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Israel and the Diaspora: Jewish Connectivity in a Changing World

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Israel and the Diaspora: Jewish Connectivity in a Changing World

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Contents

Introduction 1
Robert A. Kenedy, Uzi Rebhun, and Carl S. Ehrlich

Part I Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

Israel at 70 and World Jewry: One People or Two? 9
Sergio DellaPergola

Israel-Diaspora Relations: Latin American Continuities and Discontinuities 35
Judit Bokser Liwerant

The Evolution of North American Jews' Relations with Israel from Adolescence to Adulthood: The Bar/Bat Mitzvah Class of 1994–95 (5755) 65
Ariela Keysar

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Potential Impact on Jewish Young Adults' Relationship to Israel and Jewish Identity 83
Leonard Saxe, Graham Wright, and Shahar Hecht

Part II Leaving the Promised Land

Segmented and Transnational Identity Formation in the Israeli Diaspora 99
Steven J. Gold

Keeping the Flame Alive: The Formation of Transnational Identities Among Jewish Emigrants from Israel 115
Rina Cohen

Holocaust, Memory, Migration: The Burden of Catastrophe Among Israelis in Germany 135
Uzi Rebhun

Part III Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism

The Antisemitic Consequences of the BDS Movement in the US: An Indicative Incident 155
Cary Nelson

Antisemitism, Anti-Israelism, and Canada in Context 171
Robert Brym and Rhonda Lenton

Jewish Students' Experiences in the Era of BDS: Exploring Jewish Lived Experience and Antisemitism on Canadian Campuses 183
Robert A. Kenedy

Is Anti-Israelism Antisemitism? Evidence from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research Survey of Attitudes Towards Jews Among the Population of Great Britain 205
Jonathan Boyd

The BDS Movement in Australia: A Case Study 221
Philip Mendes

Epilogue: Summary, Discussion, and Looking Beyond 239
Harriet Hartman

Index 249

Introduction

Robert A. Kenedy, Uzi Rebhun, and Carl S. Ehrlich

This volume presents selected papers delivered at a symposium held in October 2018 at York University in Canada on the occasion of Israel's seventieth anniversary. Several additional and complementary articles were expressly written for this book. The thirteen chapters in this volume discuss contemporary Jewish identity, Israel-diaspora relations, and how Jewish life has been transformed in light of various types of antisemitism. We consider the diasporic Jewish experiences through the prism of the intersections between various Jewish communities sociologically. These themes are explored by drawing upon diverse academic disciplines and scientific approaches.

The three overarching sections in this volume consider world Jewry in general as well as both diaspora and Israeli Jewries more specifically in the context not only of their mutual responsibility but also of tensions surrounding their values and politics. The challenges of antisemitism, racism, and nationalism are explored in terms of the relationship of the Jewish diaspora to its host countries. These challenges may take the form of traditional antisemitism, which is associated with the right of the political spectrum, or of the new antisemitism in the era of anti-Israel activity related to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which is linked with the left of the political spectrum. This latter movement is especially prevalent on

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university campuses and has a deleterious impact on Jewish students, faculty, and staff, as well as on their allies and supporters. Taking an international perspective in examining Jewish identity, Israel-diaspora relations, and antisemitism, this volume brings together these interrelated topics as well as global scholarly perspectives from Israel, North and South America, Europe, and Australia. It also contextualizes connections between Israel and the diaspora in distinctive ways that broaden the understanding of home and host cultures relative to Israel's seventy years of being a nation.

Obviously, a single book can't exhaustively cover all aspects of Jewish life. We believe, however, that this collection of essays tackles some of the major challenges facing world Jewry at the beginning of the twenty-first century and allows us to look at them in-depth. The processes discussed here attest to the dynamics of Jewish life in Israel and the diaspora and to their mutual relations, which are affected both by factors outside the Jewish community and by internal Jewish developments. These processes reflect the continuity of some of the concerns that have accompanied world Jewry since the foundation of the State of Israel, albeit in somewhat modified forms, alongside change and new patterns of opportunities and risks. The readers of these chapters will find not only fresh findings and scientific interpretations but also implications for national and worldwide Jewish policy.

The book is divided into three sections, which are comprised of three to five chapters each. These are framed by an introduction and an epilogue. The chapters have been authored by senior and established scholars and, accordingly, we trust that they will inspire junior researchers to follow suit and to develop further the important investigations of the place of Jews in society.

The first section highlights Jewish peoplehood and cohesiveness in the Americas. The focus is on the relationship between Israel and the Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, and Latin America. These chapters note the ever-changing nature of their relationships, especially among so-called millennials and Generation Z. DellaPergola, Bokser Liwerant, Keysar, and Saxe, Wright, and Hecht discuss the importance of Jewish identification and its relationship to Israel, in addition to related issues.

DellaPergola considers Israel and the state of world Jewry, assessing the major continuities and discontinuities as well as the convergences and divergences within the complex and unique human aggregate of the Jewish people. He examines the role and internal coherence of being Jewish as well as the notion of peoplehood norms and personal networks. DellaPergola describes the paradox of antisemitism as enhancing Jewish cohesiveness through the mechanisms of Israel and the Shoah. DellaPergola's work also considers various aspects of Jewish identity, peoplehood, demographics, political orientations, and religion. His chapter concludes with an examination of the growing divide between Israel and younger American adults and how this may determine the future cohesiveness of world Jewry.

Bokser Liwerant considers the regional and historical attachment to Israel as a shifting and overlapping external real/concrete and imaginary/symbolic homeland. Jewish Latin American realities point to historical convergences and interactions between the Zionist idea, the State of Israel, and the attachment to Israel. She notes

that Jewish communities in Latin America are experiencing changes in their relationship with the State of Israel, shifting in terms of new meanings among communities that maintain differentiated and modified links with the Jewish State. Bokser Liwerant also points out that, depending on the Latin American country in question, there have been differing challenges related to the importance of Israel in these diaspora communities.

Keysar's North American longitudinal study begins with a bar/bat mitzvah class in 1995 and follows respondents through high school graduation in 1999, college/university graduation in 2003, and continues into 2018–2019, when these early millennials were 37–38 years old. She examines their development both as teens and as young adults in college/university, which overlapped in part with the Second Palestinian Uprising (Intifada) in Israel. Keysar finds that when Conservative Jews experience anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel, they report clear loyalty toward Israel. More recently, owing to cultural and social shifts, such as Middle Eastern politics, interdating, and intermarriage, their ties to Israel have weakened in comparison to when they were in college.

Based on aggregate data collected from the applicants to Birthright Israel, Saxe, Wright, and Hecht discuss the potential impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the relationship between American Jews and Israel. Their research considers whether the pandemic has influenced how closely young Jews feel to Israel. They also explore the measurable impact of Birthright Israel on its participants to understand the consequences of the trip suspensions occasioned by COVID-19 on young Jews, who are the ones most negatively affected. The results suggest that the pandemic has been a social disruptor and that it is unlikely that the internet will replace in-person interaction. Overall, something important will be lost if Birthright Israel is not restored to pre-pandemic levels, since it provides opportunities to build local and global connections.

In the second section, Gold, Cohen, and Rehbun consider those who have left Israel to become residents of other countries without fully integrating into the local Jewish communities. They note the strong links these Israeli expatriates have to each other and to Israel, as well as the varying levels of connectivity and identification they have with existing Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, and Germany.

According to Gold, Israeli emigrants are now among the largest Jewish migrant populations in many Western societies. He points out that they share social, cultural, occupational, and residential characteristics with native-born Jews. Most notable is their ambivalent identification with their host societies. They seldom describe themselves as host country nationals, socialize almost exclusively with other Israelis, frequently describe their intentions to return home, and often do so. Using in-depth interviews and ethnographic data, Gold's work explores how Israeli emigrants address conflicting identities associated with their country of origin and their American host society. The actions of Israeli emigrants are partly compatible with elements of both segmented assimilation and transnational views of migrant identity, but fully consistent with neither view. Instead, their identities are

simultaneously shaped both by the context of settlement as well as by their links with their country of origin.

Basing her research on extensive interviews, Cohen also discusses the formation of an Israeli diaspora, in this case the one in Canada, which is distinct from the Canadian Jewish diaspora community. Her work accounts for the transformation of the Israeli-Canadian community from transient sojourners to a diasporic settlement, as conceptualized by global transnational migration and diaspora studies perspectives. Cohen believes that the diaspora perspective is better suited to explain both the growth in the size of this community and the high level of transnationality among Israelis abroad. She notes that it is the social conditions in Canada, particularly in Toronto, that are especially conducive to the flourishing and thriving Israeli-Canadian diaspora. These conditions include Canadian multiculturalism policies, superior social services, highly developed communication technologies, Toronto's multicultural demographic composition, and, above all, its strongly pro-Israel Jewish community—all have contributed to the development of a distinct Israeli-Canadian identity in Toronto.

The role of the Holocaust in the migration settlement of Israeli Jews in Germany has been a controversial topic in the Jewish state. Based on survey research, Rehbun highlights how these émigrés cope with social and cultural integration into post-Holocaust Germany. His work considers their integration into the post-1945 Jewish community in Germany, how Israeli migrants' family backgrounds relate to their German origin and to their association with the Holocaust. He also discusses how speaking German, friendships with non-Jewish Germans, and intermarriage, impact the Israeli émigrés' construction of German identity. These factors are considered in terms of the effects of this migration on both Israeli and German society.

The third section considers antisemitism and its relationship to Israel. The late Robert Wistrich (2010, 2013) has pointed out that antisemitism is the world's oldest and longest hatred. His analysis of the phenomenon includes the classic old antisemitic religious and economic tropes. More recently, however, universities have become the latest site for the spread of what Wistrich referes to as the new antisemitism in the form of anti-Israel rhetoric, which delegitimizes Israel through the BDS movement both on and off campuses in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Australia. The essays in this section build on his analysis of the new antisemitism and its implications.

Nelson argues that there is a new and growing threat to academic freedom that arises out of the association of politicized faculty members with the BDS movement. The size of the US higher-education system means that BDS activities on US campuses dwarf those in other countries. Nelson differentiates between signing a BDS petition and joining a pro-BDS demonstration, the latter of which is oftentimes a purely social and not a political activity. He discusses how many of the people who actively support BDS are oftentimes comfortable with admitting that they are not well informed about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict nor have studied it seriously. Nelson also points out that the actions of both academic and non-academic segments of the population, such as specific Protestant sects, have contributed to intensifying the conflict.

Brym and Lenton examine the relationship between antisemitism and anti-Israelism in Canada through their recent survey research. In their chapter, they argue that a correlation exists between antisemitism and anti-Israelism, but that it varies considerably by social context. Their findings suggest that the level of antisemitic sentiment in Canada is relatively low, except in the case of a small number of extremists. Brym and Lenton show that while antisemitism and anti-Israelism are correlated in some categories of the population, in the population at large the correlation is weak. They conclude that antisemitism and anti-Israelism are somewhat independent attitudinal and behavioral dimensions, with the overlap between them varying by context.

Kenedy's research analyzes in-depth interviews held with Jewish and non-Jewish students and their lived experiences of the BDS movement on university campuses. His analysis highlights Canadian Jewish students' experiences of campus safety, anti-Israel sentiment, and the new antisemitism. The findings suggest that their lived experiences include being discriminated against, silenced, threatened, and harassed as being the "new normal" on campuses. Specifically, both female and male students reported being intimidated and bombarded with anti-Israel information that is pro-BDS and based on opinion rather than fact. For some students, this has led to an atmosphere of fear, taking away from their university learning experience owing to intimidation and threats.

Boyd focuses on the extent to which, if at all, anti-Israel rhetoric is antisemitism in disguise in Britian. He notes that those who argue that anti-Israelism is antisemitism tend to draw on the parallels between the contemporary anti-Israel discourse and traditional anti-Jewish tropes: accusations such as Israel having excessive power over global affairs, Israelis killing Palestinian children, and Israel having no right to exist. Those arguing against the link maintain that criticism and condemnation of Israel is entirely distinct from antisemitism.

Mendes examines the specific manifestations of the BDS movement in Australia from 2002 onward. He highlights the activities of the University of Sydney Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Greens, certain trade unions, and the protests against the Max Brenner chocolate shop. Mendes argues that the BDS movement has had little impact on mainstream Australian political parties and public debate but has succeeded in influencing the attitudes of segments of the academic world regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This movement has also, at times, excluded moderate voices in favor of a negotiated two-state solution from progressive debates.

In the epilogue, Hartman draws together the volume's themes according to an ecological framework based on the convergences and divergences of Jewish populations. The model maps life-cycle variation in ecologies by taking both individuals and families from one setting to another, ranging from synagogues and Birthright groups to collective and individual memories of significant historical events and/or lived experiences. She ties together the common elements in the volume as a whole across the gamut of Jewish diasporic settings, thereby creating new divergences or convergences in the social arenas of antisemitism, economy, and polity.

Overall, this volume explores various connectivities between Israel and the Jewish diasporic communities in North America, Latin America, Europe, Great Britain, and Australia. These connections include those who have left Israel to become transnationals, maintaining strong links to Israel and varying levels of identification with local Jewish communities. Finally, the oftentimes related phenomena of support for BDS and antisemitism are examined both on and off university campuses.

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Part I
Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

Israel at 70 and World Jewry: One People or Two?

Sergio DellaPergola

Seventy years of Israeli statehood offer an opportunity to assess what major continuities and discontinuities, convergences and divergences, conflicts and reconciliations have emerged in the complex and unique human aggregate that I will address here as the Jewish people. As the title of this chapter suggests, do the Jews constitute one people or two? Or maybe more? Or none? Differently formulated, is contemporary Jewish peoplehood better characterized as one center in Israel surrounded by a diaspora of other Jewish communities worldwide? Or as multiple, competing centers? Or as a centerless, transnational galaxy?

What is 70 years? Just a round figure represented in the *gematria* (Jewish numerology) by the Hebrew letter ע (pronounced: *'ayin*), recalling the word עין (same pronunciation), equivalent to the English *eye*. In the representation of world Jewry, then, let us respond to the imperative to *look* at what has worked, what may have failed, what else is knocking at our doors, and what still seems to have no solutions.

The Sociohistorical Context

After surviving the Shoah, the Jewish people crossed a metaphorical Red Sea on three occasions of salvation, change, and continuity: in 1948 with the return of the Jews to the role of sovereign political actors following the independence of the State of Israel; in 1967 with the Six-Day War that signaled the definitive birth of Israel as a meaningful player on the international scene and deeply marked discourse on Jews and Israel to this very moment; and with the exodus of millions of Jews across

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continents and the radical transformation of their geographical, socio-economic, and cultural profile. Today, contradictory and disquieting developments and irreversible mutations of the global polis generate unprecedented existential challenges to Jewish peoplehood but also opportunities for growth and achievement. Among these are:

- The cultural and normative contents of a coherent and shared *raison d'être*, the battle over the boundaries and limits of collective identity and the rules of individual inclusion, and the mechanisms of generational continuity of corporate solidarity;
- The nature of the local and global exchange and cross-fertilization between Jewish minorities and non-Jewish majorities;
- The identification and defense of common interests of the Jewish collective globally through appropriate theoretical and practical tools and the elaboration of winning strategies.

These major existential challenges involve three distinct contexts:

- *Israel as a sovereign state* where Jews are a solid majority in a society characterized by extraordinary processes of growth and mobility, yet still entangled in unsolved and perhaps unsolvable military, political, and ethno-religious conflicts;
- *The Jewish diaspora as a proliferation of communities* where Jews constitute tiny minorities of the respective societies, yet are overwhelmingly more visible and at times more powerful than their mere proportion of total population;
- And more elusive but critical, the *delicate bilateral relationship between these two odd partners*—Jews in Israel and in other countries—all along huge demographic, socio-economic, cultural, and political transformations.

Throughout history, Jews perpetually sought shelter, security, protection, equality, integration, autonomy, dignity, and happiness. Today, with apologies for the bluntness, we might reduce the whole issue to Jews-with-an-army versus Jews-without-an-army. We could separately deal with the different local contexts trusting coveted area experts. But the political, economic, and cultural consequences of globalization and transnationalism and the tension between *being* Jewish and *belonging* to a broader society generate such a strong interdependence between different contemporary Jewish communities that we better meld local sensitivities into a larger global vision.

The Quest for Definitions and Meaning of the Collective

In the beginning, the rules of belonging to Jewish peoplehood—assuming there must be one such entity, which is not a matter of universal agreement—call for a unified standard. A broadly recognized and accepted evaluative ground cannot but be respectful of long-term historical and normative tradition, but also must be sensitive to the particular cultural and institutional contexts and transformations of

different communities worldwide. I shall review some of these issues later, but let me first acknowledge that it is often non-Jewish society—either the majority or another dominant minority—that determines the image and expectations about what an ideal Jew should be. I refuse to accept that Jewish identity should be reduced to a sub-identity of another national identity and I hope many will agree with me on this point. From Karl Marx, (1844) to Jean-Paul Sartre, (1946), to (with all due respect) Shlomo Sand, (2009), the proposition that the Jew is created by the circumstances of the environment is manifestly untenable or, at the least, analytically deficient. The main definitional effort, instead, should come from the inside and should identify recognizable and unique standards of Jewish contents. Here I will pursue quite an assertive stance.

Imagine I have a serious toothache and I look for a dentist. To be recognized as such, a dentist needs titles and professional accreditation. I will not seek care from someone who says he is partially a dentist, or has a dentistry background (possibly the child of a dentist), or feels an affinity for dentists (maybe as a customer), or is a new or different type of dentist. And yet, when it comes to Jewish identity, much contemporary discussion and a growing part of research discourse hasten to include people who self-define as partially Jewish, with Jewish background, with Jewish affinity, or otherwise Jewishly new or different (Tobin & Groeneman, 2003, Pew Research Center, 2013, Saxe & Tighe, 2013, Sheskin & Dashefsky, 2019). I am fully aware of the difference between a professional and a symbolic identity, but I suggest that the more we dilute or suppress the standards for voluntary group belonging and address boundary blurring by favoring all-inclusiveness, the less defined, relevant, or even intellectually defensible our subject matter becomes.

One of the crucial questions of identity—the essence of Jewish peoplehood—is about boundary maintenance. Boundaries are admittedly processual and may change—as is so clearly demonstrated throughout the *longue durée* of Jewish history. I have argued about the end of Jewish/non-Jewish dichotomy as an established empirical fact (DellaPergola, 2015), but I also suggest that indifference to modes of collective identity building—such as partial, background, or affinity—weakens collective coherence and may lead to mutual estrangement if not antagonism. The less *qualifiable* Jewish identity is, the less *quantifiable*—the more trivial, evanescent and disposable—it becomes. The more one expands the collective boundary, the less one makes whatever is inside it recognizable, coherent, and relevant. This is the critical predicament of defining the Jews.

Different definitional criteria of who is a Jew clearly are bound to produce very different population sizes. The social scientific perspective that inspires this article requires empirically specified, transparent, and replicable definitional criteria, capable of ensuring appropriate comparisons over time and across space—unlike a literary perspective where adjudication is left to the free propensities and tastes of the individual interpreter. Chart 1 exemplifies four such definitions: (1) the core Jewish population concept (CJP), (2) the Jewish parentage population (JPP), (3) the enlarged Jewish/non-Jewish household population (EJP), or (4) the Law of Return population (LRP). At the beginning of 2020, I assessed a minimum world *core Jewish population* of 14.8 million, of which 46% were in Israel and 39% in the US,

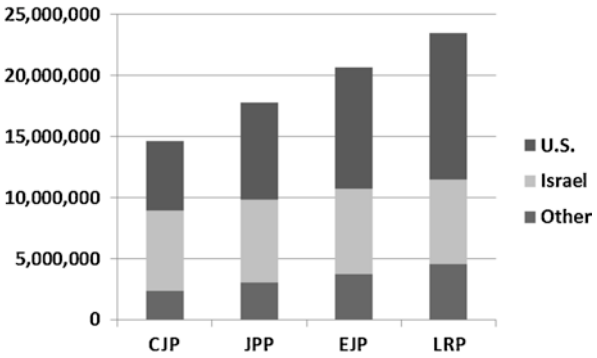


Chart 1 World Jewish population by major areas and different population definitions, 2020. (Source: DellaPergola, 2021)

versus a maximum *Law of Return population* of 23.8 million (9 million more), of which 30% were in Israel and 50% in the US (DellaPergola, 2021). The main impact of differently defined populations manifestly concerns the US. These different population frameworks are essentially the derivative of intermarriage and of the formation of households composed of Jews and non-Jews whose descendants may have multiple identification options, including no group identification at all. I purposely will not focus on intermarriage here, but I must note that an environment wherein the rate of intermarriage is 58%, as among US Jews in the 2010s (Pew Research Center, 2013), versus 5% as among US Jews in the 1950s (Schmelz & DellaPergola, 1983) or among Jews in Israel in 2008 (DellaPergola, 2017), generates completely different circumstances for the creation, circulation, and transmission of values, norms, social networks, cultural priorities, and corporate identities.

What is mainly at stake here is not demography and the numbers: it is the mental, moral, and political hegemony over the boundary, hence over Jewish peoplehood. Many Israelis who affirm they host the largest community imply that the center of the Jewish world has moved to Israel; many Americans who deny that same assertion imply that the largest and more powerful center still remains in the US. These sensitivities underlie the continuing argument between the more rigid mode of dealing with identity in Israel and the more pragmatic one in the US. In addition, one must bear in mind the existence of hundreds of thousands to possibly tens of millions of Crypto-Jews, largely descendants of converts from the time of the Inquisition, who may one day discover or rediscover a coveted ancestral Jewish identity and might act individually or collectively to obtain its recognition (e.g., Torres, 2017; Israel Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, 2018).

Demography and Geography

Beyond different population-definition sizes, demography plays a latent, perennial, and not exclusive but essential role in the ability of Jewish communities to exist and above all to function. Chart 2 illustrates the extraordinary distribution changes, from

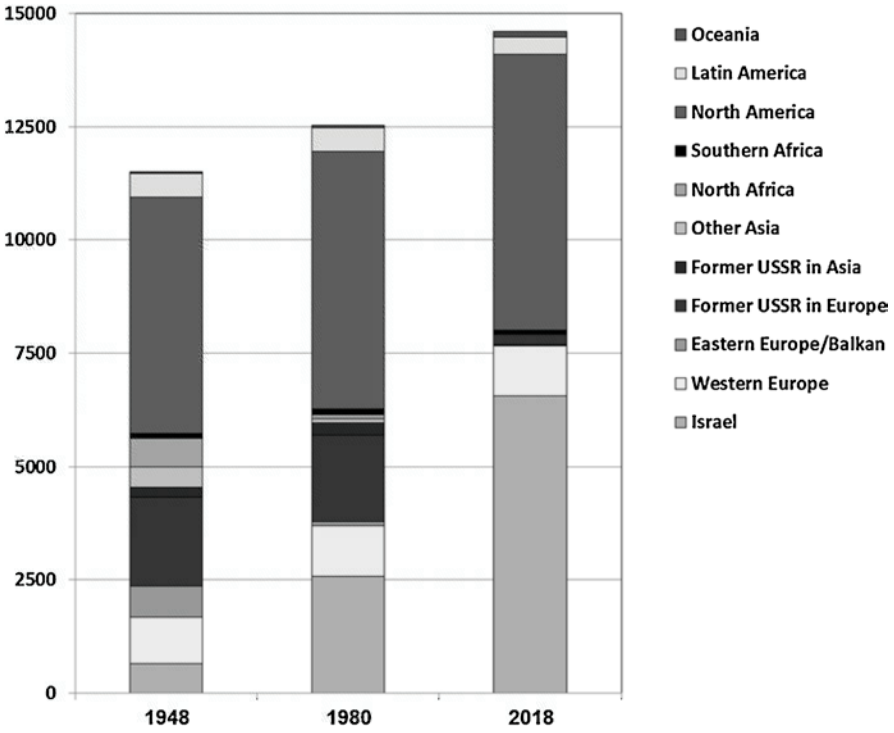


Chart 2 Core Jewish populations by major regions, 1948, 1980, 2018, thousands. (Source: DellaPergola, 2019)

a more dispersed Jewish people in 1948 to a much more concentrated, in fact bipolar, one in 2018. More than 5 million international Jewish migrants caused the virtual disappearance of the Jewish presence in North Africa, Asia, and large parts of Eastern Europe, and led to its decline in Latin America. Resilience or growth characterized Israel and transoceanic English-speaking societies in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, in Latin American locations such as Mexico and Panama, as well as in a few Western European countries such as France and Germany.

These numerical shifts reflect the powerful actions of demography and globalization, in turn nourished by history, politics, and the economy. The diffused quantitative decline of the diaspora as an aggregate primarily reflects emigration to Israel but also the powerful effects of low birthrates, population aging, and high rates of assimilation. Chart 3 illustrates the different age structures that have emerged among Jews in Israel and in the US. In Israel about one-half of the Jewish population is below 30 and about one-third is 45 and older; in the US about one-third is below 30 and one-half is 45 and older. Age composition, in turn, critically affects the current and expected pace of growth in these two communities. Age epitomizes how Israel has become the largest Jewish community in the world—at least based on the

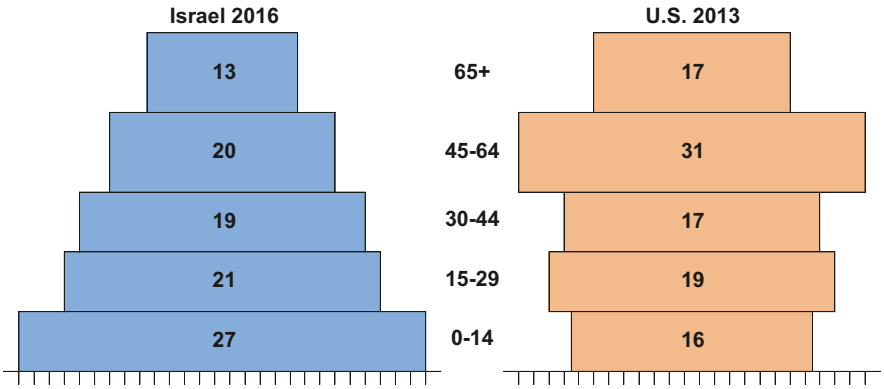


Chart 3 Age composition of Jews in Israel, 2016, and in the US, 2013, percentages. (Source: DellaPergola, 2019. Processed from Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2013)

aforementioned conservative but broadly comparable core Jewish population definition. This transition for many is still surprising, unlikely, controversial, or poorly digested.

Global socioeconomic currents in turn create incentives, opportunities, and development in certain locations, and the opposite elsewhere. Large numbers of Jewish migrants, between but also within countries, explain why Jewish communities such as those in Greater New York, Moscow, Buenos Aires, or Milano, but also in Akron, OH, today stand at levels lower or much lower than in the 1960s, while those in Greater Tel Aviv, but also in Toronto, Sydney, San Diego, or Panama grew significantly. A good test of the global transnational coherence of contemporary Jewry comes from observing its relationship to world system development. In Chart 4**,** I show the relationship between the Index of Human Development (HDI)—a measure of education, health, and income of the overall population of a given country—and the percentage of Jews out of the total population of that country. Each country in the chart is represented by a dot. The relationship is strongly positive with a coefficient of determination indicating that of all possible factors, 44% or nearly half of the distribution of Jews worldwide is explained by the mere essentials of human development in the general societal environment, where Jewish communities are located.

Regional differences are interesting, too, showing that evidently because of historical, political, and economic reasons, certain countries currently have more Jews than expected by the model: primarily Israel (which in the course of time has become a developed country) but also the still fast-declining former Soviet Union (FSU), Latin America, and a few European countries; and certain countries have fewer than expected: the more developed countries in Asia, and a few Latin American and European countries. Transoceanic English-speaking democracies (Anglos in the chart) stand at the top in terms of both development and Jewish presence. Naturally, the levels of a country's democracy and freedom are often strongly

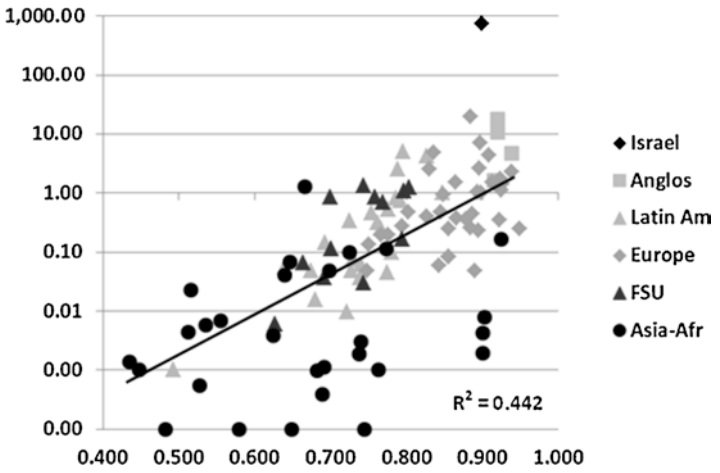
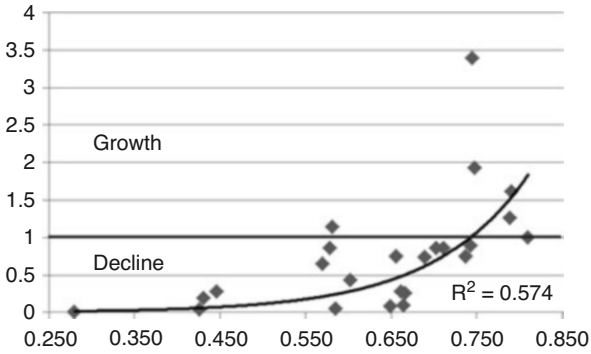


Chart 4 Jews per 1000 population, 2017, by Index of Human Development. (Source: DellaPergola, 2019)

Chart 5 Jewish population ratio in selected countries, 2018 versus 1980, by Index of Human Development 1980. (Source: adjusted from DellaPergola, 2019)



correlated with extant human development, thus enhancing the motives of Jews for staying or leaving. Looking ahead, these data outline where in the future we might find more Jews or fewer Jews than at present—provided world system variation or stability continues to follow the patterns outlined by current social indicators.

In Chart 5 I show how Jewish population changed between 1980 and 2018 in the 24 countries that in 1980 had at least 30,000 Jews, again as against the HDI at the initial date of the period. Again, each country is represented by a dot in the chart. Only 6 of the 24 countries experienced Jewish population growth (Germany, Israel, Australia, Canada, Mexico, and the US). The HDI's explanatory power in assessing these changes appears here even stronger: 57% of the variance in exponential relationship. In other words, more development boosts more than proportionally the likelihood of Jews to stay or to join, while less development pushes Jews to leave. Such is the common wisdom of normal people who live within one integrated world system. Because yes, Jews *are* normal people.

Among the reasons for these extraordinary alignments, Jews are generally well-educated, professionally competent, eminently urbanized, and concentrated in the main metropolitan areas—especially those areas that are well-connected internationally. To pursue the logic of the Jewish presence better in the global system, I turn to the changing socioeconomic stratification of Jews in the two leading population centers: the US and Israel.

Socioeconomic Stratification

A population cannot be understood without examining its internal social stratification, which—besides being essentially the product of long-term historical trends—is also a motivator and predictor of many other demographic and cultural trends. The question is whether Jews globally have developed widely divergent or basically similar socioeconomic profiles. Let us not forget the hard times of the interwar and World War II years, when much of the Jewish economy was destroyed, but also the late 1940s and 1950s, when diaspora Jews were sending packages of used clothes to their needy brethren in Israel. In the case of the US and other Western countries, the well-to-do senders often were themselves the children and grandchildren of poor immigrants from Eastern European or Arab countries. We have long lived with the myth of the pioneer society in Israel as against the unprecedented and unmatched Jewish upper social mobility across the diaspora, particularly in the US. To check the myth, Chart 6 compares the socioeconomic profiles of Jews in the US and in Israel by sex at two points in time: around 1960 and in the 2000s. For the sake of simplicity, I have reduced the occupational profiles to three categories: higher—including professionals, managers, and technical personnel with academic education; middle—including lower managerial, clerical, sales, and service workers; and lower—including craft, operative, and unskilled labor.

For both sexes, Jews often concentrate in the higher and middle stratum of the occupational ladder. But among men the initial gap between the two countries around 1960 was indeed very substantial with a majority in Israel (in 1961) in the lower ladder versus 27% in the upper, and a majority in the US (in 1957) in the upper ladder versus 20% in the lower. By the 2000s, occupational gaps had not disappeared entirely, but they had much diminished: among men, 48% in Israel versus 65% in the US were in the upper ladder while 34% of the Israelis and 8% of the Americans remained in the lower. Much of this reflects the different options of a population majority in Israel charged with functions such as security, strategic manufacturing industry, and essential services versus a Jewish minority in the US specialized in the professions and business services and relying on other functions fulfilled by others in the majority or by other minorities. Over the years the influx of Arab and foreign workers in the Israeli economy and their substitution for lower-status Jewish workers allowed mechanisms of upper mobility very similar to those observed in Western countries—namely a sort of *diasporization* or simply modernization and tertiarization of the Israeli labor force. Among Jewish women—high

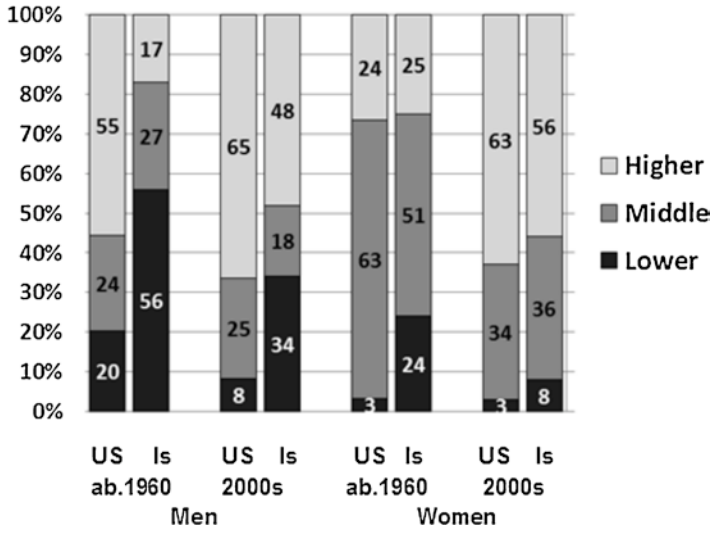


Chart 6 Occupational stratification of Jews by sex, US and Israel—about 1960 and 2000s. (Sources: US Bureau of the Census, 1958; Goldstein, 1969; Kosmin et al., 1991; Kotler-Berkowitz et al., 2003; United Jewish Communities, 2000–2001 (author's processing); Chiswick, 1997; Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 1963, 1998, 2006; DellaPergola, 2020a)

shares of whom participate in the labor force—around 1960 the gap was less noteworthy, with a majority in the middle ladder in both countries, but with a share in the lower ladder still triple in Israel than in the US. By the 2000s, the women's occupational gap had disappeared with nearly identical profiles in both countries.

Occupational profiles are not the same as income, which is still higher in the US, but the lesson is that over an extraordinarily short time span Israelis have become much more similar to their contemporaries in the US than to themselves 50 or 60 years earlier. The Index of Dissimilarity (the percentage of one of the two populations that would have to move to a different occupational stratum in order to produce a distribution identical to that of the other population) diminished from 39% in the 1960s to 25% in the 2000s for men and from 17% to 7%, respectively, for women. Social structural dissimilarity has diminished across world Jewry, suggesting the possibility of broader patterns of convergence.

Political Orientations

Political behaviors reveal perceived national, community, and personal interests, in turn mediated by socioeconomic characteristics and by values and beliefs more closely related to personal socialization and life experiences. To evaluate emerging convergences or divergences, I will compare the political choices of Jews in the US and in Israel from 1980 through 2020. While the US two-party system is quite easy

to follow, Israel's (let me state: perverse) electoral law encourages a highly fragmented party system. To allow for quick comparisons of the Jewish vote in the two countries, I reduced the Israeli system to a four-fold typology: a group of tendentially nationalist and national-religious parties that I label here the Republicans; an aggregate of secular, social-democrat, and liberal parties that I label the Democrats; an aggregate of religious Haredi parties; and an aggregate of Arab parties. To help understand this characterization of the two major Israeli party camps, the respective positions can be compared regarding a number of central political issues: the attitude toward a negotiated solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the amount of support given to a strong judiciary independent of the executive and of the legislative branches of government, and the amount of tolerance and support for a pluralistic approach to Judaism and its religious denominations. In the practice of Israeli parties, positions regarding these issues largely overlap within each camp and significantly differ between camps. In Chart 7 I compare the trends in the American Jewish vote in presidential elections since 1980 with the vote expressed in Israel's Knesset elections in favor of "Republicans" and "Democrats" (the Haredi and Arab parties are not displayed in these data).

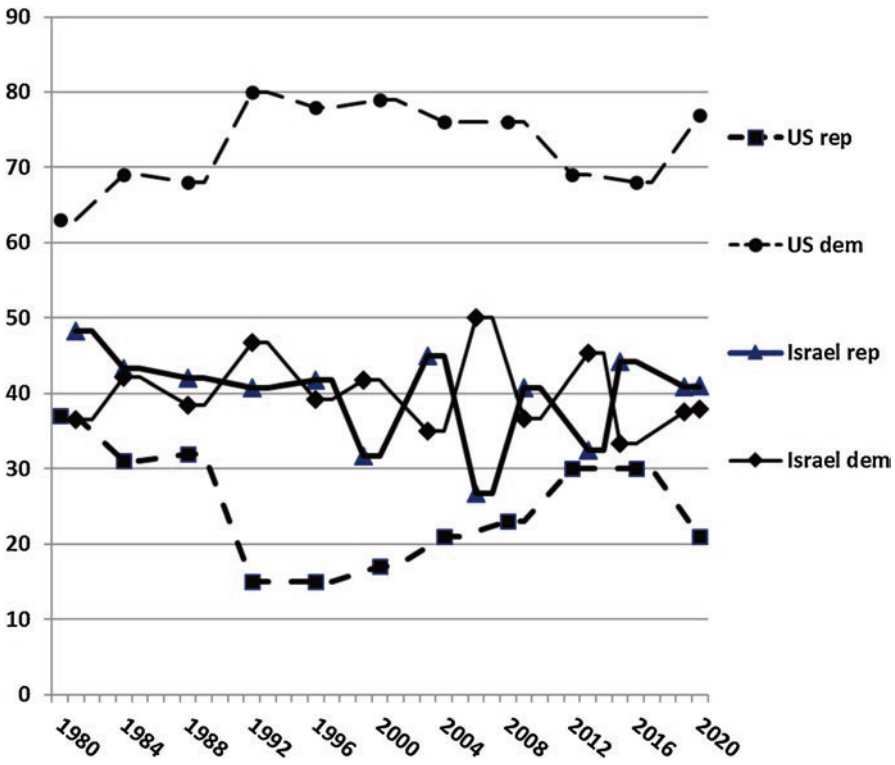


Chart 7 Jewish vote to elections in Israel and in the US, 1980–2020. (Source: adjusted from DellaPergola, 2014)

The Jewish vote in the US has traditionally been overwhelmingly Democratic, but there has also been a slow but steady trend of support for the Republicans. I would expect that the same trend will continue in the future, with only a temporary interruption due to the deterrent that Donald Trump represented for many Jewish voters. In Israel the key and less expected finding is the absence of a clear trend. Since 1980, Israel's "Republicans" and "Democrats" have held similar shares of the electorate. Repeated shifts of the political winner reflected the ability to form a coalition no less than the vote's results. A mild declining trend appears among the "Democrats," the internal composition of which—it should be stressed—significantly shifted over time from Labor to centrist. Of the other two camps, Arab parties enjoyed a recent reflux of Arab voters who previously had opted for Jewish parties. The growing influence of the Haredi camp was slowed down by a growing social integration that drove away voters mostly to the nationalist "Republican" camp. Since the 1970s but especially the 1990s, Israel's "Republicans" were also boosted by new immigrants from the FSU. The "Democrats" did not benefit from these demographic trends but drew some votes from upwardly mobile "Republicans." Going back in time, we would find a much more hegemonic position of the Labor Democrats among Israel voters, making their more recent decline even more dramatic.

All in all, a modicum of convergence did occur between the political preferences of the US and Israeli Jewish electorates, reflecting in part internal demographic changes and in part lesser differences in the respective socioeconomic structures, upward mobility, and the emergence of more similar class interests. We must turn now to the ideological-identificational factors that also significantly underlie these political choices.

Jewish Identification

Over 70 years after the birth of the state of Israel, do Jews worldwide share common patterns of Jewish identification? Homogeneous comparisons are possible thanks to parallel data recently collected in the US and in Israel through the Pew surveys of 2013 and 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2013, 2016; Keysar & DellaPergola, 2019; DellaPergola et al., 2019). In the case of the US, I separately address persons raised as Jews from other persons who are partially Jewish or with some Jewish background.

Regarding the essential meanings of Jewish identification, Chart 8 displays a selection of eight attributes and activities affirmed to be important markers—along with many others covered in both Pew surveys. The question is how essential these specific indicators are to define one's own Jewish identity. The chart refers to the total population of all ages combined. The eight indicators are ranked according to their frequency among the Israeli respondents. The ranking is not inconsistent in the two countries, but there also are remarkable differences. "Remembering the "olocaust" and "Leading an ethical and moral life" stand at the top in both countries, although the former prevails among the Israelis and the latter among the Americans.

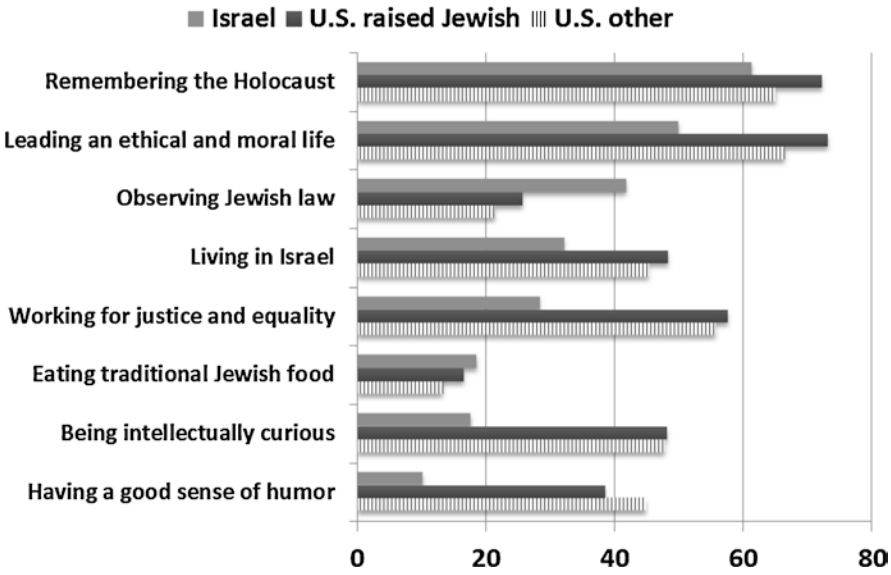


Chart 8 Selected indicators of Jewish identification, Israel, 2015, and US, 2013. (Source: Keysar and DellaPergola, 2019)

The Israelis place far greater importance than the Americans on "Observing Jewish law" and far lesser importance on "Working for justice and equality," "having a good sense of humor," and "Being intellectually curious." Notably, US Jews attribute greater importance to "Caring for Israel" than the Israelis do to "Living in Israel"—two measures that of course are not strictly comparable. "Eating traditional Jewish food" is the lowest marker in both countries.

In the US, differences between those raised as Jews and others with Jewish background are usually minor and smaller than might have been expected. This may indicate that the American cultural environment exerts thorough influences on identification perceptions, regardless of whether those perceptions concern the respondents themselves or others they may be connected with or aware of.

I further compare four different identification aspects by age, with special attention to the younger cohorts comprising those under 30 (the Millennials) (Chart 9). An Index of Religiosity was built based on positive answers to three statements: "Religion is important in my life"; "I believe in God or universal spirit"; and I attend weekly religious services." An Index of Jewish Peoplehood was based on assertions that "being Jewish is important in my life"; "I have a special responsibility to take care of Jews around the world"; and "I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people." The Index of Nationalism drew on favorable answers to: "settlements in the West Bank help Israel's security"; "God gave the Land of Israel to "Jews"; and "I do not think a way can be found for Israel and an independent Palestinian state to coexist peacefully." Finally, an Index of Political Position on the Israel-Palestine conflict was based on the difference between positive answers given