mobilization of economic resources and political support from world Jewry and others. These efforts led to successive waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine in ever-growing numbers, mostly from Eastern Europe; accordingly, its numbers increased from 24,000 in 1882, to 85,000 in 1914, to 159,000 in 1929, and 450,000 in 1939 (IBS). Yet despite these impressive figures, the size of the Jewish community in Palestine at that time, out of world Jewry as a whole (close to 17 million) was still very small, accounting for less than 3% of the total.

Alongside the role of the Zionist Movement, large-scale Jewish immigration to Palestine until 1939 was influenced by two major external political developments of quite a different nature—the establishment of a British Mandate over Palestine after World War I, and the rise of Nazism in Europe during the 1930s. The importance of the British Mandate derives mainly from the “Balfour Declaration,” that was published in 1917. Accordingly, “His Majesty’s government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.” This declaration, which was incorporated in the mandate with which the League of Nations entrusted Britain in 1922, created for the first time in history a legal basis for Jewish immigration to Palestine. This turn of events was one of the two major factors underlying the increase of the Jewish population in Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s; the other factor was the flight of Jews from Nazism during the latter decade.

A much more significant change in the demographic balance between the Jewish communities in Palestine and the diaspora took place as a consequence of two contrasting, though related, historical events. The first was the tragedy of the Holocaust, that claimed the lives of about six million Jews—over one-third of the entire Jewish people. The second event was the United Nations resolution on 29 November 1947, to end the British Mandate in Palestine by the middle of May 1948, and replace it by independent Jewish and Arab states. For the purpose of this discussion, it is relevant to note that the UN decision

was affected, among other things, by two major factors: first, the plight of the Holocaust survivors in Europe who at the end of the Second World War were held in congested refugee camps, unable to go to Palestine because of Britain's policy of prohibiting Jewish immigration, despite the Jewish community's readiness to absorb all the refugees. Second, based on a report submitted by a "fact-finding committee" that was dispatched to Palestine in 1947 by the UN Secretary-General, the General Assembly was impressed by the viability of Jewish community, which had developed over the years a full-fledged modern institutional structure in practically all spheres of life. Indeed, following its declaration of independence, the new Jewish state, named from that point on "the State of Israel," opened its gates to all Jews who could and wanted to come and settle there. This policy was shortly later embraced by the Knesset, with its adoption of "The Law of Return," under which every Jew has a vested right to settle in Israel (Hacohen, 2001). The ideology underlying this law is expressed symbolically by the use of the value-laden terms of "*aliyah*" and "*yeridah*" ("ascent" and "descent" in Hebrew), instead of "immigration" and "emigration."

In the same spirit, the State of Israel has opened its gates to Jewish immigrants since the first day of its existence. This policy has generated successive waves of immigration from different parts of the world, often depending on geopolitical circumstances. Starting in 1948 and through the 1950s and early 1960s, the largest groups of newcomers consisted mainly of Holocaust survivors (about 450,000) and Jewish refugees from Arab and other Muslim countries (about 800,000). It should be borne in mind that on the verge of independence, the Jewish community in Israel numbered barely 650,000, including Holocaust survivors who were able to enter the country illegally between 1945 and 1948, with the help of various Zionist organizations, as in the case of the iconic "Exodus" refugee ship.

The next major wave of immigrants to Israel was comprised mainly of Jews from formerly Communist countries, following the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1989. Except for some brief periods, Jews had not been allowed to immigrate to Israel from former Communist countries. During the following two decades, this group of immigrants enlarged the size of the Jewish community in Israel by over 1.2 million people. Overall, with these waves of immigration, allied with the contribution of natural birth, the Israeli-Jewish population increased from 650,000 in 1948 to little over 6,000,000 by mid-2013 (see Della Pergola). The total population of Israel at that date was about 8 million, and the minority of 20% consisted mainly of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, mostly Muslims. These numbers reveal that the Jewish community in Israel has indeed come far in terms of size since the beginning of the

Zionist movement in the late nineteenth-century. Of no lesser importance is the observation that, for the first time since the Roman era, the Jewish community in Palestine has gained political sovereignty.

Taken together, the historical developments in world Jewry since the late nineteenth-century have led to a dramatic change in its demographic dispersion. Accordingly, the Israeli and American communities represent today the two largest, almost equal, Jewish centers in the world, accounting together for about 85% of total world Jewry. Due in part to differences defining “who is a Jew,” some experts disagree in calculating the size of the Jewish population in the United States. Three recent American studies—by the Pew Research Center, the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, and by Prof. Ira Sheskin—all put the number at about 6.7–6.8 million. Prof. Sergio Della Pergola, a leading Israeli demographer, contends however that 5.7 million is a more appropriate estimate.

The Development of a Relationship

It follows that any discussion of the relationships between the Jewish communities in Israel and in the Diaspora has to concentrate on these two centers. While the two communities established mutual ties at the individual and collective levels since the beginning of renewed Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, their relationships became more viable and significant in the aftermath of the Holocaust and with the subsequent birth of the State of Israel. Yet while the two communities have contributed to each other in many ways, their contributions were not of the same kind and of equal value. Israel provided the American Jewish community (as well as the rest of world Jewry) with mainly symbolic and emotional rewards, such as feelings of pride, whereas American Jewry furnished Israel with more tangible materials, such as economic aid and political support, that have been vital for Israel's development and its security.

To be sure, Israel has come a long way since its hard-won victory in the struggle for independence, and has made significant achievements in almost all spheres of state and society. Among other things, it has institutionalized a viable democratic form of government, built a strong basis of defense forces, absorbed large numbers of immigrants, developed its economic system so as to become an advanced post-industrial society, and reached high levels of scientific and cultural creativity. Yet despite all of that, Israel's isolated location in a hostile geopolitical environment, that has been the source of frequent threats and acts of violence, fosters a widely shared feeling of insecurity at the levels of ordinary citizens and political leadership. This sense of vulnerability has been

further enhanced by Israel's small territorial and population size—both factors that have exercised adverse effects on Israel's sense of security and on the potential growth of its economic market.

From the viewpoint of the Zionist ideology, one thorny consequence of this reality is the phenomenon of Israelis emigrating, particularly to the United States. According to a recent study reported by the CBS, Israeli families that left for the United States are characterized by relatively high educational and skill levels, and they represent a larger group of emigrants, in comparison to families who migrated elsewhere (Cohen-Kastro, 2013). It is unsurprising that the Israeli political establishment, like many ordinary Jewish Israeli citizens, views this trend with great alarm and construes it as a threat to the viability of the "Zionist Project" and its future. However, different views on this subject have been posited, for example by Yuchtman-Ya'ar (1988) and Della Pergola (2007). Israel's hardships and vulnerability stand in sharp contrast to the condition of the Jewish community in the United States which, besides being safe and secure, enjoys unprecedented success in its overall standing in American society, especially in the economic, educational, academic, and cultural spheres. In fact, one can argue that this community represents the most successful ethnic group in American history and in the history of the Jewish Diaspora, including the "Golden Age" of Spain. Needless to say, the prominent position of the Jews in the United States and their affluence have been associated with a growing sense of self-confidence and enhanced political influence at the various centers of policymaking. The Jewish community has often used this influence in order to affect American policies both at home and abroad, with Israel being a major beneficiary of the fruits of those labors. Put in a broader perspective, when comparing between the Jews living in Israel and those in America, the following observations seem useful: first, unlike the hostile environment that Israeli Jews face, their American counterparts live in the secure environment provided by the physical might of the United States and its entrenched liberal tradition. Second, as a tiny minority group of less than 2% of the total population, characterized by high levels of human capital, American Jewry has a competitive advantage in the huge capitalist market of the United States, whereas in Israel Jews compete mainly between themselves. Indeed, this reality partially explains the above-noted popularity of America as a country of destination for so many Israeli emigrants. As Yuchtman-Ya'ar (1988) notes, sometimes one has to move out in order to move up.

Nevertheless, it appears that the proud and self-confident American Jewry has some weak spots of its own. Paradoxically perhaps, precisely because of its phenomenal success in realizing the "American dream" and integrating into mainstream American society, the Jewish identity of American Jewry seems to

be weakening. This process is due largely to related trends: intermarriage and diminished engagement in Jewish life. Thus, a recent Pew Research Center survey (Pew Research Center, 2013) shows that the percentage of married Jews who wed non-Jews has risen from 17% before 1970, to 58% since 2000 and is even higher (71%) among the non-Orthodox. As might be expected, this trend is far more pronounced among those with one Jewish parent as well as with those who might be termed “softly” religious, and weakly identifying Jews, who represent a considerable fraction of American Jewry.

In the ongoing discussion of the meaning of this historic development for the future of the Jewish community in America, one of the major issues concerns the extent to which this trend enhances the assimilation rate among American Jewry. From a policy point of view, the main questions concern those actions that can enhance the rates of inmarriage, and second, what can be done to encourage mixed married families to raise their children with a viable Jewish identity. Of no lesser importance is the broader question regarding the effects of the changes which are unfolding within the American Jewish community regarding its relationships with Israel and the rest of the Jewish world. Viewing the main trends in the evolution of the Israeli and American Jewry in recent decades, it appears that the two groups have followed different trajectories. While Israeli society remains preoccupied with the problem of national security and its effects on major domains of state and society, American Jewry has been mainly concerned with the problem of preserving its Jewish identity. This difference in priorities has the potential of enhancing tendencies of self-centeredness in both communities, thus distancing them from each other. Furthermore, during that time Israel has experienced profound socio-demographic changes that have contributed to the rise of nationalistic trends and the weakening of liberal-democratic sentiments within Israeli society. These trends, that stands in sharp contrast to the liberal spirit of American Jewry, may have further weakened the relationship between Israeli and American Jewry. And yet on the other hand, it is quite possible that the two communities will be able to overcome their differences and keep their close relationship alive, given that this relationship is based, essentially, on primordial foundations involving shared history, religion, ethnic origin, and cultural heritage. Ties of this nature often have their own vitality, capable of sustaining times of strains and disagreements.

Taken together, all these considerations lead to the question as to which of the following two vectors prevails in the relationships between the Israeli and American Jewish communities—that of attachment, or that of detachment? To address this question we examined empirically, on the basis of survey data, the state of Jewish “peoplehood” in the two communities as it appears to be in

recent years. To begin with, the relationship between contemporary American and Israeli Jewry extends far beyond the symbolic. One critical dimension of the close relationship between the two Jewish communities is expressed through travel between the two countries. Each year, thousands of American Jews visit Israel, while thousands of Israelis come to the US to visit family, friends, and colleagues, as well as business associates, and they travel not just for short visits or vacations—every year a significant number undertake migration in both directions. We estimate that each year, about 10,000 (very roughly estimated) Israeli and American Jews move in one direction or the other, consisting of about 3,000 olim from the US, and around 6,000 Israelis moving to the US for periods of study, work, or residence, and a very roughly estimated additional 1,000 American olim returning to the US. Not only has a sizable population of American-origin Jews settled in Israel, and are thought to number over 100,000. Notably a significant number of former Israelis or children of Israelis each year (re-)establish residence in Israel, just as a significant number of American olim (migrants to Israel) return to the US after a period of living in Israel. These human flows strengthen personal, political, religious, and cultural ties between Israeli and American Jewry. Yet another dimension of the relationship is encompassed in business and commercial ties (investment, consumer products, and business-to-business dealings). These are generally not chance encounters, but are brokered ethnically—that is, with the recognition that the shared ethnic background presumes solidarity and trust.

Beyond these relationships are a plethora of charitable activities and interactions. Often thought of as uni-directional (with American Jews—like other Diaspora Jews—assisting particular Israeli institutions), the relationship here is also multi-directional: not only do American Jews contribute to Israel, but Israel contributes to American Jewry. The former make donations totaling hundreds of millions of dollars to Israel-based causes, ranging from health and human services, to educational endeavors, to civic advocacy, to West Bank Jewish settlement (Sasson, 2014). But, at the same time, representatives of those causes maintain relationships with real and potential donors, producing a massive flow of images and information to selected audiences of American Jews. Israel and Israelis control or influence the deployment of diverse charitable and educational resources to American Jews. Among the numerous instances of American Jewish influences upon Israel must be included the out-size presence of American Jews (both as residents of Israel and visitors) in various political and social activist causes on both the right and left, as evidenced by the American accents frequently heard both in West Bank settlements and at the Peace Now demonstrations that protest their expansion. Closely related are American Jews' manifold contributions to Israeli Orthodoxy, as well as to

the Masorti / Conservative and Reform religious movements in Israel. In tandem, Israelis in America—numbering well over 100,000 Israel-born individuals, a smaller number of former Israelis who are not native-born, and about as many US-born family members, that altogether may number over 400,000—exert influence in several Jewish population centers, most notably New York, Los Angeles, South Florida, and San Francisco. We note, drawing on a discussion in Cohen and Veinstein (2009) that, in contrast with estimates advanced by advocacy groups, almost all scholarly estimates place the total number of Israeli-born Jews residing in the U.S. at close to 100,000. These are only a fraction of the people in households with Israeli-origin members, some of whom are Israelis not born in Israel, and some of whom are US-born spouses and children. Notably, Israeli Jews tend to settle in areas where American Jews are fairly populous, increasing the chances that the two groups will interact. Israeli-Americans (both Israel- and US-born) are disproportionately involved in all manner of Jewish life, Israel-related causes and organizations, as well as consumers of Israeli and Hebrew-based culture in the US, as expressed in music, newspapers, on-line web-sites, social media, art, and other venues. They make up a disproportionate share of Jewish educators in day schools, summer camps, supplementary schools, and elsewhere.

And beyond these specific areas of interchange and influence, one must add the numerous interpersonal connections that bind Jews in the US with Jews in Israel. Every *oleh* maintains family and friendship connections with Jews in the US. Quite reasonably, so do “partial” *olim* (the unknown number who live part of their lives in Israel) as well as returned *olim*, those who have lived in Israel and return to the US after some years. Some tens of thousands of others have spent significant time in Israel as students or in other educational programs; and these people also maintain personal ties with Israelis. In addition, not only do Israelis in the US help to personally bridge between the two populations, so too does a considerable portion of the people and families who hail from the Former Soviet Union, a group numbering close to 700,000 (first and second generation in the US) and well over a million in Israel. The recent emigration of FSU Jews (the one that peaked in the late 1980s and early 1990s), coupled with the flow of FSU-origin emigrants from Israel to the US, means that FSU-origin families find members and friends in both countries, further facilitating ties of family, friendship, business, and culture.

Against this background of the rich array of personal, family, business, political and cultural relationships, we turn to examining the relevant attitudes of American and Israeli Jews as displayed in recently collected survey data in both countries. For the American side, we rely heavily on the recently conducted Pew Research Center’s “Portrait of Jewish Americans,” (2013) and

subsequently also draw upon a survey of American Jews that we conducted in 2008–2009 (about which more below). The distinctive advantages of the Pew study for our purposes are several: this massive and well-funded study fielded a national survey with a scientifically drawn national sample of American Jews (N=3,475 Jews, plus 1,657 others with attachments to the Jewish population). Though far smaller in scope and dimension (as measured by sample size, cost, effort, scientific sampling rigor, etc.), the 2008/9 study we conducted offers several distinct advantages for present purposes. In addition, the US survey offers extensive comparability with the survey of Israeli Jews we conducted at the same time.

Parallel Challenges

To provide more details on the parallel surveys of American and Israeli Jews: both surveys were conducted in 2008/2009 for the Jewish Peoplehood Index Project, for which we both served as principal investigators. The US survey encompassed 1161 Jews aged 21+ who resided in the continental United States. Administered to an opt-in panel by Synovate, a research company that maintains a massive pool of Americans who are willing to complete social surveys, the questionnaires were completed both by mail and on the web, between December 2008 and January 2009. The sample included only those who said that their religion was Jewish, comprising an estimated 80% of American Jews at the time. As the Pew report and other surveys have demonstrated, Jews who identify their religion as “none” tend to score low on all measures of conventional Jewish engagement, including attachment to Israel. Hence, the findings from the 2008–09 survey must be regarded as biased slightly upward in terms of Israel-oriented measures. We weighted the sample for household size, age, sex, region, and educational achievement so as to approximate distributions reported in the National Jewish Population Study of 2000–01. The Jewish Peoplehood Index Project survey we conducted of Jewish Israeli adults, aged 18+, comprised 1,000 respondents who were interviewed by telephone between 12–17 December 2008 by Midgam Ltd.

Several major and consistent findings emerge from these multiple surveys. Most fundamentally, we learn that with respect to American Jews’ overall levels of attachment to Israel, on average, American Jews can be termed, “moderately attached,” to Israel. This is not to say that all American Jews share the same levels of attachment; a large minority are highly attached, many somewhat attached, and a noticeable but small number report that they feel only weakly attached if at all. The Pew Study provides pertinent evidence. With

respect to a question on emotional attachment to Israel, the national sample divided almost evenly in thirds among those who were very attached to Israel, only somewhat attached to Israel, and those describing themselves as not very or not attached to Israel (30%, 39%, and 31% respectively). The Pew survey also asked respondents about whether each of nine items is regarded as “an essential part of what being Jewish means.” Among the nine items, “Caring about Israel” ranked fifth. Under one half (43%) saw Israel as essential to being Jewish. In so doing, they placed Israel just barely ahead of, “Having a good sense of humor” (which garnered the endorsement of 42% of the respondents). Indeed the middling position of attachment to Israel emerges early in the social scientific study of American Jews, dating back to the study of Lakeville by Sklare and Greenblum (1957), when Israel assumed only a middling position in a list of items evaluated as desirable or essential to being a “good Jew.” Moving beyond attitudes to behavior, the Pew survey estimates the number of Jews who were ever in Israel at 43% (the same as the number who see Israel as essential to their view of being Jewish), and the number who have been to Israel twice as 23% (not far from the number who say that they are very attached to Israel). Thus, a good number of Jews have traveled to Israel; but, over their lifetimes, under a quarter have ever been as often as twice. Travel by Americans to Israel has indeed increased over the last two decades, but notwithstanding the impact of Birthright Israel and other spurs to visiting Israel, the increasing numbers of American Jewish visitors to Israel do not translate into a level of Israel engagement that is either very widespread or a dominant feature of American Jewish life.

This composite portrait of what we term American Jews “middling” overall levels of engagement with Israel ought not to obscure a variety of significant variations in attachment. In study after study, we find very similar relationships of attachment with various crucial axes of social differentiation. In broad terms, Israel attachment varies with:

- denominational traditionalism (the Orthodox score the highest, the non-denominational the lowest);
- all measures of conventional Jewish engagement (positively related to Israel attachment);
- in-marriage (the in-married are far more Israel-engaged than the intermarried); and,
- age (with less Israel attachment among younger Jews).

That is, however we measure such matters, younger Jews are less attached to Israel than are older ones. The long-standing and wide-ranging age variation has generated something of a debate among scholars as to the way it has played out in previous years, as well as its implications for the future. Specifically, do the lower levels of attachment to Israel among younger people portend a diminution of overall attachment as they age and come to replace their elders? Does currently low attachment mean low attachment later? One possibility is that because of the changing composition of the younger cohorts (more of them will be children of intermarriage), attachment levels may stay low and drag down overall averages. On the other hand, other factors—increased Israel travel chief among them—might affect the picture in the other direction. Some scholars have called the future of American Jews' attachment to Israel a race between intermarriage on the one hand and Birthright on the other.

In short, the predictions about the future depend in large part upon the processes underlying the age-related variation. That is, why are younger people less attached to Israel than their elders? One possible reason that younger Jews are detached from Israel is that they are widely unmarried. Since eventual marriage and parenthood provoke engagement in Jewish life (ritual practice, institutional affiliation, etc.) and, by extension, adoption of more positive attitudes toward Israel, Israel attachment is bound to rise with time. If family life-cycle underlies low levels of attachment, then today's younger people will become increasingly attached to Israel as they marry, have children, and engage more thoroughly in conventional Jewish life—to be sure, such has been the pattern throughout research conducted since 1982. In contrast with the maturation hypothesis that sees attachment to Israel rising with age and the family life-cycle, another view on the matter attributes prime importance to intermarriage as a determinant of Israel-related attitudes. That is, as numerous studies document, the intermarried consistently score far lower than the in-married on all measures of Jewish engagement. Most critically, the gaps between the in-married and the intermarried are especially pronounced with respect to any measure connected to Israel. Intermarriage looms as a significant factor both because it is so closely tied to distancing from Israel, and because it is so increasingly prevalent in the lives of younger Jews. And not only are more young adults married to (or partnered with) non-Jews; many more are the children of intermarried parents. Since the respondents' intermarried parentage cannot change over time, and their non-Jewish spouses and partners are relatively unlikely to change, the diminished attachment to Israel among younger Jews may be seen as a relatively enduring cohort effect; that is, a semi-permanent feature of the younger birth cohorts who are destined to remain

fairly distant from Israel even as they age and mature. Furthermore, to the extent that intermarriage rates will continue to grow, the distance from Israel is likely to increase over the coming years and decades. Our own view is that intermarriage, rising numbers of Jews with no religion, and the partially Jewish, as well as Jews with hybrid religious and ethnic identities, all point to a gradual weakening of attachment to Israel among the non-Orthodox (and majority) segment of American Jewry, over time.

One commonly held view is that chronological distance from the Holocaust as well as from the early “popular” wars Israel fought (between 1948 and 1974) contributes to a diminished sense of attachment to Israel by younger Jews. No scientific research has yet established causality of the kind suggested by Garfinkle (2013). Moreover, if the analysis is restricted to in-married Jews, we find no decline in attachment to Israel among younger adults who are in-married. If changing historical consciousness were at work, then we should find declining attachment to Israel associated with younger birth cohorts, but this is not the case. Hence, rising intermarriage over time rather than the simple elapse of time seems to serve as the prime driver of detachment from Israel. This discussion relates to attachment alone, and leaves aside policy questions. That is, in thinking about attachment to Israel among American Jews, one needs to distinguish between feelings of closeness to (or distance from) Israel, and support for Israeli government policies—a separate matter entirely. The former is measured by survey questions on such matters as caring about Israel, attachment to Israel, talking about Israel, or reading about Israel. In contrast, policy support has been measured in other ways, such as views on the construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, confidence in the Israeli government’s sincerity in pursuing a peace settlement, and views on whether the US is lending sufficient or excessive support to Israel. Our discussion of attachment above excludes such policy-related matters. That said, a growing number of younger American Jews are evincing an emerging configuration: high attachment combined with low support for prevailing government policies.

To move beyond an almost exclusive focus on US Jews to one that simultaneously embraces US and Israeli Jews, we draw upon the 2008–09 parallel surveys we conducted of both populations as part of the Jewish Peoplehood Index Project. Our major “take-away” from these surveys centers on the extent to which the two populations—though differing in so many ways—nevertheless express strikingly similar attitudes, be they towards each other or the Jewish collective overall, namely, the “Jewish People.” Accordingly, we found that when asked in a variety of ways whether they care about the other group—

i.e., Jews in Israel or the United States—significant numbers of Jews in both societies claim to feel attached to the other. These feelings are closely aligned with similar feelings toward Jews world-wide. Thus, feelings of closeness to Israeli or US Jewry are part and parcel of feelings of attachment to the Jewish people. Not surprisingly, attachment to Jewish peoplehood is, in turn, strongly related to positive feelings about being Jewish.

In both surveys, we observed that levels of Jewish Peoplehood attachment hardly vary by age. Contrary to widely held expectations, in our earlier survey consisting only of Jews who identify Judaism as their religion, young Jews are as engaged with Jewish Peoplehood feelings as their elders. However, in the Pew survey, where 22% of Jewish respondents reported no religion, measures of commitment to Jewish peoplehood varied considerably. In the Pew survey, 84% of those aged 65+ agreed they have a “strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people,” as compared with just 69% of those aged 18–29. In a related question, the numbers of those saying that they “have special responsibility to care for Jews in need” declines modestly—from 67% among the oldest respondents to 60% for the youngest. In the 2008–09 dual surveys, we found that both Israeli and American Jews report a considerable number of family members, friends, and communication with Jews in the other country. Israelis, in fact, report more such ties, perhaps reflecting the fact that significant number of Israelis have taken up residence in the US. Quite predictably, we found that peoplehood feelings increase with the number of contacts in the other society, and with travel to the other country. Travel to Israel by US Jews and to the US by Israelis, as well as the fostering of personal contacts, both reflect and enhance pre-existing feelings of connection to the Jewish people and to Israel/American Jews. Yet while Jews in both societies may say they feel warmly toward the other, however we can measure such things, they know relatively little about Jews in the other society. On both subjective and objective measures, members of both societies demonstrate low levels of knowledge about the other.

To provide a quantified examination of how American and Israeli Jewries relate to each other and the overall notion of Jewish peoplehood, we turn to those questions asked identically (or as identically as possible) in our parallel, nearly simultaneous surveys in 2008–09. Table 5.1 reports mean scores on several duplicated items, where the mean scores are calculated on a 0 to 100 metric, where (for example) a strongly disagree (or “not at all”) answer was assigned a score of 0, a strongly agree (or “to a great extent”) answer a score of 100, and other answers the appropriate intermediate values (such as 25, 50 and 75 for these 5-point scales, or 33 and 66 for 4-point scales).

TABLE 5.1 *Mean Scores of Peoplehood Items for American and Israeli Jews**

	Americans (N=1160)	Israelis (N=1000)
1. How important is being Jewish in your life?	76	81
2. To what extent do you feel proud to be a Jew?	83	84
3. For you personally, to what extent does being Jewish involve feeling part of a worldwide Jewish people?	68	76
4. To what extent do you feel close to Israeli/American Jews?	53	55
5. To what extent do you feel close to Jews who live in countries other than Israel or the United States?	54	55
6. To what extent do you feel emotionally attached to Israeli / American Jews?	59	51
7. To what extent do you feel emotionally attached to Jews who live in countries other than Israel or the United States?	51	51
8. To what extent do you care about Israeli / American Jews?	77	71
9. I consider all Jews around the world like family	59	70
10. To what extent does the existence of the Israeli / American Jewish community benefit the American / Israeli Jewish community?	54	77
11. To what extent would you say that you are well-informed about the Israeli / the American Jewish community?	39	39
Average scores:	61	65

As can be seen from the items above, the overall “peoplehood” score of Israeli Jews is slightly higher than that of the American Jews. Moreover, we recall that the results for American Jewry are somewhat upwardly biased since, unlike the more recent, more representative, and larger sample of the Pew survey, the 2008–09 survey we conducted could not include so-called “Jews of no religion” (JNR). These account for 22% of American Jewry, and they score much lower on most of the indicators of Jewish peoplehood compared with Jews by Religion, the vast majority (78%) of whom, when asked, say their religion is

Jewish, as opposed to atheist, agnostic, or none—the answers of the Jews of no religion. We estimate that if the JNR group was represented in our sample, then the average gap between the American and Israeli respondents would grow by as much as 12 points, testifying to a clear lead for Israeli over American Jews with respect to what may be called their Jewish peoplehood commitment.

With all this said, current ties may certainly be seen as fairly strong. Nevertheless, we surmise that the distance between the two communities could well increase due in part to contrasting trends in their socio-cultural and socio-political evolution. On the American side, non-Orthodox American Jews are becoming less engaged in being Jewish in all ways, owing in large part to rising intermarriage rates. Moreover, they retain a firm liberal worldview, as demonstrated in their self-characterizations as liberals rather than conservative, and in their heavy voting for Democratic Party candidates. In contrast, Israel Jewry's Haredi population is rapidly growing, as is the West Bank settler population, and, arguably (although this assertion may be contested) more nationalistic segments in the Israeli Jewish voting population. Notably, in the last few decades the religious camp has joined forces with the secular right, giving the two allied camps a dominant position in Israel's politics and society. As might be expected, the alliance between them is reflected, among other things, in the vast amount of economic support that has been given to them—often at the expense of vital national and socio-economic needs. For example, large portions of the national budget are channeled to yeshivas, most of which prohibit their students from serving in the Israeli army, and that generally fail to provide a general education, including math, sciences, foreign languages, and world history. The political right gets its share through the government's huge investments (the exact sum of which is not transparent) in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. However, the most consequential product of this alliance is reflected in Israel's policy in ongoing efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It goes without saying that this policy severely undermines Israel's relationships with the American government and, indirectly, weakens the position of American Jewry within American society and polity, and weakens its feelings of solidarity with Israel (Garfinkle, 2013). The Pew Survey in fact uncovered several significant age-related differences on Israel-related political attitudes. As compared with their elders, non-Orthodox younger adult American Jews are less sympathetic to Jewish settlements on the West Bank, more skeptical of Israeli leaders' sincerity in pursuing peace, and more eager for the US government to give Israel less support rather than more support.

Concluding Remarks

The Jews of Israel and the United States maintain an unusually strong relationship, that is conducted on several levels. Not only do they maintain symbolic and affective connections, as the survey evidence clearly demonstrates, but we also note significant interpersonal contacts, visiting, and migration. The two communities mutually influence each other's culture in multiple senses of the term. And, on top of all this, both are engaged in a massive political endeavor designed to advance the security and diplomatic standing of the State of Israel, both in the United States and in the world arena. At the individual level of analysis, our empirical evidence indicates that the two groups are at least moderately attached to each other and that both have a relatively strong sense of Jewish peoplehood. Furthermore, these shared sentiments are often accompanied by concrete action, including joint cultural and educational activities, social networks, reciprocal travel, and flows of a variety of material and non-material resources. The current unusual character of that relationship immediately raises the question of its viability and sustainability going forward. Since predictions are risky—especially about the future—we will refrain from an overall judgment, preferring the more modest goal of outlining some of the key considerations that are likely to influence both the magnitude and character of relationships between the two large Jewish populations.

On the American side, one factor operating to sustain and even strengthen the relationship entails the strongly growing Orthodox population. The recently conducted Pew Research Center study points to a doubling of Orthodox Jews' number, generation by generation (as does the recently conducted *Jewish Community Study of New York 2011*). While just 10% of adults are Orthodox, 27% of American Jewish children are being raised in Orthodox homes. Notably, Orthodox Jews are not only highly attached to Israel but also deeply supportive of its major war-and-peace policies. They also supply a steady stream of visitors, students and immigrants, many of whom settle in the West Bank. This human movement in turn reflects, sustains, and expands strong personal and familial ties between the two communities.

Other developments also portend sustained or strengthened ties. The rise of J Street, the New Israel Fund, and smaller groups generally associated with the Israeli left, means that liberal-oriented Jews in the United States now have a channel for effecting and expressing strong attachments to Israel. Somewhat paradoxically, the breakdown of uniform solidarity with the dominant American Jewish support for the prevailing Israeli policy line works to provide an additional arena for remaining attached to Israel. Alongside these developments in the population and political culture of American Jewry, others

portend weakening ties of American Jewry to Israel. Most critically, the sheer size of the non-Orthodox US Jewish population is dramatically falling, meaning that fewer such Jews will be around to conduct and contribute to the relationship. In addition, far larger segments of that population will have been associated with intermarriage, either by virtue of having intermarried parents or by way of marrying non-Jews. Approximately 80% or more of young non-Orthodox Jews either marry non-Jews or are the children of intermarried parents. The intermarried population, whether by parentage or marriage, displays far weaker attachment to being Jewish in general, and an especially weaker attachment to anything related to Israel. In addition, markedly larger fractions of the population—especially among younger adults—express alienation from Israel's prevailing political directions. Certainly, some opponents of Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians remain deeply attached to Israel, but many—if not most—choose to distance themselves from Israel in general and not just from the policies they see as inconsistent with their liberal and universalist worldviews.

On the Israeli side, the pattern of development seems to be quite contradictory. Whereas American non-Orthodox Jewry is becoming less Jewishly engaged and remaining steadfastly liberal, the Jewish population in Israel is arguably becoming more ethnocentrically, nationally, and religiously Jewish and less liberal. Notably, during the last few decades, a long-standing alliance between the camps of the national-religious and the secular right has dominated Israel's political and social scene. That reality has been reflected internally in attempts by prominent Knesset Members to undermine Israel's democratic foundations, including the recent efforts to limit the authority of Israel's Supreme Court and to pass a law according to which Israel would be Jewish first and democratic second. Externally, the government's consistently hawkish foreign policy has severely undermined Israel's standing and increased its isolation in the international community, including the Western world. In fact, even the United States, historically Israel's most important ally, has been dismayed by its policy in the West Bank, particularly because of the continued construction of Jewish settlements in the midst of peace negotiation efforts. Needless to say, these circumstances may be detrimental to the ability and motivation of American Jewry to support Israel and come to its assistance.

In sum, juxtaposing the trends in the Israeli and American Jewish communities, we find elements of both strengthening and weakening ties. Migration, travel, easy communication, business relationships, and cultural exchange all work to express and strengthen ties. So too does the increasing demographic presence and cultural influence of Orthodoxy in both countries, as the Orthodox build increasingly numerous relationships on several levels. At the

same time, the weakening of Jewish attachment among American Jews, and tendencies that veer toward the political and religious right in Israel, can only serve to widen the divides between the two populations and strain historic ties. How these and other forces play out over time is, of course, impossible to predict, but well worth following.

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