

JEWISH IDENTITY IN THE U.S. AND ISRAEL

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INTRODUCTION

Strong Jewish identity, for purposes of this paper, is understood as the effort to express the Judaic tradition in one's own life (living one's life in accordance with Jewish rhythms), and a strong sense of attachment to the Jewish people leading to a concern with their welfare. These components are theoretically measurable and allow us to compare levels of Jewish identity among individuals, among communities, and over time.

Although they are analytically distinct they tend to be closely related. In fact, at least for the past three generations in the United States, and in Israel today, observance of Jewish law (religion) and commitment to the Jewish people (ethnicity) are correlated. This is especially true of those who are strongly observant of Jewish ritual. They tend to be the most strongly committed to Jewish peoplehood. (Arguably, the ultra-Orthodox are an exception.). More recently, as a result of the decline of secular Zionism as an ideology competing with religion for hegemony in the understanding of what it means to be Jewish, those who remain strongly committed to Jewish peoplehood tend to be those who are also strongly committed to ritual observance. There are, of course, exceptions.

Many if not most students of contemporary Jewish life in the U.S. are not ritually observant but do see themselves as strongly committed to Jewish peoplehood (ethnicity). Hence, the fact that religion and ethnicity are correlated is an unpleasant finding as far as they are concerned. My own suspicion is that some social scientists and some communal leaders have sought to muddy a clarity that, heretofore, existed in the definition of Jewish identity and the measures of Jewish identity. They do so, I believe, because the declines

in the level of Jewish identity, at least in the U.S. challenge them and their values at both the personal and the institutional level. However, none of this relieves us of asking how Jewish identity expresses itself at lower levels of Jewish commitment where associations between ethnicity and religion are less powerful – where we find, for example, a moderate level of commitment to ritual observance but an absence of commitment to Jewish peoplehood or a moderate level of ethnic commitment but virtually no commitment to ritual observance. We need to look carefully at the measures which we use. Sweeping observations may be correct but measuring Jewish identity is no simple matter and, as I have noted elsewhere, is the subject of serious debate.¹ Nevertheless, when we observe any given community of Jews over time or when we compare one Jew with another, we are able to make fair judgements about relative levels of Jewish identity. Common sense and judicious observation provide us with a generally accurate picture of changes taking place in Jewish identity. I am more confident about my reflections regarding U.S. Jewry than I am with regard to Israel. The topic of the Jewish identity of Israeli Jews has engaged fewer scholars and there are fewer studies of Israeli Jewish identity. Furthermore, most of the studies that do exist are written from a different perspective than studies of Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

There are different types of studies of Israeli Jewish identity. An analysis of these studies and a comparison between these studies and studies of Jewish identity outside Israel would yield important insights. What I say here is a result of first impressions that rather than extended study,

Studies of Jewish identity in the U.S. tend to focus on the issue of the intensity or strength of Jewish identity among individual Jews; on whether it is declining or

expanding. The question of “assimilation” generally hovers in the background. The specter of assimilation does not haunt studies of Jewish identity in Israeli society. Most studies of Israeli Jewish identity tend to focus on Jewish identity as a handle to understand other aspects of Israeli society and politics. The impetus often comes from an exploration of tensions between religious and secular Jews or on attitudes toward the democratic versus the Jewish nature of the state and its implications for Arab Jewish relations or even Israeli Palestinian relations. As these issues have gained wider currency in the past decades, studies of Jewish identity, along these lines have multiplied.² But they don’t facilitate comparisons between Jewish identity in Israel and the U.S. or for that matter other Diaspora communities.

The studies which most closely resemble those conducted abroad were pioneered by Simon Herman. He sought to measure the religious behavior and beliefs of Israeli Jews.³ However, unlike the U.S. such studies also ask respondents about the strength of their Jewish as compared to their Israeli identity.⁴ I know of no comparable studies in the U.S. I suspect such studies would be deemed objectionable on the grounds that the results, indeed the very posing of the question, raises the notion of dual loyalty – a fear which no longer assumes the massive importance which it once did on Jewish public agenda, but still remains a sensitive issue.⁵

Observations in this paper about Jewish identity in Israel and the U.S. are painted in broad strokes. There are many exceptions to the generalizations made here. I try to describe the forest but the description not only overlooks individual trees but even clumps of trees. For example, the paper ignores those groups of Jews in both the U.S. and Israel who, contrary to developments described here have strengthened their commitment to

Jewish continuity and survival. Assimilation of an individual or the acculturation of a communal leadership often generates a counter reaction. All I can hope to do in this essay is briefly describe trends in Jewish identity in the US and in Israel by focusing upon the issues which the conference conveners posed: the nature of ethnic and religious boundaries, who sets them and how they change, the relationship of ethnicity and religion, and what influences how ethnic and religious minorities relate to the state and the wider society. This last question assumes, of course, a peculiar twist in Israel. Since my discussion touches on some of the questions more fully than on others I provide a capsule response to those questions I deem most relevant at the conclusion of each section.

JEWISH IDENTITY IN THE UNITED STATES

The systematic study of American Jews and their Jewish identity originates with the work of Marshall Sklare who began publishing his studies in the 1950s. Articles which explored specific aspects of Jewish identity and behavior⁶ and some studies of specific Jewish communities were published as early as the late nineteenth century but Sklare was the first to undertake the study of American Jewry, with a special emphasis on Jewish identity, in a systematic fashion. His keen intelligence combined with his knowledge and understanding of American Jews and an ability to disassociate his own values from his scholarly research was unparalleled. His first book, Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement,⁷ described the Conservative movement and inter alia the mass of American Jews as possessing a Jewish identity that was basically ethnic. Although one can always find greater emphasis on one or the other component, religion and ethnicity are intertwined in the Jewish tradition. The ties had begun to unravel in western Europe in the nineteenth century but this was less true in eastern Europe – home of the mass of Jewish immigrants who emigrated to the United States between the late nineteenth century and 1924. However, the more religious East Europeans, those to whom the observance of religious commandments was a primary factor in their lives, were least likely to immigrate to the United States or to return to Europe once they saw how inhospitable the cultural climate was to strict observance. The vast majority – those who did immigrate and who remained in the U.S. -- were by and large a highly adaptable group. They gave primacy to their ethnic identity but, over time, they learned to translate their ethnic identity into religious terms since America was far more hospitable to immigrant groups who insisted on differentiating themselves

religiously than to immigrant groups who insisted on differentiating themselves ethnically. In other words, American Jews adopted a new meaning system, probably in an unselfconscious manner, which suited the cultural climate of the United States, at least until the late 1960's. In the last two decades, especially in the 1990's, this has changed.

Sklare's conceptualization of the basic nature of American Jewish identity in the first half of the twentieth century as ethnic, wrapped in a religious package, may be overstated. It may be a consequence of research carried out in the period following World War II and the Holocaust and under the impact of Zionism on American Jews. There is every reason to reexamine the question from an historical perspective. But memory alone, my own and those of colleagues my age and even somewhat younger, whether we grew up in Orthodox, or Conservative homes, and of course those who grew up in unsynagogued circles, argues strongly that ethnicity and not religion was the driving force of Jewish identity. (This may be less true of those who grew up in Reform homes). Many if not most Jews grew up in neighborhoods with substantial Jewish populations and a variety of local Jewish institutions from bakeries and delicatessens to synagogues. Until World War II, the pervasive presence of antisemitism in higher education, occupation, and social settings as well as the physical threats to Jewish survival in so many parts of the world resulted in Jews looking to other Jews for assistance. They tended, therefore, to follow the educational and occupational paths set by other Jews. But whereas it was ethnicity not religion which energized American Jews, it was religion not ethnicity which provided the cloak under which American Jews presented themselves to the American public.

Under these conditions, with Judaism understood as a matter of birth rather than choice, and more disadvantages than advantages accruing to being Jewish, there was little debate over Jewish boundaries. Marginal cases always existed and they are interesting cases. But by and large, subjective definitions of oneself as a Jew coincided with definitions which both the Jewish world and the non-Jewish world offered. These boundaries, never officially defined by either the Jewish or the non-Jewish community, least of all by the American government, were rarely, to the best of my knowledge, the subject of dispute. The exceptions were, as indicated above, in marginal cases: high profile non-Jews (often entertainers) who converted to Judaism for the sake of a marriage and were subsequently divorced from their Jewish partner (Marilyn Monroe), low status groups who claimed Jewish ancestry (the Black Jews), or high status individuals who were baptized or, short of being baptized, denied any tie to the Jewish people (Walter Lippman). This condition was coincident with clear lines of demarcation between Jewishness and non-Jewishness and reinforced very low rates of intermarriage. Although some attention was directed to a rise in intermarriage rates in the 1960's, rates among Jews remained extraordinarily low compared to other minority groups. The argument that ethnicity rather than religion drove this opposition to intermarriage is supported by the fact that in popular Jewish parlance the term intermarriage meant a marriage between a born Jew and a born non-Jew regardless of whether or not the non-Jew had converted. Jews wondered why a non-Jew would want to convert to Judaism. The convert remained an outsider since Judaism was basically a matter of birth. Conversion, in the minds of Jews, took place only for the sake of marriage; most often to placate Jewish parents. The notion of conversion based on religious conviction was foreign to the thinking of most

Jews. In addition, a good part of the opposition to intermarriage stemmed, I suspect, from the Jewish parents' sense that they would be uncomfortable interrelating with the parents of the non-Jewish spouse.⁸ Despite increasing acceptance of Jews in the business and professional world, they were still not accepted nor did they feel comfortable in the social presence of Gentiles.

The forgoing is misleading if it suggests that American Jews sought to isolate themselves from the non-Jewish world. On the contrary, they were anxious to enter that world, although they assumed that the price for such entry would not include surrender of their Jewish identity. That, after all, is what they thought made America different and a true paradise for Jews. Nothing reflects this orientation better than the political proclivities of American Jews.

A pure survival strategy would dictate that Jews and certainly Jewish organizations abstain from political activity that doesn't affect them. If Jews did engage in political activity other than in defense of Jewish interests, a strategy of survival would dictate that they do so as individuals and not under a Jewish banner. Furthermore, if Jewish organizations were to engage in politics, it would make sense for them to seek, other things being equal, a platform attractive to most other Americans. But American Jews have not done so. Indeed, in the political realm, especially in matters of religion and state, Jews behave like missionaries seeking to coerce unbelievers to the true faith.⁹

Since the time of FDR and the New Deal but especially since World War II Jews have been deeply committed to the political agenda of American liberalism. In fact, they did as much as any group in the US to shape that agenda. Its major planks, included strict separation of religion and state, support for the civil rights of minority groups (when civil

rights was a major issue in American politics), government intervention in the economy (this is less true today), and a latitudinarian policy, i.e. an emphasis on individual rights in matters involving abortion, sex, and pornography. American Jews insist that their liberalism is an extension of their Jewish tradition. It is clear to me that the liberal political agenda is not an extension of the Jewish tradition nor is there a relationship between adherence to political liberalism and adherence to the Jewish heritage. It seems equally clear to me that the liberal political agenda, most especially the emphasis on individual autonomy, undermines Judaism and Jewish continuity. Nevertheless, Jews believe the opposite to be true. In fact, the commitment to liberalism is the major tie, in the minds of many Jews, that links them to Judaism.¹⁰ In pressing the liberal agenda, American Jews are convinced that they are pressing a just and fair agenda of benefit to the vast majority of Americans, whether other Americans know it or not. Liberalism, in the eyes of American Jews, is the universalistic message of Judaism and is at least equal in importance if not superior in importance, to any aspect of Jewish particularism¹¹. This commitment to liberalism runs very deep. It is less true of Orthodox Jews but my own impression is that only the ultra-Orthodox reject it. Modern Orthodox Jews whom I know, with a few exceptions, support the liberal agenda with only a drop less enthusiasm than the non-Orthodox. (See Barry Kosmin's paper for a comparison with U.K. Jewry).

Commitment to liberalism has remained central to the Jewish identity of many American Jews. But other aspects of Jewish identity have undergone dramatic change. These changes are related, as both cause and effect, to the personalization and privatization of religion in the United States, a phenomena well documented among non-Jews¹² and vividly illustrated in a number of studies of American Jews.¹³ It is best

described as the notion that it is proper and even desirable for an individual to construct his/her own pattern of religious belief and behavior choosing only that which suits the individual. Personalization of religion has been accompanied by greater emphasis on the spiritual quality of one's life. In the case of Jews the immediate consequence has been a radical decline in ethnic commitments (feelings of attachment to the Jewish people, concern with Israel or the fate of Jews outside one's own community),¹⁴ and a decline in the importance of the systematic observance of Jewish ritual viewed as a mandate imposed from without. It does not mean a decline in the observance of one or more rituals which the individual finds personally appealing. This form of observance may well have increased.¹⁵

Personalism or privatization, as these terms suggests, focuses religious life on the actual experiences of the individual person. Even when the experience takes place in the company of others, indeed, requires others for its consummation, it remains the individual's experience of the group encounter that is central. "Immediacy", "authenticity" the "here and now", the "face-to-face" encounter, the "actually lived moment", the "meaningful experience" -- all the verbal insignia of personalism -- run against the grain of responsibilities to either an abstract collectivity or to an impersonal code of do's and don'ts. If it is not meaningful, there is little sense in doing it -- customary duties notwithstanding.

Hence, the personalist "life-style" is indeed a "style", that is, a form of life given to sharp fluctuations and not a structure that is stable and continuous. It tends to be constituted out of episodic and exceptional experiences that light up the workaday and lackluster, rather than out of a fixed position that encourages disciplined regularity or

patterned coherence. Jewishness has increasingly become an acquired taste, not an historical obligation. Personalism and privatization detach individuals from the larger social collectives of which they are a part, release them from the binding duties these collectives impose, and leads them toward self-directed lives that pursue rare moments of meaning and growth. It should be stressed, however, that these “moments” may constitute periods of intense involvement. Folk festivals, musical happenings, even emotional prayer services evoke strong impressions on the participants, however episodic these impressions may be. They are not, in my opinion, signals of Jewish revival although some observers have chosen to interpret them as such.

This privatization process takes place in an open, universalizing, almost syncretistic context. Although many Jews feel far more “spiritual” and are far more open to “spiritual” moods than their parents, for example younger Jews are more likely to attest to a belief in God than older Jews, spiritual matters are not necessarily associated in their minds with Jewish matters. The synagogue and even attendance at Sabbath services has remained an important institution for many Jews but it is the communal and social aspects of the synagogue which attracts the “worshippers”.¹⁶ Under these circumstances, barriers to intermarriage are rapidly disappearing. From this personalist perspective, true love, the ultimate immediate personal experience, far supercedes the historical weight of ethnic ties. Indeed, to the degree that love needs to overcome obstacles (ethnic or religious) in order to be realized, it is considered the more authentic and marvelous.

This is well illustrated in the year 2000 survey of American Jews conducted by the American Jewish Committee.¹⁷ Only 30 percent of those surveyed agreed that “it would pain me if my child married a gentile” only 12 percent voiced strong disapproval

of intermarriage (an additional 30 percent said they were disappointed by intermarriage), and half the respondents indicated that “it is racist to oppose Jewish-gentile marriages”. What all this points to is the fact that not only are boundaries between Jews and non-Jews rapidly disappearing but the maintenance of such boundaries is no longer considered legitimate. What is taking place among a majority of American Jews is a process of group assimilation. The assimilation process is not simply a process whereby individuals distance themselves further and further from their own roots. It is also a process in which the group increasingly internalizes conceptions which prevail in the general culture about itself, about others and about God. This form of acculturation and coalescence is probably inevitable in an open society. Whatever else may be said on its behalf it certainly threatens the survival and continuity of a recognizably Jewish community in the United States.

To briefly summarize the answers to the central questions of this conference:

1. Jews in the U.S. set the boundaries to their community and non-Jews seem rather indifferent to the question of who is or is not a Jew. In the U.S., unlike Israel there are no governmental constraints or even guidelines in this matter. At no time in the history of American Jewry have the boundaries defining who is a Jew been more open and less clear. The rising rate of intermarriage means that children raised in such homes increasingly identify themselves as half Jewish or partially Jewish. Furthermore, whereas in the past non-Jews who married Jews were generally lapsed or religiously indifferent Christians, this is no longer the case. The Jewish community is increasingly inclusive and uncomfortable with the notion of boundaries. This is, in part, a function of a climate of opinion which has made inclusivity into a virtue and exclusivity into a cardinal sin. In

addition, parents and grandparents have a strong desire to feel that their offspring are Jewish. Rabbis and communal leaders want the money and the membership numbers that the half Jews, or partial Jews bring with them and they fear the consequences of offending intermarried constituents or the families of intermarried Jews. Given the break down of communal norms which, heretofore, rejected intermarriage, the community, including most synagogues, has no patience with leaders who voice objections to intermarriage much less act upon their convictions.

2. Boundary changes take place in accordance with changes in the urban middle class cultural and political climate in the United States. Jews are very much a part of this cultural and political climate and generally adopt its tenets without being conscious of the impact of these changes on their own assumptions and behavior. Nothing, in my opinion, is more destructive of Jewish life than the assumption that the regnant cultural climate in the United States is necessarily consistent with Jewish continuity and survival.

3. Religious observance and ethnicity remain closely intertwined at the level of deepest commitment but the religion-ethnicity package has unraveled at lower levels of Jewish commitment. It is, however, significant, that many Jews insist on redefining what it means to be a good Jew with emphasis on subjective factors such as feeling Jewish. The fact that they bother to do so, however mistaken the observer may deem this redefinition, points to continued vitality in Jewish life.

JEWISH IDENTITY IN ISRAEL

Conditions in Israeli society in the last few decades would lead observers to anticipate a radical decline in Jewish identity; to anticipate that a growing number of Israeli Jews would feel increasingly detached from the Jewish people and less anxious to express the Jewish tradition in their own lives.

There is an abundance of anecdotal evidence to support this. A recent incident illustrates what seems to be happening to the Jewishness which once characterized Israeli society. Many organizations, institutions, politicians and figures in public life send holiday greetings to their members and constituents twice a year. Greetings on the Jewish New Year are most common but Passover greetings are not unusual. A few days before Passover my wife and I received three greetings on the same day. One was from an Arab, a student in my department who is an official in an Arab town. The printed card wished the recipient a happy Passover (*chag Pesach sameach*). My internet provider also emailed wishes for a happy Passover to subscribers. The third greeting came from the local branch of the Civilian Guard (*Mishmar Ezrahi*), the civilian arm of the police department in which my wife is very active. The Passover greeting card which she and all other member of the *Mishmar Ezrahi* in our town received, wished them a “Happy Spring Festival” (*chag_aviv sameach*). Although the holiday of Spring is one of the names given to the Passover holiday, one almost never heard it used in the recent past as a form of greeting. I interpret its usage as an effort to neutralize the overt Jewishness and religiousness of the traditional Passover greetings. I find its current usage (for example in radio greetings from the National Health insurance system (*Kupat Holim L’eumi*) suggestive of developments taking place in Israeli society.

These developments owe their origin to a number of interrelated and reinforcing factors. They include:

1. The influx of FSU *olim* (estimates are that whereas up to a third of those who arrived in the early 1990's were non-Jewish, over half of the recent arrivals are non-Jews). The majority of the Jewish *olim* seem to show little interest in Judaism and Jewish culture.
2. The influx of foreign workers. Most have yet to form families. Nevertheless, their children constitute a majority in some elementary school classes in south Tel Aviv. The presence of guest-workers from Thailand, Romania, the Philippines and African countries (unofficial estimates place their number at more than a quarter of a million of whom an estimated 90,000 are in Israel illegally) have altered the human horizon that was, at one time, almost uniformly Jewish.
3. The disintegrating sense of community among the mass of veteran Israeli Jews due in part to the differentiated impact which globalization and the growth of high tech industries have had on Israeli society. The process has enriched one segment and impoverished (at least in relative terms) another.
4. The loss of legitimacy which once accrued to the "nation state", a point to be elaborated upon below.
5. The declining capacity of the state to control and supervise the process of socialization as a consequence of greater privatization of the educational system, the increase in the number of television channels, most of them carrying foreign programs; and, of course, the internet.
6. Perhaps most important of all, the penetration of a consumer culture into Israeli society and the elevation of individual aspirations, individual autonomy and individual self-fulfillment to the level of ultimate values.

It would be quite surprising if these factors did not undermine Jewish identity and a sense of Jewish cohesiveness in Israel. A colleague and myself have written about this phenomenon.¹⁸ We noted that kashrut observing restaurants are harder and harder to find in resort sections of Tel Aviv or Natanya. The immigration of ex-Soviet immigrants in the recent years has also meant the opening of about 600 pork-selling shops around Israel to meet their demands. In line with dominant Western proclivities, individualist and careerist trends have intensified greatly and the readiness of the young to sacrifice their interests for the sake of the community is increasingly unusual. At the fringes, Christmas parties, replete with Santas and trees, have become quite the vogue. Whether in terms of dress, daily habits, the music that is listened to, the food that is eaten, the TV programs that are watched, the leisure activities that are pursued, the shopping malls that are frequented (and so on), it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between the lives of many Israelis -- especially those in the younger age cohorts -- and their counterparts abroad..

Individualist careerism and dwindling commitments to national causes are perhaps nowhere better epitomized than in the decline in motivation to serve in crack combat units in the Israeli army. This unprecedented phenomenon is so arresting that students of Israel's strategic position in the Middle East have begun to argue that it must be factored into the country's ability to maintain its security posture over time. Israeli society, one analyst wrote, "displays signs of fatigue and is more reluctant to pay the price for the protracted conflict with the Arabs."¹⁹ Moreover, so far as we can tell, the chic qualities associated with Western practices are distinctly more attractive than those of Jewish or Israeli origin among large parts of the secular youth. (For example, disco is far 'cooler' than the traditional Israeli evenings of communal singing). This raises the

troubling question: can Jewish secularism, with its openness to world culture, resist assimilation into the global village?

This is a speculative question, one that cannot be settled conclusively by simply compiling empirical data. One arresting method of advancing the inquiry is to focus on that group of Israeli publicists, scholars and ideologues who, to one degree or another, repudiate the Jewish character of Israel. Far from representing a problem for them, the de-Judaization of Israel lies at the heart of their program. To be sure, this group of protagonists, who go under the catch-all and somewhat misleading label “post-Zionists” represent only a minuscule fraction of Israeli public opinion. The post-Zionists are not important because they are poised to imminently capture the Israeli mainstream, but because they present, with verve and without apology, a position that is already latent in Israeli society.²⁰

Israel has, in large part, already become a “post-Zionist” state. Even if the doctrine of post-Zionism is disdained in principle, the actual world many Israelis inhabit has long ago left recognizable Zionist substance behind. Zionist discourse is rarely heard. When it is, it rings strangely outmoded and dowdy, perhaps even somewhat comic. The image of the *halutz* is only minimally more relevant to the Israeli teenager of the 90s than the western pioneers of the United States are to their American counterparts. Zionist youth movements -- the erstwhile hothouses for ideological self-dedication -- have turned into nondescript social clubs that are avoided by those young people concerned with cutting a dashing figure. Hebrew is giving way to English in advertising promotions because the latter radiates a worldly aura which the former does not.

Post-Zionism as an idea system may, therefore, be understood as a radical extrapolation upon post-Zionism as a social reality -- one that carries existing elements to their logical and psychological conclusions. If there is truth in this analysis, a careful study of post-Zionism's central tenets is likely to handsomely reward the effort. It promises to sharpen our ability to assess Israeli Jewish durability

Not surprisingly, many post-Zionists applaud the advent of Westernism and the erosion of Jewish particularism it brings in its wake. One respected journalist, who is broadly sympathetic to post-Zionist themes, expressed satisfaction with the growing attenuation of Jewish identity. Finally, he asserted triumphantly, "we are ridding ourselves of that old bother; clarifying our national identity."

In the past, so many efforts were made to examine what it is, what happened to it, how it was formed, whether it exists at all, and if it exists why isn't it visible... It now appears that just as this old question threatened to bore us to death, it has begun to be resolved.

Commentators, he goes on to say, have:

noted the growing tendency to move from nationalist slogans to simple individualism...The lust for life...is not the self-destructive inclination of a declining nation, as the ideologists of the right see it...Madonna and Big Mac are only the outer periphery of a far-reaching process whose basis is not American influence but a growing tendency throughout the West, especially among its young people... Israeli young people are naturally gravitating to these fresh tendencies -- they are not aping the West, they are part of it. Their new forms of cultural consumption and

leisure activities have become supra-national. This is true of popular music, movies, trips abroad, dress and even the style of speech."

Those who wring their hands over these changes, he says, are becoming increasingly anachronistic.²¹

In the eyes of many secular-cosmopolitan Israeli Jews, their country is being hijacked by a band of crude obscurantists, relics from the Jewish past. Jewishness, so recently emancipated and brought into the enlightened ambit of Western history, has risen, in its most primitive form, out of the dark corners of history, to threaten them with (in a reference to the rise of the religious party Shas), a "state of the Ayatollahs". Insofar as Jewish culture is equated with religion and religion remains a highly divisive issue, secular Jewishness faces a difficult uphill struggle and the post-Zionist program of de-Judaizing the State of Israel gains a certain degree of attractiveness among those who would not call themselves post-Zionists, indeed who may not even know what that label means.

The depth and virulence of anti-religious feeling among many secular Israeli Jews, (albeit still a minority of them), will scarcely be comprehensible to a western non-Israeli. It involves such a profound delegitimizing and demonizing of the religious that, what in other contexts would be condemned as scurrilous antisemitic vulgarity, passes here without remark.

Israeli theater has been a leader in emphasizing secular-religious schisms. *Chametz*, honored as the best play of 1995, makes an overt plea for Israeli society to forget its past, ignore its mythical heroes, even forget the Holocaust and its victims, and to live as a normal society bereft of any Jewish attachments. The popular play *Fleischer*

prompted great involvement on the part of the audience, who laughed and applauded at the anti-religious jokes. One of the play's actors described his role as that of a catalyst for "venting all those expressions of anger that the secular have against the religious."

Audience responses to the play's rancorous message were tested by questionnaires distributed at a number of performances. Most believed that the play provided a faithful representation of contemporary Israel. "Religious spectators sensed such hostility and even hatred directed toward them that they felt inclined to take off their skullcaps."²²

Proposals, made only half facetiously, to create 'two states for two peoples' -- the one secular, the other religious -- have gained a certain redundant currency in the press. A colorful and savage variant on the same theme is presented by a well-known novelist who reminds us that there is a Biblical precedent for two states: Judah and Israel. He tells the Orthodox that their

religion has fossilized, become idolatrous. And when a religion that has become racist and political, confronts a democracy -- the opposite of dogmatic, open and compromising -- a barrier is erected, one that cannot be camouflaged by sweet talk...If you wish to curse menstrual intercourse, do so in your state. With the money we save from not supporting your thousands of idlers [read: Yeshiva students] we will reduce income tax by two thirds and raise the salaries of school teachers...If a woman is halakhically forbidden to you, do as you see fit. We will fuck just as much as we please...We do not want Jewish values, because there are no such things; there are [only] universal values.²³

When anti-religious sentiment goes this deep, the temptation to throw out the Jewish baby with the religious bath water becomes, for some at least, too powerful to be resisted.

Oddly, there is a striking symmetry here between the Orthodox and the post-Zionists. Both argue for the indistinguishability of Jewishness and Judaism. Whereas the Orthodox argument is entirely familiar, the post-Zionist position is quite novel. For the post-Zionists, Jewishness as a nationality and Judaism as a religion form a unity -- and they are both to be rejected. Having little concern with either, and arguing moreover, that religion is the sole basis of Jewish nationality they are only too happy to grant custodianship over Jewishness to the religious. Echoing the religious position, they contend that there is no secular Jewish alternative to religiously-based Jewishness. Secular Jewish culture is a contrived and flimsy construct, either tending to revert to its deeper religious and insular sources or to dissipate itself naturally in the course of its exposures to the non-Jewish world. As such, the choices that face Israel are two and only two: either a Jewish state in the fully religious sense, or a non-national, non-confessional state of all its citizens.²⁴

In the past, the Jewishness of Israel issue was the conflict over the degree to which the Jewish heritage -- including the Jewish religion -- was to be incorporated into the character of the state. Voices arguing for a state that was Jewishly neutral were not heard. Few if any were then concerned with the underlying contradiction between a Jewish state and a “normal” state. For all the heat it generates today, this was not an issue that exercised the creators of Zionism.

Nor should this be surprising. The era in which the Jewish national movement developed took for granted that nations, as well as the states associated with them, linked individuals sharing ethnic roots and a common past. Nation-states were precisely what this hyphenated unity implied: states representing distinct nations. The conspicuous

exceptions to the rule such as the United States and the many multi-ethnic European states were glossed over. America was exempted because, despite its heterogeneous population, a common social vision was said to unify its people. Multi-ethnic societies such as that of the English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish, were collapsed into one over-arching ethnic unit and labeled British. Following these assumptions, a Jewish state intended as a homeland for all Jews would naturally bear the attributes of the Jewish people and the symbols of the Jewish heritage. Such a state would be both Jewish and 'normal' -- or, in other words, the latent tensions between a nationally Jewish and a “normal” state were entirely obscured.

These assumptions have changed dramatically in the past half century. Ethno-national states -- and even those that are integrated around a shared vision of a society's ultimate purposes-- have fallen into bad odor. In their place, an alternate, individualist-liberal-democratic conception has arisen. In this intellectually regnant image, the state does not possess a moral vocation; it is not in the business of embodying collective ethical purposes -- national or otherwise. Indeed, the identification of the state with a specific ethnic group is understood to be fundamentally unacceptable.²⁵ Even less palatable is a “confessional” state, one in which public power is in the service of a particular religious creed. The state legitimately represents citizens as autonomous individuals; its primary purpose is to service their interests and enforce the “rules of the game” by which they are to live.

Virtually everywhere in the West the liberal democratic idea, now formulated as “multiculturalism”, has replaced the older conception of the nation-state. If they were once allies in the struggle against aristocratic government, today the democratic urge in

its liberal pluralist form increasingly undermines nationalist visions of the political community.²⁶ Liberal democracy has fared so well because it is the only regime that accords with the contemporary valuation of personal autonomy-- the separateness of the individual as a moral agent -- as the ultimum desideratum. Today, therefore, “normal” states avoid doing just what was once considered the central duty of nation-states: pursuing goals specific to the dominant ethnic group who comprised the “real” nation or defining themselves in terms of the characteristics of the dominant ethnic group. Governments refrain from taking sides between the various ethnic communities that compose the polity. Under these conditions a democratic Jewish state becomes a contradiction in terms.

One might argue that problems of security prevent the serious erosion of national unity or compromising national loyalties. National identity, whatever its cultural poverty, is easily expressed in terms of a common enemy. The vision of a tiny people in a hostile sea threatened with extinction, resonates with paradigmatic sense of Jewish history but it may do no more than slow the de-nationalizing thrust of the global village. It does not seem to have had much of an effect since the outbreak of the current *intifada* following the failure of the Camp David talks in September, 2000. This is the first time Israeli society has been threatened from without, the Gulf War included, where there is no substantial evidence of the society pulling together, of individuals and even groups minimizing their differences and their separatists demands. Security is no longer as effective a slogan of national unity as it once was. Strikes, even strikes which seriously inconvenience the public such as the garbage worker strike in late 1999 renewed in early 2000 occur. No economic sector has moderated its demands for public funding in light of

the security situation and the resulting strain on the national budget. Intra-Jewish ethnic and religious strains have not abated. On April 20th, eight months into the *intifada*, a period in which mortar shells were being fired at Israeli settlements in the south, the Shas daily newspaper, *Miyom L'Yom* in a play on initials, labeled the IDF, the army that promotes Ashkenazim. (They translated the letters Tz.H.L. as standing for *Tzava Hamekadem L'Ashkenazim*.)²⁷ In the summer of 2001 a new issue emerged. The heads of religious Zionist schools threatened to prohibit their students from serving in the army as long as women serve in the same combat units in which religious soldiers serve. Women's organizations, in turn, have shown no willingness to compromise their demands that women be allowed to serve in such units. Although a compromise will likely be reached, it is remarkable that both sides allow the issue to emerge at a time that Israel confronts a most serious external threat.

Nevertheless, despite the anecdotal evidence and the social analysis, survey data fails to provide evidence of a dramatic decline in Jewish identity. The most recent survey of the religious attitudes and behavior of the Israeli Jewish population, was conducted in the years 1999-2000 by the same team that conducted the Guttman survey in 1991²⁸. (The full report of the results are not yet published). The table that follows compares those who felt it "very important" to observe certain religious ceremonies as reported in the two surveys:

Table One

Percentage Declaring it "very important" to Observe the Following Rituals

Ritual Observance	1991	1999
Observing Shabbat according to religious tradition	32	30

Circumcision	74	70
<i>Bar Mitzvah</i> ceremony in a synagogue	63	66
Wedding ceremony performed by a rabbi	69	64
Having a religious burial ceremony	70	66
Reciting <i>Kaddish</i> for parents	71	69

In a separate set of questions: 96 percent in 1991 and 95 percent in 1999 answered “definitely yes” or “yes” to feeling part of the Jewish people (of those who answered “definitely yes” the figures were 65 percent in 1991 and 68 percent in 1999).

The results point to a slight decline in religious observance and mixed results with regard to ethnic ties. This is quite remarkable since the 1991 survey did not include recent FSU immigrants who are less religious than most Israeli Jews and whose Jewish identity most observers feel, is more attenuated. The most recent survey includes these Jews. It also provides separate tables for the FSU immigrants and demonstrates their lower levels of Jewish identity. The table below compares Jews from the former Soviet Union with the national sample (excluding FSU respondents). The table compares the percentages who gave the Jewishly strongest or most positive responses.

Table Two
Percentage of Jewish FSU Immigrants and All Other Israeli Jews Offering
the Most Positive Responses to Questions of Jewish Identity

Jewish Attitude or Behavior	FSU	National Sample
Life conducted in spirit of Jewish values	7	26
Very important to observe circumcision	28	70
Very important to have <i>aliya letorah</i> in <i>Bar Mitzvah</i>	23	66
Very important to have religious burial ceremony	27	66
If born again would want to be born a Jew	29	61
Important to feel part of the Jewish people	31	62
Israeli Jews and Diaspora Jews share a common fate	11	28
N	373	2,466

But despite the relatively low Jewish identity score of the FSU immigrants who constitute 13 percent of the 1999 sample, there is relatively little decline over the eight year period. How are we to account for this?

It is possible that the survey was poorly conducted or that respondents are unrepresentative of the Jewish population. It is also possible that whereas real attitudes and even behavior have changed, respondents are reluctant to admit the changes. Hence, it is possible that it will take another decade before the kinds of changes to which the previous analysis alluded finds expression in survey data. I don't know how much of this is true but I think that there is an additional factor which plays an important role in

maintaining nominal Jewish identity at a high level. This has to do with the alternative to not strongly identifying oneself as a Jew.

Israel is a Jewish state. This is reflected in a number of ways. The symbols of the state are Jewish, it is the Jewish holidays which are celebrated as national holidays, it is Jewish history, not the history Palestine, which youngsters learn as their history, it is the Holocaust which continues to serve as the central myth of Israeli society and forms the prism through which the present is understood. Israel is also, as Smootha calls it, an ethno-national state²⁹ in the sense that public policy favors the Jewish sector of the population. The stark reality of one's Jewishness and the importance of one's Jewishness are reinforced by growing demands by Israeli Arabs for greater benefits and demonstrations of empathy with the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The alternative to being Jewish in Israel, is not the same as it is in the U.S. or many parts of western Europe. Israeli society, even middle class high tech globalized Israeli society hardly recognizes a neutral or a cosmopolitan or global identity – the real alternative that strikes everyone but a small coterie of intellectuals as the alternative to being an Israeli Jew is to be an Israeli Arab. This is a powerful force in maintaining the Jewish populations' sense of Jewishness in the face of other tendencies which act to trivialize it.

To briefly summarize the answers to the central questions of this conference:

1. Boundaries between Jews and non-Jews are of two kinds; legal boundaries and informal boundaries. Legally, boundaries are set by the official (Orthodox) rabbinate but the authority of the rabbinate and the manner in which the rabbinate sets these boundaries have been under increasing challenge in recent years. The challenge comes from two directions. First, from the Conservative and Reform movements who have challenged the authority of the rabbinate

in the courts. Court rulings favorable to the non-Orthodox have had little impact on the boundaries themselves. But they serve to further undermine the legitimacy of the rabbinate's behavior. The other challenge to the boundary setting activity of the rabbinate is probably more significant in the long run. Increasing numbers of Israeli Jews are indifferent to the boundaries which the rabbinate sets or for that matter to any claims which the rabbinate makes. This would seem to be inconsistent with our earlier point that the alternative to being Jewish is being an Arab. It should make Israelis sensitive to boundaries. But Israeli Arabs, whether Moslem or Christian, do not seek to be Jews. They don't constitute any danger to the self identity of Israeli Jews. Those who do seek recognition as Jews, potential converts for example, are generally Europeans or Americans, most of them FSU *olim* who seek entry into the Israeli Jewish collectivity. Raising bars to their entry on religious grounds strikes increasing numbers of Israelis as unreasonable. A significant segment of its cultural elite and many at the secular leftist end of the continuum have adopted a more relaxed attitude toward *halakhic* boundaries separating Jews and non-Jews and this probably portends a major revolution on the issue of Jewishness in Israel and the Jewishness of Israelis; especially when coupled with the decline of Jewish identity. Having said that, it should be clear that we are talking about trends to which most Israeli Jews are still not parties. Continued and even growing concern over national security may dampen such trends.

2. Levels of ethnic identity and levels of religious identity continue to be strongly correlated. The more religiously observant are more likely than the non religiously observant to feel part of the Jewish people throughout the world. Simon Herman found this to be the case as early as the 1960s.³⁰ At the time this finding seemed surprising since Zionism, which emerged from a powerful sense of ethnic identity, was a secular movement. Virtually all Zionist

leaders defined themselves as secular Jews. (Religious Zionists were a tiny minority and their own leaders were never acknowledged as the real leaders of the Zionist movement.).

Attitudes of Zionist leaders toward the religious tradition ranged from acknowledgement that the Jewish religion was, after all, a central component of Jewish culture to militant hostility. Since then the tie between ethnicity and religion has strengthened as the Jewish identity of secular Jews attenuates. The 1999 Guttman Report supports this observation. Although that Report did not find a radical decline in the sense in which Israelis felt part of the Jewish people throughout the world, intensity of ethnic identity was nonetheless correlated with religious observance.

COMPARING JEWISH IDENTITY IN ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES

One important point of comparison remains to be stated. The phenomenon of “personalization” or “spiritualization” sweeping U.S. Jewry has also made an impact on Israeli society, especially on younger Israelis.³¹ Trips to India or other exotic and “spiritual” places, the special popularity of transcendental meditation, or scientology, or even the widespread use of “ecstasy” pills among the young, point in this direction. If meaning is only to be derived from within oneself rather than by virtue of membership in an ascribed community, than the search for meaning becomes more intense because it is no longer a given, and is likely to take spiritual forms. In the U.S. this has led some heretofore marginal Jews into practicing a more intense Jewish life. But more commonly the phenomenon lends itself to religious syncretism, to a break down of boundaries between Judaism and non-Jewish practices and beliefs.³² Some would speculate that because Israel is a Jewish state the phenomenon is less threatening. Since Judaism is the

dominant religious culture, the spiritual quest is more likely to lead Israelis to look for sources within the dominant religious tradition. This remains to be seen.

The most important factors in maintaining a high level of Jewish identity among Israeli Jews probably have to do with the nature of the population and of the policies of the state. Israeli Jews constitute an overwhelming majority of the Israeli population. Most Israeli Jews live in totally homogenous neighborhoods. The national culture is rooted in Jewish symbols and memories. Israeli public policy discriminates in favor the Jewish population. The Arab minority has increasingly voiced its dissatisfaction with this state of affairs in militant and aggressive terms further emphasizing differences between Jew and Arab. Furthermore, Arab leaders joined by post-Zionists have begun to demand the dejudaization of the state. These latter factors serve to remind Israeli Jews of the significance of their Jewishness

Can these factors outweigh the trivialization of Jewishness because of its taken-for granted status and the pressures of western culture referred to earlier. The answer may be no different than the answer to the question of whether European nations, the smaller ones in particular, can retain their cultural identity and their particular national characteristics under the pressure of European unity.

In the United States, on the other hand, Jewish life has always been built around the assumption that the prevailing set of values, the cultural climate of opinion shared by urban, middle class, well educated Americans, is consistent with the essential values of the Jewish tradition. This cultural climate of opinion, at the present time, emphasizes the values of individual autonomy, communal inclusiveness, and non-judgmentalism. I would speculate that the internalization of these values by American Jews and by the

organized Jewish community account, more than any other factor, for the decline in Jewish identity among American Jews.

What all of this portends for the future is beyond the scope of this essay. One's pessimism is balanced by the glaring failures of social science to analyze the human condition and to the expectation that the external forces now driving Jewish identity are likely to change. Whether this will be a change for the better or the worse remains to be seen.

ENDNOTES

¹ Charles S. Liebman, A Research Agenda for American Jews (Ramat-Gan, Bar Ilan University; The Argov Center for the Study of Israel and the Jewish People, 2000). A revised version of this article will appear in a forthcoming issue of Contemporary Judaism.

² See for example: Yochanan Peres and Ephraim Yuchtman-Yaar, Between Consent and Dissent: Democracy and Peace in the Israeli Mind (Jerusalem: in Hebrew, The Israel Democracy Institute, 1998, especially chapter five “Religiosity and Political Attitudes” pp. 147-174; Michal Shamir and Asher Arian, “Collective Identity and Electoral Competition in Israel,” The American Political Science Review, vol. 93 (June, 1999), pp. 265-277; Michal Shamir and Yaacov Shamir, “Value Preferences in Israeli Public Opinion,” Megamot, 37 (in Hebrew, June, 1996), pp. 371-393.

³ See for example, Yehuda Ben-Meir and Peri Kedem, “A Measure of Religiosity for the Jewish Population of Israel,” Megamot 24 (in Hebrew, 1979), pp. 353-362. The most comprehensive study of the religious beliefs, attitudes and behavior of Israeli Jews was conducted in 1992 by the Guttman Institute of Applied Social Research. See Shlomit Levy, Hanna Levinsohn and Elihu Katz, Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews (Jerusalem: The Louis Guttman Israeli Institute of Applied Social Research, 1993). Its major findings are reported in Charles S. Liebman and Elihu Katz (eds), The Jewishness of Israelis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997). In addition to the highlights of the study the volume includes an analysis of the findings and a variety of responses to the original study by leading Israeli intellectuals. See also Hanna Levinsohn, Attitudes of the Israeli Public on Issues of Religion and Jewish Tradition (in Hebrew, Jerusalem: Louis Guttman Israel Institute of Applied Social Research, 1990).

⁴ Simon Herman, , Israelis and Jews: Continuity of An Identity (New York: Random House, 1970) and by the same author Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, New edition, 1988). Unusual in this respect is an important study by Uri Farago, “The Jewish Identity of Israeli Youth 1965-1985”, Yahadut Zmanenu: Shnaton L’iyyun V’mehkar 5 (in Hebrew 1989), pp. 259-285. It is a continuation of Herman’s work and incorporates many elements which are found in traditional studies of Jewish identity in the Diaspora.

⁵ For a contrary view which argues that fears of dual loyalty still drive American Jewish responses to communal issues see: Jerold Auerbach, Are We One? Jewish Identity in the United States and Israel (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

⁶ Many of these are to be found in the collection by Marshall Sklare (ed.), The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957).

⁷ Marshall Sklare, Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955). The book was reprinted a number of times including an augmented edition published by Schocken Books in 1972.

⁸ For more on the social discomfort of Jews, even economically successful Jews, with non-Jews see Marshall Sklare, Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier (New York: Basic Books, 1967), chapter 8.

⁹ For an opposing view see Jerome Chanes, “Who Does What? Jewish Advocacy and Jewish ‘Interest’: A Contextual Review and Analysis” L. Sandy Maisel and Ira Forman (eds.), Jews in American Politics (Boston: Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming). According to Chanes, a long time participant in and a very knowledgeable observer of Jewish organizational life in the U.S., antisemitism, Israel and the security of Jewish communities abroad are the priority issues that govern Jewish political advocacy. The secondary issues such as separation of church and state and civil rights, even welfare issues are important to Jewish leaders because they effect the welfare of Jews and it is the welfare of Jews which dictates the particular positions which the Jews adopt. I would argue, contrary to the Chanes position, that it is because American Jews, their organizational leaders in particular, are liberal that they interpret the welfare and security of Jews through a liberal prism. The best example, in my opinion, is the issue of separation of church and state. Separation in my opinion is disastrous for the interests of Jewish continuity and survival but Jews and their leaders in particular insist that the separation of church and state is in the Jewish interest.

¹⁰ Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2000).

¹¹ A major finding of a recent survey was that “American Jews remain strongly supportive of predominantly liberal social justice causes”. Fifty six percent claimed that social justice was more important to their Jewish identity than Torah or text study. Combined with the fact that 74 percent don’t

care whether their own social activism falls under Jewish or non-Jewish auspices, this bodes poorly for Jewish continuity. See the JTS Weekly News Digest (April 13, 2001), p. 4.

¹² Kaspar Schwenkfeld, a follower of Martin Luther, argued that since each soul has a unique destiny each man and woman can frame his or her creed within the common Christian religion. “They deserve to have faith custom-tailored to their needs. Today, when Individualism has turned from a fitful theme to a political and social right this seer deserves to rank as the Reformer with the greatest following – millions are Schwenkfeldians *sans le savoir*” Jacques Barzun, From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), p. 33.

¹³ See, for example, Sara Bershtel and Allen Graubard, Saving Remnants: Feeling Jewish in America (New York: The Free Press, 1992), Bernard Susser and Charles S. Liebman, Choosing Survival: Strategies for a Jewish Future (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), and Cohen and Eisen, op. cit.

¹⁴ Steven M. Cohen, Religious Stability and Ethnic Decline: Emerging Patterns of Jewish Identity in the United States (New York: The Florence G. Heller JCC Research Center, 1999).

¹⁵ On this phenomenon along with many examples see Charles S. Liebman and Steven M. Cohen, Two Worlds of Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ See for example Riv-Ellen Prell, “Communities of Choice and Memory: Conservative Synagogues in the Late Twentieth Century,” Jack Wertheimer (ed.), Jews in the Center: Conservative Synagogues and Their Members (New Brunswick: Rutgers University press, 2000), pp.269-358 and Cohen and Eisen, op. cit.

¹⁷ The data regarding intermarriage was published separately under the title: Responding to Intermarriage: Survey, Analysis and Policy (New York: The American Jewish Committee, January 2001).

¹⁸ Susser and Liebman, op. cit. p.124 ff

¹⁹ Efraim Inbar, “Contours of Israel’s New Strategic Thinking,” Political Science Quarterly, 111 (1996), p.56.

²⁰ Most of the New Historians fall under the rubric of post-Zionist but the post-Zionist literature is not confined to New Historians such as Benny Morris, Ilan Pappa, or Avi Shlaim. For a selected sample of post-Zionist essays see, for example, Laurence Silberstein, The PostZionism Debates (London: Routledge, 1999); Uri Ram, Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995). The most important post-Zionist journal is Teoria U’bikoret and appears under the imprimatur of the Van Leer Institute. An

important collection of post-Zionist essays in Hebrew is Uri Ram (ed.), Israeli Society: A Critical Approach (Tel-Aviv: Breirot, in Hebrew, 1993)

²¹ Gideon Samet, "The Nation Goes Up a Grade," Ha'Aretz (July 28, 1995), p. 1B.

²² Dan Urian, "The Stereotype of the Religious Jew in Israeli Theater," Assaph C (No. 10, 1994) pp.131-154.

²³ Yoram Kanyuk, "Let's Divide," Ha'Aretz 12 November 1996, p. B2

²⁴ For a presentation of the arguments by post-Zionists that there is no meaningful secular Jewish culture see Charles S. Liebman, "Reconceptualizing the Culture Conflict Among Israeli Jews," Israel Studies, 2 (Fall, 1997), pp. 172-189.

²⁵ Recently. post-Zionists have argued that since this is the case, Israel cannot be considered a democracy. See, for example, Oren Yiftachel,, "Ethnocracy, Geography and Democracy: Comments on the Politics of the Judaization of the Land," Alpayim no. 19 (in Hebrew, 2000), pp. 78-105.

²⁶ This notion is developed in Bernard Susser and Eliezer Don Yehiya "Israel and the Decline of the National-State in the West," Modern Judaism, 14 (1994), pp. 187-202. The most important study questioning the compatibility of democracy and the nation-state is probably John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). On the notion that globalization leads to the weakening of national loyalty see also: J. Fulcher, "Globalisation, the Nation State and Global Society," The Sociological Review, 48, (4), pp. 522-543; Z. Bauman, Globalisation: The Human Consequences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Polity Books, 1998) and M. Castells, The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

²⁷ The story was reported on Israeli radio's Second Channel .

²⁸ On that survey see Beliefs, Observances and Social Interaction Among Israeli Jews (Jerusalem: The Louis Guttman Institute of Applied Social Research, 1993). The results are analyzed in Liebman and Katz, op. cit.

²⁹ Sammy Smootha and Theodor Hanf, "The Diverse Modes of Conflict: Regulation in Deeply Divided Societies," International Journal of Comparative Sociology 33 (1992), pp. 26-47.

³⁰ Simon Herman, Israelis and Jews. op. cit. and the first edition of his book Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1977).

³¹ There is a paucity of scholarly studies of this phenomenon. Virtually alone, to the best of my knowledge is Benjamin Beit-Halahmi, Despair and Deliverance: Private Salvation in Contemporary Israel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) At least one doctoral dissertation is now being written on the subject. There is more material at the popular level. In addition to many newspaper articles on the subject see, for example, Tom Sawicki , “Inside the World of the Mystic Healers,” The Jerusalem Report (January 27, 1994), pp. 10-16; or Micha Oppenheimer, “In the Backyards of the [Hassidic]Courts,” Eretz Acheret, 1 (in Hebrew October-November, 2000), pp. 10-22.

³² Needless to say, religious syncretism and the breakdown of barriers between Judaism and Christianity is facilitated in homes of mixed married couples. For some poignant examples of this see Sylvia Barack Fishman, Jewish and Something Else: A Study of Mixed-Married Families (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 2001).

None of my friends were Jewish and we weren't part of the community, so it wasn't a cultural identity for me. Additionally, the first time I had ever been to a synagogue was for a classmate's Bar Mitzvah when I was 12 years old, so it wasn't a religious identity either. That leaves ethnic identity. My Mom spoke regularly about the anti-semitism she experienced growing up. Here's my "Home Group": Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, England, France, Germany, Israel, Russia, and, of course, the US were all represented. On the fourth day, a discussion about Jewishness arose. The day before, many delegates at the Summit went on trips where they spoke with Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem and settlers in Hebron with more extreme opinions of Jewishness. Jewish identity is very important to larger numbers of older Jews, including 46% of those ages 30-49, 50% of those ages 50-64 and 54% of those 65 and older. Pride, Connectedness and Responsibility. More than nine-in-ten Jews (94%) agree they are "proud to be Jewish." The survey also finds a generational divide in the importance attached to caring about Israel. Among Jews 65 and older, about half (53%) say caring about Israel is essential to what being Jewish means to them. Among Jews under age 30, by contrast, 32% express this view. Older Jews also are more likely than their younger counterparts to say remembering the Holocaust, working for justice and equality in society, and having a good sense of humor are essential to their Jewish identity. The vast majority of Israeli Jews cited connections with Jewish history, culture and community. In addition, 53% said passing Jewish traditions on to children is crucial to their Jewish identity. Most American Jews, by contrast, did not name an additional essential element of Jewish identity in the open-ended question, perhaps in part because they felt more satisfied with the list of possible responses that had already been offered (among other potential reasons). U.S. and Israeli Jews offer more-similar perspectives on what disqualifies a person from being Jewish. Solid majorities in both countries, not as a political cause but as a civilizational one, might offer an opportunity to disrupt Jewish identity in America. But perhaps I am getting ahead of myself. It can, if we properly understand the forms Judaism has taken in the past. While in America we speak in terms of religion, religion itself is a category that has been imposed from without: Whenever we see a combination of theology, ritual, and houses of worship, we call it a religion. Judaism never really saw itself this way, however. It had these, but it also had other things—a collective narrative and sense of "peoplehood"; an ethnic component; a metaphysical, spiritual path; a textual tradition and the practice of study; "secular" communal institutions alongside and intertwined with "religious" Jewish identity is the objective or subjective state of perceiving oneself as a Jew and as relating to being Jewish. Under a broader definition, Jewish identity does not depend on whether a person is regarded as a Jew by others, or by an external set of religious, or legal, or sociological norms. Jewish identity does not need to imply religious orthodoxy. Accordingly, Jewish identity can be cultural in nature. Jewish identity can involve ties to the Jewish community. Orthodox Judaism bases Jewishness