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## THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

**date** March 26, 1985  
**to** Area Directors and Executive Assistants  
**from** George E. Gruen *GE*  
**subject** Middle East Peace Efforts

I am attaching for your information the letter sent by AJC President Howard I. Friedman to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak elaborating the reasons why we disagree with certain aspects of his proposals to restart the peace process by bringing a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to Washington and suggesting an international conference. The letter also states our serious concern that Egypt's failure to normalize diplomatic relations with Israel and the continuing appearance of blatantly anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic articles and cartoons in the Egyptian media will undermine the psychological basis for peace.

I am also enclosing another copy of the AJC statement of March 5, 1985 regarding recent Middle East peace efforts. Our view that the Hussein-Arafat agreement of February 11 "falls far short of a serious peace proposal" has been confirmed by subsequent developments. Some of Arafat's own key supporters within al-Fatah have denied that the agreement constitutes a readiness to recognize Israel. Meanwhile, the Syrian-backed opponents to Arafat within the PLO have intensified their activities. Reuters reported from Damascus, on March 25, that "six Palestinian guerrilla groups opposed to the policies of Yasir Arafat, . . . said today that they had formed the Palestinian National Salvation Front to fight Israel. . . . The National Salvation Front was announced by former speaker of the Palestine National Council, Khaled Fahoum."

When I asked Jordanian Foreign Minister Taher Masri, at a meeting sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute in Washington on March 18, how Jordan expected to deal with the Syrian opposition to the Hussein-Arafat agreement, he replied that King Hussein's call for an international conference was in part designed to meet their objections. As you know, the Syrians and their Soviet mentors have long been calling for an international conference. The reasons Israel and the U.S. have opposed this approach is, as indicated in Mr. Friedman's letter to President Mubarak, because it would reintroduce the Soviet Union as a major actor in the negotiations and would also give Syria a veto power, thereby strengthening the more extreme Arab demands and increase the likelihood of failure to reach any agreement. As demonstrated by historical experience, the only successful peace negotiations in the Middle East have been bilateral and step-by-step.

I am also enclosing a Washington Post article of March 23, 1985, in which Secretary of State George P. Shultz attempts to clarify the U.S. position regarding a possible visit by a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to Washington and the American role in negotiations.





# The American Jewish Committee

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Howard I. Friedman, President • 1600 One Wilshire Building, Los Angeles, Calif. 90017 • 213/629-0274

March 14, 1985

President Hosni Mubarak  
c/o His Excellency Abdel Raouf el-Reedy  
Ambassador L & P  
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
2310 Decatur Place, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Mr. President:

As one of the group of American Jewish organizational leaders who met with you in Washington on Monday, March 11, 1985, may I take this means of expressing to you my own organization's appreciation for your generous sharing of time and thought at that meeting. Because the format of the meeting, involving more than two dozen people, makes it extremely difficult to pursue in depth a substantive dialogue, I am taking the liberty of writing this letter to you. What I say here, of course, is only intended to reflect the views of the American Jewish Committee and does not purport to speak for others, although I believe these views are widely shared.

Our leadership met with you, as you will recall, in late October, 1981, in Cairo, shortly after you assumed the presidency of Egypt. That was a particularly constructive meeting and had the effect of conveying most dramatically to us your own commitment to the integrity of the peace process with Israel and your determination to broaden it to the fullest. In that same spirit, we have taken some satisfaction in your more recent efforts to expand the peace process itself. It is, however, primarily because of our appreciation of the seriousness of purpose which has always characterized you that we want to voice to you our conviction that certain aspects of your recent initiative may be counter-productive to what we view as the primary ingredient of the peace process.

Peace can only be achieved, as it was between Egypt and Israel, through direct negotiations between Israel and its adversaries. That is so in our view because the underlying obstacle to peace in the area has always been Arab refusal to accept the reality and sovereign legitimacy of the State of Israel. President Sadat cut through that mind set completely when he made it clear that he was prepared to negotiate directly with Israel as a legitimate sovereign entity.

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Nothing less will be productive with respect to the securing of peace between Israel and its remaining adversaries. That is why we respectfully suggest that the preliminary negotiations which you have urged between the United States and a negotiating group consisting of Jordanians and Palestinians, including in the latter PLO representatives, is not a foundation upon which positive results can be predicated. Rather, it is seen by most observers as an attempt to press the United States into a posture of dealing with representatives different from those with whom Israel can reasonably be expected to negotiate. I understand that our own government's recognition of that reality has been plainly and unequivocally conveyed to you and we believe it is based on sound principles.

We likewise feel profoundly that the process will be most productive if it is not sought by means of a universalist format. Peace can best be built step-by-step. A logical next step would be negotiations with Jordan. As you know Israel has indicated that it would not object to the inclusion of Palestinians who are not PLO officials in such a Jordanian delegation. The alternative of an international conference will encourage the most extreme demands of Israel's adversaries to become the common denominator upon which the totality of Israel's adversaries can join together. Moreover, it suggests a key role in the ultimate negotiating process for the Soviet Union. I realize that you, too, share that apprehension. Such an approach would not be a formula for success, but rather a prescription for failure.

I hope you will forgive the frank spirit in which I address these remarks to you. You have always been a man characterized by openness and frankness. Because we share a common commitment to a meaningful peace in the area, I write you only to provide you with our own sense of the inherent limitations and deficiencies in some aspects of the approach which has recently been advanced.

We share with you as well an appreciation of the importance of the psychological dimension in the fostering of peace among nations. The people of Israel made heavy sacrifices for the sake of peace with Egypt and the Government of Prime Minister Peres has indicated its readiness to take additional risks for true and lasting peace with all its neighbors. Yet we found during our recent visit to Israel many Israelis who are asking themselves whether the Arab world will ever really accept Israel in its midst. They argue that if Arab hatred is unalterable then why made additional sacrifices and take additional risks for peace?

President Hosni Mubarak  
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I believe that Egypt's actions play a crucial role in molding attitudes in Israel as well as in the Arab world. The prompt return of the Egyptian ambassador to his post in Israel would help to reverse the popular pessimism within Israel about Arab attitudes and could also encourage other Arab parties to enter into direct peace talks with Israel.

In this connection we are also distressed to find that articles continue to appear in the Egyptian press, including the semi-official Al Gomhouria, which are not only harshly critical of Israel but contain vicious anti-Jewish stereotypes. Such articles go far beyond legitimate criticism of specific Israeli policies in that they attribute malicious and evil characteristics to all Israelis and to the Jewish people as a whole. We are deeply concerned that the cumulative effect of this hate propaganda among the Egyptian people will be to undermine the progress that has been made thus far by Egypt and Israel to create a new atmosphere of tolerance and reconciliation between Arabs and Jews.

Please be assured that we want to be helpful in any way we can to advance the peace process and look forward to an early opportunity to discuss with you in the same spirit of frankness our mutual concerns as well as our mutual aspirations.

Sincerely yours,



Howard I. Friedman,  
National President,  
American Jewish Committee.

HIF:JA

bcc: Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum  
Dr. David Gordis  
Dr. George E. Gruen



## AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

### STATEMENT ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS

By Howard I. Friedman, President

The American Jewish Committee welcomes the latest initiatives of Prime Minister Peres of Israel and President Mubarak of Egypt to improve relations between their two countries and to encourage efforts to broaden the Camp David peace process through direct negotiations. King Hussein of Jordan has indicated that he also favors negotiations on the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and the participation of Palestinians in the framework of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

We welcome the signs of good faith manifested in Jerusalem, Cairo and Amman. We believe that the insistence by the Reagan Administration that the primary responsibility for resolving the issues in dispute rests on the parties in the Middle East has had a salutary and sobering effect within the Arab world. The repeatedly demonstrated readiness of the Government and people of Israel to make significant concessions for the sake of peace may also have finally evoked a positive response.

However, many difficulties remain. Indeed, it has become increasingly doubtful in recent days whether Yasir Arafat and the factions of the fragmented Palestine Liberation Organization that remain loyal to him are genuinely prepared to recognize the legitimacy of Israel and its right to live within secure and recognized borders, as required by Resolution 242. It thus remains to be seen whether King Hussein will be willing and able to enter negotiations with moderate Palestinian representatives, who are not officials of the PLO and who favor permanent peace with Israel in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian context.

There is thus no basis for premature jubilation. Indeed, the Hussein-Arafat joint agreement of February 11, 1985 is not only full of ambiguities but contains elements that are fundamentally inconsistent with the peace process agreed upon by the United States, Israel and Egypt. It falls far short of a serious peace proposal.

Yet one should not be overly pessimistic, for the peace process has always been fraught with difficulties. We are confident that the United States Government will continue to offer its good offices to aid all parties who genuinely seek peace through negotiations.

We trust that during President Mubarak's forthcoming visit to Washington, President Reagan will also impress upon him the importance that the United States attaches to full normalization of Egypt's relations with Israel as a necessary practical step in restoring the positive atmosphere to further the advancement of the peace process.

March 5, 1985  
85-580-8



# Shultz Says Peace 'Action' Is in Mideast

3.23.85  
**Reagan Offer Called  
No Change in Policy  
US + PLE**

By John M. Goshko  
and David Ottaway  
Washington Post Staff Writers

The State Department yesterday appeared to be pulling back from President Reagan's offer of a possible meeting here with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation as Secretary of State George P. Shultz said that "the action is in the Middle East" in terms of reviving the Arab-Israeli peace process.

But at the same time, Shultz said he is eager "to keep the ball rolling" in light of new Arab proposals to revive the Middle East peace process.

Shultz held an unscheduled second meeting yesterday with Jordanian Foreign Minister Taher Masri after Reagan's statement at his Thursday news conference that "we're willing to meet with a joint group." His offer sparked speculation about increasing U.S. interest in Arab proposals and possible imminent shifts in the previously cautious U.S. attitude toward them.

But after the meeting with Masri, Shultz told reporters: "The possibility of visits here is one thing. But the parties are really in the Middle East. So I think likely that's where the action most likely will be."

Even before Shultz spoke, administration officials insisted that Reagan's offer did not signal a change in the longstanding U.S. policy of trying to bring about direct talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

They said that Reagan had meant to indicate his willingness to meet such a delegation if the move showed promise of leading to direct talks. But, the officials added, this idea was only one of the options being considered by the administration, and they added that the United States had not yet decided what course offers the best chance for

movement toward negotiations. The issue is delicate for all parties because of the implication that U.S. reception of a joint Arab delegation would be tantamount to recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Reagan tried to circumvent that problem by reiterating U.S. refusal to accept any PLO members in the delegation prior to PLO recognition of Israel's right to exist.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, while expressing willingness to negotiate directly with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation that has no PLO members, publicly has op-

posed the idea of such a group going to Washington for preliminary talks that would not include Israel.

White House spokesman Larry Speakes said Israel has sent "some mixed signals" about its attitude on U.S. talks with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. "There are some indications that they [Israel] would be interested," Speakes said.

But yesterday the Israeli Embassy here reiterated Israel's concern that the Arabs would use a Washington meeting to circumvent direct talks with the Jewish state and to bring members of the PLO into the process "through the back door."

Reagan's additional comment Thursday that "we are not getting into the direct negotiations" created confusion about whether the United States was on the verge of renewed activism in the peace process or was distancing itself from increased involvement.

A senior U.S. official, commenting on Reagan's statement, said he was trying to underscore the U.S. belief that the Arabs and Israelis must resolve their differences between themselves. But, the official added, Reagan did not mean to imply the United States was withdrawing from its role as "a full partner" in the American-sponsored Camp David accords.

He said the United States would continue to act as a mediator if the peace process could be revived and

expanded with Jordanian participation.

At a meeting with reporters earlier yesterday, Masri said he did not know what the mechanism for selecting the Palestinian members of the delegation might be, and he proposed that the United States should suggest names Jordan could pass on to the PLO for its consideration.

"We didn't try to work out anything of that kind," Shultz said after the 40-minute session with Masri. But he said there was "general agreement" that some Palestinians would have to be involved in any talks.

Other U.S. officials acknowledged that the problem of finding potential Palestinian delegation

members acceptable to all parties is likely to be discussed by Assistant Secretary of State Richard W. Murphy when he goes to the Middle East in mid-April to explore the various options.

Masri, following the lead taken by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak when he visited here last week, stressed that any Palestinians chosen would have to be approved by the PLO. As a result, he said, their reception by U.S. officials would be regarded as American recognition of the PLO.

The idea of the meeting was among several proposals that Masri and Shultz discussed at their first meeting Wednesday and that might be explored further by Murphy

when he visits the region. U.S. officials said that other topics included a Jordanian request for the United States to endorse a limited form of Palestinian self-determination and an Egyptian suggestion that the foreign ministers of the United States, Egypt and Jordan meet to help select members of the joint delegation.

The officials said that any U.S. declaration on self-determination would have to be made within the context of Reagan's September 1982 peace initiative calling for the Palestinian-inhabited West Bank and Gaza Strip to get independence "in association with Jordan" rather than as an independent Palestinian state.



AMERICAN JEWISH

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**REASONING TOGETHER**

**Three Decades of Discussions  
Between American and Israeli Jews**

Etta Bick



The Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, an arm of the American Jewish Committee, undertakes programs and activities in the United States and Israel designed to enhance the collaboration between the two largest and most important Jewish communities in the world.

The Institute was founded on these premises:

1. The American Jewish community is a healthy, creative and viable community with a positive future in the United States.
2. American Jewry's commitment to Israel's security and survival is strong and irrevocable; for many, Israel is a major ingredient of their Jewish identity.
3. Israelis have come to recognize the importance of the American Jewish community's economic, political and moral support and the potential for joint action.
4. Events that affect either community are likely to affect the status and future of Jewish communities the world over.

It is hoped that this publication will help increase the understanding essential for productive interaction, not only in times of crisis, but in the day-to-day relationships between Israelis and American Jews.

Bertram H. Gold, *Director*

# **REASONING TOGETHER**

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

## **Three Decades of Discussions Between American and Israeli Jews**

Etta Bick

**INSTITUTE ON AMERICAN JEWISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS  
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**



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Etta Bick is a freelance writer and researcher who specializes in the relationship between the American Jewish community and Israel. She received her doctorate in political science from the City University of New York and immigrated to Israel in 1977.

זכר אלה יעקב וישראל

## INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, concerned Jews in Israel and in the United States have labored to find a modus vivendi to govern the relations between the sovereign state and Jews who have chosen to live elsewhere. Many have questioned whether being a Zionist in the Diaspora still has any meaning once aliyah (immigration to Israel) has become a possibility most Jews in the free world have rejected. They have pondered what the role of the American Jewish community should be in building the Jewish State, and debated the extent to which the Jewish State should help strengthen the American Jewish community.

Thinkers in each community have felt the need to define their own condition and explain it to the other, making certain to differentiate between Jewishness in Israel and Jewish identity in the Diaspora; between being Jewish in America today and being a Jew in other countries or times. They have sought to define mutually acceptable boundaries between active participation in each other's affairs and interference in each other's internal concerns.

These are some of the major questions Israelis and American Jews have discussed among themselves and with each other over the years in a variety of forums. In 1950, 1957 and 1961, delegations of the American Jewish Committee conducted formal discussions with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, in an effort to clarify the relationship between Israel and Jews in the United States and other free countries. The discussions in 1950 culminated in the Ben-Gurion-Blaustein Clarification Statements, reaffirmed in later exchanges, in which Israel's leader stated clearly that he recognized that American Jews "as a community and as individuals have only one political attachment and that is to the United States of America. They owe no political allegiance to Israel." Ben-Gurion also declared that Israel has no desire and no intention to interfere in any way with the internal affairs of Jewish communities abroad. He explained that Israel's "success or failure depends in large measure on our cooperation with, and on the strength of, the great Jewish community of the United States." Many felt that the authoritative pronouncement by Israel's Prime Minister gave the lie to accusations of dual allegiance, leveled by the American Council for Judaism as well as by some hostile



non-Jewish circles. The Ben-Gurion-Blaustein Clarification Statements formally delineated the principles on which relations between Jews in the free countries and Israel are based.

These principles served as broad guidelines to establish that the Israeli Government does not formally represent Jews living in the United States and other Western democracies, but they did not spell out exactly what the relationship should be. There are many areas of interest Israel and the Diaspora share: philanthropy, Jewish education, Zionism, political support, aid to Jews in distress. No clear-cut rules exist for defining the proper relationship between Israel and Jews abroad in these areas. Since the establishment of the State, a variety of discussion forums have been held between American Jews and Israelis in an attempt to reach at least a mutual understanding of each other's point of view.

In 1962, the American Jewish Congress initiated a yearly series of dialogues between Israelis and American Jews -- 20 of which have been held thus far -- in order to increase understanding between the two groups and dispel the myths and fallacies that may exist in each one's perception of the other. The organizers deliberately refrained from pragmatic implications or policy design. Participants were selected to include representatives of a variety of viewpoints across the political, religious and ethnic spectrum, and most of the discussions were not open to the general public. "We do not come together for a match between American and Israeli," declared Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld, who chaired several of the sessions. "This is not a kind of intellectual Maccabiah [international Jewish sports competition]. Rather, we come together in the effort to talk as intimately and freely to one another as we possibly can, about shared problems from differing points of view -- differing points of view among the Americans and among the Israelis here assembled."<sup>1</sup>

The American Jewish Committee's Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations was established in the Fall of 1982 with the expressed purpose of "increas[ing] dialogue and understanding between the two largest and most vibrant Jewish communities in the world," American Jewry and Israel. The Institute published the discussions of its U.S. and Israel advisory boards, focusing on the centrality of Israel and on the right to disagree with Israeli policies, in twin publications entitled Understanding One Another.<sup>2</sup>

Other major forums include the World Zionist Congress -- eight of which have been held in Jerusalem since the establishment of the State -- where Zionist parties from Israel and Zionist organizations from the Diaspora focus on the problems and needs of the world Jewish community; the symposium convened by the Hebrew periodical Gesher, in conjunction with the World Jewish Congress in 1979, at which a panel of 21 Israeli thinkers discussed the question of the centrality of Israel for the Jewish people; and the Continuing Seminar on World Jewry, whose deliberations, under the auspices of Israel's fourth

President, Professor Ephraim Katzir, were later published.<sup>3</sup> In addition, conferences on the nature of Jewish identity have been held at several universities in both Israel and the United States.

The following basic questions were discussed at the various encounters:

1. What is Jewish identity and how should it be imparted to the next generation? What is the difference between the Israeli and the American experience of Jewishness?

2. What do Israel and the American Jewish community have in common? What kind of future lies in store for American Jewry?

3. Is Israel central to Jewish life today?

4. What is the significance of Zionism after the establishment of the State of Israel?

5. Do Israelis and American Jews have the right to participate in each other's affairs? To what extent?

6. What should be the role of religion in Israel?

An attempt is made in these pages to analyze the issues on the American Jewish-Israeli agenda, highlight areas of agreement and disagreement, and assess the contribution of such dialogues to enhancing understanding between the two communities.



## JEWISH IDENTITY: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE JEWISH

However Israeli and American Jewish participants defined Jewish identity and the reasons for being Jewish, the overwhelming majority expressed their strong commitment to the perpetuation of the Jewish People as the collectivity that unites Jews wherever they may dwell. This very basic feeling was evident in the Jewish reaction to the threat to Israel's survival during the Six Day War of 1967. With the tragic loss of six million Jews in the Holocaust ever fresh in their memory, Jews the world over felt their own security threatened even as they feared for the very existence of the Jewish State. This emotion, roused by potential tragedy and loss, surfaced again during the Yom Kippur War in 1973, strengthening world Jewry's resolve to survive. Thus, the lowest common denominator shared by both Israeli and American Jews was the commitment to Jewish survival. With that axiom accepted as the basis for further exploration, two questions presented themselves: What is the nature of this "Jewishness" that binds the Jewish people, and how can it be preserved and transmitted to future generations?

For an understanding of the various definitions of Jewishness held by both Israelis and American Jews who participated in the various discussion forums over the years it may help to use sociologist Mervin Verbit's construct of Jewish identity.<sup>4</sup> At one end of the continuum he places the "essentialist" position, which asserts "that Judaism comprises a specifiable and permanent set of basic ideas and values and that those ideas and values constitute the proper criteria with which to assess the Jewishness of any behavior, be it that of an individual, that of an organization, or that of a state." At the other end is what he calls the "existentialist" position, which says that "whatever Jews do when in control of their own affairs becomes the central substance of Jewishness." These two positions should not be viewed as representing an empirical dichotomy in the Jewish community, Verbit explains, but rather as end points of a continuum along which the variety of opinions in the Jewish community are distributed.

The following definitions of Jewishness came to the fore in the discussions:

- a. **Judaism as a halakhic system.** This essentialist view is that



of the observant participants, who explained Jewishness as a way of life regulated by Halakhah (traditional Jewish law). It also exemplifies collective Jewish behavior through the ages. One of the basic requirements of Judaism is learning, a process that never ends. Thus, for example, Israeli Orthodox Rabbi Mordechai Piron contended that the essential difference between his view and that of Jewish secularists is that the latter speak about Judaism without possessing much Jewish knowledge. "The terrible mistake is that everybody is telling how he would like Judaism to be," Piron stated, "in accord with individual and subjective points of view, feelings and emotion. But Judaism is an open book. Read it. Learn what it is -- and then go out and teach and preach."<sup>5</sup>

This view of Judaism as a way of life does not minimize the importance of ethical and social concerns emphasized by Jewish secularists. On the contrary, as American Orthodox Rabbi Walter Wurzbarger explained, "leading representatives of Halachic Judaism, from Maimonides to Rabbi Soloveitchik (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University's Rabbinical Seminary) stress the paramount importance of efforts to imitate G-d's way through the cultivation of an ethical personality."<sup>6</sup> The truly religious person should view ethical obligations and ideals as an integral part of a God-centered life, he said; moral standards are determined by divine law and not by the relativistic morality of human conscience. In general, Orthodox participants, lay and clergy alike, stressed that only a Jewishness expressed through the traditional framework of Jewish activity and reinforced by intensive Jewish education can be successfully preserved and transmitted to future generations.

Interestingly, none of those presenting halakhic views stipulated that living in Israel is an essential condition for sustaining Jewish identity. In fact, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, Israeli popularizer of the Talmud, argued that Zionism has been disastrous in terms of Jewish identity and survival. "The root conception of Zionism, the building of a state 'kechol hagoyim,' like any other state, provided an elegant formula for self extermination," he emphasized, adding that he was fearful that those who live in Israel will be just Israelis, not Jews in any meaningful sense.<sup>7</sup>

Other Orthodox rabbis disputed this castigation of Zionism. A more optimistic view was advanced by Rabbi David Hartman, Professor of Jewish Philosophy at Hebrew University, who envisioned special possibilities for a renewal of Judaism in Israel, where Jews are politically independent in the land that has been the focal point of Jewish historical memories and longings. In his view, Israel has unlimited potential for Jewish creativity and renewal.<sup>8</sup>

**b. Jewish identity as a commitment to social justice and other universal values.** Many secular participants, as well as many American Conservative and Reform rabbis, saw the commitment to social justice for all as the core of historic Jewish striving. Although secular,



their position is no less essentialist than the halakhic view, because it, too, prescribes a set of ideas and values for assessing Jewishness. Jews were in the forefront of the struggle for social justice represented by the civil rights and anti-war movements in America in the 1960s and 1970s, a struggle that gave meaning to their Jewishness. As American Rabbi Joachim Prinz, past president of the American Jewish Congress put it, "To me, the involvement on behalf of social causes are Jewish activities. Why Jewish? Simply because such activities are an expression of the genius of my people. I have this passion, so to speak, in my blood, in my historic memory."<sup>9</sup>

For Amnon Rubinstein, an Israeli intellectual and political figure, Jewish identity should manifest "a general, universal, humanitarian point of view," and Judaism must have ethical and moral values. "Our persecution has developed in us a keen sense of justice and humanity," he explained. If there were one element in Judaism that he would choose to preserve, he asserted, it would be that we were slaves in Egypt, because this experience sensitized the Jews as a nation to freedom and justice.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, American Jewish educator Isaac Toubin pointed to Judaism's "sensitivity to history" as the "unique genius of the Jewish people," which has made the Jewish collective responsive to the problems of injustice besetting all humanity.<sup>11</sup>

Some American participants in the discussions on social justice remarked that, paradoxically, American Jewish youth who were active in the civil rights causes of the late 1960s and early 1970s saw their involvement totally in secular terms, not as the ultimate expression of traditional Jewish concerns. Essentially these young people rejected their Jewish roots, associating them with the Jewish establishment, which they perceived as stilted and unreceptive to their needs. Suggestions were made that Jewish educators devote efforts to enhancing the Jewish identity of these activists by teaching them the Jewish roots of social justice.<sup>12</sup>

**c. Jewish identity as predicated on a belief in the messianic vision of national and universal redemption, buttressed by Jewish education and ties with Israel.** This nationalistic view was advanced by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion at the opening session of the first American-Israel Dialogue in Israel in 1962. Central to this vision was the need for the ingathering of the exiles from the lands of their dispersion, a task to be abetted by Jews the world over, even by those who choose not to immigrate to Israel, Ben-Gurion stressed. Jewish education -- the study of Hebrew, Bible and Jewish history -- was imperative to ensure the Jewish identity of the younger generations, he went on. Lastly, he declared, Jews should establish close personal ties with Israel through frequent visits, sending their children to study or volunteer in Israel, or going on aliyah themselves.

**d. Jewish identity as a form of estrangement from other cultures.** Critic and author George Steiner argued that being Jewish means to be



a "guest" in different countries, never to belong anywhere. However, he went on; "far from resenting his guest-status in the Gentile communities -- the Jew ought to welcome it. What he may have inherited of nomadic centuries, the remarkable antennae he has grown for linguistic adaptations, his skills as an agent de change -- of currencies, of style of life, of ideas -- his fascinating ability to live in time where others tend to live in concrete space -- these equip the Jew to exist and flourish, as it were, 'in transit'." Steiner's very personal definition aroused heated responses among his listeners.<sup>13</sup>

**e. Jewishness as an existential experience.** Another existentialist view was expressed by novelist Philip Roth and echoed by several secular Jews from both Israel and the United States. Asked if his writing could be said to reflect his "Jewishness," Roth responded that his works could undoubtedly be called Jewish because he was a Jew, but that he made no deliberate attempt to write "Jewishly."<sup>14</sup> A number of secular American Jews endorsed this position, arguing that they were Jewish because they considered themselves as such, and not because they found Jewish religion or culture personally satisfying.

In a similar vein, some Israelis contended that all acts undertaken by Israelis in the Jewish State were by definition "Jewish." "When an Israeli is manning the front in the Suez he contributes no less to our Jewishness and Judaism than those who sat in Yeshivot in the past," one former Israeli official declared.<sup>15</sup> "In the little finger of each secondary school student in Israel there is more Judaism, more consciousness of the Jewish values, than in the majority of American Jews," said another.<sup>16</sup> Ben-Gurion's statement that in Israel the trees are Jewish, the tractors are Jewish, that everything one does in the Jewish state is Jewish, was quoted as well.

Most American Jews and some traditional Israelis disputed the assertions that Jewishness "came naturally" only in Israel. Jewishness devoid of real content is not long lasting, they countered. They pointed to Israeli yordim (emigrants) in America, many of whom were completely disassociated from Jewish life and institutions, as evidence of the insufficiency of this kind of Jewishness.

American journalist Max Frankel summed up his own experience of existential Jewishness by declaring: "The most eternal thing about Jewishness...is that both in persecutions and in success the Jew has simply continued to feel that there is something about him that is different; and he continues to keep asking himself: What is it?" This Jewishness entails a continuous journey of self-searching and exploration necessary for the development of Jewish identity, he stressed. If Jews ask questions and begin to search for answers, identification with Jewishness will deepen.<sup>17</sup>

The existential assertion of Americans, who claimed Jewish identity by virtue of birth, or of Israelis, who saw a Jewish quality



to everything they did, was challenged by those who questioned pointedly how such a generalized "feeling" of Jewishness could be successfully imparted to future generations if it lacked specific content.



## TRANSMITTING JEWISH IDENTITY TO THE NEXT GENERATION

The participants in all of the forums were generally in accord that instilling Jewish identity in the younger generation was a major priority of the Jewish communities in both Israel and the United States, but could not agree either on content or method. Secularists, for example, who described Jewish identity as pride in Jewish accomplishments or as a belief in the need for Jewish survival and continuity, pointed to the pervasiveness of American culture as a deterrent to American Jewish youth forming a solid Jewish identity. Young people, they argued, found it difficult to be Americans most of the time and having to set aside a small part of their inner self to being Jewish. Harold Weisberg, Professor of Philosophy at Brandeis University, stressed the need not only for preserving Jewish modes of behavior, values and experiences, but also for creating, changing and allowing pluralism within Judaism. New meaningful forms of Jewishness should be explored in Jewish education, religious content, as well as in commitment to and interest in Israel, he advised.<sup>18</sup>

Robert Gordis, Professor of Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, described the post-World War II younger generation of American Jews, who had drifted away from their sources:

We have produced a new American version of the 'am ha'aretz or Jewish illiterate. In the past an 'am ha'aretz was a person who was Jewishly ignorant and who, therefore, recognized his incompetence to pass judgment on Jewish life and thought. Today, we have produced a type of uninformed Jew who has great, or at least respectable, intellectual credentials in other cultural areas, but is totally ignorant Jewishly. Since he knows nothing of Judaism, he concludes that there is nothing to know in Judaism. Since he finds no values in Jewish life, he decides that Jewish life has no value. He prefers to go out into what was once "the brave, bright new world," which is perhaps no longer so brave or so bright or so new, but which still seems less confining than the more limited dimensions of the Jewish community.<sup>19</sup>

Some Israelis acknowledged that a similar problem exists in Israel. Graduates of the Israeli secular state school program know little about Judaism, they contended. These young people, too, often suppose that the meager knowledge they may have acquired in introductory courses is more than sufficient to support the contention that Judaism is irrelevant for them today. However, for the most part, Israeli dialogue participants considered the problem of weakening Jewish identity to be endemic to the Diaspora. They suggested that it was becoming increasingly difficult to detect a common denominator between Jewishness in Israel and Jewishness in America. As one Israeli pointed out:

...What alternative to Israel is there? There does not seem to be any. Those Jews who have not opted for Israel necessarily find themselves in a continuing crisis of faith. You people who come from America have lost your belief in the idea that here is a universal mission in which you are engaged; you do not believe that you are in the Galut as a punishment for the misdeeds of your fathers. Accordingly, you have to invent a superstructure to justify your existence as Jews. I doubt very much that we Israelis can be of any great help to you in your fumbling quest.

As for transmitting Jewishness, he went on, the problem exists in the Diaspora, not in Israel. "In Israel, Jewishness is essentially spontaneous and national," he explained. "To be sure, you have to convey information about Jewish values and about Jewish history, but you do not have to teach 'Jewishness' in any formidable, disciplined way. Whatever Jews do, so to speak, is by definition Jewish."<sup>20</sup>

This existentialist viewpoint evoked criticism for being both chauvinistic and shortsighted in its acclaim for the Jewish quality of the Israeli experience. Some pointed to the seemingly uninhibited exodus of Israelis to other countries, including West Germany, and the assimilationist pattern of behavior they adopt there, as evidence of the speciousness of this argument.

A very different view was poignantly advanced by an Israeli kibbutz member, who denied the "Jewishness is Israeliness" equation:

Let us take, for instance, people like myself who have grown up in a kibbutz with only the slightest notions of Judaism, and who are not content any more simply with "Israeliness." We do not find answers to burning questions about Jewishness only in Israel. We continue to ask ourselves: Where are we going? What is all this for? Why on earth are we continuing this Jewishness for? And these questions, I repeat, cannot be summarily answered simply by alluding to "Israeliness." If that were all, if all the answers were to be simply in terms of nationalism, it would be better, perhaps, if we all lived in the United States. Why suffer so much?



Why struggle so much? Just for a tiny territory? For our standard of living?<sup>21</sup>

Several American Jewish educators described the apathy of Jewish youth in the United States toward their heritage. Comfortable in their relations with non-Jews, many do not care about Jewish identity as a value or whether Jews survive as a people. They can share the idealism for radical causes of their non-Jewish fellow students more readily than the concern for Jewish survival of their parents' generation.

It was suggested that if Israel were presented to these young people attractively, as a pioneering society open to new initiatives and conducive to personal growth, it might serve as a challenge to them and as a possible solution to the problem of their Jewish identity. American sociologist Nathan Glazer suggested that the following factors be emphasized: 1) Israel's socialism in all its forms; 2) the multiethnic character of the Jewish State and the ensuing problems it needs help in solving; 3) the development in Israel of an effective, rational welfare system, evidence of the Jewish State's intense concern with social justice.<sup>22</sup> In this spirit, a number of Israelis and Americans proposed the formation of a volunteer group, along the lines of the Peace Corps, to bring idealistic Jewish youth to Israel. Zionists saw this plan for an extended stay as strengthening potential aliyah; others regarded it as a positive Jewish answer to the humanistic, idealistic search of American Jewish youth.<sup>23</sup>

The study of Hebrew as a means of linking Diaspora Jewish youth to Israel was another topic that engaged Israeli and American thinkers throughout their exchanges, especially in the early years. It became a primary goal of Zionist educational efforts, directed to all Jewish children and adults, at the 23rd World Zionist Congress in 1951, and was taken up in subsequent Congresses as well as in other forums. Zionist Congresses in the late 1960s adopted resolutions calling on Zionists to study Hebrew, to give their children a Jewish education and rear them in the spirit of aliyah and Zionist self-fulfillment. The Jerusalem Program, adopted at the 27th World Zionist Congress in 1968, cited as one of the five aims of Zionism "the preservation of the identity of the Jewish People through the fostering of Jewish and Hebrew education and of Jewish spiritual and cultural values." Every Zionist was assigned the personal obligation to see to it that his children obtain a Jewish education. In fact, in 1972, the plenum resolved that those who did not do so should not be in the leadership of the Zionist movement.

Non-Zionists rejected the thesis that knowledge of Hebrew was essential for Jewish identity. Several Americans somberly warned that it was unrealistic to expect widespread study of Hebrew language and literature by American Jews. While Hebrew reinforced Jewish identity, they argued, only a small minority would be attracted to its study and

even fewer would achieve proficiency in it.

Yet some American Jews did believe Israel could salvage Jewish education in America by sending teachers to staff the Hebrew schools. They reasoned that Israeli teachers would be successful in rousing students from their apathy (although these proponents sometimes failed to take into account the impediments of the culture gap between the Israeli teacher and the American Jewish child to such undertakings). American communal leader Arthur Hertzberg outlined his conception of "a vast cultural rescue operation" from Israel to the U.S. that included the following elements: world Jewry should guarantee a free Jewish education to every Jewish child; this education would consist of some direct experience with Israel early in life; the Jewish community should require all Jewish youth to spend a year or two in a Jewish service corps, either in Israel or in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

Another suggestion involved the idea that American youth come to Israel to study in Israel's universities. Rabbi Joachim Prinz cautioned Israelis "not to automatically assume the friendship of our Jewish young people in America for Israel." They were "children of freedom," he said, who had to be won over. He suggested establishing special one-year programs for American students in Israeli universities.<sup>25</sup>

One American participant aptly described the choices before American Jews and Israelis: "If we are genuinely interested in forging Jewish unity, we must look to our peculiar Jewish elements. Otherwise, we come together as human beings who see need for one another only in times of peril and disaster."<sup>26</sup>



## ALIYAH VS. CREATIVE JEWISH SURVIVAL IN THE DIASPORA

The subject of aliyah, which, in its classic Zionist formulation, presupposed the ingathering of the exiles from their lands of dispersion, came up again and again in the various Israeli-American encounters throughout the years, provoking heated debate among the participants and highlighting seemingly irreconcilable positions even when each side made genuine attempts to "understand" the other. To the Israelis' repeated demands for aliyah Americans usually responded that Jews in the West considered the free and open societies in which they lived as their home, and urged Israel to accept this reality and adjust to it. They added that continuous insistence on aliyah would only alienate those American Jews who were concerned with Israel's interests and welfare.

Still, many Israeli leaders were openly critical of American Jews for not moving to Israel and often expressed their disappointment. Ben-Gurion's famous declaration at the 25th World Zionist Congress in December 1960 that a religious Jew who remained in the Diaspora "daily violated the precepts of Judaism and the Torah" found a variety of echoes in the words of other Israeli public representatives. "The State of Israel will not be the same state we yearned for and willed if the Jewish masses are not going to come here -- not only because they are compelled to come, but because they want to come," Foreign Minister Golda Meir deplored, adding that she could not grasp "the instinctive lack of responsiveness when we speak about aliyah." And when Dr. Joachim Prinz responded that Israelis must face the fact that the overwhelming majority of American Jews will make their permanent home in the United States, she countered:

I did not say six million Jews should come overnight... I say Jews in the United States must accept the principle of aliyah. Dr. Prinz, you have become reconciled to no aliyah. Why? Why simply accept it? Why is it so difficult to accept the idea of immigration? I believe immigration will become a fact. Zionism is a revolt against reality. You, Dr. Prinz, are influencing the young merely to accept reality...<sup>27</sup>



Historian Gerson Cohen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, reminded Israelis and American Jews that the same process of secularization and breakdown of traditional faith in the 20th century had been responsible for two opposing phenomena: the movement to establish a Jewish State -- Zionism -- on the one hand, and the identification of millions of Jews with the nation-states in which they were full-fledged citizens, on the other. Those who chose Babylon rather than Jerusalem did so deliberately and permanently, he declared, drawing the historic parallel with the time of the rebuilding of the Second Temple, when the majority of Jews chose to remain in Babylon even as they lent support to the Temple endeavor.<sup>28</sup>

Rose Halperin, representing the American Hadassah Women's Organization, articulated a view shared by many American Jews, Zionist and non-Zionist alike, in which the distinction is made between the concepts golah (exile) and tfutzot (dispersion or diaspora). The former, she said, described the condition of Jews who live in fear or under hardship in such countries as the Soviet Union or Syria. Aliyah would alleviate the suffering of these Jews, but they cannot freely emigrate to Israel. In contrast, in the tfutzot, such as the United States and other democratic countries, Jews live in freedom, without fear for their safety; aliyah for them is not a necessity but a matter of choice. The Zionist message to them should be predicated on idealism, not fear, Mrs. Halperin went on. She criticized the "scare" approach of some Israeli spokespersons and American Zionists, who warn American Jews that they must come on aliyah before a terrible wave of anti-Semitism hits them.<sup>29</sup> Dr. Joachim Prinz took up this last theme, forcefully rejecting any hints that America was not a guaranteed safe home for Jews -- that what had happened in Germany could happen in the United States. In his view, such warnings were "irresponsible and naive," and indicated a lack of understanding of the Jewish experience in America.<sup>30</sup>

While most Israelis did not go so far as to predict that a massive wave of anti-Semitism would descend on the American Jewish community, they expressed concern for Jewish survival in America.

In one of the early encounters Abba Eban jolted his American Jewish interlocutors by stating bluntly: "I doubt if you're going to exist. All that Israel really wants you to do is exist as Jews." Group survival in America was in deadly danger, he told them, because the very absence of hostile, external pressures would cause Jewish identity to fall away through apathy and neglect. Only the "magnetic force of Israel's resurgence" could offer some hope for Jewish survival in America, he added, warning that unless there was a massive effort by both communities to stem the increase in assimilation in the United States, there was no reason why 20 years hence American Jews should not have the same tenuous relationship with Israel that Italian Americans had with Italy.<sup>31</sup> Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, too, had told assembled delegates to the 25th World Zionist Congress in January 1961 that, unlike in totalitarian and Islamic countries, where Jews faced



death by discrimination, imprisonment and strangulation, in Western countries Jews were being "killed with kindness." The very freedom they have will cause the end of Jewish existence by assimilation, he predicted.

American participants in the early exchanges heatedly disputed the Cassandra-like pronouncements of their counterparts. They resented the almost cavalier way in which several Israeli speakers rejected the possibility that there could be a creative Jewish life in America. They were especially irked by the remarks of Gideon Hausner, which reflected the opinion of many other Israelis as well: "We do not understand how you [American Jews] can possibly be immersed in the ideals of Jewishness without trying to bring them to fruition in the only place in the world where those ideals can be realized....," the jurist charged. "As long as you remain abroad, you cannot possibly live full Jewish lives: you live American lives, influenced by the prevailing culture."<sup>32</sup> They could not accept what they considered a simplistic solution to the problem of the American Jewish community implicit in that accusation: aliyah. Immigration to Israel, they agreed, might work for a minority of American Jews who were seeking a more meaningful dimension to their lives, but it was not relevant for the majority who felt at home in the United States. For the latter, a richer, more qualitative Jewish life must be created in America.

In the course of the discussions, the participants from the United States often emphasized the importance of their identity as Americans, which separated them somewhat from their fellow Jews in Israel. As scholar Jacob Neusner explained:

We shall understand ourselves best...only if we take seriously the power of American nationality and American culture and realize that we Jews, as always, in all our specificity, point to more than ourselves. When American Jews come to the State of Israel, they discover not their Jewishness but their Americanness. That means for American Jews, Jewishness is a mode and measure of their Americanness. It is what makes them distinctive and different specifically in the context of American nationality and American culture.<sup>33</sup>

Professor Neusner's assessment of the importance of the American component in the identity of American Jews highlighted the fact that, since World War II, a generation of Jews had grown up immersed in American culture, while, concurrently, a generation of Israelis had developed in their own nation-state, and that the two experiences were quite different. The new generation of American Jews no longer felt the need to apologize for remaining in the United States; nor did its members identify with a place or culture other than American. And nowhere did they feel more American than in Israel.

Several Israelis continued to call for aliyah from the West by



invoking Israel's need for human resources. The talents of American Jews, who are in the forefront of technology, academia and research foundations in America, would make a great contribution to Israel, they said. Abba Eban, in 1980, echoed a presentation he had given almost two decades earlier. He said that Israel had "a deeply troubled feeling that in the fundamental sense you [American Jews] are letting us down...[by] not giving Israel that of which Israel stands in greatest need...a reinforcement of our manpower. Three million is not enough for our long-term security, or to safeguard our culture from inundation by the neighboring Arab flood, or to create a viable domestic market as the springboard for an expanding export trade." Eban concluded: "I do not know of any Israeli or Zionist purpose that can be safely insured by three million people."<sup>34</sup>

While American Jews recognized Israel's need for aliyah, they insisted that Israelis face reality -- that only a mere trickle of American immigrants had come and would come to Israel each year. Moreover, they argued, no real dialogue could take place unless Israelis began to realize that most American Jews would remain in America. Israelis, they said, might well encourage and urge aliyah, but not on the basis of negating Jewish life in America. In addition, the Americans advised, Israelis should change their tone from the insistent "come, come" to one which recognizes the American Jewish experience as permanent and as having its own creative potential.

Israeli political leaders found this idea difficult to accept, at least publicly. Golda Meir, for example, considered the fact that a significant number of Jews from the free countries had not settled in Israel as one of the three major tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people in our time, ranking it with the loss of six million Jews in the Holocaust and the isolation of Soviet Jewry.<sup>35</sup>

Yet even early on, Israeli leaders and Zionists were forced to admit that aliyah from America would not increase significantly in the near future. Prime Minister Ben-Gurion, while castigating those Jews -- especially the observant among them -- who remained in the Diaspora, suggested as second-best that all Jews in the Diaspora must establish some sort of personal connection with Israel. Visits to Israel, investing capital, and sending their children to study in an Israeli high school or university were some ways he mentioned of expressing this connection.<sup>36</sup> For the Israeli leader this was a major concession to the realities of American Jewish life, a recognition that there must be secondary goals for Zionists who will not move to Israel. Some also suggested that Israel might attract middle-aged academics or professionals to come on sabbatical, or for a year or two. It was felt that such a stay might encourage them or their children to want to stay or to return to Israel at a later stage.

Jacob Neusner of Brown University proposed that a Zionist theory for American Jewry consist of aliyah at the apex of Jewish aspirations but also of other goals that would address themselves to the contempo-



rary Jewish reality in the United States. "Aliyah has become, in the main, an empty slogan, affirmation of aliyah an empty ritual, in American Zionism. We must ask whether there are not other, lesser things for Zionism to discuss," Neusner declared, adding that Zionism consisting only of aliyah was no longer relevant.<sup>37</sup>

There was a general consensus among American Jews that prospects for aliyah might improve only if Jewish life were made more meaningful in the United States. It was imperative, therefore, that Israel join in the effort to improve Jewish educational opportunities for American Jews at all levels. Rabbi Walter Wurzburger elaborated: "The more we succeed in cultivating Jewish values in the Diaspora, the more Jewish we make the American Jewish community, the better will be the prospect for a large-scale aliyah from the U.S. -- not as an escape, but as a quest for Jewish self-fulfillment." Israeli educators, youth workers and artists could play an important role in establishing and strengthening Jewish identity among American Jews, he added.<sup>38</sup>

Over the years several attempts were made to adopt platforms recognizing the realities governing the Israel-Diaspora relationship, in an effort to enhance ties between Israel and world Jewry. One such effort called on Zionists to subscribe to the five provisions of the Jerusalem Program, adopted by the 27th World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem in 1968. It read as follows:

The aims of Zionism are: the unity of the Jewish People and the centrality of Israel in Jewish life; the ingathering of the Jewish People in its historic homeland Eretz Israel through aliyah from all countries; the strengthening of the State of Israel which is based on the prophetic vision of justice and peace; the preservation of the identity of the Jewish People through the fostering of Jewish and Hebrew education and of Jewish spiritual and cultural values; the protection of Jewish rights everywhere.

The second provision, especially, pertaining to aliyah, was accepted only over the initial objections of the American representatives.

Another statement, "A Program for Zionists," was drafted at the 12th American-Israel Dialogue in 1976. Its first guideline, stating that Zionists affirm the role of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people but also acknowledge the existence of "other valid and ongoing centers of Jewish creativity," represented a major concession by participating Israelis and diehard American Zionists.

The second guideline recognized the mutual dependence of Israel and the Diaspora "in the struggle to maintain the continuity of the Jewish people." This, too, represented a concession by the Israelis who, in the course of the discussions, had come to accept that there was a "mutual dependence" of Israel and the Diaspora rather than a one-sided dependence of the Diaspora on Israel.



The Program for Zionists also included a call for a deepening of Jewish knowledge, the study of Hebrew, and the development of "instrumentalities for effective consultation and deliberation between Diaspora Jewry and Israel on issues affecting our common fate." The latter was evidence of evolution in the thinking of American Zionists and Israelis alike, as they finally recognized that it was in the interest of both communities that a mode of consultation be established. Gone were the days when the Israeli Government dictated and American Zionists could do no more than obey.

A renewal of Zionist spirit and idealism to inspire world Jewry and Israelis to build Israel was invoked by Israeli Talmudist Ephraim Urbach. He listed three failures of contemporary Zionism: lack of aliyah from the free countries, the Soviet dropout phenomenon (nosh-rim), and the third and greatest failure -- the number of Israelis who choose to leave Israel for greener pastures abroad. In Professor Urbach's view, the root cause of this triple rejection of the Jewish State is materialism, or the search for affluence. The critical task of Zionism is to revive the pioneering spirit that world Jewry seems to have lost, he concluded.<sup>39</sup>

Some two decades earlier, at the 24th World Zionist Congress in 1956, Nahum Goldmann, Chairman of the Zionist Executive in New York, had reminded delegates that the goal of Zionism was to assure Jewish survival. The Jewish State was the means for realizing that goal, not the goal itself, he explained. There must be, therefore, a partnership between Jews in the Diaspora and the State of Israel to help Diaspora Jewry survive and, especially in the case of Jews in distress, to come to Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel).

## THE CENTRALITY OF ISRAEL IN JEWISH LIFE

As Israeli and American Jews continued to engage in dialogue, the foci of their discussions shifted, with some concerns propelled into the forefront by the force of historic events or yielding to more immediate preoccupations. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the Israeli demand that American Jews learn Hebrew was heard less insistently, and while the call for aliyah became by no means less urgent, its tone was sobered somewhat under the growing realization that the majority of the Jewish people would remain in the Diaspora.

The question of Israel's status in the world Jewish constellation was brought up in its various ramifications: Is Israel indeed the center of modern Jewish life, and if so, does that status endow it with special privileges and duties vis-a-vis the Diaspora? Might world Jewry have more than one center, with neither taking precedence over the other? Should Diaspora Jews look to Israel for inspiration and guidance in matters of religion or politics?

Two leading American Jewish thinkers presented opposing views in this regard. Gerson Cohen of the Jewish Theological Seminary advocated the notion of a polycentric world Jewish community, which, he argued, was consistent with past historical experience and a satisfactory arrangement for the present. Not only in modern times has the Diaspora asserted its independence from Jerusalem and developed its own meaningful religious forms, he explained, but as far back as the Maccabees, in the second century B.C.E., Jews chose to live in the Diaspora even as they sent funds for the rebuilding of the Temple and supported the community in Palestine. Overwhelmingly, he said, Jews since that period and up to the present day have chosen to live in the Diaspora, even when the Holy Land was accessible.

In the modern era Israel is "a place of sanctity and inspiration," Professor Cohen averred, but it has no authority to control the religious, and by that means the personal, lives of all Jews everywhere. Its power to shape Jewish culture will depend on whether Israeli forms speak to the values and the needs of today's Diaspora and not on coercion by the state apparatus. For Israel to become the center of the Jewish world, it will have to earn the respect and recognition of Jews everywhere, he declared.<sup>40</sup>



Alfred Gottschalk, President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, disagreed. If Jews accept the polycentrism of Judaism, he warned, they will have lost a "very important theological and psychological imperative, which has kept Jews alive throughout our history." Jews have traditionally looked to Zion for religious and cultural inspiration, he added, and Israel's centrality must remain sacred in the consciousness of the Jewish people, especially because it was built on the "embers of the Holocaust."<sup>41</sup>

Gottschalk and Cohen differed on the normative place of Israel in Judaism. But other American and Israeli scholars questioned the centrality of Israel from an empirical point of view. Is Israel, in fact, the center of world Jewish life? they queried. Many of them argued that Israel is not the religious center of the Jewish people, since Conservative, Reform or Reconstructionist rabbis do not recognize the authority of its Chief Rabbinate -- nor, for that matter, do ultra-Orthodox circles in Israel and in the Diaspora. Demographically, Israel is also not the center of Jewish life, since most Jews have chosen to remain in the Diaspora. However, Israel does represent, for the majority of Diaspora Jews, a special opportunity for the fulfillment of the Biblical prophecy that Israel will become a "light unto the nations." This opportunity affords all Jews the challenge and the responsibility to contribute to the creation of an exemplary Jewish society. As such, Israel is the central rallying point for Jews all over the world. What it achieves or fails to achieve is of vital concern to Jews everywhere; that is why its accomplishments are a source of pride and its shortcomings causes for disappointment.

Both American and Israeli thinkers were careful to point out that recognizing the centrality of Israel does not negate the legitimacy of life in the Diaspora. Negation of the Diaspora, a recurrent theme of early Zionist ideology, cannot serve as a basis for dialogue on the relationship between the Diaspora and Israel, they asserted. Israel must take pains not to alienate Diaspora Jews by denying the very legitimacy of their existence, and then inviting them to sit down and talk. On the other hand, recognition of the legitimacy of Jewish life outside Israel does not negate the centrality of Israel as the focal point of Jewish aspirations.

## THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE AND TO DISSENT

Controversy over the right of Israelis and American Jews to participate in each other's affairs is one of the more recent developments of their ongoing exchanges. In the early years, American Jews did not claim to have a say in Israel's policy decisions, whether domestic or foreign. As Joachim Prinz put it, American Jews do not consider themselves passive onlookers to the creative fulfillment of the Jewish State because they, too, have a stake in it. But they cannot presume to tell Israelis how to act because they are not the pioneers or soldiers whose lives are on the line.<sup>42</sup> Dr. Prinz's statement expressed the consensus among American Jewish leaders in those years, that criticism of Israeli policies, if any, should be voiced only behind closed doors. Publicly, the American Jewish community should stand united behind Israel.

The dramatic changes in Israel in the wake of its victory in the Six Day War stimulated American Jews to demand greater participation in Israel's affairs. Almost overnight, Israel found itself an occupying power, ruling over 1.2 million Arabs on the West Bank and Gaza alone. Internally, societal divisions began emerging, as disadvantaged Oriental Jews called for the end to a perceived second-class status. Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld, then President of the American Jewish Congress, reflected the view of many other American Jewish leaders. He stressed, first, that no Jew in the Diaspora had the privilege to speak or act in any way that would add pressure to the strain of living under constant threat from Israel's enemies. However, he added,

I am convinced that it is part of our Diaspora responsibility, as well as one of our Diaspora prerogatives, to raise such questions of goals and values and, indeed, to participate fully in the discussion of Israel's internal affairs and Israel's foreign affairs.

The contemporary world citizen, as I have become acquainted with him in Israel and in the United States, does not hesitate to express himself on apartheid in South Africa; repression, tyranny and anti-Jewish actions in the Soviet Union; torture and corruption in Greece; discrimination and



injustice in the United States. How much the more, then, are we required as liberals and Jews to refrain from being either uncritical or silent about those whom we love most and about whom we are most fully concerned? This is also a responsibility and it is one that stands second only to the great primary responsibility of financial and political support.<sup>43</sup>

Still, except for New Left intellectuals, American Jews continued to voice their criticism in private conversations with Israeli leaders rather than in public declarations.

The consensus to withhold public criticism began to erode in 1973, after the Yom Kippur War. The prime ministers from the founders' generation -- Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir -- long known to American Jewry, gave way to new personalities, first to Yitzhak Rabin, and then, to the relatively unfamiliar opposition leader, Menachem Begin. In Israel itself, controversy between supporters and dissenters of government policy regarding the territories captured in 1967 widened considerably after the nationalist right-wing Likud party's ascendancy to power in 1977. The Likud government expanded settlement activity in the occupied territories, explaining Israel's claim to them on the basis of Biblical and historic rights rather than security reasons alone. The Lebanon war of 1982 only exacerbated the issue.

Some American Jews who disagreed with Israeli government policy began asking why they had to remain silent if Israelis themselves were deeply divided over Prime Minister Begin's policies and debated their wisdom. Despite attempts by Jewish organizational leaders to keep the criticisms within the Jewish community, the debate carried to the news media both in the United States and Israel. Concurrent with the more vocal criticisms were demands by several American Jews for greater participation in Israeli decisions, especially in those whose consequences might affect Diaspora Jewry.

From the start, a certain differentiation was observed between American Jewry's right to speak out on Israel's internal affairs, which impinged on social, religious or economic matters, and criticism of its foreign policies.

In general, American Jews and Israelis agreed that American Jews have the right, even the obligation, to voice their concerns about social and religious issues in Israel. Philosopher Nathan Rotenstreich of Hebrew University stressed that Jews in the Diaspora have a moral and legal right to influence policies in the State of Israel because the state represents the achievement of the entire Jewish people, not only of Israelis.<sup>44</sup> Yet Abba Eban rebuked American Jews who explained their rejection of aliyah as a function of unfavorable conditions in Israel. "You cannot create our weaknesses by your calculated absence -- and then invoke those weaknesses as a reason for

not coming to correct them," he scolded.<sup>45</sup>

Other Israelis suggested that if American Jews were less accepting of what went on in Israel, their comments and advice would contribute to broadening the perspective of Israelis. Most Israeli and American Jews acquiesced that constructive criticism of Israel's social problems and of ways of distributing philanthropic assistance was both acceptable and appreciated. American-Israeli cooperation to alleviate social problems, such as "Project Renewal," was cited as evidence of constructive cooperation between the two communities. Sharp disagreement arose, however, in the area of foreign policy, with the debate centering on the following questions:

1. Do American Jews have the right to criticize or otherwise intervene in the area of foreign policy, or should that right be granted only to those whose security is threatened, whose husbands, fathers and sons are manning the fronts and risking their lives?

2. If American Jews have the right to voice criticism or dissent, what is the proper forum? Do petitions, articles or letters in the foreign press damage Israel's image and weaken the power of American Jews as a domestic lobby supporting Israel? Moreover, who may criticize? Jewish organizations? Intellectuals?

3. Should a specific institutional framework be established to regularize (and perhaps legitimize) the input of American Jewry in Israeli policy discussions?

The remarks of Harvard economist Marshall Goldman reflect the debate within the American Jewish community itself over the right to criticize Israeli policies. In his view, American Jews have the duty to let Israel know when some of its lines of action weaken public support for Israel in the United States. "I firmly believe that when I find that Israel's policies are counterproductive, it is very important that I point that out to the Israelis," he asserted. "I don't have to rush off to The New York Times, but if I feel that I and others are not being listened to, I would have no compunction about writing a letter to the Times." Israelis should not underestimate the importance of the efforts of American Jews in influencing American foreign policy on Israel's behalf, he cautioned.<sup>46</sup>

A more circumspect view was advocated by Morris Abram, former President of the American Jewish Committee, who said he would restrict the intervention of American Jews in Israeli affairs to issues that "go to the core of the United States-Israeli alliance and affect the vital security of Israel." The question whether Americans may influence the Israeli government "is not one of right but of prudence," he stressed. In regard to settlements on the West Bank, Abram went on, since Israeli policies endanger the traditional support of the United States for Israel, American Jews not only have the right but the duty to speak out.<sup>47</sup>



Howard Squadron, former Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, agreed that the bottom line should be whether U.S. support is essential to the safety and security of Israel:

If it is not [he said], then you can call us outsiders. You can build as you want, you can deal with settlements or annexation or any other issue as you want. And you can tell us to mind our own business. But if the United States is critical to the safety and survival of Israel then because we are as devoted as you to the dream, it becomes our business. It is not only our business, it is our obligation."<sup>48</sup>

While there was general consensus among the American contingent that American Jews have both the right and the obligation to present their views to the Israelis in the hope of influencing Israeli decisions, the question that generated the most controversy concerned the forum at which the criticism or suggestions could be made. Should American Jews turn to the media as a means of pressuring the Israeli government to consider American Jewish opinion?

Phil Baum, Associate Executive Director of the American Jewish Congress, rebuked American Jews who had signed a petition appearing in The New York Times in Spring 1980 against the establishment of more Israeli settlements on the West Bank. These individuals were putting pressure on Israel, he said, by trying to weaken U.S. support for its policies. It is illegitimate to go to the non-Jewish press to gain a sympathetic ear, Baum argued. In his view, the Israelis do hear American Jewish leaders -- they just don't heed them. "Our task is to be an advocate for the State of Israel in matters affecting its physical safety," he declared. "If it appears to the American public that we are as divided as some of us would have it appear, our strength will be sapped."<sup>49</sup>

Some Americans said they doubted whether American Jews have effective access to Israeli leaders. Since no serious internal debate on Israeli policies has as yet taken place within American Jewish organizations, they pointed out, the views of American Jewish leaders are regarded by Israeli officials as the personal opinions of a select few and have no clout. Those who maintained this opinion advised that Jewish leaders present the American Jewish position to Israeli leaders only after controversial issues had been seriously discussed within the organized Jewish community.

Theodore Mann, former President of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, rejected the contention that statements critical of Israel expressed by American Jews in The New York Times are damaging to Israel. The President and the Congress know fully well that even if Jews disagree about various aspects of

Israeli policy, they stand firm against any attempt to undermine Israel's security, he observed. It may not be dignified to take an internal Jewish quarrel to the secular press of America, Mann went on, but it is no tragedy even if it does end up there.<sup>50</sup>

The organizational Jewish leadership, for the most part, agreed that the general press was not the proper forum to air American Jewish reservations about Israeli policy. On this they differed significantly from some American Jewish intellectuals who said that if they considered certain Israeli policies erroneous or counterproductive, and if they felt Israelis were not listening to them, they would have no compunction about writing to The New York Times.

Israelis themselves were divided regarding American Jews' right to voice opinions on Israeli policies. Few went as far as Hebrew linguist Uzi Ornan, who totally denied them that right. "...You have already chosen your place on earth," he told the American Jews in his audience. "You have the possibility of being an Israeli citizen but you prefer to remain American. So you follow what you have to follow, which is the policy of the American Administration," he contended, adding that American Jewry had a selfish interest in Israel's dependence to prevent its own decline.<sup>51</sup>

Others showed a marked lack of sympathy for the desire of some American Jews to influence Israeli foreign policy, invoking the argument that if American Jews feel so strongly that Israel is doing wrong, they should settle in Israel to try to change things on the spot. Only those who live in Israel pay the price and they alone have the right to make decisions pertaining to security, they asserted. Joseph Lapid, then Director-General of the Israel Broadcasting Authority, lashed out at American Jews who, he said, had sat by while millions of their European brethren perished in the Holocaust.

American Jewry...has no right to forget its quiet and passivity during World War II. Today I ask what would American Jews do if the advice they proffered was taken and if Israel were subsequently annihilated? Give up some [dinner] parties again, just to demonstrate? It is not then a question of who knows what is best for Israel, but who is willing to suffer the consequences of political and security-related decisions.<sup>52</sup>

Mordechai Nisan, Professor of Middle East Studies at Hebrew University called on the critics of Israeli policy to face realities in the Middle East. American Jews are unable to comprehend the kind of enemies Israel faces -- Arafat, Khomeini and Assad, extremists who would not hesitate to use any and all means to destroy the State and the people of Israel, he charged. "The reality principle must dominate us, not a metaphysical inspection of values and our soul," Nisan advised. The latter is a luxury of America, a nation at peace, he went on, a luxury Israel does not have.<sup>53</sup>



An Israeli Foreign Ministry official stated that American Jews should not attempt to advise Israel on "political questions, war and peace or autonomy on the West Bank." He invited American Jews to express opinions on matters that relate to the daily life of Israel but to refrain from any public criticism of Israel on security matters. He also suggested that committed American Jewish organizations establish educational lobbies in Israel to seek to "educate" the political leadership in Israel and public opinion at large on issues affecting the immediate interests of Diaspora Jewry.<sup>54</sup>

Some Israeli political figures, frustrated in their own failure to change Israeli policy, such as members of the Labor Alignment who opposed the Likud government or adherents of the Peace Now movement, defended the right of American Jews to try to influence Israeli policy. Abba Eban, for example, championed their right to participate responsibly in discussions of Israeli policy. "Those who ask world Jewry to maintain silence are relegating the Diaspora to a grave loss of dignity," he warned. "They are saying, in effect, that Jewish support of Israel should have a material and political but not an intellectual dimension. If we impose this limitation, the Jewish world will slide into non-involvement, leaving the Israeli cause diminished." However, he suggested, Israel must ask American Jews to respect its decisions regarding its minimal security needs because the sacrifice of life and blood is borne by Israelis alone. Eban also added that he considered it only fair that world Jewry be given a role in determining the policies they are called upon to explain to outsiders. He suggested that "Israel's danger arises not from any excess of Jewish zeal or involvement but, on the contrary, from the prospect of Jewish apathy and detachment."<sup>55</sup>

Even Israelis who opposed certain of their government's policies rejected the idea of criticizing Israel in the foreign press. They suggested that the debate among Jews be contained in the Israeli media. The New York Times, they said, took a particular interest in reporting divisions within the Jewish community, thus weakening the power of Jewish opinion in the United States, which is based on the unity of the community.

Sociologist Rivka Bar Yosef defended the right of American Jews to dissent from Israeli policies. The desire to express disagreement is in itself proof of interest in Israel, she pointed out, since the uninvolved take no stand. She disparaged Israeli attempts to discourage dissent. "If only agreement with Israel is legitimate," she cautioned, "no normal channels of communication will exist, and criticism will then turn to such non-Jewish channels as The New York Times." If dissent is stifled in Jewish circles, critics will naturally turn to less sympathetic forums in order to be heard, Professor Bar Yosef declared.<sup>56</sup>

Several American Jews and Israelis called on Israel to support the development of some kind of formal channel of communication or consultative body through which the voice of Diaspora Jewry in Israeli affairs could be heard.

Rabbi David Polish of the American "Artza" delegation (Reform) to the 29th World Zionist Congress in 1978 advocated the establishment of a joint democratic, representative body of the Diaspora and Israel, to meet on a regular basis. It was obvious that in the 1980s, American Jews, Zionist and non-Zionist alike, demanded more input into Israeli policy than they had in the early years of the State.

In two spheres of Israeli-American Jewish relations, American Jews firmly told Israeli leaders to keep "hands off." In the area of American domestic politics, Israel was urged to refrain from telling American Jews how to vote in elections by having Israeli government leaders or representatives in the United States endorse U.S. candidates. The second area had to do with advising American Jews how to react to American policies outside the Middle East because these might affect Israeli interests. A case in point involved the late President Lyndon Johnson who, on several occasions, had signaled to Israeli leaders that it would be helpful if they urged American Jews to tone down their public expression of opposition to the war in Vietnam. Johnson had been particularly proud of his record on policy toward Israel and he made it clear that he expected some reciprocity by way of Jewish silence on Vietnam. Israeli officials passed the message along and pressured American Jews to refrain from anti-war activities. Rabbi Walter Wurzbarger decried this Israeli intervention in American Jewish affairs. "Many of us were placed in a very difficult position," he recalled. "Our moral imperatives clashed with what we were told were the vital interests of the State of Israel... Nothing seems to matter to us anymore but concern for the security of the State of Israel. This moral impoverishment is certainly a negative influence exerted by the State."<sup>57</sup>

The American participants reserved the right to comment on and criticize social and religious issues in Israel. American Jews were particularly outspoken in their opposition to the monopoly of Orthodoxy over all matters of personal status. Controversy over the relationship between state and religion in Israel emerged time and time again in American Jewish-Israeli discussion forums, no matter what their officially designated subject.



## THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ISRAEL

Differences over the role of religion in the Jewish State took up many of the discussions. The participants were split along religious lines, the Orthodox in both the United States and Israel defending the predominance of the Orthodox rabbinate in Israeli life and the non-Orthodox condemning it.

The main point of contention revolved around the monopoly of the Orthodox in Israel over all matters of personal status, such as marriage, divorce and conversion. Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform rabbis are not officially recognized in Israel to perform these rituals. The Ministry of Religion will not register changes in personal status ritually performed by non-Orthodox, Conservative or Reform rabbis, thus leaving the non-Orthodox congregant in a sort of religious limbo. The question has disturbed non-Orthodox Jews in Western countries since the establishment of the State. Ben-Gurion, at one point, responded to Reform Judaism's calls for revisions in the status of its rabbis in Israel by saying that only when a large number of Reform Jews will come on aliyah, will there be sufficient public interest in changing the law. Until that time, he said, the status quo would prevail, because only a small minority of Israelis were perturbed by the problem. Non-Orthodox American Jews have demanded that the three main branches of Judaism be granted equal opportunities to perform religious rituals in Israel and to teach their interpretation of Jewish life there.

American Conservative Rabbi Harold Schulweis explained that he was not seeking to emphasize his own personal humiliation or that of the millions of Conservative, Reconstructionist or Reform Jews, whose beliefs and practices are not recognized. Rather, he said,

at stake is the unity of the Jewish people threatened by the monopolistic religious power which the State has conferred exclusively on one branch of Judaism. At stake is the sectarianization of world Jewry... The alienation of millions of Jews affiliated with non-Orthodox religious movements throughout the world cuts deeply into the strands of fidelity which hold us together.

He called for religious pluralism in Israel to give non-religious Israeli Jews the opportunity to discover meaning in Judaism in religious models and institutions that are different from what he called "pan-halachic behaviorism."<sup>58</sup>

These same themes emerged again and again in debates over the role of religion in Israel. Conservative and Reform Jews questioned how Israeli leaders could demand and expect aliyah from the United States if American immigrants could not find congenial religious institutions to serve their spiritual needs. Moreover, how could converts move to Israel if their conversion was not recognized by the Israeli Ministry of Religion?

Knesset Member Yehuda Ben Meir, then Chairman of the National Religious Party, denied accusations that government policy discriminated against the Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist movements in Israel. Religious freedom exists for all forms of Judaism, he contended. All trends can establish new synagogues and attract adherents. Furthermore, he said, Reform and Conservative rabbis can sanctify or dissolve the union of Jews who request their services, provided these procedures are registered with the Ministry of Religion, which is in the hands of the Orthodox. Why, asked Ben Meir, is this different from the requirements, for example, of the State of New York in marriage and divorce?<sup>59</sup> Americans were quick to point out that the additional Orthodox procedure was insulting to other branches of Judaism, who consider their interpretation of ritual to be valid and legitimate on its own merits.

Bible scholar Robert Gordis of the Jewish Theological Seminary suggested that Israel learn from the American experience of church-state separation, in which no preferential treatment is given to any religion. All members of the clergy have equal status, as well as the right to officiate at religious functions and to conduct them in accordance with the convictions of their group. Separation of church and state in Israel "would move religious observance from the area of compulsion to that of free conviction," Gordis asserted.<sup>60</sup>

David Clayman, a Conservative rabbi living in Israel, while admitting that he has had problems with the Orthodox establishment, cautioned his colleagues from abroad, both Conservative and Reform, not to enter into the "unholy alliance of liberal religionists and the secularists." In his view, Israel should not bow to the secularists and take religion out of the public purview. "A Jewish state "does not have to abide by the principle of separation of church and state," Clayman explained. "I want a Jewish state that recognizes Shabbat, Pesach, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur as national, legal holidays."<sup>61</sup>

American Jews criticized the Israeli Orthodox rabbinate for being preoccupied with minute and mundane details of Halakhah rather than with taking a stand on the moral social issues of the day. Reform rabbi Arthur Lelyveld declared:



If you study the programs of [American] synagogue bodies and their commissions, the joint plans of the National Jewish Community Relations Council and the work of the Synagogue Council of America, you will find that their major concentration has been on the pursuit of truth, justice and peace.

This has not been the case of the religious establishment in Israel, whose major emphasis has been on the ritual and personal status mitzvot -- on kashrut, shabbat, taharat hamishpacha, tfilin, tsitsiot -- none of which I deprecate -- rather than on the ethical mitzvot, to the neglect of the overarching mitzvot of love and compassion and social righteousness.<sup>62</sup>

Dr. Joachim Prinz described the American rabbinate as being in the forefront of the struggle for equality. "Through its leaders, Judaism in America...has declared itself to serve as the conscience of a society," he stressed. The Israeli rabbinate, in contrast, was completely removed from moral leadership; it did not speak out on the issues of war, peace, equality and other ethical concerns.<sup>63</sup> Some American Orthodox Jews speculated that concentration on issues of justice and equality rather than on ritual might partly account for the rise in assimilation and intermarriage among Jews in America, and that a proper mix of ritual and social conscience might hold the key to improvement.

An American Conservative rabbi deplored the fact that the synagogue as a "non-partisan, non-political forum where the issues of the day can be assessed in terms of the timeless insights of the Jewish religious and ethical teaching" does not exist in Israel. He suggested that Americans could contribute to the religious vitality of Israel by stressing the role of the rabbi and the synagogue as a focal point of religious and moral influence.<sup>64</sup>

Several American Orthodox rabbis concurred in part with the criticisms their Conservative and Reform counterparts made about the Israeli rabbinate. Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits called on Israeli rabbis to pay more attention to questions of social ethics and personal integrity. They might have much to learn, he observed, from the American rabbi's "concern with the spiritual and often with the psychological and, occasionally, even with the material well-being of his congregants and their families, from his social concerns, from his public and political conscience, from his involvement in the causes of voluntary organizations and private groups." The establishment of the State opened up new opportunities for moral leadership in Israel's political and social life, he went on, which Israeli rabbis could not afford to let slip by.<sup>65</sup>

Some American rabbis suggested that American Jews could make a positive contribution in Israel by helping to establish a rabbinic

training institution that would make a general education a prerequisite for future spiritual leaders, along the lines of the Jewish Theological Seminary or Yeshiva University. Until now, Israeli rabbis were immersed in Jewish learning and often were not attuned to the problems and issues of a secular society, they pointed out.

In sum, non-Orthodox participants in the American Jewish-Israeli discussion forums were most critical of the Israeli Orthodox rabbinate's monopoly over personal status, its preoccupation with halakhic minutiae and almost total disregard for the moral and social issues of the day. Interestingly, several Israeli participants pointed out that many Americans were ignorant of the positive vibrant changes occurring within the Orthodox community in Israel. These include the large increase in the membership of the B'nai Akiva youth movement, the expansion of the yeshivot hesder (in which students spend two or three years learning Torah and approximately two years in army service), the increased number of ba'alei teshuvah ("returnees" to traditional Judaism), the large number of Orthodox Jews attending universities, and the popularity of the nationalist Gush Emunim movement. They expressed the hope that these more modern elements within Orthodoxy might open the way to improved communication with secular Jews both in Israel and in the United States.





## IN CONCLUSION

The discussions between American Jews and Israelis reviewed in this essay indicate the interests and concerns shared by the two communities and the issues on which they differ. On some issues greater agreement prevailed among individuals of similar ideologies in both communities than among individuals within each community. On the question of religious pluralism, for example, non-Orthodox Israelis and American Jews generally concurred that Israel unfairly discriminates against Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism, while most Orthodox participants from both countries defended present Israeli policy. On the right to dissent from Israeli foreign policy, the lines are more clearly drawn between American Jews and Israelis, with the former defending that right, and the latter questioning whether it should exist at all and what its limits should be.

Members of both communities were sincerely committed to the preservation and continuity of the Jewish people the world over. They agreed on basic questions, such as the need to instill a sense of Jewish identity in the younger generation and prevent assimilation, but they differed among themselves as to the content of that identity.

Most secular Israelis perceived a serious threat to Jewish continuity only in the Diaspora. They pointed to the increased alienation of American Jewish youth from all things Jewish and to the growing rate of intermarriage as evidence of the decline of American Jewry. American Jews, with the exception of the Orthodox, rejected this view as overly pessimistic. They contended that Jewish life in America was indeed viable and creative, and suggested that Israel's religious leadership could, in fact, learn a great deal from the innovative religious forms and institutions of American Jewry. Orthodox participants from the U.S. and from Israel considered the lack of "Jewishness" among the youth a problem of non-observant Jewish families in both countries.

American Jews in all the discussion forums asserted that the American Jewish experience is different from all previous Diaspora experiences. They tried hard to explain that predictions of another Holocaust or of serious anti-Semitic outbreaks in the United States were simply far off the mark. They wanted Israelis to respect the fact that America is home to most American Jews, who feel both American and Jewish.

Many Israelis persisted in their single-minded demand for increased aliyah, failing to comprehend why the Zionist message did not inspire American Jews. At the Gesher symposium, for example, Israeli intellectuals discussed ways of making Israel more attractive to American Jews so that many more would consider aliyah. The Americans countered that Israelis must reorient their thinking and face the reality that only a few American Jews would come on aliyah even if Israel appealed to their idealism and creativity. They argued that the American Jewish-Israeli relationship would be richer and more honest if the Israelis stopped regarding American Jews as "potential" immigrants (or worse, as truants). Then the two communities could make a joint effort to design programs to strengthen Jewish identity and identification with Israel among American Jewish youth.

The right to participate in each other's affairs emerged as an issue of major concern to American Jewry in the late 1970s and early 1980s. American Jewish participants in the American Jewish Congress's American-Israel Dialogues held in those years, in the 1978 session of the World Zionist Congress and in the discussions of the U.S. and Israel Advisory Boards of the Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations (1983), called for the establishment of an institutional framework through which the opinions of American Jewry on Israeli policy could be voiced. They differed as to the proper forums for airing their views but generally agreed they had both the right and the duty to voice their approval of or dissent from Israeli policies. All acknowledged that any attempt by the Israeli government to stifle or disregard American Jewish criticism was detrimental to the future of their relationship.

For the most part, Israelis were receptive to these demands but limited them to social and religious issues. Political issues, which, in their view, often involved questions of security, were reserved for Israelis, they said, who alone made the sacrifice in blood and lives. A minority of Israelis conceded that American Jews could dissent on political issues as well, discounting the potential threat to Israel's security. They explained that some political issues involving the very nature of the Jewish State, such as the possible annexation of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and the absorption of over one million Arabs into the state were the concern of the entire Jewish people. Any danger to the safety and survival of Israel would be, in effect, a threat to the safety of Jews the world over.

Most Israelis and Americans agreed that American Jews should have a voice in the state of religion in Israel. Many non-Orthodox Israelis supported the efforts of representatives of the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist branches of Judaism to influence Israeli policy makers to end the Orthodox rabbinate's monopoly on matters of personal status; other Orthodox Jews, from both Israel and America, defended the status quo. Several Americans deplored the Israeli rabbinate's lack of involvement in social and ethical issues, in contrast to the involvement commonly shared by American rabbis



across the religious spectrum. It was generally agreed that each community had much to learn from the "Jewish" experience of the other and that, together, they could work for solutions to the problems confronting them.

The discussion forums reviewed in this paper highlight both the strengths and the weaknesses in the relations between the American Jewish community and Israel. Some of the best thinkers in both communities sat down together and discussed, frankly and openly, the issues that unite them and the problems that divide them. This in itself is a constructive step toward better mutual understanding. However, because these exchanges were not intended to be pragmatic, and were invested with no authority to solve problems, the question remains whether their effects have extended beyond the narrow confines in which they took place. Stimulating as these discussions were, only a very select audience of committed intellectuals participated in them, and it is doubtful whether many of those who might benefit from their insights even took the trouble to read a transcript of their proceedings.

At several of the forums suggestions were made to set up suitable frameworks that would institutionalize the America-Israel interchanges and give them practical application. Deciding how to implement policies while respecting Israeli sovereignty and American Jewish independence will be the difficult task of the brightest and most imaginative minds in both communities. Only then will Israel and American Jews be able to combine their intellectual, spiritual and financial resources to meet the challenges facing Israeli and American Jews today.

## NOTES

1. 7th American-Israel Dialogue, 1969. The proceedings of these annual dialogues are reprinted in issues of the American Jewish Congress journals, Congress Bi-Weekly (1962-1974) and Congress Monthly (1977- ).
2. U.S. Advisory Board, The Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, Understanding One Another: Excerpts of a Discussion on American Jewish-Israeli Relations (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1983); Israel Advisory Board, The Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, Understanding One Another: An Israeli Perspective (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1984).
3. See Moshe Davis, ed., World Jewry and the State of Israel (New York: Arno Press and Herzl Press, 1977); Zionism in Transition (New York: The Herzl Press, 1980).
4. Mervin Verbit, "Jewish Identity and the Israel-Diaspora Dialogue," Forum 48 (Spring 1983): 63-74.
5. 6th American-Israel Dialogue, 1968.
6. 7th American-Israel Dialogue, 1969.
7. 14th American-Israel Dialogue, 1978.
8. Ibid.
9. 7th American-Israel Dialogue, 1969.
10. 5th American-Israel Dialogue, 1966.
11. 7th American-Israel Dialogue, 1969.
12. Ibid.
13. 6th American-Israel Dialogue, 1968.
14. 11th American-Israel Dialogue, 1976.



15. 7th American-Israel Dialogue, 1969.
16. Ibid.
17. 5th American-Israel Dialogue, 1966.
18. 7th American-Israel Dialogue, 1969.
19. 8th American-Israel Dialogue, 1970.
20. 7th American-Israel Dialogue, 1969.
21. Ibid.
22. 3rd American-Israel Dialogue, 1964.
23. In fact, Sherut La'am, a one-year program for volunteers from the Diaspora, was set up in 1965 for precisely this purpose.
24. 12th American-Israel Dialogue, 1977. A similar proposal for a free Jewish education for every Jewish child had already been presented a decade and a half earlier by Israeli rabbi Shlomo Goren and by American rabbi Emanuel Rackman, but was never implemented.
25. 1st American-Israel Dialogue, 1962. Since then, a variety of programs for study in Israel for foreign students have been established in Israel's universities, yeshivot and seminaries. Thousands of American Jewish youth have studied in Israel since 1962; yet their percentage of the total American Jewish student population is considerably smaller than might have been expected.
26. 8th American-Israel Dialogue, 1970.
27. 3rd American-Israel Dialogue, 1964.
28. Understanding One Another: Excerpts of a Discussion.
29. 23rd World Zionist Congress, 1951.
30. 1st American-Israel Dialogue, 1962.
31. Ibid.
32. 3rd American-Israel Dialogue, 1964.
33. 15th American-Israel Dialogue, 1979.
34. 16th American-Israel Dialogue, 1980.
35. 3rd American-Israel Dialogue, 1964.
36. 25th World Zionist Congress, 1961.

37. 15th American-Israel Dialogue, 1979.
38. 12th American-Israel Dialogue, 1976.
39. 29th World Zionist Congress, 1978.
40. Understanding One Another: Excerpts of a Discussion.
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42. 1st American-Israel Dialogue, 1962.
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45. 12th American-Israel Dialogue, 1976.
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49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
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55. Ibid.
56. Understanding One Another: An Israeli Perspective.
57. 15th American-Israel Dialogue, 1979.
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63. 3rd American-Israel Dialogue, 1964.
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February 1985





**PERCEPTIONS OF ISRAEL  
IN THE AMERICAN MEDIA**

**Summary of a Conference**

Joshua Muravchik

The Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, an arm of the American Jewish Committee, undertakes programs and activities in the United States and Israel designed to enhance the collaboration between the two largest and most important Jewish communities in the world.

The Institute was founded on these premises:

1. The American Jewish community is a healthy, creative and viable community with a positive future in the United States.
2. American Jewry's commitment to Israel's security and survival is strong and irrevocable; for many, Israel is a major ingredient of their Jewish identity.
3. Israelis have come to recognize the importance of the American Jewish community's economic, political and moral support and the potential for joint action.
4. Events that affect either community are likely to affect the status and future of Jewish communities the world over.

The conference on the Perceptions of Israel in the American Media was co-sponsored by the Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations and the Israel-Diaspora Institute. The conference brought together leading American and Israeli media specialists in the hope that some new insights could be gleaned concerning the nature and the extent of the coverage which Israel has received in the American media over the years.

Bertram H. Gold, *Director*



**PERCEPTIONS OF ISRAEL  
IN THE AMERICAN MEDIA**

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**Summary of a Conference**

Joshua Muravchik

INSTITUTE ON AMERICAN JEWISH-ISRAELI RELATIONS  
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE



AMERICAN JEWISH

Joshua Muravchik, a participant in the Conference, received his Ph.D. in international relations from Georgetown University. He is a frequent contributor to Commentary, The New Republic, and other publications, and his widely discussed study of press coverage of the war in Lebanon was published in Policy Review.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Spring of 1984 the Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations of the American Jewish Committee and the Israel-Diaspora Institute at Tel Aviv University joined in sponsoring a conference on "Perceptions of Israel in the American Media." The conference brought together dozens of journalists, academics, government officials and community relations specialists from both Israel and the United States for two days of lively, sometimes heated, give-and-take.

The conference met in the aftermath of the disappointment among Israelis and American Jews in how the American media reported Israel's 1982 war in Lebanon. Yet, sufficient time had elapsed that the conference dwelled relatively little on that war. Instead, almost all the discussion addressed long-term trends in the news media, in the Middle East, and in news coverage of the area.

The conference reached no conclusions, achieved no general meeting of minds. Rather it stimulated engagement among a variety of conflicting views on such questions as whether press coverage of the Middle East is distorted, and if so, why; whether Israel is singled out for special treatment by the press; whether coverage of Israel has grown less favorable, and if so, whether this is due to changes in the media or changes in Israel; and what, if anything, can be done to improve the situation, if indeed a problem exists. This report aims to distill the main points of these discussions.



### "NEWS" AND "FACTS"

Professor Daniel Pipes, of Harvard University, presented a paper arguing that U.S. media coverage presents a severely distorted picture of the Middle East. The main source of distortion, said Pipes, is not "falsehood and prejudice" in the reporting of individual stories. It lies instead in the very choice of subject matter. American journalists, Pipes said,

are interested in only two topics in the Middle East: Israel and the United States. Whatever takes place related to these countries is amplified and broadcast to the world; whatever does not is virtually ignored.

One consequence of the news media's "preoccupation with Israel," said Pipes, is

an exaggerated sense of the importance of one Arab actor, the Palestine Liberation Organization. Unlike the Arab states, which are integral nations with domestic policies and identities separate from Israel, the PLO is by nature bound to Israel. As the organization that exists to destroy Israel and whose fate is inextricably tied to Israel's, it is Israel's counter-ego and mirror image. It too receives excessive coverage from the American media.

In addition, said Pipes, "Palestinian refugees receive attention out of proportion to their numbers or distress."

Participants speculated on the possible causes for the intense news focus on Israel, but whatever the causes, the effect that worried several discussants was spelled out by Professor David Sidorsky of Columbia University:

The excessive focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict, even if motivated by legitimate criteria of newsworthiness, serves to reinforce the central propaganda theme of the opponents of Israel. The main thesis or "line" of critics of Israel has been twofold. First, the claim that the problems and the instability of the Middle East derive primarily from the Arab-Israel conflict. Second,

that the issue of the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs is the central conflict within the Arab-Israel dispute.

This serves, said Noach Moses, publisher of Yedioth Achronoth, to spread "the illusion that if only the so-called 'intransigent' policies of the Israeli government would change, all the disturbing problems of the Middle East would disappear and the world would be a safer place."

Pipes also argued that the American press focuses too much on developments in the Middle East that directly affect the U.S., however important or unimportant these developments might be in balance appraisal of Middle Eastern events. For example, said Pipes, "when they were polled on the biggest news story of 1983, American journalists chose by a wide margin the October 23 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut." In a Middle East context, this was a rather minor event; on the other hand, the war between Iran and Iraq is enormously important, yet evokes very little attention from the American media.

Similarly, because of the propensity to see Israel and the U.S. as foreground and all the rest of the Middle East as vague background, Israel is judged by different standards than are its neighbors. Hannah Zemmer, editor of Davar, said that Israel accepts being judged by different standards, that is, by Western standards, but that "you cannot take things out of the context of the reality in which we live." Other "Western" countries have neighbors like Canada or Switzerland; Israel has neighbors like Syria and (in southern Lebanon until 1982) the PLO. The two situations do not allow for the same kind of neighborly behavior.

Gershon Schocken of Ha'aretz, argued that the ethnocentric bias of the U.S. press, combined with the characteristic American impulse toward "problem-solving," can lead to impatience with Israel. "A realistic attitude must take into account that the integration of Israel into the Middle East will continue to be a problem for a long period of time," he declared. "The area until now rejects Israel as a foreign body, and this is not a problem which can be solved on a short-term basis." Yet American statesmen continue to stress the goal of "solving" the Arab-Israel conflict; and the media's focus on the U.S. role exaggerates the degree to which this problem is amenable to American influence. Thus, when American initiatives fail to achieve their inflated goals, the blame is often laid at Israel's door.

In such situations, the American media are also susceptible to the efforts of American officials to divert blame, so that the price of failure is not paid entirely out of their own political capital. Skeptical though the U.S. press corps may be toward official American pronouncements, said Zev Chafets, the former head of the Israeli Government Press Office, they are inclined to take the government's word over that of a foreign government, even a friendly one. Chafets and Dan Pattir, a former spokesman for the Israeli government, and Ephraim Evron, former Israeli Ambassador to the United States, both spoke of



U.S. officials "feeding" stories to the press that were deliberately designed to put Israel in a bad light. And Ari Rath, editor of the Jerusalem Post, cited, as a classic example of this process, Jody Powell's press briefing in Jerusalem during President Carter's 1979 trip to Israel.

The goal of the President's trip was to wrap up an Israel-Egypt peace treaty codifying the Camp David agreements. The going was rough; Carter and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin finally achieved a breakthrough during the President's last morning in Israel. But the night before, even though the talks were not yet over, Powell briefed the press and led them to believe -- and to report -- that the talks had failed. Rath argued that Powell's sense that the talks would fail impelled him to start deflecting the blame, even at the risk of contributing to a self-fulfilling prophecy. He called this "a deliberate attempt by a senior American government spokesman to manipulate the news, to make Israel look bad." And most of the American press corps, Rath said, including some of the best White House and State Department correspondents and anchormen, "fell into the trap."



### SOURCES OF DISTORTION

Various reasons were suggested for the media's preoccupation with Israel and for distortions that work to Israel's disadvantage. Some participants speculated about the possible influence of Soviet propaganda and disinformation, noting that the comparison of Israel and Zionism to Nazi Germany and Hitlerism, sometimes cited in the Western press during the Lebanon war, has long been a staple of Soviet propaganda. In support of this thesis, Noach Moses cited a survey documenting the influence of Soviet disinformation on coverage by the West European media of the war in Lebanon. It was pointed out, however, that no one has documented similar influence in the U.S. media, and Professor David Sidorsky noted that "the former head of the American C.I.A., William Colby, when asked about disinformation in the American media, replied that the only case of successful press disinformation he could relate was the British planting of stories that misled the Germans on the site of the Normandy invasion."

The desire of the news media to satisfy the craving of the American Jewish community for news about Israel, it was noted, contributes to the stress on the Middle East in cities where Jews are concentrated. Zev Chafets, referring to The New York Times, noted that it has more Jewish readers than any other paper, including the Israeli papers. "Because of this readership," said Chafets, the Times devotes a great deal of space to reportage on Israel. But the Times is not just a New York newspaper. It is also the "national newspaper of record." Most important, said Chafets:

The New York Times is the morning daily newspaper of the entire American media establishment in this country. When the heads of ABC, NBC, CBS, the Wall Street Journal, AP, UPI, Time and Newsweek wake up in the morning, with their coffee, they're reading The New York Times. Which means that they're reading a "Jewish newspaper." To the extent that The New York Times is the dominant influence in the journalistic community in setting the agenda, there is a rather bizarre influence. If there were three million Jews not in New York but in Denver, and the media establishment were based in New York, there would be considerably smaller emphasis on Israel.



As one participant pointed out, it would be hard to argue that the media's eagerness to attract Jewish readers led them to engage in anti-Israel distortions, but it was argued that the overemphasis on Israel and the Middle East unwittingly contributes to the erroneous impression that Israel is at the center of the Middle East's problems.

Nor is it only Jews who are interested in Israel. "The question of 'will the Jews survive?' is a question of interest to the Western world," said Howard Squadron, adding:

The history of Christian-Jewish relations lead to a kind of interest in that question...that is quite unique. Jews - and their survival - are seen not only as a test for Christians, but as kind of exotic in the fact that they do survive at all.... Why do Jews survive? Will they survive? Are we so happy that they're surviving? The success of Israel and the success of American Jews in American society may be seen as a reason why people [concentrate on] it. It may also create a kind of hostility.

Moshe Decter, former editor of the Near East Report, saw this factor in a somewhat more positive light:

If you think back to the Balfour Declaration, and shortly thereafter to the League of Nations Mandate,... the terms of the Mandate reflected Western Christendom's, or the Civilized World's, or the Western World's understanding of the fundamental historic connection of the Jewish people with that little piece of land. That seems to me to be very much at the heart of the question of the obsession of the world with the Jews, and with the Jewish connection with Palestine, the Holy Land, Israel. There has always been that sense of connectedness which the Civilized World has been deeply aware of.

Decter reported that in researching his paper on "The Image of Israel in the American Press," he found striking documentation of this preoccupation:

"Hundreds, if not thousands, of items in 1947-1948 dealing with Palestine and Israel, and the War of Independence [which] vastly outweighed the attention paid by The New York Times to such other world-shaking events during the same period as the Kremlin's break with Marshal Tito, the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia ...and the blockade of Berlin and the airlift."

This extreme emphasis on Israel in 1948, Decter said, resulted not only from a historic fascination with the Jews, but also "had something

to do with the fact that this was just at the time when the world was beginning to become aware of, and morally shattered by, the Holocaust, and about what the world had failed to do, about what had happened to the Jews."





### AN OPEN SOCIETY AND A FREE PRESS

If reader interest causes the media to give Israel more than its share of press attention, Israel's open society may contribute to its receiving more than its share of negative stories, said some participants, since the press corps stationed there is free to discover and expose its blemishes. Replying to the complaint that the American press devoted far more attention to the slaughter of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatilla than it had to the far larger slaughter of Syrian Shiites by the Syrian government in the town of Hama, Terence Smith, of The New York Times, explained that the first difference between the two cases was that "Hama...was...closed to the press." Smith further declared that much the same could be said about the Iran-Iraq war, which has been far bloodier than any of Israel's wars, but inaccessible to reporters and TV cameras.

Ari Rath said that, for Israel, having to stand exposed to the scrutiny of the foreign press is part of the price of being a free society, because "there is no such thing as a two-tier approach -- news for home consumption and news to be sent abroad."

Not only cannot Israel keep information from foreign reporters that is available to its own press; the Israeli press itself is a prime source for foreign reporters, and often of news unflattering to Israel. In other Middle Eastern countries, the newspapers print only good news about their own governments; but Israeli journalists are like those in other "Western" countries. As Noach Moses put it:

In Israel many journalists are anti-establishment. They were so at the time when Labor was in power, and they are more so now that the Likud is in power. The angle from which they look at the news is...quite often similar to the angle from which American journalists, who are also frequently anti-establishment, would look at it.

The Israelis are individualistic and quarrelsome, and they tend to frame their political opinions in extreme language. This is also reflected in the Israeli press and makes it particularly interesting to foreign correspondents. Internal conflicts in Israel - on foreign affairs, on the place of religion in the state,

on relations with the Palestinians, on Lebanon - all make good copy, and all that and much more is to be found in the Israeli press.

The access of foreign reporters based in Israel to "negative stories," and the help they derive from the Israeli press in finding and documenting such stories, may account for one anomalous finding reported by Moshe Decter in his study of what he called a "disjunction" or "disparity" between news stories and editorials about Israel in the same newspapers. The news stories, he reported, seemed much more critical of Israel than the editorials. Stating that he was not sure that he had an adequate explanation for this finding, Decter conjectured that it might reflect "the editors' taking a step backward and trying to put things into perspective." It might also reflect the fact that newspapers basically friendly to Israel seem to run what seems a disproportionate amount of "bad news" about Israel because such stories are much more available in Israel than they are in Arab countries.

Participants also discussed whether -- at least in respect to the Middle East -- journalism ought to be looked upon as "a rough draft of history." The consensus was that it should not. Historians generally seek to highlight those events that were most important during a particular period, though of course, historians often disagree about which events those are. But journalism, unlike historical research, is a commercial enterprise, and while it does aim to highlight what is important, it also aims to sell newspapers or attract viewers. As Trude Rubin, of The Philadelphia Inquirer, put it: "Journalism is a business. Maybe it's not history writing. It's newspaper selling, and most newspapers, I think, regard it that way." The goal of journalists, said Professor Sidorsky, is to transpose "an inherently ambiguous and complex event into a short narrative that can be simply told, have a central plot and retain the interest of the reader or viewer."

Public interest in a given situation, or its novelty, may give a story a big audience, and thus impel the media to give it much coverage. But what is "newsworthy" is not necessarily what is most important. Professor Sidorsky cited, as an example, the killing of Dr. Herman Tarnower, an event intrinsically no more important than any other murder, which received much more news coverage because the victim was well known, and because of the widespread interest in the relationship between Tarnower and the woman who shot him.



### RESPONSE TO THE CRITICISMS

Most American journalists at the conference, as well as several other participants, rejected accusations that press coverage of Israel is negative. No one argued that the coverage is entirely free from distortion; but many denied that the distortion is as great as suggested by various critics, that a bias against Israel exists in the press, or that the amount of press attention devoted to Israel is harmful or unwelcome.

Terence Smith said that "the coverage of Israel since its birth has been overwhelmingly favorable and basically sympathetic." Moshe Decter's survey of American press coverage of Israel concluded:

it is essential to bear in mind, in our present consideration, [that] the press's fundamental sympathy and understanding for Israel is matched by the virtually unvarying political support which Israel has continued to enjoy in this country; indeed, that sympathy can be said to mirror the political support...

It is thus, I believe, safe to assert, with all the noted caveats, that -- judging at least from these seven most highly regarded and influential newspapers -- the image of Israel in American public opinion has suffered remarkably little damage in the past three and a half decades of strife and destruction and shock and angry debate....

...none of Israel's severest press critics [among the papers surveyed] entertained the slightest doubt of its basic decency, flawed and fallible though it be, nor of its permanent and special position in the conception and execution of American national interest.

Even those who denounced Israel's invasion most fiercely, who are most outraged by the devastating bombardments of Beirut, who were most appalled by the death of thousands of innocent civilians, who urged sanctions against Israel for policies that appeared to contravene American interests, who were most insistent on moves to create a Palestinian homeland on the West Bank, or who

agonized most painfully over Israel's share of moral or practical responsibility for Sabra and Shatilla -- all staunchly upheld steadfast American support for Israel.

Some participants argued that it is this very fact of enduring American sympathy for Israel on the part of both the public and the government that leads American news media to concentrate so much attention on Israel. H. D. S. Greenway, of the Boston Globe, pointed out that public opinion surveys all over the country show that "there is indeed continuing support for Israel and this is reflected in the attention of the American press. The American press is following American interests; it isn't leading."

This theme was also sounded by Terence Smith:

The interest of the American press follows logically and I think legitimately from the interest of the American government. The interest of the American government in Israel is huge. It's measured in billions of dollars. It's measured more recently in the physical presence of American troops in the area, and the commitment of enormous amounts of diplomatic effort.... So to suggest that [the press coverage] is in disproportion, I think is wrong. I think it is a reflection of American involvement and interest and commitment.

Nor has the intense media focus on Israel been seen as unwelcome. Thus, while former Ambassador Ephraim Evron commented early in the conference, "I do wish there would come a day when I would open The New York Times and Israel was off the front page," Robert Chandler, of CBS News, said that he found himself "bemused" by such remarks, "because for many years the attitude of Israeli government officials was, 'hey, look at us!' Well, we're looking."

Chandler's point was buttressed by Ari Rath, who doubted that Israelis would really like to be treated as "just another country of four million people, of which there are scores.... I think we Israelis will be the first to be most unhappy if the world, particularly America, would really want to relegate us to that inferior position," said Rath.

Louis Cioffi, of ABC News, took issue with the argument of Professor Pipes and others that the press gives the Arab-Israeli conflict more attention than it deserves. "History will show that the major conflict in the Mideast is the Arabs versus Israel, and that's what we're covering," said Cioffi.

Moshe Decter agreed with Cioffi:

It is in fact, I believe, the single most important story in the Middle East, and one of the most important in the world. Because it is not just that tiny little country. It has directly to do with the whole Arab



world of one hundred million people, and all the political and economic repercussions, and the strategic and military repercussions, that that [has] for the entire world. All of those will be, and have constantly been, mobilized against this tiny pipsqueak of a... country whose right to exist is denied and [whose] extirpation is constantly harped on.

It is that as much as the traditional, ancient western Christendom's obsession with the Jews. It is those two factors together that make it the single most important story in the Middle East, and perhaps one of the three or four most important stories in the world. Israel is important precisely because the world of the Arabs and the world of Islam have refused to accept it as normal and legitimate and natural.

Not only is the Arab-Israeli conflict important, said others, but Israel itself is fascinating and deserves the heavy coverage it gets. Yoram Dinstein, of Tel Aviv University, disagreed with those who said it was the large concentration of Jews in New York and other media centers that led the media to concentrate on Israel:

When I went to Denver or Salt Lake City ...the thing that struck me was that the Denver Post wrote as much about Israel, comparatively speaking, as The New York Times. And when I found myself in Salt Lake City, the local press wrote about Israel. And in Denver, not just the Post but also the Rocky Mountain News wrote about Israel all the time. And these were newspapers that might not have had foreign correspondents. They just lifted stories from AP, UPI, the Washington Post, The New York Times, etc. This is true all over the United States.

So I would suggest to you that everybody is fascinated with Israel. And I for one do not blame anybody for being fascinated with Israel because I think Israel is a fascinating place. Furthermore, this is true all over the world. Do you think that in Sweden or Norway they write less about Israel than in the U.S.? I should tell you that in Lapland or in Norway the size of the Jewish population leaves a lot to be desired. Yet even in Trondheim they write about Israel!

Several journalists challenged Professor Pipes's complaint about the egocentric focus of American reporting on the Middle East. Whatever the objective importance of the U.S. role in the Middle East, they argued, places and events where the United States is directly involved or where immediate U.S. interests are at stake are obviously of greatest interest to an American audience, and it is natural and proper for the American press to concentrate on them. "We get paid to tell our

audiences what our government is doing, and to at least begin the discussion on whether that action by our government is healthy or not," said Robert Chandler.

Louis Cioffi concurred. After 1967, he said, Americans

found ourselves with PLO attacks, found ourselves with terrorists. We found ourselves with the oil embargo. On a recent tour around the United States, I mentioned to the audience our moral commitment to the survival of Israel, and the question was "why?" And there were other questions of why we have to pay higher gasoline prices because of this. People are asking questions: why should this great nation not only have these problems but also be put into direct confrontation with the Soviet Union at the risk of a third world war because of a little country of three million? I'm not saying that that commitment is wrong, but there are a lot of Americans who are asking that question...and I think editors and our producers are sending [reporters] out there trying to answer the questions in the minds of a lot of Americans.

Criticisms of American press coverage of the Middle East also evoked many comments about the standards by which such journalism could be measured: Alfred Balk, of the World Press Review, noted that the American press is less unfriendly to Israel than the European or Asian press, which, he said, "is more analytical and more critical [of Israel], and was so sooner, and was reporting more from the Arab side sooner than the American press was." H. D. S. Greenway commented that although the press "makes mistakes covering Israel, they are not different in kind from the mistakes we made covering South Vietnam and probably covering Central America right now."

Robert Christopher, the Administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes, said:

Some of the things said [here] and that are implicit in Dr. Pipes's paper suggest that there are perhaps unique flaws in the coverage of the Middle East by American journalists.... I would...suggest that those flaws are not unique at all. For the most part, American journalists are not experts on any foreign situation and our coverage of much of the rest of the world is at least as flawed as our coverage of Israel. I happen to be particularly interested in Japan and I can assure you that the coverage of Japan in the American press is even worse than the coverage of Israel. Happily, there is less of it.

Joshua Muravchik added that the depiction of the Arabs in the American press has not always been very sympathetic.



Several journalists commented on the degree of accuracy it is reasonable to expect of the press. Explained Seth Lipsky, of The Wall Street Journal:

I don't perceive the press's job as to print the "truth." I don't think its possible, and I don't think most newspapermen or women put their papers to bed with the impression that they are printing the truth. We print the best information we can get by 7:00 PM.... We do the best we can by late evening, and it is all subject to revision the next day. It's constantly revised in each edition, and I don't see how it can be anything else.

Lipsky's remarks were seconded by Walter Goodman, of The New York Times:

I think the Wall Street Journal man...was closer to the [truth] when he talked of the hectic pace in putting out a paper, the hurly burly, the give and take, the tumult.... Now out of all this commotion, out of all these deadlines, trying to get the stuff in, just to put the paper out, you make a lot of mistakes, every day a lot of mistakes.

But mistakes are not rewarded very well on the papers that I know or the magazines that I've been on. You don't get ahead by making mistakes. You have to believe that. People who make mistakes get sent to Detroit. Now it's quite true that the corrections never make up for the mistake. You can't catch up. And we do our best. ...[But if] you think that there is some sort of policy behind the mistake...that the mistakes are part of a philosophy...it's just not so.

H. D. S. Greenway added:

There may be mistakes, in fact...but there's an enormous effort to get the facts.... Many facts are not checkable by themselves.... We often print the truth as told to us. In circumstances where we can go and see something [we do], but in most cases we're victims of what we are told. And [we] just try to get as many cross references as [we] can.

Greenway cited the controversy that arose during the Lebanon war over the numbers of casualties and homeless:

I did a study of this, and [of] the number of times The New York Times and The Washington Post tried to update the casualty figures in the midst of the war, with the changing story. That erroneous figure was indeed

presented, but it was also corrected, and there was an attempt many times over, all through that invasion, to correct the figures.

But Professor Sidorsky replied that "the fact that the correction comes later doesn't change the impression that has been fixed" by the original reports. The initial story from Lebanon, Sidorsky said, was: "Israel is fighting civilians." The corrections, he said, never overcame this impression.





### CHANGING AMERICAN COVERAGE OF ISRAEL

Most participants agreed that there has been a detrimental change in the tone or content of American coverage of Israel in recent years. One dissenter from this view was Yoram Dinstein, who argued that the idea that there once was a "golden age" in press imagery of Israel is "entirely spurious."

People completely forget...that in the 1960s, the government of Israel--a Labor government, mind you --officially complained to The New York Times about its correspondent in Israel...and in fact requested that he be replaced by someone else who would be more pro-Israel.... In 1956 the coverage of Israel in the American media was actually very negative. And even prior to 1956, at the time of the reprisal actions, the coverage left a lot to be desired from an Israeli viewpoint.

Few participants agreed with Dinstein, however, and most of the discussion was not about whether the press coverage of Israel has changed, but why. Trude Rubin said: "I think coverage of Israel has changed, but it has changed because Israel has changed and the regional situation has changed." A number of changes she cited suggested that Israel is covered less sympathetically because, in effect, it is less worthy of sympathy:

In 1977 you had the election of the Begin government. They spoke a different language from most of the journalists who were out there. At first it wasn't such a great problem. Menachem Begin was involved in peace talks, but gradually, as events developed, things happened which [affected western perceptions]. For example, as the religious sector became more important in Israel and especially as violence from the religious sector became repeated and more prevalent, and as the government seemed to countenance this, this gave a different aspect to Israel.

Some also reported right wing nationalism on the West Bank. You have to go there and listen to the way people talk. It's not nice, but it becomes reported and it

doesn't look good to a western audience.... I think that this shifted a bit the rather pristine and perhaps too pure notions that reporters had about democracy in Israel. But this doesn't mean that their ideas changed. It simply meant that the situation was more complex and they were covering it....

Begin provided lots of news. A lot of this was perceived by the American government as unfriendly and reporters were simply covering it. There was the Syrian missile crisis. There was the bombing of the Iraqi reactor. There were very divisive elections inside Israel, with people chanting, "Begin, Begin." It didn't look nice on the television. This was democracy that was going on, and this was what got covered. Then [came] the Lebanon war.

Terence Smith also focused on ways Israel itself has changed:

Facts changed and the perceptions changed.... From 1967 onward, for the last 17 years, Israel has been an occupier. Occupying is an odious business under the best of circumstances; it's a dirty business. When people wrote stories about it, they were frequently what would be perceived to be negative stories about Israel. They were about the occupation. And they reflected the reality of that, [which] in my experience...was not very pleasant. It never is, for any one country over another: no exception there. And that whole business of the occupation of 1.2 million people who didn't want to be occupied was a new aspect of Israel's role in the region...and therefore became a major factor in the coverage that did not exist before.

Smith agreed with Rubin that the advent of the Begin government had a large impact on coverage. "Menachem Begin," said Smith, "was a forceful, charismatic, dynamic figure, the man you loved to hate. This was the figure that people focused on...either for or against him, but he aroused great passion."

Smith and Rubin also spoke about a growing press skepticism about Israeli veracity. Smith cited the war in Lebanon as an example: "The fact that...[the] objectives of that invasion were described first as being a cordon sanitaire up to an agreed point, and then, with Arik Sharon pushing all the way, it rolled up onto something much more ambitious. That that should be viewed in a different light, I think is no surprise at all."

Rubin said the "truth factor"...was starting to become important...many years before the Lebanon war." "Years ago," she said, "there was a point where you always believed what the Israeli spokesman said, and you always were sure the Arabs were lying. That's the way



life was.... Usually if you checked out what the Israeli spokesman said, maybe it was a little bit off, but generally the statistics checked out." But in the 1970s, she said, she and other journalists began to encounter Israeli pronouncements that were directly contradicted by their own observations. Once, she said, she visited a village in southern Lebanon where the church and every house had been hit in an Israeli reprisal raid, yet Israeli spokesmen denied hitting civilians. On another occasion, Israeli spokesmen vehemently denied published reports that excessive force had been used to break up a demonstration at a West Bank school, but "ultimately the Military Governor of the West Bank was fired for this incident." As a result, the press came to view information it received from the Israeli Government much more critically.

Dan Pattir, who served for over six years as spokesman for the Israeli Government, responded that "the Israeli spokesmen were not less credible than any American government spokesman." Rubin agreed. "Ordinarily I would take Israeli statistics over Washington's, any day," she said, "but on the other hand, I wouldn't take Israeli statistics for granted until I had checked them to the best of my ability.... I think that that was a change that took place over the years...[Israeli facts] were unquestionably accepted earlier on."

Smith and Rubin suggested that sympathy for Israel has diminished in part because to some extent it has grown less deserving of sympathy. But both of them, as well as several other participants, also cited other reasons for the change in Israel's image.

In earlier years, said Rubin, "Israel was the land of feature coverage. Those were the days when you could write endless stories about how tomatoes could grow on air, and editors wanted them." It was also, she said, "the age of the Exodus image" and then "the age of the Arab 'no's.'"

Most important, Israel was once the "underdog." Elihu Katz, of Hebrew University, commented: "Americans are notoriously sentimental about...foreign affairs, and if there is a new underdog who can fit the moral criteria of the American public, then the American public will be sympathetic and journalists will feed that sympathy." But Israel is no longer the underdog. After the Six Day War, said Terence Smith, "in the minds of many people, David became Goliath."

Israel has come to be seen, said Smith, as "a major power in the region, able to determine events well beyond her borders, able to more than hold even with the U.S. in debate over what its next diplomatic move should be, more than able to resist pressure from the U.S. when Israel believed it not to be in her interest."

This evolution in attitudes toward Israel was described with some force by Roger Starr, of The New York Times.

When Israel was barely organized, having merely declared its independence to find itself assailed by the Arab armies, such as they were, its very lack of central organization captured American sympathy. . . . That sympathy is hard to sustain today without making Americans think they themselves had become war-mongers. As a non-Jewish college mate of mine had said to me: "It is not easy to see the Jews as victims any more; they are one of the most powerful military nations in the world."

There are, said Starr, writers and readers who

loved Israel when it was barely alive and might have been overrun at any instant. They will love Israel again and weep copiously when the same writers describe the massacres following its demise. They are effective precisely because they mirror with some exactitude the unrealism that probably has been produced in America by its distance from European battlefields. It is notable that not until the native Americans had been defeated and were no longer a threat did the present American romanticization of the American Indian become possible.

The change in Israel's image reflects the reality of her growing military strength. But the new image, some participants pointed out, ignores the dangers still confronting Israel. "We are talking about a country surrounded by states which, until just a few years ago, not only had no diplomatic relations with it, but were committed to its death," said Moshe Decter. "It is a unique historical, political, moral situation. That is the permanent context in which all news about Israel has to be understood and has to be reported."

Some participants stressed that changes in Israel's image have been paralleled by changes in the Arab image as well. The most important substantive change, Trude Rubin pointed out, began with President Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. The era of the "Arab 'no's'" was over. No longer did the Arab world present a monolithic front of intransigence. On the contrary, an Arab leader became a hero for peace.

Also mentioned were other important changes of a less substantive kind. Stephen Hess, of the Brookings Institution, pointed out that "the Arabs have learned many things and they have the money to support the many things that they have learned. They have learned how to hire very fine public relations experts in Washington, for example. They have learned how, if not to endow a university like Brandeis, certainly to endow many institutes as seats for [Arab] studies."

Another crucial change in the Arab image involves the Palestinians. "The Palestinian problem," said Gershom Schocken, "should be



regarded as [akin to] the large scale refugee problems that arose in the wake of World War II" which were solved by "absorbing refugees in existing states." Indeed, he said, "the Palestinian question is one of those which could more easily be solved in that way than any of the other refugee problems because there are so many Arab states, with so few inhabitants in many of them, and tremendously big financial resources." Yet, since the Yom Kippur War, the PLO has succeeded in presenting the Palestinian problem as one of "national identity and not as a refugee problem," said Schocken.

The Camp David Accords, said Trude Rubin, served to focus the interest of the American press on the West Bank as never before:

Suddenly it became a subject, so [reporters] went [there] and then what happened is the portrait of Israel became more complex. Whatever you think about the occupation, whether it's necessary, whether it's done properly, the fact is that once correspondents went out there, they began to hear things they hadn't known before. They began, obviously, to have some sympathy with some of the people there, who were not terrorists or murderers, and the complexion of things became different.



### CHANGES IN THE NEWS MEDIA

Other discussants suggested that changes in the press coverage of Israel have less to do with changes in Israel than with changes in the news media. David Rubin, of New York University, said that:

Reporters are players or participants in stories to the same extent as are the government officials, the soldiers, the businessmen and the other newsmakers that they are interviewing. The very process of reporting and the process of deciding what to report will shape the public's view of an event and can alter the very meaning of that event.

Seth Lipsky argued that participation of journalists as political "players" is nothing new, and certainly should not come as "a surprise to those who care about and have followed the Jewish nationalist struggle." Indeed, he said, the founders of the political Zionist movement include a number of the names of great newspapermen -- Herzl and Jabotinsky, among others.

David Rubin agreed that the fact that journalists are participants in the stories they are covering is not new. What is new, he said, is that "over the past 20 years or so, the press, at least in this country, has become increasingly introspective about this power, and concerned not to abuse it." But others, citing survey data, suggested that many journalists have developed an inflated estimate of their own importance and righteousness, that, in fact, some American journalists believe that the country would be better off if they had more power.

While a number of participants argued that the U.S. government sets the agenda of foreign news that the press covers, others said the press often sets the agenda for government. Steven Scheuer, of TV-KEY, gave this example:

For almost all the time that the American hostages were held in the Embassy in Iran, Walter Cronkite would end his CBS evening news broadcasts by saying: "This is the 15th day of the hostages being held in captivity," or "this is the 92nd day" or "the 183rd day," etc. That was factually correct. It was also, I suggest, extraordinarily inflammatory. And in a very real sense it



was agenda setting. Various senior officials in the White House and other places told me at the time that it was enormously damaging to Carter's being able to set other agendas, to depressurize, if you will, that situation. It was one of the factors, a significant factor, that kept a vast percentage of the officials' energies focused on that particular problem.

Contrasting views of the role of the media were offered by one prominent journalist and, indirectly, by a prominent government official. In a paper presented to the conference, Ben Bagdikian, of the University of California-Berkeley, said: "The media are important not because they are infallible or always wise, but because they are independent of government, they have reason to maintain their own credibility with the public, and they are open to the public (because the news media's errors are all public ones) in ways that government is not."

On the other hand, a contrasting view by Jeane Kirkpatrick, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, was quoted in a paper by Professor Sidorsky. Dr. Kirkpatrick shared Bagdikian's high estimate of the media's importance, but not of its objectivity:

One of the most pressing questions of our time [is]: can democratic governments survive the systematic (and unsystematic) distortion of political reality by the press, radio, and television under conditions of mass communication....

We know well enough that the publication of textbooks and the control of the media are in the hands of a relatively small number of people who decide without public accountability what should be said in the textbooks, shown on the television screens, and advertised through the length and breadth of 50 American states. These people are unelected. They are, in the technical, political scientist's sense of the word, irresponsible, because they are accountable to no one for the use of this enormous power. In this technical sense, the media constitute the largest concentration of irresponsible power in the contemporary United States.... Great concentrations of power in the media are as dangerous to human freedom as are great concentrations of power in government.

One result of journalists' growing self-consciousness as participants in the political process has been their tendency to see themselves as pitted against the government. David Rubin maintained that the Watergate scandal was a crucial milestone in the history of adversary journalism, pointing out that "it sparked a debate over the use of

confidential sources and on the intensity of the so-called adversary relationship between press and government and what the level of intensity should be for a healthy democracy."

Roger Starr said that reporters are "naturally suspicious of people who have titles after their names, who represent government." And, said Starr:

Increasingly the journalists who represent the Western industrial world in Israel recognize Israel as an "establishment." It now has been in existence long enough so that the suspicions that we attach to governments and government spokesmen and spokesmen for business enterprises generally in the United States now attach to the leadership in Israel. And the more organized, the stronger, the more powerful Israel has become, the more journalists apply to Israel the same set of standards that they've been applying right along to their own government and their own country.

There was, however, no unanimity about the harm of "adversary journalism." "I'm not sure it's dysfunctional," said Elihu Katz. "I think for every example of back-stabbing or demoralization...one can find...a counter story which says that an independent view of situations...through non-establishment eyes, which is what we hope from journalism, has been functional."

Some participants argued that the media have not only grown more "adversarial," but have also shifted political biases -- specifically, that they have moved to the left. And as the left as a whole became more firmly arrayed against Israel, it was suggested, the media reflected these attitudes. Stanley Rothman, of Smith College, reported that his survey research suggests that "journalists have a certain worldview. They are certain kinds of people, and they have a certain worldview which they share with other people of the leadership in society. I would call it 'liberal cosmopolitanism.'"

Rothman said that Israel was most favored when its adversaries were perceived as reactionary oil companies and reactionary Arab rulers, but that this has changed. Formerly, he declared, journalists shared with other groups of western opinion leaders:

A sense of the superiority of Western institutions, and these [Arabs] were still people who somehow in terms of behavior didn't quite measure up. Now, that sense of legitimacy of Israel and of Western institutions has come into questions....

...I suspect that in fact Arab misbehavior isn't...overlooked because we expect less of them. It's overlooked



I suspect to a greater extent because of our belief that these are people who have been oppressed, who are poor because of the actions of the West, the dominant West, the institutions we are critical of, and therefore we really can't blame them for this behavior. They're poor and downtrodden. We blame ourselves and hold ourselves to higher standards [than] we hold them.

Now, we have some evidence on this [from survey research]. The majority of American journalists... believe that we have been exploiting [the Third World] ...believe that the West has been involved in exploitative relations with these countries. And that's bound to affect those facts which are seen to be important and the way they're brought out.

A similar view was introduced by Professor Sidorsky:

The "new class" hypothesis...suggests that membership in the academy and the media is heavily recruited from a constituency that is adversarial to the establishment. In this perspective, the negative reports of Israel coincide with Israel's emergence since the 1970s as a nation that is turning away from socialism, is a strategic ally of the United States and a military asset against Soviet dominance in the Middle East.

This view is consistent with the generally credited claim that these groups are sympathetic to the perceived "underdog," whether Third World liberation fronts or even "terrorist" organizations in the United States and abroad.

Another theory of leftist bias was advanced by Roger Starr, who focused less on a new class than on an old dogma:

The influence of Marxism on the development of elite thinking in the Western world has been very significant and very serious since Marx wrote his work. I think that the presence of a large imperial nation, which espouses at least orally, verbally, the notion that it is a Marxist nation, organized according to Marxist principles, has resulted in a barrage of ideas, propaganda and perceptions which to some extent colors our perceptions of the world around us and to some extent motivates our criticisms of the institutions and the arrangements of the society in which we live.

These ideas, said Starr, "are picked up, consciously or unconsciously, by Americans in the press and other media."

Joshua Muravchik argued that Israel's problem with the media arose not merely from political bias, but also from the degree to which journalists have come to feel free to convey their biases in their reporting:

The problem is that there was, in my judgment, very unfriendly coverage to Israel during the Lebanon war and, for a decade perhaps, about the issue of the West Bank and the issue of Israel's relations with the Palestinians and its unwillingness to deal with the PLO. ...Israeli policy, both with regard to its willingness to use force in defense of itself and in its unwillingness to deal [diplomatically] with a foe committed to its destruction, like the PLO, goes very much against the grain of the predominant opinion of many American elites, including in the media.

What we've had in Lebanon, and what we've had in the coverage of the West Bank, is a good deal of reportage that is very opinionated, and the opinions conveyed say, in a nutshell, that Israeli policy is wrong. Israel is wrong to use as much force as it did in Lebanon. It's basically wrong to be making war against the PLO. It's wrong not to be making peace with the PLO. It's wrong not to be negotiating with the PLO. I think these views are widespread in the media. What makes it justifiable and important to turn to people in the media and say, "you're doing something wrong," is the degree to which they allow these opinions to be conveyed in the news reporting.

I agree with David Greenway [H.D.S.] when he says this is not different from the coverage of Central America or Vietnam or other places.... I think the attitudes that are reflected in the coverage of Lebanon are attitudes that were created or reinforced by the American experience in Vietnam. There is a very pronounced distrust of the use of force by our own government or any government with which we are allied.

But I disagree with David Greenway's remark that all of the errors [in the coverage of Lebanon] were innocently intentioned or were errors that well-meaning people could make.... There was much exaggerated or distorted reporting that seemed to be designed to get across the point of view or the anger or the indignation of the reporters who reported it.

One change in the media discussed had nothing to do with the opinions or attitudes of journalists, and this was the central role that



television now plays in American news reporting. In television, the impact of visual images usually exceeds that of the spoken word. This was very evident during the Lebanon war when no viewer, whatever his political views, could avoid being affected by heartrending scenes of the suffering of the residents of Beirut. As George Gruen, Director of Middle East Affairs for the American Jewish Committee, pointed out:

...around the time of Sabra and Shatilla, I was interviewed by one of the TV reporters about my reaction, and he noted that it seems when Jewish leaders and others were expressing regret over what happened, they were trying to put it into context.... The voices were there, but the pictures were those of the actual massacre [scenes] and the bodies being carried out and the wounded and the children, and it sounded as if anything one said was callous in the context of people suffering.



## REMEDIES

As the earlier pages indicate, the conference focused more on problems, or perceived problems, than on possible solutions. Among those who agreed that a problem exists -- and by no means all participants did -- there was little optimism that solutions exist or are readily available, given the general agreement that any "solution" must avoid impinging on freedom of the press.

Indeed, a number of those present seemed to feel that for this reason the problem is insoluble. Hannah Zemmer remarked: "We have no choice -- the editors and newspapermen in Israel -- but to give American reporters and European reporters and Arabic reporters and Russian reporters...the opportunity...to learn from us the bad face of Israel, because learning that from us means that we are an open society, and this is what we want to [be], and this is how we want to improve and correct whatever shortcomings there are."

This sentiment was echoed by Ari Rath. "If the price is, or would be, to limit our freedom of expression and of criticism in the Israeli press in order to be able to present a more positive image or perception of Israel, I don't have to tell you what I and, I guess all of my colleagues, and I hope the majority in the state of Israel, would opt for." Moreover, Rath pointed out that Israel cannot afford to tailor its security policies to make them more palatable to foreign critics. "Rather than diagnose the nature of the problem of the perception of Israel in the American media," Rath said, "it is better to learn to live with it, because just by diagnosing it, the problem will not go away."

While no encompassing "solutions" were offered, several reporters said that outspoken criticism by groups that feel aggrieved by the media coverage does have a noticeable impact in the news room. "No editor can make a mistake or allow a mistake in a story about Israel," H. D. S. Greenway said, "because the Jewish community is very literate on the subject. They read the papers very thoroughly. I'm not allowed to make a mistake, and when I do, I hear about it the next day. That's the way it should be. I really wish that every community would be the same way, and that all of the mistakes we make would be brought up to us."

Walter Goodman said: "You can't walk through the third floor of the Times, which is the main news floor, without hearing some reporter on the phone talking to someone who is calling to complain about



yesterday's story. Every day, it seems that a mistake was made. [The callers] are treated very politely. I don't mean that in a superficial way. [Reporters] pay attention to it because if it's taken to a higher level, it's very uncomfortable for the reporter."

Goodman added that the best corrective lies in the reporter's "sense of professionalism," although he agreed that in the eyes of those aggrieved, "it's a slender reed." But he argued that this sense makes reporters responsive to complaints from readers and aggrieved groups and makes them receptive to criticisms that they hear at "meetings of this sort."



## CONCLUSION

The conference on "Perceptions in the American Media" met a year and a half after the 1982 war in Lebanon, and 11 years after Watergate. The latter event is relevant because it engendered, or at least symbolized, a change in the role and status of the press in America. In that crisis, the press pitted itself, more boldly than ever in recent memory, in direct opposition to the highest officials of the country; and it was vindicated. Its prestige and self-confidence grew, and so did its propensity for investigative, interpretative and even adversarial journalism. And, said some, so did its arrogance.

This trend inspired, in turn, an increase in scrutiny and criticism of the press by journalists and scholars. A growing number of news organizations assigned "ombudsmen" to receive complaints about their reporting, and accuracy in news reporting became, in itself, an important public issue.

This issue was heightened during the 1982 war in Lebanon, which was covered in greater detail, perhaps, than any war in history. In that coverage, Israel was frequently shown in a bad light. Spokesmen for news organizations said this was the result of Israel's own "indefensible" actions; but Israel's defenders argued that reporters had often allowed their coverage to be colored by anti-Israel bias or their harsh judgments of Israel's policies in Lebanon.

Actually, this debate had been brewing for several years before the Lebanon war. Many in the media agreed with critics of the press that news coverage of Israel had grown less sympathetic, but the two groups disagreed sharply about the cause. One side argued that Israel's policies --especially toward the Palestinian Arabs and the administered territories--had grown less deserving of sympathy; the other side argued that the changes within Israel were less important than changes within the press corps itself, specifically a growing leftish vogue and a decline in inhibitions against opinionated reporting.

Both of these views were presented at the conference, as were other explanations of the changes in perceptions of Israel. It was pointed out, for example, that the Arabs have grown more effective in presenting their case, and that Israel's warm "David" image is harder to sustain since it established itself as a formidable military power. It was also



mentioned that changes in the nature of news coverage itself -- particularly the growing emphasis on visual drama -- had also worked to Israel's disadvantage in Lebanon.

Although virtually all of the Israeli participants expressed dissatisfaction with U.S. press coverage of the Lebanon war and other aspects of Israeli life, many issues raised at the conference divided the participants along lines other than nationality. For example, when it came to evaluations of press performance and a discussion of the standards by which the press should be judged, the journalists, both Israeli and American, tended to unite on one side, and various scholars and former government officials, on the other.

Israel's image problem is just one reflection of a central anomaly of its existence. It is, in most senses, a "Western" country; yet it is located in "the East." As a Western country, and a democracy, Israel conducts most of its "public affairs" in public. It cherishes its free press, subjects itself to constant scrutiny both from its own reporters and those of other lands, and relies on self-criticism as an engine of progress. On the other hand, the states that would destroy Israel are all closed societies that stringently control their own press, sharply limit the access of foreign reporters and often manage to keep their most unbecoming acts or policies from being widely or clearly reported abroad.

The circumstances of Israel's existence are unlike those of any other Western state. No other Western state's right to exist is denied by its neighbors; no other Western state's existence is threatened as Israel's is; no other Western state is compelled, so often, to take action in defense of its security. And the investigative and adversarial reporting that other Western governments may find vexatious, or occasionally damaging, can be much more seriously threatening to Israel.

This, it seems, is the price Israel must pay to be the kind of country it wants to be, under the circumstances in which it is compelled to live. The press cannot be blamed for this, nor can it be asked to avert its eyes from the shortcomings it perceives in Israeli actions and policies merely because it is often prevented from observing the shortcomings of Israel's adversaries.

But Israel is entitled to expect Western news organizations to bear in mind these two irreducible features of her existence: that Israel lives with neighbors sworn to her destruction, and that, unlike her adversaries, Israel submits to the press's scrutiny. That these two facts are critical to the "context" in Middle Eastern events must be understood and reported. News organizations which forget or ignore them are not living up to their obligation to present the clearest, most balanced reporting they can.

APPENDIX I  
PARTICIPANTS

BEN BAGDIKIAN, School of Journalism, University of California, Berkeley

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ROBERT CHANDLER, CBS News

JULIUS CHERNEY, Bruner Foundation

ROBERT CHRISTOPHER, Administrator, Pulitzer Prizes

LOUIS CIOFFI, ABC News

RICHARD COHEN, The Washington Post

MARY CURTIS, Los Angeles Times

DEAN ROBERT CURVIN, New School for Social Research

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HERBERT GANS, Columbia University

MARCIA GAUGER, Time Magazine

BERTRAM H. GOLD, Director, Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations

WALTER GOODMAN, The New York Times



H.D.S. GREENWAY, The Boston Globe

GEORGE GRUEN, The American Jewish Committee

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SETH LIPSKI, The Wall Street Journal

NOACH MOSES, Yedioth Achronoth

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK, Writer

DAN PATTIR, Former Israeli Government Spokesman

JACK PAYTON, UPI

DANIEL PIPES, Harvard University

DOROTHY RABINOWITZ, New York Post

ELIMELECH RAM, Israeli TV

ARI RATH, The Jerusalem Post

PHILIP RITZENBERG, New York Jewish Week

GARY ROSENBLATT, Baltimore Jewish Times

SHALOM ROSENFELD, Maariv

STANLEY ROTHMAN, Smith College

TRUDE RUBIN, The Philadelphia Inquirer

STEVEN H. SCHEUER, Editor of TV-Key

GERSHOM SCHOCKEN, Ha'aretz

SHELLEY M. SCHRETER, Israel-Diaspora Institute

MARVIN SEID, Los Angeles Times



FRED SHAPIRO, The New Yorker Magazine

MARCIAROSE SHESTACK, Journalist, TV Commentator

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RICHARD FROSTIG, Inside Story

SHIRA HERZOG-BESSIN, Comite Canada-Israel Committee

SEVER PLOTZKER, Al Hamishmar



APPENDIX II

PROGRAM

Thursday, April 26, 1984

**Opening Session**

Chair: Stuart E. Eizenstat

Opening Remarks: David Rubin

General Discussion

Comments on Conference Papers: David Sidorsky

Friday, April 27, 1984

**Session II**

JOURNALISM AS A ROUGH DRAFT OF HISTORY

Chair: Yoram Dinstein

Presentation: Daniel Pipes

Comments: Gershom Schocken, Noach Moses

General Discussion

**Session III**

WHAT'S FIT TO PRINT

Chair: Ephraim Evron

Presentation: Roger Starr

Comments: Elihu Katz

General Discussion

**Session IV**

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY: ISSUES FOR THE MEDIA  
IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Chair: Bertram H. Gold

Presentation: Ben H. Bagdikian

Comments: Zev Chafetz, Shalom Rosenfeld

General Discussion

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# Israeli Parties Differ on W. Bank

MIDEAST, From A26

trying to reshape Arab countries into more pliable partners.

Levy and Arens, for example, supported the initial invasion, which destroyed the Palestine Liberation Organization as a military force on Israel's border.

Now, both frankly admit to disillusionment about the final results of an operation that failed to implant Lebanon's Christian minority in firm control of the country and will have kept Israeli troops there for three years by the time the withdrawal is completed this summer.

"I came to recognize that the time had come to leave, that there is no viable partner there for Israel to work with," Levy said in explaining his decision in January to break ranks with his Likud colleagues and support the withdrawal plan drawn up by Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin. "I realized that any agreement, even if it is the best agreement, would not be worth the paper it was written on. There is no respect for anything in that country."

"Israel is a strong country, but a small country. Israel can win wars, but it is far more difficult to obtain political aims by war, since we cannot impose total defeat" on larger Arab countries, said Arens, who, as defense minister in the last Likud government, sought to reach security arrangements with Shiite villagers in southern Lebanon to enable Israeli troops to withdraw peacefully.

"The political change we sought in Lebanon did not work out . . . I still find it very difficult to understand why our very serious efforts to come to terms with the Shiites did not succeed. We should be working together, but we can't."

Even more stinging judgments are voiced by those outside Likud. In a remarkable four-part series published last month in the Haaretz newspaper, military affairs commentator Ze'ev Schiff said of the Lebanese experience:

"We gained a military victory at a huge price, and we were defeated strategically . . . Israel and the Lebanese Christians have been weakened. Syria has been strengthened, and Lebanon has become more Arab than it ever was."

The rising tide of assaults on the withdrawing Israeli troops and the harsh retaliatory raids the Israelis are staging against Shiite villages in the south has damped down much of the debate about the consequences of Lebanon and provided a strong impetus for unity within the coalition government.

"These tactics would have been impossible if they had not been undertaken by a national unity government," Shamir said in an apparent reference to the strong criticism by Labor of the siege of Beirut. "A gov-

ernment with a limited base would have been criticized in Israel.

Aides to Peres are quick to praise Shamir's constructive role in holding the coalition together thus far. After meeting separately with their Cabinet ministers, the two men confer in Peres' office or at his home on Friday afternoons to reach agreements that are ratified in the weekly Cabinet meetings on Sunday.

Under the agreement setting up the coalition government after inconclusive elections last summer, Shamir is due to succeed Peres as prime minister after 24 months. This would give Likud a strong advantage in setting up the elections that are scheduled to be held, under the agreement, two years after that.

Shamir appears to be suggesting in Likud circles that he may agree to step down then and allow Arens, Levy and Sharon to contest for the leadership of the next government.

Political analysts suggest that it would be in Peres' interest to engineer a breakup of the coalition before he has to yield power to Shamir and force new elections. Both leaders deny that they expect such a breakup, unless Hussein were to toss the coalition the hot potato of agreeing to direct negotiations.

This does not appear to be a serious probability at the moment. Beyond Hussein's reluctance to start such negotiations without guarantees that he will get the West Bank and East Jerusalem back stands the hardening sense in Israel that the greatly increased pace of Israeli settlement in Likud's seven years in power has overtaken whatever chance for meaningful territorial compromise may have existed.

The coalition has agreed to build six new settlements under the terms of the agreement but has taken no steps to do so. Peres' aides acknowledge that this is due primarily to a lack of money, but they hint that this should be seized on by the Arabs as a sign of Peres' willingness to seek peace through compromise.

But a study released this month by Meron Benvenisti's West Bank Data Base Project asserts that Likud built enough housing before leaving office to accommodate the likely flow of new settlers on the West Bank through 1986. The number of settlers doubled in the past two years and now stands at 42,600, who live in 114 settlements, according to Benvenisti's figures.

In that two-year period the new settlers tracked by the project went almost entirely into well-established, large settlements that Labor is unlikely to agree to include in any territorial negotiations. Nearly two-thirds of all settlers now live near the urban centers of Jerusalem or Tel Aviv and form a powerful political constituency.

"Talk of the settlements withering away," Benvenisti told The Jerusalem Post last week, "is nonsense."



# Peace Initiatives Reveal Cracks in Israeli Coalition

M.T.

3.10.85  
11:58 AM

By Jim Hoagland  
Washington Post Foreign Service

(1)

JERUSALEM—After a six-month political truce enforced by a national unity government that has joined the Likud and Labor parties in shared policies, Israel's political leaders are gingerly resuming their national debate over the future of the country's relations with its Arab neighbors.

The coalition government has enabled Israel to impose austerity measures on a chaotic economy and to begin the withdrawal of its Army from the quagmire of Lebanon.

Now, divisions over broader Middle East strategy are surfacing again because of an ambiguous Egyptian proposal to get talks started on the West Bank territory of the Jordan River.

Like a cloud passing across the surface of a lake, talk of new peace initiatives and the unlikely prospect of Jordan's King Hussein suddenly agreeing to territorial negotiations with Israel have sent fleeting shadows across the unity painstakingly developed by Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Foreign

NEWS ANALYSIS

Minister Yitzhak Shamir on other matters.

"Lebanon was not an ideological problem," Shamir observed during an interview in which he praised the responsibility-sharing aspects of the coalition government. "Judea and Samaria is an ideological problem" between Labor and Likud that could threaten the coalition, he added, using the biblical names for the territory preferred by Likud leaders.

Likud "would never accept that we embark on a search for territorial compromise" with Hussein if Hussein were to put forward such a

proposal, said David Levy, the Moroccan-born minister of housing who is seen by many as Shamir's successor as head of Likud. "We are working together well now, but there are unrealistic things that would cause the government to fall."

Interviews with Levy, Shamir and other senior Israeli political leaders suggest that Israel approaches the sixth anniversary of the Camp David peace accord, and the end of its military involvement in Lebanon, in a mood of disappointment.

See MIDEAST, A26, Col 1

# Israel's Parties Resume Debate on Relations With Arab Neighbors

MIDEAST, From A1

ment and disillusionment with the country's ability to transform the attitudes of its Arab neighbors either through peace or war.

That frustration in turn translates into declining interest in exploring the prospects for any new exchanges of territory for peace agreements of any sort with Arab countries, the interviews suggest.

Camp David, in this view, produced only a "cold peace" with Egypt instead of the full range of relations that Israel was promised in return for giving back all Egyptian territory conquered in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. That frustration appears to extend into Peres' Labor Party, which is nominally committed to negotiate with Hussein to return part of the West Bank in return for peace, and is producing new support within Labor for political arrangements with Hussein that exclude giving up territory.

"It could be that we have to come to an understanding on sharing" jurisdiction on the West Bank and Gaza, said Ezer Weizman, Peres' informal adviser on Arab affairs and minister without portfolio in the coalition government. "Today you have to say that the autonomy plan for the West Bank" designed by then prime minister Menachem Begin in 1979 "was a good beginning

... and the final result may be something in between autonomy and a territorial concept."

For many Israelis, Weizman indicated, another approaching anniversary may be at least as important as the March 26, 1979, signing of the Camp David accord on the White House lawn.

"Next year we will have been on the West Bank for 19 years," he said. "That is exactly the same time that Hussein was on the West Bank." Jordan took control of the territory, which had been part of the mandated territory of Palestine, during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

Moreover, the growing sense of permanence that the Israeli presence on the West Bank inspires today and the pattern of settlement there during the past two years strongly suggest that the West Bank already may have slipped beyond Hussein's grasp.

The view from Levy's spacious third-floor office illustrates the passage of time and its effect on Arab-Israeli relations here as well as a history book might. Bright winter sunlight ripples into one window from the western slope of the Mount of Olives, where a single camel is tethered near the summit.

In the opposite direction, out on the mountain ridges descending toward the Jordan valley from the heights of Jerusalem, rise wave after wave of recently built apartment houses and dormitories. The complex of office

buildings where Levy's ministry is located in what had been an Arab section of Jerusalem is a definitive statement in stone and concrete about the Israeli government's intentions here.

"Hussein likes to live," Levy said in an idiomatic French laced with irony and nuance, "and he knows he cannot afford to give up a half, or a fourth, of Judea and Samaria. And neither will Israel share like that, not one half, not one fourth. We have to talk about political sharing, about autonomy for the people who live there, but not about territory."

The passage of time since Begin got Anwar Sadat and Jimmy Carter to agree to center the first phase of negotiations about the Palestinian-inhabited territories on self-rule rather than on territory has had another paradoxical effect. Many members of Likud who initially were opposed to or unenthusiastic about the Camp David accord have become its strongest advocates.

"People who voted against Camp David are even more determined to make it work now than those who voted for it," said Moshe Arens, formerly defense minister and ambassador to Washington and now a minister without portfolio. As a Likud member of parliament, Arens voted to reject the peace agreement.

"We thought then that the price was too high," he said. "We are in the position of having paid the full price

for the ticket, and we want to get to the destination we're supposed to reach."

Arens, Levy and Shamir insisted in separate interviews that the Camp David arrangements for autonomy talks between Israel and Jordan, with Palestinian participation, must form the next step in the peace process. Hussein has said that he will join peace talks only on the basis of the return of all of the territory occupied in 1967.

"If Hussein steps forward and says he wants to make a deal on the basis of territorial compromise, there will be serious problems" within the coalition, Arens predicted. "Likud will say we cannot do that," while Labor is bound by its previous position to explore such an offer.

At that point, Levy predicted, there would be a rupture in the coalition and new elections in which he would challenge Shamir for the party leadership. If Shamir were to falter, Levy undoubtedly would face challenges from Arens and Ariel Sharon, the minister for commerce who, as defense minister, led the Israeli Army into Lebanon in 1982.

It is the winding down of that war that has left Israelis perplexed about the utility of military power in

See MIDEAST, A27, Col. 1



# CONTEMPORARY MIDEAST BACKGROUNDER

to:

date:

## Focal Points

February 21, 1985

BACKGROUND # 204

AMERICAN JEWISH

MORE ON THE SAUDI ROLE IN MIDEAST POLITICS\*  
(focus on Saudi-North Yemen relations)

SUPPLEMENT TO BACKGROUND # 203

"The PLO enjoys the backing of Saudi Arabia in its present position, according to well informed PLO officials here. King Fahd told Mr. Arafat, during a recent visit the PLO leader made to Jedda, that the PLO is not obliged to make more concessions at this stage. 'The Saudis believe that the PLO's acceptance to explore political solutions and an international peace conference is enough at this stage,' the source said."

The aforementioned commentary in the February 7, 1985 issue of the *JORDAN TIMES* - which has been known to reflect views shared by King Hussein - was published shortly after the January 1985 visits of King Hussein to Riad and that of Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud Bin-Feisal, to Amman.

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**Media  
Analysis**

**Center P.O. B 13169 Jerusalem 91131, Tel. 53 6933/4**

BACKGROUNDER # 204

One may assume that the *JORDAN TIMES* commentary expresses Jordanian disillusionment with Riad's ability and willingness to deliver, to influence political developments in the Mideast to take clear-cut positions and to align itself with the 'moderates' rather than with the 'radicals'.

*Placing Syria high on its list of national priorities, and seeking security through alignment with Arab ('radical'-dominated) consensus, was reflected last week by Saudi Arabia dispatching Prince Bandar bin-Sultan, its ambassador to the US and the favorite son of its Defence Minister, to Damascus, in order to brief President Assad on the Fahd-Reagan talks. That visit was preceded by those of Crown Prince Abdullah (February 2, 1985) and Prince Bandar (January 24, 1985). Together they lend credence to the observation that Riad is aware of its inherent strategic vulnerabilities and limitations; and therefore considers the adherence to Arab consensus, and the protection of its 'radical' flanks, much more vital to its survival than (and sometimes at the expense of) its special ties with the US.*

In fact, David Ottaway of the *WASHINGTON POST* reports on January 30, 1985 from Cairo that "despite a concerted diplomatic campaign, it (Egypt) has been denied re-entry into the Arab League by a strange alliance of interests - those of Saudi Arabia and Syria... What irks the Egyptians far more, however, are the stonewalling tactics of Saudi Arabia, a seemingly natural ally, to Egypt's return, on the pretext that there must be an Arab consensus - a clear impossibility in today's divided Arab world... Egyptians blame the Saudis, who also opposed Egypt's obtaining a seat on the UN Security Council last year, mainly for the failure of Iraq to follow Jordan in renewing diplomatic ties with Cairo last fall... 'There were traditional elements in the area which always disliked Egypt's role, especially the Conservatives' he (Heikal, former confidant of Nasser and a well-known political commentator) said. 'When Egypt abdicated (its role) those people felt liberated from Egyptian pressure which they felt before. Yes, they all want Egypt. But they want an historical Egypt, not the political Egypt, the actual Egypt, but the Egypt of old'."

The Egyptian and Jordanian view of the House of Saud contrasts sharply with the perception which regards Riad as a consensus-building ally with the potential to deliver other Arab countries to suit US interests.

This Egyptian and Jordanian view was reflected in the following commentary:  
"For a decade the Saudis have passed out billions to moderate and radical Arab



regimes alike, contending that the money buys influence. America, which has made the House of Saud one of its main Mideast pillars, dutifully echoed the claim. If it ever was true - and Saudi influence probably never was what Washington professed - it is certainly less so today. Arab nations, now bitterly divided on almost everything else, agree on one thing - their disdain for Saudi rulers...

"Strikingly, Arab officials, who in the past cautiously skirted criticism of their billionaire benefactor now bluntly - though still privately - savage the Saudis. Some even disparage King Fahd personally... Whatever the reason, the new willingness of officials in several Arab capitals to discuss with an outsider their contempt for the Saudi monarchy clearly suggests that Saudi influence in the region is overrated...

"... No one in the Mideast, neither opponents nor proponents of the Reagan Plan believe the Saudis will wield any influence over the PLO... This Saudi willingness to keep the money coming to everyone regardless of what conflicting course each pursues is a big reason for the Arab scorn. The ruling princes are much like a woman who offers her favors too freely - used but not respected. The Saudis are seen as susceptible to blackmail, even those to whom they give aide voluntarily don't feel privileged or particularly grateful... Saudi Arabia's enemies have always argued she is a political weakling. But now her so-called Arab friends frustratedly agree." (Karen Elliott House, foreign editor of the *WALL STREET JOURNAL*, March 15, 1983).

One may add that as limited as is the Saudi leverage, it has been further eroded with the diminution of its importance as a leading oil supplier (down from 10-11 mbd to 3.5-4 mbd along with a drastic decline in price). Moreover, *as far as the oil weapon is concerned, Riyadh has been disarmed*, and its ability to protect its domestic and external vulnerable flanks has been severely curtailed.

#### SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS WITH NORTH YEMEN

The complex of Saudi Arabia - North Yemen (YAR) relations reflects the limits to Riyadh's leverage, even vis a vis such a regional "light-weight" as the YAR, its inherent fears and strategic vulnerabilities, as well as *disruptive potential* when aiming to assert itself regionally at the expense of its smaller neighbors (e.g. the on-again off-again territorial conflicts with Oman, Abu-Dhabi, Qatar - as discussed in Backgrounders 106 and 170 - and the YAR.)

• BACKGROUNDER 204

For instance, on November 4, 1984 the informative Lebanese weekly, *A-SAFIR*, claimed that the Saudi airforce bombed YAR oil and natural gas installations located near the Saudi border. The pro-Libyan weekly adds that such Saudi-initiated border skirmishes have occasionally followed the discovery of natural resources by Riad's southern neighbor, and they have tended to express Saudi expansionist aims. Similar reports were provided on February 22, 1984 and March 12, 1984 by the Egyptian leftist daily, *AL-AHALI* and by George Habash's *AL-HADAF* which referred to major battles between invading Saudi units and YAR forces in the northern YAR region of Sa'dah.

M.S. El Azhary, the deputy director of the Iraqi sponsored Centre for Arab Gulf Studies at the University of Exeter, England, suggests that "it is interesting to note that on many occasions these skirmishes result in serious fighting causing casualties, but one never hears of them because both sides prefer to keep them quiet."

El Azhary provides a thorough review of Saudi-YAR relations in Chapter 13 of *Contemporary Yemen: Politics and Historical Background*, edited by B.R. Pridham, Croom Helm Ltd., Britain, November 22, 1984:

"Being the most densely populated country in the Arabian Peninsula (7.039 million in 1980, annual growth rate 3 percent) and strategically located at Saudi Arabia's back door, North Yemen occupies a key position that affects the safety of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states and the oil fields... Since the oil boom of the 1970s over half a million Yemenis have been working regularly in Saudi Arabia... Their remittance of about \$1 billion annually has helped to ease the YAR balance of payment deficit... Yet, because the Yemenis form the largest group of aliens in the Kingdom, they represent a security threat and can be said to constitute - at least theoretically - a Yemeni 'fifth column.'" (Christopher Van Hollen, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, indicates - in the summer 1982 edition of *THE WASHINGTON QUARTERLY* - that the North Yemenis "outnumber the roughly five million Saudis... They look down on the people<sup>of</sup> the (Saudi) plains, and many view the Saudis as 'johnnies-come-late' - just a generation removed from bedouin camel drivers").

El Azhary notes that "the Saudis also worry about the dispute over their undefined borders with North Yemen. Intermittent skirmishes remind the Saudis that the North Yemenis have never given up their claim to the fertile Asir region, whose loss to Saudi Arabia in the war of 1934 was confirmed by the Treaty of Taif of the same year... (to be reviewed every 20 years until finally ratified - ed. note).



BACKGROUNDER # 204

"In 1974 Saudi Arabia obliged the Yemeni Prime Minister Abd al-Rahman al-Hajri to sign an agreement renewing the 1934 treaty, but this agreement was never ratified because of the strong opposition it engendered from all political strata in North Yemen. According to a Yemeni politician, this issue has been so sensitive that previous governments have not been able to resolve it without provoking a revolt. He concluded that the current President Ali Abdullah Salih 'wants it to be ratified by an elected consultative assembly, and not by an appointed one; no government would take this responsibility.'

"What the Saudis have feared most, however, has been the instability and unreliability of the central government in San'a, particularly in the face of pressures from the Marxists in Aden (South Yemen) since they gained power in 1967... In early 1972 border clashes between North and South Yemen escalated into a full blown war... The two Yemens moved, within a few short weeks, from a fully fledged war to unification talks which produced a merger agreement signed by the two countries in Tripoli, Libya, later the same year. (The agreement was ascertain and durable as the governments signing it... - ed. note)...

"The Saudis opposed it in principle, and since then they have opposed every similar effort towards this goal... Saudi opposition to the unification of the two Yemens stems from the simple reason that if the conservative republican regime in San'a were to unite with the Marxist regime in Aden (South Yemen), Saudi Arabia would be confronted with a hostile state with a population twice the size of that of the Kingdom"... (Van Hollen - ibid - mentions the legendary words of King Abdul al-Aziz, the founder of Saudi Arabia: "The good or evil for us will come from the Yemen").

"The Saudis' experience in the 1960s, during the Egyptian intervention in North Yemen, convinced them that their security, and that of the Red Sea, would be threatened if San'a were controlled by an unfriendly regime...

"Having failed to overthrow the Marxist regime in Aden, the Saudi leaders had no choice but to bolster the regime in North Yemen against its southern neighbour. But the Saudis, fearing for their own security, have been reluctant to make North Yemen too strong. A strong regime in San'a might also become too independent, something which is likely to be at odds with Saudi policies elsewhere in the Peninsula and beyond... As early as 1971 King Faisal began what have become two permanent features of Riyadh's financial assistance to North Yemen: first, annual budget support to maintain the central government

BACKGROUNDERS # 204

by paying its functionaries and armed forces personnel; second, direct subsidies to the tribes, thus aiding the three most important groups for the political and physical survival of the regime in the YAR. (In fact, Riyadh follows the policy of 'divide and rule', taking advantage of the inherent conflict between some of the major tribes and the YAR government, and of inter-tribal intricacies as discussed in Backgrounders 183, 181, and 180 - ed. note)

"Hand-in-hand with their financial assistance to the government in San'a', the Saudis have also continued over the years to subsidise the tribes, to an extent perhaps equivalent to the amount of funding provided to the YAR government. These subsidies are viewed by Saudi officials as an essential effort to establish 'a buffer zone of Saudi influence against some future central government in North Yemen which may seek to adopt anti-Saudi policies'... "Indeed, several analysts see the Saudis as having been responsible for the overthrow of several YAR leaders who became too independent or moved closer to Aden; for example, the removal of Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani from the presidency in 1974, the dismissal of Muhsin al-Aini from the premiership in 1975, and the murder of President Ibrahim al-Hamdi in 1977...

"Once the implementation of the modernization plan began, (US and France 10-year military modernization plan for the YAR armed forces) however, the Saudis showed their ambivalence about strengthening the armed forces of their more populous neighbour to the south. Firstly they delayed making a firm commitment on which arms would be purchased; secondly, equipment had to be delivered through the Saudi military mission in San'a' which phased the release of equipment to the Yemenis only after the Saudis were 'satisfied that training and reorganization schedules had been met'; thirdly, the Saudis insisted on administering the training of the YAR armed personnel...

"In seeking to maintain its independence from Riyadh, the YAR has been careful to develop closer bilateral relationships with its other Arab brethren. It has cultivated friendships with the Gulf states and it has sought aid from them to lessen its financial reliance on Saudi Arabia. It has now become a yearly ritual for the North Yemeni Head of State and Prime Minister to tour the Gulf countries (including Iran under the Shah) and ask for aid. In recent years the aid provided from the Gulf states has increased significantly to an extent equalling what the YAR receives from Saudi Arabia, amounting to another \$1 billion. The Gulf countries have also accorded North Yemen special treatment in relation to oil.



"From the North Yemeni perspective, Iraq has proved valuable, not only financially but also politically to counter Saudi influence. Even in the early 1970s when Baghdad had close relations with Aden, YAR leaders pragmatically ignored the frequent allegations that Iraqi Ba'thists were behind several coup attempts and other subversive activities in North Yemen. Relations between the two countries were not affected by these allegations because the YAR benefited from Iraq's openly anti-Saudi political posture in those days when Baghdad was in competition with Riyadh for leadership in the Gulf region. Moreover, YAR leaders have relied on Iraq on several occasions to bring pressure to bear on South Yemen to lessen its support of anti-regime insurgents. It was Iraq, in concert with Syria and Jordan, which saved the present regime of President Salih from collapse during the 1979 border war by putting enough pressure on Aden to stop the fighting...

"Once a ceasefire was arranged (to the border war of February 1979 which broke out between the two Yemens) - before the American equipment reached North Yemen - the Saudis were again ambivalent about building up the YAR military capacity, reverted to delaying tactics, and withheld the delivery of the military equipment. The North Yemenis were disappointed with Saudi Arabia's attitude towards extending military aid to their country, and realizing that it was not possible for them to deal directly with the United States, the leadership in San'a' became convinced of the soundness of the earlier YAR policy over the past two decades of relying on the Soviet Union for military aid. Within a few months of the ceasefire with South Yemen, President Salih renewed his country's long-standing military relationship with the Soviet Union. Moscow's response was equally swift and generous, as indicated by the large amount of arms provided to the YAR since then. Between 1979 and 1981 alone, the Soviet Union provided the YAR - on easy-credit terms - with some \$600 million worth of major military equipment including advanced Sukhoi bombers, Mig-21 fighters, helicopters, T-55 tanks, ground-to-air missiles and armoured carriers. Furthermore, several thousand military and civilian Yemenis have travelled to the Soviet Union for training since then. It should be added that, after twenty years of experience with the Soviet Union, North Yemen's military personnel had become familiar with Soviet equipment and therefore had little or no difficulty in switching back to it. Moreover, YAR leaders have always felt that, while the Soviet Union has provided considerable military assistance, it has not tried to dominate their country. They also view YAR relations with the Soviet Union as a counterbalance to Saudi influence in their country."

# CONTEMPORARY MIDEAST BACKGROUNDER

to:

date:

## Focal Points

February 21, 1985

BACKGROUNDER # 204

AMERICAN JEWISH

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(focus on Saudi-North Yemen relations)

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**Media  
Analysis**

**Center P.O. Box 13169 Jerusalem 91131, Tel. 53 6933/4**



BACKGROUND # 204

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BACKGROUND # 204

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BACKGROUNDER # 204

"From the North Yemeni perspective, Iraq has proved valuable, not only financially but also politically to counter Saudi influence. Even in the early 1970s when Baghdad had close relations with Aden, YAR leaders pragmatically ignored the frequent allegations that Iraqi Ba'athists were behind several coup attempts and other subversive activities in North Yemen. Relations between the two countries were not affected by these allegations because the YAR benefited from Iraq's openly anti-Saudi political posture in those days when Baghdad was in competition with Riyadh for leadership in the Gulf region. Moreover, YAR leaders have relied on Iraq on several occasions to bring pressure to bear on South Yemen to lessen its support of anti-regime insurgents. It was Iraq, in concert with Syria and Jordan, which saved the present regime of President Salih from collapse during the 1979 border war by putting enough pressure on Aden to stop the fighting...

"Once a ceasefire was arranged (to the border war of February 1979 which broke out between the two Yemens) - before the American equipment reached North Yemen - the Saudis were again ambivalent about building up the YAR military capacity, reverted to delaying tactics, and withheld the delivery of the military equipment. The North Yemenis were disappointed with Saudi Arabia's attitude towards extending military aid to their country, and realizing that it was not possible for them to deal directly with the United States, the leadership in San'a' became convinced of the soundness of the earlier YAR policy over the past two decades of relying on the Soviet Union for military aid. Within a few months of the ceasefire with South Yemen, President Salih renewed his country's long-standing military relationship with the Soviet Union. Moscow's response was equally swift and generous, as indicated by the large amount of arms provided to the YAR since then. Between 1979 and 1981 alone, the Soviet Union provided the YAR - on easy-credit terms - with some \$600 million worth of major military equipment including advanced Sukhoi bombers, Mig-21 fighters, helicopters, T-55 tanks, ground-to-air missiles and armoured carriers. Furthermore, several thousand military and civilian Yemenis have travelled to the Soviet Union for training since then. It should be added that, after twenty years of experience with the Soviet Union, North Yemen's military personnel had become familiar with Soviet equipment and therefore had little or no difficulty in switching back to it. Moreover, YAR leaders have always felt that, while the Soviet Union has provided considerable military assistance, it has not tried to dominate their country. They also view YAR relations with the Soviet Union as a counterbalance to Saudi influence in their country."



AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

STATEMENT ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS

By Howard I. Friedman, President

The American Jewish Committee welcomes the latest initiatives of Prime Minister Peres of Israel and President Mubarak of Egypt to improve relations between their two countries and to encourage efforts to broaden the Camp David peace process through direct negotiations. King Hussein of Jordan has indicated that he also favors negotiations on the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and the participation of Palestinians in the framework of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

We welcome the signs of good faith manifested in Jerusalem, Cairo and Amman. We believe that the insistence by the Reagan Administration that the primary responsibility for resolving the issues in dispute rests on the parties in the Middle East has had a salutary and sobering effect within the Arab world. The repeatedly demonstrated readiness of the Government and people of Israel to make significant concessions for the sake of peace may also have finally evoked a positive response.

However, many difficulties remain. Indeed, it has become increasingly doubtful in recent days whether Yasir Arafat and the factions of the fragmented Palestine Liberation Organization that remain loyal to him are genuinely prepared to recognize the legitimacy of Israel and its right to live within secure and recognized borders, as required by Resolution 242. It thus remains to be seen whether King Hussein will be willing and able to enter negotiations with moderate Palestinian representatives, who are not officials of the PLO and who favor permanent peace with Israel in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian context.

There is thus no basis for premature jubilation. Indeed, the Hussein-Arafat joint agreement of February 11, 1985 is not only full of ambiguities but contains elements that are fundamentally inconsistent with the peace process agreed upon by the United States, Israel and Egypt. It falls far short of a serious peace proposal.

Yet one should not be overly pessimistic, for the peace process has always been fraught with difficulties. We are confident that the United States Government will continue to offer its good offices to aid all parties who genuinely seek peace through negotiations.

We trust that during President Mubarak's forthcoming visit to Washington, President Reagan will also impress upon him the importance that the United States attaches to full normalization of Egypt's relations with Israel as a necessary practical step in restoring the positive atmosphere to further the advancement of the peace process.

March 5, 1985  
85-580-8

(over)



*Charles Krauthammer*

## 4 Questions for President Mubarak

In the last few weeks, Egypt has been all diplomatic motion, sending secret envoys to Israel and throwing up a variety of peace proposals. Israeli officials, starved for any hint of warmth from Egypt, are required to give any Egyptian gesture the benefit of the doubt. Americans, who are not so desperate, need not be so diplomatic. As partners to Camp David, they have a right to ask questions. The first is: Could there be a connection between this sudden peace offensive and President Mubarak's arrival tomorrow in Washington?

Mubarak comes to Washington to ask for \$3.15 billion, plus forgiveness of unpaid interest on Egypt's \$4.5 billion military debt. But he will have to mollify Congress, which is in no mood to grant him the money. That is because American largess was our part of the deal at Camp David. For its part, Egypt promised the United States two things: strategic cooperation with the United States and normal relations with Israel.

Congress will ask Question 2: What has happened to strategic cooperation? Its symbol was to be the Ras Banas naval base in southeastern Egypt. Sadat had promised President Carter military facilities at Ras Banas. The United States envisioned it as a staging ground for the Rapid Deployment Force. Mubarak scrapped the whole project. The reason is not sinister. Mubarak simply does not want to be closely associated with the United States, both for domestic and Third World reasons. As Prime Minister Kamal Hassan Ali once said, "We take weapons from the United States, but we are not aligned to the United States." How non-aligned? The United States asked Egypt to allow a Voice of America transmitter on its soil. Mubarak said no even to that. (It will be placed in Israel instead). Fair enough. Egypt is, as we say here, a free country. But if no quid, why our \$3 billion quo?

The other half of the Camp David bargain was to be this: Israel gives up Sinai, a buffer zone three times its own size and its only source of oil; Egypt gives normal relations (the verb is strange, but so is the deal) and sends an ambassador to Tel Aviv. Question 3: How are relations and where is the ambassador?

Answer: The ambassador was recalled to Egypt over two years ago, and cultural, commercial and scientific agreements are nearly frozen. As Butros Ghali, Egypt's minister of state for foreign affairs, put it, relations are in a state of "cold peace."

Now, when the United States sponsored Camp David, it did not press Israel to give up all of Sinai for non-belligerency. Israel already had non-belligerency. That was guaranteed not only by the Sinai II disengagement accord of 1975, but by the preponderance of Israel's deterrent power. Israel gave up Sinai for normal relations. Not for the material benefits such relations would bring—they are hardly worth a tenth of the lost oil revenues alone—but because the example of open, routine commerce between Egyptian and Jew might persuade other Arabs to seek coexistence with Israel.

Egypt blames cold peace on the Lebanon war. However convenient an excuse that may once have been—in fact, the freezing of relations began long before Lebanon and accelerated with the Sadat assassination—it rings false now: Israel, under a Labor Prime Minister, is leaving Lebanon. (Likud committed Israel to withdrawing as far back as May 1983, in the treaty negotiated by Secretary of State George Shultz.) Furthermore, Shimon Peres is open to compromise on the West Bank, another "warming" condition recently created by Mubarak.

Well, says Egypt, Israel is still ille-

gally holding Taba. Taba is a dot on the map. In fact, it is in dispute because, when the map was drawn in 1906, the lines were drawn in pencil. All of Taba lies under the width of the pencil mark! Suppose Taba did belong to Egypt. Israel gave up 61,000 square kilometers in Sinai. Taba is less than one.

For returning 99.99 percent of the land, what has Israel gotten? Israel has an embassy in Cairo with an Israeli flag flying over it. But the Israeli mission is totally ostracized by Egyptian society. The ghettoized Israeli Embassy in Cairo mirrors precisely the position of the Israeli state in the larger Arab world: an alien presence in quarantine. If that is what Israel gets for Camp David, then, in fairness, it should have given up Taba and kept the rest of Sinai.

We are now in the midst of a mini peace enthusiasm. The Mubarak peace offensive, however, is unusually empty, even by Middle East standards. Next week he will ask the United States to start a "peace process" by negotiating with a Jordanian-PLO delegation. This is a transparent attempt to get the United States to deal with the PLO, without the PLO's renouncing terror and recognizing Israel (America's longstanding condition for such talks). It is also a way to get Hussein off the hook of direct talks with Israel.

If the "process" is nothing more than maneuver, what of the "peace"? The peace everyone will be talking about next week is ultimately to be brought about, all will agree, by the "land for peace" formula. Well, land for peace is not just theory. It now has a history. That history—Camp David—suggests a final question, not only for Mubarak but for others eager to press Israel into new and riskier concessions: We can all see the land. Mubarak has Sinai. Where is the peace?





March 8, 1985

*Memo*

TO: CRC Executives

FROM: Charney V. Bromberg, Associate Director

RE: Important Materials on Israel and South Africa

I am pleased to send you three pieces of material which should augment your file on Israel and South Africa and be useful for various program activities, particularly Black-Jewish relations.

The first piece, prepared by Samuel Sislén, Director of International Affairs of the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington, addresses the broader topic of "Israel and Africa" and has an insert on Israel and South Africa. You are free to obey the first law of Jewish community relations and plagiarize or reproduce the fact sheet in any way you choose.

Second is a compilation of "Official Statements by the State of Israel Opposing Racism, Apartheid and Arms Sales to South Africa" prepared by the American Jewish Committee.

The third piece contains a translation (from Ma'ariv, October 12, 1984) of Israeli Prime Minister Peres' response to a question on Apartheid from the editor of The Amsterdam News.

Kindly share with me copies of any materials which have been or are developed locally on this subject. I will update your file with additional material as I receive it.

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amounted to \$130 million plus \$500 million worth of building contracts. Africans flock to courses organized in Israel with the official approval of their Governments in spite of the absence of formal ties. Over 25,000 Africans have studied in Israel throughout the years learned trades and techniques important to the development of their countries. Quite a few are fluent in Hebrew. They are an invaluable capital of African goodwill towards Israel. Their letters to African periodicals testify to the value they attach to friendship with Israel.

Modern-day anti-Semites say Zionism when they mean Judaism. But in their own twisted way the anti-Semites are right — though for the wrong reasons. For what unites Zionism and Judaism is the age-old Jewish passion for justice, the quest for peace. It was first



"To the black states in the making there was a great deal that Israel could and wanted to give. Like them, we had shaken off foreign rule; like them, we had had to learn for ourselves how to reclaim the land, how to increase the yields of our crops, how to irrigate, how to raise poultry, how to live together and how to defend ourselves...We couldn't offer Africa money or arms, but on the other hand we were free to the taint of the colonial exploiters because all that we wanted from Africa was friendship..."  
Golda Meir

COOPERATION

FARMERS

GOVT. DEPTS.

FARMERS & GOVT. DEPTS.

proclaimed by the Jewish Prophets and perpetuated in rabbinic teachings and institutions. Its force remains potent in all the institutions created by Jewish communities in the modern epoch, whether in Palestine or America. Theodore Herzl in Altneuland saw the liberation of Africans as a necessity after the liberation of Jews.

It is precisely because Israel is a Jewish state that it undertook such an enterprise.

Zionism has been equated with racism. Under intense pressure at the United Nations, many black African states -- to their shame -- supported the Soviet-Arab initiative at the United Nations which proclaimed that evil doctrine in November 1975. But the Africans know better -- from their own experience with Israel.

Additional quantities available without charge on request

# Israel Fact Sheet

## Israel & Africa

In 1957 the State of Israel embarked upon an enterprise that is one of the era's most impressive yet least known examples of international humanitarian action: its wide-ranging development assistance program in black Africa. The program began just nine years after Israel achieved its independence, when Israel, at the invitation of the Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, created Ghana's Black Star Shipping Line and organized Ghana's Trade Union Congress.

Since that year, thousands of Israelis have served as expert advisors and teachers to many scores of thousands of Black Africans both in Israel and in their own countries. Thousands of Black Africans have travelled to Israel for training, study and observation--to acquire skills and know-how to be used in constructive pursuits in their own countries. Thousands of others received training courses in their own lands by visiting Israeli experts.

The program has included the broadest conceivable range of subjects of immediate relevance and value to developing nations: Courses and field work in nutrition, early education, community welfare, handicrafts, midwifery and other community services, agricultural pioneering and training in civics and social services for young people, training of doctors, nurses and para-professionals.

Hydrology, management of water resources, irrigation and fertilizers, development of new branches of agriculture such as poultry and egg production, fisheries and the planting and marketing of citrus fruit, manpower training in trade union and cooperatives organization, regional planning, creation and operation of model development farms, training in microbiology, engineering, printing, port management, eradication of tuberculosis and eye diseases, planning and construction of roads, dams, schools, public buildings, construction of hotels and hotel-management training, planning, engineering and construction of water works and urban sanitation projects.

The scale and scope of Israel's efforts rank highest by far among all countries of comparable size. Per capita, Israel's development assistance program was the greatest in the world.

Why did this tiny, poor country, beleaguered by enemies and itself in need, undertake such a vast enterprise? Certainly, one important motive was to gain friends on the international scene. But beyond that, Israel had from its own beginnings seen itself as a developing country. As such it was in a unique position to understand the problems of other developing countries and to cooperate with them in assistance programs. Israelis were moved by genuine sympathy for struggling new nations like their own.

JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF GREATER WASHINGTON  
1522 K STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005 • (202) 347-4628



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**Sources**  
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In the halcyon days of the Israel-African relationship, there were 28 Israeli Embassies in African countries. Most of them were closed after 1973, as more and more African countries succumbed to Arab pressure and the influence of the Organization of African Unity.

Only Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho did not sever their diplomatic relations with Israel. Many others let it be known that they did so reluctantly. In 1973, when President Mobutu announced from the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly that Zaire was breaking diplomatic relations with Israel, he made it clear that he continued to be a friend of Israel although he felt compelled to make the pressed-for gesture of solidarity with the family of African nations.

Slowly, African governments, understanding that they cannot rely on Arab sources for much-needed developmental and political backing, are renewing full diplomatic relations with Israel. Today Israel has diplomatic relations with Zaire, Liberia, Lesotho, Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland, South Africa, and, of course, Egypt.

In five countries -- Kenya, Ghana, Togo, Gabon and the Ivory Coast -- Israeli diplomats are stationed as Interest Officers working out of Embassies of friendly European countries such as Belgium.

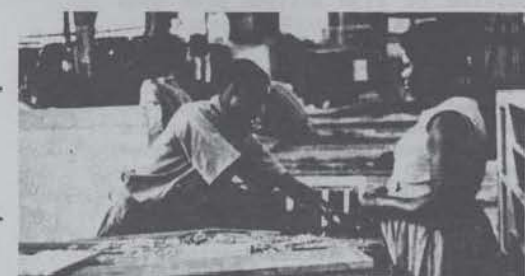
Despite the diplomatic turbulence between states, economic relations continued unperturbed and even showed a tendency to grow. Israeli experts were welcome in many African states, although they had to work under the flag of international organizations.

Israel has lively economic relations with 20 African countries. In Nigeria alone 1,800 Israelis work on large-scale projects undertaken by Israeli firms. In 1982, Israel's trade with black Africa

(cont'd pg 4)



AGRICULTURAL & VOCATIONAL TRAINING ON A "KIBBUTZ" IN KENYA



## ISRAEL & SOUTH AFRICA

Israel's ongoing diplomatic and economic relationships with South Africa have frequently been unjustly and cynically singled out for public attack, while dozens of other nations -- whose relationships with South Africa on diplomatic, commercial and other levels overshadow Israel's by far -- are routinely ignored. When such is the case, "the melancholy result," as noted by Israel's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Benjamin Netanyahu, is that the anti-apartheid movement, "a movement of great moral significance," is distorted beyond recognition.

Diplomatic relations between states do not imply the support of one nation for either the domestic or the foreign policies of the other. Indeed, Israel has consistently condemned apartheid, as well as the central role played by Arab countries in the history of racism against black Africans (for centuries, Arabs dominated the slave trade in Africa, and in certain Arab states, slavery still exists today). Israel has made its position on apartheid known to the Government of South Africa publicly at international forums, and privately in discussions with South African representatives. Israel believes that through such direct contact with South African officials, it is making its own contribution to a process which shall bring about a change in Pretoria's racial policies.

Israel's trade with South Africa is so modest as to be scarcely visible, amounting (according to IMF figures) to less than 1/2 of one percent of exports and 3/4 of one percent of imports. Close to twenty countries trade more extensively with South Africa, not to mention a number of Arab countries and black African countries which prefer to disguise their trade and conceal the statistics. Arab oil exports to South Africa amount to over \$1 billion per year, 76% of South Africa's oil needs. Arab oil sales to South Africa are twenty times that of Israel's total trade with that country.

Statistics for South African trade with Western nations put Israeli-South African trade even more clearly in context. Imports from the United Kingdom, Japan, West Germany and the United States amount to over \$9 billion worth of goods. Exports to these countries are approximately \$5.5 billion. In sum, it is the grossest misrepresentation to focus on a "special" Israeli-South African connection, when more the 99.5% of South Africa's business trade takes place with nations other than Israel.

As in trade, so too in the area of arms traffic there are attempts to portray "collaboration" between Israel and South Africa. Before the 1977 United Nations arms embargo of South Africa,

while the Western World was heavily engaged in arms traffic with South Africa, Israel's involvement was inconsequential. Between 1963 and 1975 more than \$1 billion worth of arms and war material were sold to South Africa. France was by far the largest supplier, followed by the United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany.

In that same period Israel was involved in the sum total of two arms deals with South Africa -- the building of six patrol boats and the supplying of surface-to-surface missiles to arm the boats.

In view of the large sale of tanks, missiles, submarines, bombers, and fighters by the major Western nations in those years, it is laughable to speak of an Israeli-South African military "connection." And today, when Israel is sticking to the embargo on arms, such charges are pure misrepresentation.

The 130,000 Jews of South Africa, number many campaigners against apartheid and activists for social justice. Clearly, representatives of the Jewish State have an understandable obligation to maintain contact with all Jewish communities. And not surprisingly, Jews from Israel and South Africa, both part of a people who have suffered from racism, have often joined together in public opposition to racist policy in South Africa. Such was the case when Israel's Ambassador joined with South African Jews and others in boycotting the premiere of the play, "Golda" because Africans were barred from the theatre in Pretoria.

Peres in a Meeting with Senior Journalists in America.  
"The Apartheid in South Africa is an Idiotic Regime"

(Ma'ariv, Oct 12)

"The apartheid regime in South Africa is an idiotic regime which is absurd and we as Jews unequivocally disassociate ourselves from it" - so declared Prime Minister Peres in a meeting held on Wednesday with publishers, editors and senior commentators of the American press.

Peres replied at length to a question of Bill Tatum, the black editor of the paper Amsterdam News, who referred to Israel's relations with South Africa and asked "How can a Jew consent to the apartheid in South Africa?"

Peres elaborated further on his answer and said: "We voted against this regime at the U.N. However, there is a Jewish community in South Africa and we are concerned for Jews all over the world". Peres also said that the trade between us and South Africa is miniscule. On the other hand "South Africa has Centurion tanks which were bought from Britain, Mirage jets from France, electronic equipment from Holland and it also maintains diplomatic ties with Black African Nations".

Bill Tatum responded with emotion to Peres' words and said "I would want you to say these things on television ". "Give me the time and I will say it" responded Peres. "I will not only say it; but I also believe in it and I am speaking for most of the Israelis".



OFFICIAL STATEMENTS BY THE STATE OF ISRAEL  
OPPOSING RACISM, APARTHEID AND ARMS SALES TO SOUTH AFRICA

"...it is no wonder that almost 80 years ago, Theodore Herzl, the founding father of modern Zionism, compared the oppression of Blacks in Africa to that which the Jews themselves had suffered, and he vowed that when he had witnessed the redemption of his own people, Israel, he would work for freedom in Africa..."

---- Ambassador Yehuda Blum, Israel's UN Representative, before the General Assembly, November 8, 1979.

"...Obviously, we cannot be anything but critical of a policy which, irrespective of historical and sociological reasons, tends to cause humiliation to others because of their race or color. In fact, we would be unfaithful to our Hebrew heritage if we would not be critical of such a policy...we abhor any form of racial discrimination and humiliation, and I believe that the South African government and enlightened public opinion in South Africa respect the candor with which we express our opinion..."

---- Ambassador I.D. Unna, then Israel's Ambassador to South Africa, September 3, 1978.

"Israel will comply with Security Council Resolution 418 (1977)<sup>1</sup> and, accordingly, Israel will not provide South Africa with arms or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment."

---- Note verbale from Israel to the UN Security Council, September 4, 1979. Israel's position of opposition to the provision of arms to South Africa has been repeatedly reaffirmed at the United Nations.

"...The State of Israel rose as a response to injustice and sufferings. It remains committed to social and racial equality. [The Israelis are] a people coming from the four corners of the earth. Many of them are of different origins and hues. All passionately reject racism. As recently as last December an international congress against racism was held in Tel Aviv. Representatives of teacher unions from different countries joined to study how to educate the young generation to tolerance and mutual understanding between peoples and races, how to alert it to the dangers of racism. In this spirit a call to the teachers of the world has been issued."

---- Ambassador of Israel before the UN Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, February 16, 1981.

"As a multiracial people of all colors and backgrounds, we cannot be anything but critical of a policy which causes humiliation to others on account of their race or color. In fact, we would be unfaithful to our Jewish heritage if we were to leave the slightest doubt in anybody's mind that we abhor any form of racism, racial discrimination or humiliation."

---- Ambassador Yehuda Blum, before the UN General Assembly on Policies of Apartheid of the Government of South Africa, November 12, 1980.

<sup>1</sup> The Security Council voted unanimously on November 4, 1977 to impose a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa.

"We have never missed an opportunity to publicly denounce apartheid and to associate ourselves with United Nations condemnations of apartheid. I express once again our total opposition to apartheid and to racism in any form."

---- Prime Minister Menachem Begin, interview with Afrique à la Une, June 1982.

"...nothing unites the people of Africa and the people of Israel more than a hatred of racism. Our people have suffered more than anyone else from racism, have fought and still fight, more than anyone else against this most horrible disease that still persists among mankind.

"Israel and its Government have consistently condemned publicly the policy of Apartheid, and I take this opportunity to express once more our abhorrence of Apartheid and of any form of racism wherever it may occur."

---- From remarks by President Chaim Herzog during the visit to Israel of Liberian President Dr. Samuel K. Doe, August 23, 1983.

"Israel is not a simple observer which merely sympathizes with the victims of racism and oppression. Our views have been shaped by bitter historical and emotional experience spanning centuries. Moreover, to no less an extent, our abhorrence of racism is rooted in the social norms which comprise an integral part of Judaism's teachings."

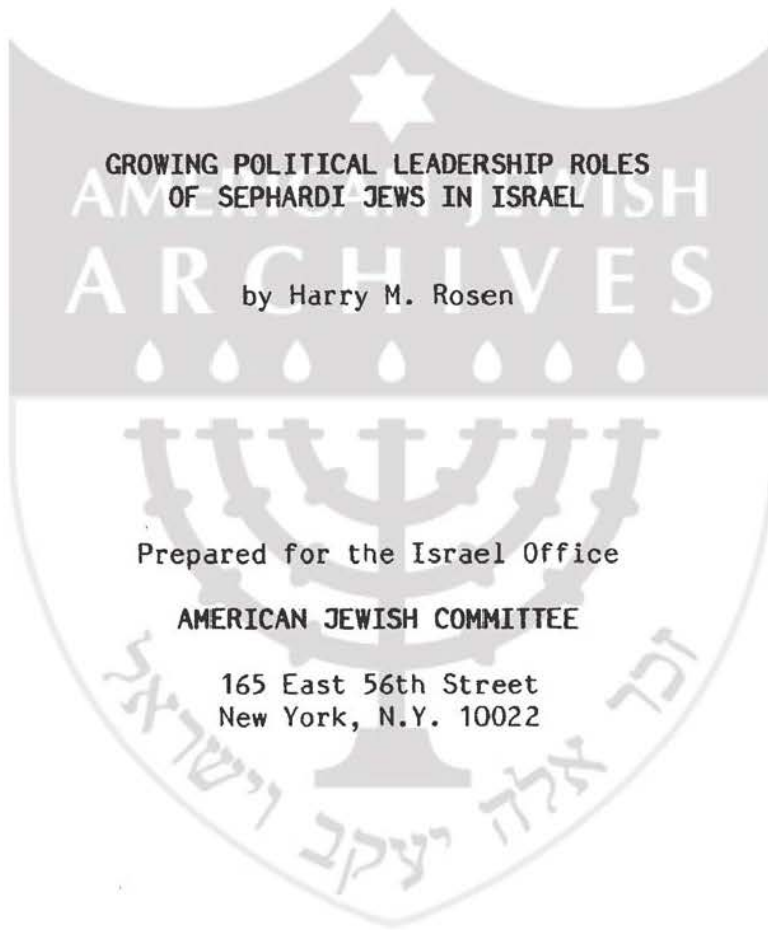
"Israel's position concerning apartheid and other manifestations of racial discrimination is clear: we oppose bigotry completely and unreservedly wherever and whenever it emerges. We have made this position known to the Government of South Africa on numerous occasions. By this direct approach, rather than through acrimonious rhetoric, we believe that the cause of eliminating racial discrimination is better served."

---- Ambassador Yehuda Blum, before the UN General Assembly, November 17, 1983.

(Prepared by the Israel and Middle East Affairs Division of the International Relations Department).

I079-Statement on Apartheid  
/gn-2/27/85





**GROWING POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ROLES  
OF SEPHARDI JEWS IN ISRAEL**

**AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES**

by Harry M. Rosen

Prepared for the Israel Office

**AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE**

165 East 56th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10022

זכר אלה יעקב וישראל

## PREFACE

Recognizing the paradox in Israeli society that the current majority in Israel's Jewish population is -- and has for some years been -- the Sephardim, while positions of power have remained predominantly in the hands of Ashkenazim, the American Jewish Committee's Israel Office commissioned this monograph by Harry Rosen to examine whether or not change has occurred in recent years. And if so, to what extent the Sephardi community has been acceding to political leadership. Sephardi involvement in selected and representative bodies and organizations is studied as an index of absorption, shared leadership, ranking and hierarchical arrangements.

The results are encouraging. Sephardim are rising in political leadership roles in most of the bodies selected for study. The Israeli-born Sephardi is doing much better than his immigrant father. Differences between Ashkenazim and Sephardim bear continued attention but are being progressively reduced. And if differences continue to exist -- and they do -- they are due not to immutable prejudice but to "the unequal history of opportunity."

We hope this preliminary study, which is only one of AJC's current efforts in the area of intergroup relations, will stimulate further research and will serve to create better understanding of the social characteristics of Israel's changing, growing society. I wish to acknowledge the helpful comments and suggestions of my colleagues, Dr. George E. Gruen, Director of Israel and Middle East Affairs in the International Relations Department, and his associate, Kenneth Bandler, during the course of the preparation of this study and its revision for publication.

Dr. M. Bernard Resnikoff, Director  
Israel Office





AMERICAN JEWISH  
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harry M. Rosen is Secretary-General of the Jewish Agency for Israel. He received a B.S. in Biology and Public Health from M.I.T. and an M.S. in Social Administration from Ohio State University. After a distinguished career in the United States and France with Jewish and non-sectarian organizations, he made aliyah with his family in 1967. Mr. Rosen is the author of several books, including Arabs and Jews in Israel (1970) and Volunteerism in Israel (1979), both published by the American Jewish Committee.

## LEADERSHIP ROLES OF SEPHARDI JEWS IN ISRAEL

After spending several months preparing this study, and reflecting on my own observations after almost sixteen years in Israel, I conclude that Sephardim are increasingly finding their place in leadership positions in Israel. While the proportion of Sephardim in leadership positions will undoubtedly continue to grow, there remain great tensions between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, especially in the political arena where the confrontation is between the "ins" and the "outs." However, these tensions are also spreading to the social arena, as the consciousness of potential Sephardi political power develops, and the disadvantaged part of the population organizes itself and presses for better housing, services, and general economic conditions.

In my view, another generation will see Sephardi leadership firmly established in all sectors of Israeli life, perhaps in the dominant positions politically. Another generation will see the Sephardi-Ashkenazi confrontation blurred and ultimately replaced by confrontations of "ins" and "outs" and "haves" and "have-nots" based on class or other lines, but not on ethnic lines.

### "Sephardi" vs. "Oriental"

Many people use the terms "Sephardi" and "Oriental" interchangeably. According to Dr. Sammy Smooha, a noted professor of sociology at Haifa University, the term "Oriental" rather than "Sephardi" more accurately describes the people of whom we are speaking. For many Sephardim, however, the term "Oriental" has pejorative connotations. Leaders in the World and American Sephardi Federations, for example, have expressed to me their strong resentment of the term. Professor Daniel Elazar, writing about confusion on the semantic level, has said that "in conventional usage, Ashkenazim are labelled 'Western' and Sephardim 'Oriental', terms clearly intended to reflect prevailing assumptions with regard to culture and modernity. In fact, however, these terms are more self-serving (to Ashkenazim) than accurate."

Dr. Smooha defines "Orientals" as "Jews from the Near East and North Africa; including descendants of Jews from Spain." Descendants of Jews from Spain include some southern European communities, such as those in Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. In addition, the Jews of Soviet Bokhara, Georgia and Tat are generally included in the non-Ashkenazi category.

For the purposes of this study, we will define Ashkenazim as the Jews of Eastern and Central European origin, while Sephardim or Orientals are Jews originating from North Africa and the Middle East, as well as those European Jewish communities whose ancestors came from Spain and Portugal. Since the terms "Sephardi" and "Ashkenazi" are commonly used in Israel -- for example, there is an Ashkenazi and a Sephardi chief rabbi -- we will include the Jews of Arab and Islamic country origin, in the category of Sephardim.



## Social and Economic Indicators

The Statistical Annual of Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics monitors the social and economic status of Ashkenazim and Sephardim according to "Continent of Origin" such as Afro-Asia and Europe-America. The Director of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Professor Moshe Sicron, summarized recent trends in a paper presented at a conference on "Social Divisions in Israel: The Ethnic Dimension," at the Hebrew University in May 1983.

According to Professor Sicron, the Israeli population has changed from a nation of immigrants to a nation of Sabras, or native-born Israelis. More than 57% of today's Jewish population was born in Israel. While Jews of European origin used to comprise the majority of the population, Jews originating from Arab and Islamic countries now make up more than 50% of the population. The continued influx of immigrants from Europe, primarily from the Soviet Union, during the 1970s, and the U.S. has prevented the Sephardi percentage from rising even further. An examination of the population according to age group indicates that the Sephardim will continue to grow as a percentage of the total population. For example, some 60% of Jews in the 15-29 years-old group are of Sephardi origin, while among the elderly the larger percentage is of European-American background.

Sicron presented statistical evidence showing that the gap between the two groups is closing in some areas, such as health, though wide disparities remain in others. In the areas of adult and infant mortality, there is now almost no difference between those of Afro-Asian and European-American backgrounds. A similar development has taken place with regard to fertility and birth control. Whereas in 1951, those of Afro-Asian background had twice the number of children as did those of European-American origin, in 1982 parents of Afro-Asian origin were having only five percent more births than their European-American counterparts. While Sephardim have decreased their fertility rate tremendously, Ashkenazim have maintained a steady rate. With regard to the average age at marriage, the difference that used to exist between the groups has largely disappeared; Sephardi women, who used to marry at an early age, now get married at an age similar to the European-American women (20 to 24).

Wide gaps between Ashkenazim and Sephardim remain in terms of educational achievement and geographic distribution. Those Jews who originally came from African and Asian countries generally had very low educational exposure. Programs were set up in Israel to teach the next generation starting from the pre-kindergarten years. Almost all of those born in Israel have had at least an elementary school education, placing them on a par with their co-religionists of European-American origin.

At the high school level the disparity between the two ethnic groups is significant. Although 77-83% of Sephardim attend high schools, a percentage that is similar to Ashkenazim, the kind of high school attended further reinforces the gap in education. The vast majority of Ashkenazim are enrolled in academic high schools. Only one-third of the Sephardi high school students are in such programs, while two-thirds are in vocational and agricultural programs. This predominance in technical and agricultural programs closes the door to further academic study in university for which academic instruction on the high school level is required. Perhaps as a result, Ashkenazi enrollment predomi-



nates at the university level. Approximately 50% of Israeli-born children of European-American descent have had university education, compared with only five percent of those with Arab and Islamic country origins.

Professor Sicron also noted that the government's policy of settling Sephardi immigrants affects their social integration into Israeli society. When the new immigrants came en masse from Arab and Islamic countries, Sicron noted, they were sent to towns and neighborhoods according to national origin. This resulted in settlements, frontier towns and neighborhoods having one nationality dominance. Of 797 rural settlements, 20% are populated by Sephardim. Of these, 74% are one-country dominant in origin. (It should be noted that in the moshavim established since 1948, some 70% of the population is of Sephardi origin. Forty percent of city neighborhoods are one-country origin dominant.) About 75% of the European-American originated population live in areas that are overwhelmingly Ashkenazi.

The number of marriages between Sephardim and Ashkenazim steadily increased over the years and now represents some 20% of all Jewish marriages in Israel. If we include such ethnically mixed marriages among children born in Israel, the percentage is 23%.

Sicron raised the question whether the choice of partner was determined by nationality or whether educational achievement was the primary determining factor. For example, the percentage of mixed marriages increased when the husband is Sephardi and has 16 or more years of education, because he is more likely to marry an Ashkenazi girl with high educational achievement, since the number of Sephardi women with 16 years of education is limited. Similarly, an Ashkenazi man with more than 16 years of education rarely married a Sephardi. Ashkenazi men usually seek out Ashkenazi women with similar educational backgrounds. Those with a low education level may marry Sephardi women with similar level of education. When a Sephardi female marries an Ashkenazi male, the educational levels of both are usually low. When a Sephardi male marries an Ashkenazi female, their combined educational average is usually high.

In his report, Sicron did not discuss the comparative economic status of the two groups. However, the Central Bureau of Statistics' studies of urban wage earners reveal a serious gap in income. In 1981, Sephardi family income, with an average of 1.6 wage-earners per household, equaled 80.8% of Ashkenazi family income. This represented an improvement over 1965, when Sephardi family income was only 71.7% of Ashkenazi family income. But Sephardi families in 1981 had an average of 4.6 persons per household, as compared with 3.1 persons per Ashkenazi household. This means that Sephardi per capita income was only 55% of Ashkenazi per capita income in 1981.

The figures for Israeli-born wage-earners, however, indicate that the gap is closing. Although the figures are not broken down according to continent of origin of the fathers, there is no question that the Israeli-born generation of Sephardi families is doing much better than the parent generation. With 1.6 wage-earners per household, Israeli-born household income in 1981 was 97 percent of European-American household income. With an average of 3.6 persons per household, per capita income was 84% of European-American family income.



The figures continue to show a direct correlation between years of schooling of wage-earners and income. The less formal education, the less income. The more years of schooling, the more income. In a society where more and more education is required for Israel's increasingly technology-based industry, the educationally disadvantaged become the economically disadvantaged. To the extent, therefore, that Sephardim have less higher education than Ashkenazim, the income disparities will continue.

### The Issue of Leadership

Political leadership is the principal concern of this paper. The term "leader," as used here, betokens influence, power, a constituency. Actually, I see leadership as a reflection of the status of Sephardim in Israel thirty-six years after the rebirth of the State. Clearly, the Ashkenazim play the majority role in Israel, although they constitute something less than half the Jewish population. Dr. Smooha writes: "Despite their numerical preponderance (about 55 percent of all Israeli Jews), they (Orientals) occupy a subordinate position in the Jewish community. The Ashkenazim, European Jews, are the old-timers who founded the new Jewish society, set up its Western or Eastern European social institutions, and still run it."<sup>1</sup>

Although Dr. Smooha wrote the above in 1978, it is still true today. Political power is still in the hands of Ashkenazim. The school system continues to reflect the values and culture of the Eastern European founding fathers of Israel. The closest thing that Israel has to the "Protestant ethic" of the United States, cited as the American ethic and established by a distinct minority, is the "kibbutz ethic," established by Israel's "Pilgrims" beginning a century ago.

The vast majority of Ashkenazim will argue that ethnic discrimination is not a factor inhibiting Sephardi leadership achievement. But many Sephardim maintain that discrimination is indeed a significant factor hindering their advancement. One theory about the nature of relations between Sephardim and Ashkenazim widely accepted by Israeli sociologists (most of them, incidentally, Ashkenazim), is described by Dr. Smooha as the "absorption-modernization model of Oriental-Ashkenazi relations." This is a "Zionist" model, what Smooha calls "a nation-building perspective." The problem is seen in terms of "absorbing" the masses of Jews who came to Israel in the early years of the State from the Arab and Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East, and then "modernizing" them to fit into the modern "western" society which Israel was building. For those who accept this model, Israel has been successful by and large in carrying out "Mizug Galuyot," the "fusion of the exiles," into some kind of Israeli entity.

How then can one explain the clearly ethnic-based confrontation that has appeared in Israeli society in recent years? How can one explain the frustrations expressed by an increasing proportion of the largely Sephardi disadvantaged sector of Israel's Jewish population?

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Smooha is preparing an annotated bibliography on Ashkenazi-Sephardi relations for the American Jewish Committee.



At the Hebrew University conference on "Social Divisions in Israel: the Ethnic Dimension," the distinguished Israeli sociologist Professor S.N. Eisenstadt, a supporter of the "absorption-modernization" model, agreed that there were indeed dangerous tensions between the two groups. However, he sees these tensions deriving not from cultural differences between the two groups, but from internal developments in Israel. In the early years of the State, Professor Eisenstadt notes, all immigrants were united in the common struggle to build the State. It was not until the late 1950s and 1960s, that labels based on country of origin began to apply, and divisions in the society became apparent. Professor Eisenstadt further notes that the Jews from North Africa and the Middle East do not demand separatism. Rather, they express frustration in terms of not being able to advance fast enough within the society.

Professor Smootha says that "Oriental-Ashkenazi relations can be better conceptualized in terms of a 'dynamic paternalism-cooptation' model" than by an absorption-modernization model. He continues: "Briefly, the Orientals are coopted into an Ashkenazi-dominated system. Since they are still 'unqualified,' they cannot move freely into higher echelons because of Ashkenazi paternalism, yet their status is changing with the erosion in the inhibitory forces." Professor Smootha takes the centuries-old separatism of the two ethnic groups as a point of departure. "The mass influx of 'forgotten' Oriental Jews after 1948 presented a problem to the established Ashkenazi groups, which viewed them as 'backward' non-Europeans... The policies of immigrant absorption and modernization were employed in a piecemeal, partial fashion in order to avert the possible hazards of overflowing the Western structure with Orientalism, rather than to promote equality and integration. While professing the ideals of the ingathering and merging of exiles, the Ashkenazim looked down on the Orientals as 'a generation of the desert.' This paternalistic, strong though unofficial, ideology, which conceives of the Orientals as impossible to be perfected, has delayed full equality to the next generation or reserved it to the select few."

Professor Avraham Friedman, Senior Lecturer in Business Administration at the Hebrew University, draws from the corporate experience with upward mobility to make the point that "the Ashkenazim got in first." The Ashkenazim were already firmly rooted in Palestine when the State was established in 1948. They had already laid the foundations of the establishment that would govern and set the tone for the State. Since it was a young as well as a small establishment, they could preempt virtually all the positions, and hold on to them for a long time. Add to this the advantages in educational level of the Ashkenazi pioneers, and one can see how they dominated the leadership echelons in Israel for such a long time.

It, therefore, would appear that Sephardim were not barred from leadership positions by virtue of their being Sephardim, but that the crucial issue was unequal qualifications which were translated into unequal opportunities. In a country where the correlation between income, for example, and years of schooling is direct, consider that less than 20% of university graduates come from the Sephardi community.

Indeed, Professor Chaim Adler argues that the social and economic gap will be further narrowed when the educational gap is closed. There are many social scientists and other observers of Israel's ethnic scene who also believe the answer lies in education. It must be remembered that only twenty years ago Israel had an illiteracy rate (defined as zero years of schooling) of some 16%,



almost all of it concentrated in the adult population of Arab and Islamic country origin. This does not exist today simply because all children must go to school for at least ten years, and, in fact, the proportion of youth in high school - something near 80% - is almost the same for both ethnic groups.

To be sure, as noted above, there is a much higher proportion of Sephardi youth in vocational tracks of high school education and proportionately less in the academic tracks. (But, in a country whose economy is developing increasingly in the direction of high technology, this may become an advantage rather than a handicap.) In the meantime, however, in terms of stereotypes, Ashkenazim are associated with academic education and Sephardim as - at best - "Johnny-come-latelies" to higher education. While the proportion of Sephardim in universities remains far below their proportion in the population, it is increasing rapidly.

Co-optation of Sephardim by the Ashkenazi-controlled establishment has been a major factor in the leadership achievements of Sephardim. In recent years, however, groups that are predominantly Sephardi, such as the Tami and Shas parties, have given the kind of public exposure to Sephardi leaders which has enabled them to move upward significantly, particularly in the political field. We are increasingly finding that where the majority of the constituency is Sephardi, the elected officials are Sephardi especially in the case of local politics. Many of the young Sephardi leaders who "learned the business" in local politics are now mobilizing the large Sephardi constituencies to help them achieve leadership roles on the national scene.

The influence of the sizable Sephardi electorate in Israel's national elections has been well documented by the Israeli pollster, Hanoach Smith, who is Director of the Smith Research Center in Jerusalem. In a special report prepared by Mr. Smith for the American Jewish Committee in August 1984, "Highlights of Israel's Election Results: Polarization, Fragmentation and Ethnicity", he projected that by 1990 Sephardim will constitute more than 50% of all Jewish voters. This means that in future Knesset elections the Sephardi electorate will play an even more crucial role, which cannot be ignored by any of the major political parties. It also means that Sephardi political leaders will advance through the ranks of the establishment parties, which until now have been dominated by Ashkenazi politicians.

While Jews of European-American origin and those of Arab and Islamic country origin voted similarly in all national elections from 1949 to 1969, the Sephardim have thrown their electoral weight behind the Likud Party and its allies in the last three elections. Thus, as Mr. Smith points out in his report, Labor and parties allied with it gained only 24.6% of this vote in 1977, 22.5% in 1981, and 21.5% in 1984. The Likud and its allies received nearly 70% of this vote in 1981. Despite the unresolved situation in Lebanon and the serious economic problems, some 72% of the Sephardi vote went to Likud in the 1984 elections. While Mr. Smith points out that his opinion surveys show that the Sephardim prefer Likud because they perceive that party as being better on the social and economic issues, he notes that the reasons for the dramatic shift in voting patterns by Sephardi Jews are still the subject of much debate in Israel.



## Sephardim in Leadership Roles

Professor Smooha has gathered extensive data on Oriental leadership roles in a broad range of political fields, the army, police, and public organizations, for his book, Israel: Pluralism and Conflict (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). For the purposes of this paper his researchers recently updated much of this information through 1983. For certain political positions, I have incorporated the results of the 1984 national elections.

The researcher faces certain difficulties in classifying individuals as Oriental or Ashkenazi from rosters of office-holders, when he relies mainly on the name and some common knowledge about the person. For example, Ohayon is known to be a Moroccan name, and Chayat is an Iraqi name. But Deputy Prime Minister David Levy obviously could not be classified by name alone. It is common knowledge that he was born in Morocco and, therefore, he can be labelled accordingly for the purposes of this study. There are, however, many Cohens and Levys in the Oriental community, as there are in the Ashkenazi community, who cannot be so easily categorized. Professor Smooha's researchers, therefore, classified as "Oriental" only those individuals who are definitely known to have Arab and Islamic country origins. When there was any doubt, the individuals were listed as Ashkenazi. Thus, the figures given below are probably conservative on the Oriental side.

## Prime Ministers and Presidents

There have been six Presidents of Israel, one of whom was of the Sephardi community. Yitzhak Navon, who served as President from 1978 to 1983, is of Moroccan origin. As yet, there has not been an Oriental Prime Minister. However, during the previous Likud government, David Levy who was born in Morocco, served as Deputy Prime Minister.

## Cabinet Ministers

In 1955, one of the twelve Cabinet Ministers was Oriental (8.3%), while in 1973, two of the 18 were Oriental (11.1%). In 1983, four of 19 Ministers were of Oriental background (21.1%). (It should be noted that the last government had eight Deputy Ministers, three of whom were Oriental (37.5%).) The current Government of National Unity has 25 Cabinet Ministers, four of whom are Sephardi. They are: Yitzhak Navon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Culture; David Levy, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction and Housing; Moshe Katzav, Minister of Labor and Social Affairs; Moshe Shahal, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure; and Yitzhak Peretz, Minister of Interior.

## Knesset Members

In 1955, ten of 113 Jewish Members of Knesset were Sephardi (8.8%), in 1973, 19 of 114 Jewish MKs (16.7%), and in 1983, 30 of 115 MKs (26.1%) were of Arab and Islamic country origin. As a result of the national elections held



last July, the current Knesset has 113 Jewish members, 32 of whom are Sephardi (28.3%). This reflects the steady, if gradual, rise in the percentage of Sephardim in the nation's parliament.

### Supreme Court Justices

The High Court commands great prestige in Israel, as in most western countries. There are many Sephardi lawyers, and probably a goodly number of judges. In 1973, the first Sephardi judge was appointed to the Supreme Court. There is only one on that bench today, out of ten justices.

### Israel Defense Forces

The number of Orientals in leadership positions in the Israel Defense Forces has definitely improved, but the exact figures are difficult to obtain because of the name problems. The importance of the IDF in terms of security and in the daily life of the nation gives officers very high status and prestige. In addition, the IDF is the key social integrating institution in Israeli society. Professor Smootha reports that in an interview in the late 1970s with then Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, he was told that at least 30% of all army officers were from the Sephardi community.

The present Chief of Staff, General Moshe Levi, is Sephardi. A previous Chief of Staff, the late David Elazar, came from Yugoslavia and is thus considered to belong in the Sephardi column.

In 1955, according to Professor Smootha's data, there were no Orientals among six Major Generals, and in 1973, none among 21 Major Generals. However, his data show three Sephardim among 24 Major Generals in 1982.

Newspaper reporters do not always exercise the same scientific caution as sociologists. In a recent article reviewing the status of Sephardim in the IDF, journalist Yaakov Haelyon wrote in the Hebrew daily Ma'ariv (March 28, 1983) that "It is inconceivable that the Israel Defense Forces would entrust human lives and security - the very soul of the nation - to people selected on the basis of national origin or in order to 'balance' ethnic ratios." He continued: "When I investigated the ethnic issue in the IDF, I was both surprised and proud<sup>2</sup> to learn that many Oriental Jews held command, expert and leadership positions and that they played a major role in contributing to our security - in the field and at headquarters - throughout all of Israel's battles." Haelyon could not list the names of all the brigadier-generals, but he reports that at least five IDF Corps are headed by Sephardim, and many others serve as senior staff officers, division commanders and in other classified positions. Without being able to account for all of them, Haelyon found 13 brigadier-generals, a rank which he stresses "is not awarded easily or over-generously in the IDF."

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<sup>2</sup> Note: I don't know whether the "proud" is an indication that he is himself Oriental -- to use his own designation -- or whether he is being a proud Israeli.

### Police Force

The police force is commonly viewed as being made up of Sephardi "troops" and Ashkenazi "commanders." In 1955, barely four percent of all police officers (holding commissions) were Sephardim. In 1969 the proportion had jumped to 25%. It was not possible to get more recent figures, but it is generally accepted that the proportion of Sephardi officers in the police force has increased substantially since 1969. Sephardim do occupy top posts. Ma'ariv reporter Haelyon cites the examples of the National Chief of Police Operations, who was born in Kurdistan; the Moroccan-originated commander of the Tel Aviv District; and the Libyan originated head of the Quartermaster Division, who formerly served as deputy commander of the Northern District.

### World Zionist Organization

The WZO continues to be a stronghold of Ashkenazi domination. From 1955 to 1960, only one of 51 Israeli members of the Zionist Executive was Sephardi. In 1972-73, six of 45 members were Sephardim. A significant change was initiated with the affiliation to the WZO of the World Sephardi Federation, and the establishment within the WZO of a Department for Sephardi Affairs. Today, three of the 20 Israeli members of the Zionist Executive and seven of the 49 Israeli members of the Zionist General Council are Sephardim. The current Chairman of the Zionist General Council is Sephardi, as were his two predecessors, one of whom was Yitzhak Navon.

### Histadrut

This is the General Federation of Labor in Israel, a very powerful body in which are organized the vast majority of Israel's workers. Israel Kessar, who was born in Yemen, is the current Secretary-General of the Histadrut. He is the first Sephardi to hold that position. The Histadrut dates back to long before the establishment of the State, and founded many of the country's social, health and educational institutions. It is also a major entrepreneurial institution, its holding company Hevrat Ovdim owning and/or controlling some 22% of Israel's industrial production. In other words, the Histadrut is a highly important and prestigious public body.

In 1956, there were no Sephardim on the thirteen-member Central Committee of the Histadrut. In 1973, five of the 20 members were Sephardim. In 1983, there were 12 Sephardim among the 42-member Central Committee. On the Executive Council, which had 91 members in 1956, there were eight Sephardim. In 1970, the proportion had risen to 34 out of 163. In 1983, there were 84 Sephardim among the 198 members of the Executive Council, or 42.4%.

Among the thirty-four General Secretaries of unions in 1983, ten were Sephardim. On the Executive of the holding company Hevrat Ovdim, there are four Sephardim among the 32 members, and 14 among the 62 members of the Secretariat (not very high, but a higher proportion than in the Presidium and Executive Committee of the Industrialists Association of Israel).



## Political Parties

In a country with so political a culture as Israel political parties are obviously important bodies, and considerable influence and prestige is attached to membership in the governing bodies of the parties.

In 1983, about 30%, or 1,200, out of some 4,000 members of the governing committees of five major political parties were Sephardim. In 1950, only eight out of 104 of members of the top governing bodies in five major parties were Sephardim. In 1973, the proportion was 14 out of 130. Because the current lists of the Herut<sup>3</sup> committees could not be obtained, it is necessary to depend on "informed" estimates. It is estimated that today 35 of the estimated 170 members of the top committees of five major parties are Sephardim.

With the splintering and regrouping of Israel's political parties, it is difficult to make accurate comparisons between the situation today and five and ten years ago. However, given the available data, there are some interesting trends. From the early 1950s to 1973, there was a fairly consistent proportion of Sephardim in the Labor Party's top committee, the "Bureau": about 9-12% of a body averaging from 17-22 members. Today there are 80 people in the Labor Party Bureau, of whom 13, or 16.3% are Sephardim. In the much larger Central Committee, with 1,143 members, there are 363 Sephardim (31.8%).

The National Religious Party has the highest proportion of Sephardim in its top committees: seven out of fifteen members in one committee (46.7%), and 17 out of 59 on the other top committee (28.8%). In the larger, lower-echelon committees, the proportions are 24.6% (17 out of 69 members) and 42.5% (105 out of 247 members), respectively.

The Liberal Party has low percentages compared to the other parties -- only one Sephardi in its eight-member Presidium; six out of 48 and 53 out of 244 in its lower committees.

The proportions for the Herut Party have varied considerably over the years, for reasons that perhaps can be explained simply by the changes in the party structure. With an Executive Committee ranging from nine members in 1949-51 to 31 members in 1973, the percentage of Sephardim was zero in 1949-51 and 12.9% in 1973. However, in 1968-70 the proportion was 31.3%, and in the two prior Executives about 20%. Unfortunately, as stated above, the lists for 1983 could not be obtained, but there is unquestionably a high proportion as compared with most other parties, somewhere between 30-35% by some estimates. As for the larger Central Committee, there were only two Sephardi members of the 29-member committee in 1949-51 (6.9%), 73 out of 251 members in 1973 (29.1%) and an estimated 35-40% in 1983.

Considering how poorly the Labor Party fared in the last two elections in predominantly Sephardi neighborhoods, I would have expected a much lower percentage of Sephardi committee members in Labor than in Herut. This is not the case, and the answer to the why of Labor's performance at the polls, as far as the "neighborhoods" are concerned, must be sought elsewhere.

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<sup>3</sup> Herut is the main political party in the Likud bloc.



## Local Bodies

Where Sephardim are the majority population, they hold the political power. It is a pyramidal phenomenon, as we have seen in the parties. Sephardim hold a much greater proportion of the posts in local authorities and other bodies because they are by far the largest proportion of the population in the development towns and the smaller local units.

In 1955, only 11 of 96 heads of local authorities were Sephardi, and by 1972, the proportion had increased to 33 out of 98. In 1983, there were 44 Sephardi heads of local authorities out of 100.

Referring now only to 1983 figures, the influential local Workers' Councils have 45 Sephardi Secretaries out of 68, or 66 percent.

The cooptation theory undoubtedly was politically applicable in the early and middle years of the State, insofar as party - then Ashkenazi - control over local constituents is concerned. It is much less the case today, perhaps not applicable at all. The local bodies have served to propel their Sephardi leaders onto the national scene. Nowhere is this more true than in Herut. It may well be that the politically-wise Herut leaders, with their image as a "populist" party, maintain this image by "coopting" this local leadership. But these new leaders - former mayors of development towns, for example - know their political strength is in the people who made them leaders in the first place. As this knowledge grows and with it political sophistication, the cooptation formula may well be reversed, with the leaders of the Sephardi voter majority "coopting" the Ashkenazi "minority" where it is needed.

## What Does it All Mean?

The figures tell the story: the Sephardi share of leadership in Israel is growing. More specifically, in the political field, it is clear that the Sephardi community will determine the next government. The Sephardim are becoming a numerical majority in the electorate. It is true that the near equality in birth rate and the larger proportion of Ashkenazim among new immigrants may in time reduce the margin of Sephardi numerical majority. In the meantime, the younger Sephardi population has more children reaching voting age.

There will undoubtedly continue to be more Ashkenazim in positions of political leadership for another generation. Nevertheless, they will have to take the Sephardi voters more and more into account. Likud has a potential Sephardi Prime Minister in David Levy. And, the name of another Sephardi, Yitzhak Navon, has been advanced as a possible Labor candidate for Prime Minister. In the party elections that preceded last July's Knesset elections, both Levy and Navon were serious contenders for the top position of their respective parties. Although Yitzhak Shamir retained his position as Herut leader, and thus Likud's candidate for prime minister, Levy received an impressive 40% of the votes, including substantial support from Ashkenazi members of the Herut Central Committee, and was placed second on the party's list for the Knesset elections. Navon was easily the most popular candidate of the rank and file to head the Labor Party, but in the interests of preserving party unity, he



decided not to challenge the incumbent party leader, Shimom Peres. In any case, for a moment it seemed very possible that in 1984 Israel would have its first Sephardi prime minister.

Political dominance, if - and probably when - they achieve it, by Sephardim is not necessarily the answer to the ultimate position of Sephardim in Israeli society. Nor is it class. The answer to those who claim the differences are class rather than ethnic background is that, for the Sephardi population, the net result is the same: their position is still inferior.

Professor Smooha insists that the issue is ideological. The origin of prevailing ideologies in Israel today is Ashkenazi. The Sephardi community has not yet had a chance, he says, to shape new ideologies which can challenge those of the dominant Ashkenazim. In establishing the framework for his chapter on "Pluralism and Inequality," Professor Smooha points out that "pluralism stands simply for cultural diversity and social separation, and inequality refers to socioeconomic gaps and power disparities." He points out further that "Orientals and the Ashkenazim... share the same core-culture, i.e., language, nationality, religion, family structure and basic ideology."

The need to settle the land and the accompanying need to build a country in the most literal sense made labor a basic ideological value of Israel's pioneers and founding fathers. Labor in this pioneer sense has since become rather devalued. Tolerance of differences and "love of brothers" were seen as values brought from Eastern Europe, although they are values basic to Jewish life everywhere and throughout the history of the Jewish people. Indeed, in recent months, police (ironically, many of them Sephardim) are trying to cope with violent riots in the Ashkenazi Mea Shearim quarter of Jerusalem, where the haredim - religious zealots - are invoking formal curses on those working on archeological digs, and stoning the police in the process. And it should also be noted that Rabbi Meir Kahane, who has called in the Knesset for anti-democratic measures against the Arabs, was born in Brooklyn, New York, and is of Ashkenazi origin. Thus, a measure of humility would be proper for Israelis of western origin who fear that as Israel's population becomes increasingly Sephardi in origin there will be a weakening of "western democratic values" in the country.

There are a number of developments in Israel today which point to the emergence of new ideological values, and, certainly, concerns which will find their expression in new or redefined values. The impetus seems to be coming from the Sephardi side. One basic concern of the nation is the social gap. For most of Israel's 36 years as a state, the eyes of the population were always turned towards the borders. The major concern was defense and security. Election campaigns were fought on the issues of economic and foreign policies. No political party in Israel included social policy as a top priority in its campaign platform.

There are new winds blowing across the political scene today. More and more, political leaders, mainly Sephardim, are calling for greater attention to social issues. It is no accident that much of the support for the candidacies of David Levy and Yitzhak Navon as potential leaders of their respective parties is based on the social views of these men. The young leaders in Herut, whose base was their leadership in development towns, are talking about social justice



and equal opportunity at home rather than about foreign policy. This is becoming increasingly important as the austerity measures being adopted by the government to deal with the economic crisis lead to cuts in social services.

The Black Panthers, a group from Musrara, a Jerusalem slum neighborhood which is almost entirely North African, first gave organized expression to the call for equal opportunity. A whole new generation of leadership is coming of age in the deprived city neighborhoods and the development towns. They are the members of the local steering committees in some 70 predominantly Sephardi neighborhoods and towns, who are responsible for the planning and implementation of Project Renewal in their communities. It was the American Jewish contributors who, having watched the failure of urban renewal programs in the United States, made it a condition of their participation in Project Renewal that the local residents constitute at least half of the local steering committees. Thus, after some five years of successful experience in Project Renewal, these local leaders are beginning to feel their political oats, and must increasingly be reckoned with as an important factor in Israel's political scene.

The Jewish Agency, in conjunction with the World Sephardi Federation and the University of Haifa, initiated some years ago a program called "Bridging the Gap," which made it possible for civil servants in development towns to complete or acquire at least the first university degree. Dr. Yael Yishai, of the Political Science Department of Haifa University, conducted a study of the graduates of this program. Two of the conclusions drawn from this research are the following: Graduates are the sons and daughters of Sephardi immigrants who live in the development towns and neighborhoods. Second, higher education has created a significant transformation in the life of these graduates, psychologically raising their self-esteem, financially improving their standard of living, and in a certain measure increasing their political involvement.

Here, then, is another element encouraging the growth and development in Israel of a new breed of political leader - young Sephardim concerned with social values. Together with the new activities deriving from Project Renewal, there are already a few thousand Sephardim who have started to climb the ladder of leadership, carrying with them new goals and new values.

Finally, one small but very significant new development is worth noting here: the emergence of a movement called "East for Peace." The Jerusalem Post article of July 8, 1983 describing the movement is captioned "Smashing the Stereotype," namely, that the Sephardim are all hawkish in their views on solving the Arab-Israel conflict. The opening paragraph states: "East for Peace aspires to be much more than a Sephardi version of Peace Now. The movement, barely one month old, has on its agenda nothing less than a total revolution in Israeli society." The movement's aims, as stated in its founding proclamation, are: to encourage the peace process in the Middle East; to combat allegations that Oriental Israelis are extremist, violent and hostile to peace; to further the political consciousness of the Oriental masses, who have been subject to political manipulation, and to support their struggle for the realization of their true social and cultural rights.

In concluding the article, journalist Daniel Gavron writes: "How significant is East for Peace? A colleague points out that the late Elie Eliachar, a leading Sephardi figure in Jerusalem, used to say the same things about peace and about Oriental Jews being able to make contact with the Arabs. But Eliachar



was a representative of the small Sephardi aristocracy, while East for Peace represents the mass immigration of the 1960s, the 'second Israel', which is at last starting to find its voice. Only time will tell whether we are seeing the emergence of just another marginal protest group, or a dynamic movement which will turn this country on its head."

Looking at East for Peace as part of the new social thrust of a new Sephardi leadership, and looking at the history of the past several years in terms of growing Sephardi political position and power, I see the leadership gap being closed. I see Sephardim assuming their deserved place in Israeli society. But I don't know what kind of culture, what kind of values my grandchildren will have. Whatever it will be, it will not be Sephardi or Ashkenazi - it will be Israeli. And I am hopeful that the new Israeli leaders will continue to enrich Israel's democratic society.



85-580-5

February, 1985

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3.6.85  
**'Iron Fist' and trade**  
NEPR Edit. CSM (13)

M.T.

**P**OLITICAL realities within Israel are said to explain why the coalition government headed by Shimon Peres has decided to cover Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon with its starkly caustic operation "Iron Fist." When politicians must do something that faces significant opposition in their society, they may feel compelled to combine concessions with indications that they have not given up the tough line. In this case, Mr. Peres may think that to end Israel's costly occupation in Lebanon in a politically acceptable way, it is necessary to stun the Shiites as the Israelis withdraw.

Another line of explanation is Israel's need to protect its flank and not allow its troops to become easy targets for reprisal.

But the reports of Israel's harsh tactics cannot be satisfactory either from the Israeli standpoint or for the United States, in whose capital Israel's emissaries and supporters are now seeking enhanced economic aid and a special free trade pact the likes of which the US has never made with anyone else.

For Israel, the withdrawal operation adds to the negative aspects that have already accumulated from its original invasion. In southern Lebanon Israel has awakened a population that had been fairly dormant; it has embittered a people who are, at least on the fringes, radical in their outlook. It remains to be seen whether the animosity aroused among the Shiite Muslims in southern Lebanon will lapse once the withdrawal concludes. If the Israelis keep some kind of presence on the Lebanese border, if only an in-and-out presence, they may continue to be vulnerable to Shiite reaction.

In Washington, the current carefully expedited treatment of Israel's economic needs should come as no surprise, given a familiar pattern in which Congress so often tries to go an administration's request for Israel one better. Of the free-trade-zone project, which would involve a mutual scaling back of tariffs over the next decade, Congress is not likely even to consider questions such as: Why not similar treatment for other countries such as Egypt, second to Israel in US aid, if such pacts would prove mutually beneficial as claimed?

Gestures like the free-trade pact, however much a reflection of American domestic political attitudes and unrelated to any United States hope to promote Middle East peace, add to the general impression in the Arab world of America's lack of neutrality. The same can be said about Israel's iron-fist policy in Lebanon: Whatever the short-term political context, it inevitably contributes to a wider embitterment among Israel's neighbors and makes it more difficult for moderate Arabs safely to step forward to negotiate peace.





## AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

### STATEMENT ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS

By Howard I. Friedman, President

The American Jewish Committee welcomes the latest initiatives of Prime Minister Peres of Israel and President Mubarak of Egypt to improve relations between their two countries and to encourage efforts to broaden the Camp David peace process through direct negotiations. King Hussein of Jordan has indicated that he also favors negotiations on the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and the participation of Palestinians in the framework of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

We welcome the signs of good faith manifested in Jerusalem, Cairo and Amman. We believe that the insistence by the Reagan Administration that the primary responsibility for resolving the issues in dispute rests on the parties in the Middle East has had a salutary and sobering effect within the Arab world. The repeatedly demonstrated readiness of the Government and people of Israel to make significant concessions for the sake of peace may also have finally evoked a positive response.

However, many difficulties remain. Indeed, it has become increasingly doubtful in recent days whether Yasir Arafat and the factions of the fragmented Palestine Liberation Organization that remain loyal to him are genuinely prepared to recognize the legitimacy of Israel and its right to live within secure and recognized borders, as required by Resolution 242. It thus remains to be seen whether King Hussein will be willing and able to enter negotiations with moderate Palestinian representatives, who are not officials of the PLO and who favor permanent peace with Israel in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian context.

There is thus no basis for premature jubilation. Indeed, the Hussein-Arafat joint agreement of February 11, 1985 is not only full of ambiguities but contains elements that are fundamentally inconsistent with the peace process agreed upon by the United States, Israel and Egypt. It falls far short of a serious peace proposal.

Yet one should not be overly pessimistic, for the peace process has always been fraught with difficulties. We are confident that the United States Government will continue to offer its good offices to aid all parties who genuinely seek peace through negotiations.

We trust that during President Mubarak's forthcoming visit to Washington, President Reagan will also impress upon him the importance that the United States attaches to full normalization of Egypt's relations with Israel as a necessary practical step in restoring the positive atmosphere to further the advancement of the peace process.

March 5, 1985  
85-580-8

*Memo*

March 4, 1985

TO: NJCRAC and CJF Member Agencies

FROM: Arden E. Shenker and Rabbi Israel Miller, Co-Chairs, NJCRAC Israel Task Force

RE: Action Recommendations Concerning Developments on the Middle East Diplomatic Front

In light of the media's intense interest in "new Middle East peace initiatives"—witness the emphasis yesterday on ABC's "This Week with David Brinkley" and this morning's CBS Morning News—we want to share the assessment of the NJCRAC Israel Task Force Strategy Committee that current developments provide a timely opportunity to develop several themes for public and community relations purposes.

ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

Drawing on the thematic points outlined below, the Strategy Committee suggests the following programmatic steps:

1. Member agencies should write letters of commendation to the President and Secretary of State for their forthright and realistic statements underscoring their belief that the Arabs must engage in direct face-to-face negotiations without preconditions. America's new realistic diplomacy should also take into account the continued failure of Saudi Arabia to support direct negotiations and should therefore not reward the Saudis with a decision to go ahead with contemplated sales of additional F-15 aircraft and Sidewinder missiles.
2. Member agencies should communicate with their Senators and Representatives indicating their support for the Administration position on negotiations as well as concern about arms sales to the Saudis. Such communications should further indicate that, commendable as Egyptian President Mubarak's call for direct negotiations is, he, above all others, must be called upon to demonstrate the benefits of peace by returning the Egyptian Ambassador to Israel and taking further steps to unfreeze trade, tourism and cultural exchanges with Israel. Otherwise, his current thrust may be little more than a self-serving gesture.
3. Member agencies should encourage editorial comment, and, where possible, the placement of op-ed articles; and, of course, letters-to-the editor.

Kindly send us copies of your correspondence as well as editorial comments, columns, etc., appearing in local media.



## Points for Interpretation

### 1. Israel's Readiness to Pursue Peace

Israel Prime Minister Shimon Peres, after offering two weeks ago to go to Amman, Jordan (or receive King Hussein in Jerusalem) has applauded Egyptian President Mubarak's call for direct Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian negotiations. Peres has reaffirmed that it has always been Israel's policy to negotiate directly with Jordan and Palestinian Arabs. However, he reiterated Israel's unwillingness to sit with the PLO (as such) or known members of the PLO. Israel's official position of openness to the peace process as expressed by its Prime Minister has been well received by the Administration and major national media.

### 2. A Realistic U.S. Response

The United States, through official and unofficial comments, continues to demonstrate a realistic and tempered approach to the recent developments. The Administration has articulated its readiness to assist the parties, consistently stressing that the Arabs must negotiate directly on a face-to-face basis with Israel, not at an international conference with Soviet and PLO participation, and without preconditions. While clearly sharing Israel's desire to advance the peace process, the Administration has exercised restraint and good judgment in not over-responding to what might ultimately prove to have been only "testing" or public relations gestures.

### 3. The Hussein-Arafat Agreement

The five-point Hussein-Arafat agreement once again avoids the central issue of explicit recognition of Israel as well as an explicit acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242, not to mention a renunciation of terrorism. While the Arafat-Hussein statement refers vaguely to their acceptance of "United Nations and Security Council resolutions," PLO Executive Council members have since been quoted as rejecting 242, while Arafat himself refuses to explicitly endorse it, even verbally. Significantly, the text of the five-point agreement was not released jointly by Hussein and Arafat, but unilaterally by Hussein. Further, in response to Mubarak's call for direct negotiations, PLO officials have reiterated their rejection of direct negotiations in favor of an internationally-sponsored meeting under the aegis of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—i.e., Soviet participation—which is opposed by the United States as well as Israel.

### 4. Mubarak Downplaying Call for Direct Negotiations

While President Mubarak's call for direct negotiations has been welcomed by Prime Minister Peres, it has been widely noted that Mubarak's burst of activity immediately precedes his visit to Washington (beginning Friday) during which he will be seeking a substantial increase in U.S. foreign aid. Moreover, in his most recent interviews carried by the Egyptian press, Mubarak has downplayed his call for direct negotiations, now characterizing it only as a "suggestion." Despite some measures taken in the last two weeks to enhance relations with Israel, some have speculated that Mubarak's timing was designed to deflect criticism during his Washington visit for his failure to return the Egyptian Ambassador to Israel.

5. Failed Arms Sales Policy to Saudi Arabia

King Fahd, in his recent Washington visit, rejected President Reagan's request for Saudi support for direct face-to-face negotiations, instead reasserting the Fez formula. In point of fact, the Saudi's, whom the Administration expected to be helpful in Lebanon and in the Middle East diplomatic sphere generally, have been a serious disappointment to the United States. Thus, the demonstrated wisdom of the U.S. position stressing direct negotiations contrasts sharply with the failed policy of rewarding the Saudis with extravagant arms sales in the errant expectation of Saudi diplomatic support. This is another reason why the Administration should decide, upon anticipated completion in mid-April of its review of proposed additional arms sales to the Saudis, not to submit the sale, and for Congress to discourage any such sale. (Note: Last week 64 Senators, led by Senator Alan Cranston of California sent a letter to President Reagan urging him not to sell additional F-15s and Sidewinder missiles to Saudi Arabia.)

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THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

AND

RELIGIOUS FAITH

The Report of a Working Party set up by

the Middle East Advisory Committee

of the  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**  
British Council of Churches

April 1970



Members of the Working Party

The Rev. A.E. Harvey (Chairman)

The Rev. Professor P.R. Ackroyd

The Rev. W.A. Curtis

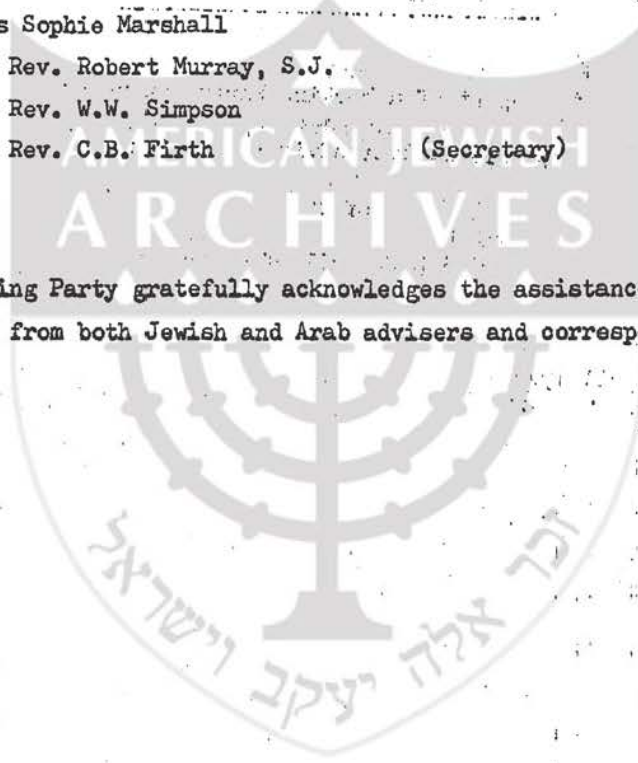
Miss Sophie Marshall

The Rev. Robert Murray, S.J.

The Rev. W.W. Simpson

The Rev. C.B. Firth (Secretary)

The Working Party gratefully acknowledges the assistance it has received from both Jewish and Arab advisers and correspondents.





## I INTRODUCTION

The present dangerous and embittered situation in the Holy Land confronts the Christian observer with a deep emotional and intellectual challenge. Listening to the arguments advanced, whether by Israel or by the Arab States, he will soon become aware that both sides are deeply conscious of having suffered great injustices in the past, and have an almost fanatical desire for compensation and security in the present. He will find it desperately difficult not to lean towards one side rather than the other, even while he knows that taking sides effectively prevents him from being a peace-maker. At the same time he will find it impossible to look at the conflict dispassionately. It has within it the seeds of a war which would involve us all; and since Britain must bear a large measure of responsibility for the course which events have taken, any conscientious citizen of this country must be aware that we have a duty to contribute to any possible solution of the present conflict. Added to this there are conflicting emotions in most people's minds. Many have an instinctive sympathy with the Arab peoples (and some even a deep-seated prejudice against the Jews); yet the same people will admit to a sincere admiration for the professed ideals and the economic achievements of modern Israel; and most of us are aware of an inherited sense of responsibility for the treatment received by Jews at the hands of European nations in recent years, and of professedly Christian nations in earlier centuries. Stated simply as a political problem, the situation in the Middle East is perhaps the most complex and the most baffling which we are called upon to face. It touches not only our national interests, but our conscience and our compassion. Most agonizing of all, it seems at present to be insoluble, and to be steadily deteriorating.

Yet, as if the political difficulties were not enough, the problem has also a particularly complex religious dimension. The land in question is the Holy Land of three major Faiths, and members of each of these faiths have a powerful attachment to it. The Old Testament, which is venerated (though in different ways) by all three faiths, attributes a special sanctity to the land and its history, and is understood by many Jews to assure to the descendants of Abraham an inalienable claim to its possession; moreover both Jews and Christians have at one time or another regarded the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine as a step towards the inauguration of a new age in the history of mankind at large. It is therefore inevitable that political arguments are reinforced by religious arguments, and that religious concepts are frequently invoked to justify political action. The land of Palestine is not just the national territory of Israel and Jordan, it is "The Promised Land"; Jerusalem is not just a capital city, it is the "Holy City", a symbol both of past religious fervour and of future religious aspirations. It is barely possible to discuss the political problem of Israel and her Arab neighbours without at some stage being confronted with religious concepts and religious language.



It is with this religious dimension of the problem that these chapters are concerned. In part, the problem is not a new one: the religious significance of the Jewish people as such has been the subject of much study in recent years, particularly since the Nazi persecution of the Jews and the subsequent period of uncertainty in the fortunes of world Jewry. But recently, and especially as a result of the spectacular Israeli successes in the June War of 1967, and of the critical situation produced by that War, the State of Israel itself has begun to be widely discussed in religious as well as political terms; and in August 1969 the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches issued an urgent plea to its members to examine some of the religious factors in the present situation.

It is important that any observer, whatever his own faith and convictions, should be aware of the subtle and powerful influence which religious claims can have on any statement of the problems posed by the existence of the State of Israel; but it is Christians who are particularly exposed to influences of this kind. Christians share with Jews a great deal of their faith; and claims which are made about the State of Israel on the basis of the Jewish religion find an answering response deep within the consciousness of many Christians. Conversely, many Christians who are committed to the Arab side of the argument find that they can no longer acknowledge the debt of Christianity to the religion and civilization of the Jews without appearing to endorse modern Israeli aspirations. In either case, the profession of the Christian religion in its historic form appears to have certain implications for one's attitude to the State of Israel. It is an urgent matter to examine the true extent of these implications.

The point where Jewish and Christian (and also to some extent Muslim) interest comes closest together is in the interpretation of the Old Testament. For Christians, as for Jews, the Old Testament contains the Word of God. How that Word is to be interpreted, and in particular what sense is to be given to the many passages in the Old Testament which appear to make important promises to a specific people, is the question which was perhaps the first to create a real division between Christians and Jews, and is still debated today. There are many Christians, as well as many Jews, who by upbringing or by conviction are accustomed to a very literal reading of Old Testament prophecies. Those who are already disposed to see something providential in the establishment of the State of Israel and in its recent fortunes find startling confirmation of their beliefs in a literal application of scriptural passages to contemporary events; while those who are more conscious of the injustices created by the establishment of Israel (such as the majority of Arab Christians) find it increasingly difficult to hold that the Old Testament (or at any rate certain parts of it) can be any part of the Christian revelation. The present crisis, therefore, makes it a more urgent matter than ever before to re-examine the principles on which the Old Testament is to be interpreted, and to lay bare the reasoning which leads some Christians, as well as Jews, to see in recent events an instance of a signal intervention by God in human history.



But the Christian attitude to these events is not conditioned only by the Old Testament. The New Testament too has much to say about the Jewish people (for much of it was written at a time when the antagonism of the Jews to Christianity was one of the main factors which Christians had to contend with and which produced an answering antagonism among Christians). In earlier centuries it was thought to contain such an explicit condemnation of the Jews that Christians felt no qualms in promoting their destruction (for example during the Crusades, when it was felt entirely proper to finance the liberation of the Holy Land from the "infidel Turk", in part at least, by the mulcting and massacre of Jews). At least since the 17th century, on the other hand, particular attention has been paid to those passages in both the Old and New Testaments which appear to prophesy a glorious destiny for Israel immediately before the end of the world; and this has provided the impetus for movements to restore the Jewish people to the Holy Land as a preparation for their conversion to Christianity and the dawning of the Messianic age for all mankind. Indeed, it is an important and often overlooked fact that during the nineteenth century, in the West, the major impetus in the movement for the restoration of Jews to the Holy Land came from the Christian side. It is only since the end of the nineteenth century, particularly under the pressure and threat of organized antisemitism, that the Jews themselves have taken the main initiative.

Even from this very brief survey, it can be seen that the Christian faith has always been an important influence on people's attitudes towards the Jewish people and the Holy Land. The attitudes of Christians down the centuries have by no means been constant, but have varied according to their different presuppositions and also as a result of different approaches to the Scriptures. There is therefore no single "Christian" approach: traditional attitudes must be constantly re-examined, especially now when the present political crisis makes it an urgent matter to disentangle political interests from the religious phraseology with which they are often clothed. But there are also new factors to be taken into account. It is only very recently that the normal attitude of Christians towards Muslims has changed from that of the Crusaders. Even the Restorationist movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries completely disregarded any Muslim religious interest in the Holy Land. The Turk was still simply the "infidel" whose political influence was regarded as a serious obstacle in the way of the fulfilment of prophecy. Today such language seems absurdly out of date. Christians have come to learn that the Kingdom of God is not advanced by political conquest, but involves dialogue with other faiths and willing service to other peoples. We have at last learnt to take seriously the aspirations and claims of other great religions. And therefore, in any consideration of the religious implications of the present situation in the Holy Land, we must now make sure that the Muslim is given as fair a hearing as the Christian or the Jew.

Much of this study may have a somewhat negative ring. There is a great deal of work to be done which seems critical and destructive: the clearing away of misconceptions, the stripping off of religious language from purely secular interests, the criticism of too-easily accepted norms of biblical interpretation. In the background are the sombre realities of the present conflict in the Middle East, and the apparently receding prospects of reconciliation. And there is an uneasy consciousness, even among Christians, that they are themselves deeply divided on the issue, and that a generally acceptable Christian statement may well be unattainable. Nevertheless there is a positive side to it. By being forced, through these events, to re-examine our received methods of interpreting Scripture, we may come to a more mature understanding of the Word of God as it is revealed to men; by the attention we are forced to pay to the claims of religions other than our own, we may discover a new perspective in which to set the truth that is revealed in Christ; and as we realise that many of the actions of those most involved in the conflict are motivated by religious convictions analogous to our own, we may learn something of our common humanity under God, and become better equipped to make our own contribution to the cause of peace.





## II. THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is a sacred book, not only for Jews, but also for Christians and Muslims. Despite the different interpretations which they lay upon it, all three religions regard it as in some sense an authoritative revelation of the will of God for men. Members of all these faiths are predisposed to credit statements made in it with a special degree of divine authority and truth. Among these statements there are what appear to be predictions made by the prophets that the Jewish people is destined to be restored to the possession of its lands and of the city of Jerusalem; there are divine commands to conquer the land of Palestine and exterminate its existing inhabitants; there are promises made to the Jewish nation of a glorious destiny which will be fulfilled specifically within the confines of the land, and in which the city of Jerusalem will be central; and there are narratives of the original conquest of the land by the Israelites which, by reason of sometimes startling parallels with recent events, may seem to impart a kind of divine sanction to the territorial acquisitions and aspirations of the State of Israel. To anyone, whether Christian or Jew, for whom the Old Testament possesses religious authority, a reference to statements of this kind will not be without effect. A slight and subtle instance of such an appeal is the name "Israel" itself for the modern state. The name inevitably carries overtones (as it was doubtless intended to do by those who chose it) of identification with the ancient description of the land, and its use is an implicit assertion of the continuity of its history with that of the "Israel" of the Old Testament (this explains why a modern Israeli may be deeply offended if reference is made to other names, such as Palestine, which the land has borne in the course of its history). A similar instance is the map of the country with its biblical frontiers which is exhibited over the door of the Israeli parliament building, the Knesset: this is a clear implication that, because the land of "Israel" once had these frontiers, the modern state may be expected to have the same. An extreme instance of the same kind of appeal is the following statement of the Chief Rabbi of Israel on the occasion of the Security Council resolution condemning Israel's attitude towards the annexation of Jerusalem in July 1969: "How can the representatives of countries which profess to believe in the Bible have been able to vote for a resolution which rejects all the Biblical prophecies which make Jerusalem the eternal capital of Israel?"

It will be obvious at once that such a literal application of Biblical statements to contemporary events begs a great many questions. Nevertheless there are many people, both Christians and Jews, who by up-bringing or conviction are accustomed to interpret the Scriptures in a literalistic way, and are deeply suspicious of modern critical approaches to the Old Testament which seem to them not to take seriously its divine inspiration and authority. Such people will naturally be disposed to support the claims of modern Israel to the original territory of Solomon's Kingdom, and to see the hand of God in recent events. Conversely, many Arab Christians who are unable to be reconciled to the existence and policies of the modern State of Israel, are



forced by their literal interpretations to abandon their regard for the Old Testament and to discard it altogether as scripture. But it is not by any means only the literalists whose view of recent events is influenced by the Old Testament. There are many Christians, as well as Jews, for whom parts of the Old Testament seemed to come alive, as never before, during the June War of 1967, and for whom claims based upon biblical statements arouse at least a measure of sympathetic response; and there are perhaps very few Christians indeed (and the same goes for Jews) who have fully thought out the question of the way, if any, in which biblical statements or prophecies may be expected to be "fulfilled" in contemporary events. To establish whether a real relationship exists between the Bible and the modern State of Israel, and if so what this relationship may be, is a task of great urgency.

An obvious point to be made at the outset is that the kind of statements already referred to - for example those which appear to promise God's approval for a policy of territorial conquest - represent only a one-sided selection of biblical statements on the subject. Absolute assurances of the right of the Hebrews to possession of the land and to a glorious destiny are balanced in the Bible by strongly worded threats that some types of conduct may still lead God to judge and reject his people. Promises of conquest and occupation of the land which are found in certain books or in certain strands of the tradition must be set against equally strong threats expressed in other places of exile and loss of the land. The Book of Deuteronomy provides a good example of this. That book contains a tremendous stress upon the Israelites' rightful possession of the land and on the centrality of Jerusalem to their national life and their religion; but it also raises with complete seriousness the possibility of dispossession and exile as a punishment for disobedience to God's commands (see especially chapter 28). Taken as a whole, the Old Testament can be seen to enshrine, not only Israel's original conviction that a land and a destiny were promised to her by God, but a threatening question-mark placed over that conviction in the light of subsequent history and of a developing understanding of the relationship between God and man. To concentrate on the promises of conquest and possession without taking account of the themes of exile and punishment is gravely to distort the message of the Bible. Indeed there are Jewish thinkers today who are prepared to question whether even the survival of the Jewish people as such - let alone its possession of a land - is compatible with the threats of punishment and purification which the Old Testament brings to bear upon the historic people of Israel.

But there is more to this than merely balancing one type of Old Testament statement against another. Take the conquest narratives themselves. One approach to them as we have seen, is to regard them as a direct expression of God's will which, having been true once, can be true again, and can therefore be taken as a divine endorsement of a policy of ruthless territorial conquest by the modern State of Israel (and this approach, which is not entirely absent from some modern Jewish declarations, can have a powerful

\* popular appeal). Another approach, equally dangerous and naive, is the one



which finds the conquest narratives totally unacceptable, because they envisage ruthless slaughter of the inhabitants of captured cities and countries, and other types of conduct which by modern standards are seen as immoral. This approach can actually lead to the Old Testament material being used as a propaganda weapon against the State of Israel.

Both these approaches fail to do justice to the forms in which the conquest narratives in fact appear in the Old Testament. These narratives, though they certainly contain many details which belong to an early stage in the moral and religious development of the people, are by no means presented as a bare factual record of what may have taken place. By the time they achieved their present forms, they had been much reflected upon and had been subject to intensive theological interpretation. "Conquest", for example, as presented in all the narratives as they now stand, is not a human initiative: it is a result of the direct action of God. Occupation of the land is part of God's "covenant" with a particular people: it is understood as part of the process by which God makes it possible for men to have an enduring relationship with him. In some places this "covenantal relationship" is presented as something highly exclusive to the Jews; but in others it is seen as only part of the wider purposes of God for all nations. The choice of Israel to be the people of God is presented at its most profound in terms of responsibility and not of privilege. The centrality of God's acts for Israel is no more than the focus through which all nations may recognize the reality of divine saving power.

By means of this kind of interpretation, the shocking and apparently primitive elements in these stories had already been somewhat neutralized by the time they were recorded in the Old Testament. A further development of this process can be seen in those battle narratives (for instance in Chronicles) which are presented as unreal procedures in which the only active participant is God himself. And in fact the same process has continued ever since. In Qumran, in the New Testament, in Christian hymns and in writings such as those of John Bunyan, recollections of old battles have turned into imagery for heavenly warfare between the forces of light and darkness. When this is recognized, the straight application of biblical statements to the contemporary military successes of the state of Israel represents a lowering of the theological level to one that is exceedingly trivial.

What has been said so far applies principally to the narrative books. Still more powerful, perhaps, are the explicitly prophetic writings of the Old Testament, and all those other passages which, because they were regarded as "types" of future events, or else because they seemed in some way to point forward to things which must one day come to pass, have constantly caused both Christians and Jews to study the signs of the times for indications of their fulfilment and of the consequent dawning of a new age. Here there has been a considerable change over the last century or so. Until then, it was commonly supposed that the primary concern of Old Testament prophecy was the precise prediction of future events. So long as it was unquestioningly



believed that all the writings which are collected in the "Book of Isaiah" were the work of a single eighth-century prophet, then the clear references in that book to the reign of Cyrus could only be regarded as instances of supernatural foresight. So long as "Daniel" was presumed to be a work of the sixth century B.C., its descriptions of events of the second century could only be regarded as miraculous predictions. So long as no thought was given to the possibility of the Old Testament having influenced, either the pattern of life and suffering which Christ deliberately followed, or else the way in which the evangelists recorded these things, the many correspondences between the gospel and the Old Testament were confidently used both as proofs of the truth of Christianity and as confirmation of the prophets' powers of prediction. In reaction to this, modern critical study has tended to stress that the prophets were not uttering predictions which might be fulfilled at any time in the future, but interpreting the events of their own time in the light of their enhanced understanding of the purposes of God for men. This activity certainly led the prophets to see the probable course of events more clearly than their contemporaries, and on occasion they did indeed "prophecy": many of their proclamations were confidently couched in the future tense. But, on this view, the reference of their "prophecies" is only to the conditions and events of the times in which they lived. To regard them as in any way applicable to subsequent history in the distant future is to misunderstand the whole nature of Old Testament prophecy. It is equally mistaken to regard the events of 1967 (for example) as a "fulfilment" of specific Old Testament texts.

This view, though undoubtedly correct so far as it goes, is nevertheless not the whole truth. A very large number of Old Testament texts, particularly from the prophets and the psalms, were in fact regarded as prophetic of future events very soon after they were recorded. The sayings had an oracular quality, a depth and a generality, which made it difficult to believe that their meaning had been fully exhausted by a single set of historical circumstances. When those circumstances changed, they were taken up again and re-applied; and when this happened, a new meaning was given to them which then affected the way they were likely to be re-used, yet again, in the future. This process of repeated re-application and re-interpretation can be seen already in the writings of the Old Testament itself; it was continued in Judaism and received a new and often startling impulse from Christianity. A good example is provided by certain psalms which originally assured a glorious destiny to a particular king of Israel. The original meaning of such a "prophecy" may be found in the circumstances under which a new king was enthroned at an early stage of the Hebrew Monarchy. But at a later period, when there was no longer an actual king in Israel at all, the prophecy was not regarded as obsolete: on the contrary, a further meaning was found for it in the notion of a divinely appointed figure who would usher in a new age, the Messiah. And then Christianity, building upon this Jewish interpretation, saw the text as definitively fulfilled in a person who both fulfilled, and radically re-interpreted, the Jewish expectation of a Messiah: Jesus.



It is perhaps not surprising that under the pressure of this conflict no single and fully consistent attitude towards the Jewish people was adopted by the New Testament writers. Jesus, caught himself in the tension of a similar relationship, had left no systematic teaching on the subject; and his followers faced their difficulties with different degrees of tolerance or animosity. They saw themselves as the new "Israel", and under the pressure of frequent harrying and persecution by the old Israel, they did their best both to define their own position and to parry the attacks of their Jewish adversaries. Matthew's gospel is a striking example of this tension: there is much bitter polemic against the synagogue; but at the same time there is a more consistent attempt than perhaps anywhere else in the New Testament to demonstrate that Christians in fact fulfil the ideals of Old Testament religion. Another example is the letter to Hebrews. Here, there is apparently little concern about the Jewish way of life at the time, or animosity against existing Jewish communities; but there is a burning conviction that the divinely revealed laws and institutions which the Jews have preserved are the key to understanding the nature of the salvation procured by Jesus.

Thus, while much occupied with the problems with which their Jewish contemporaries confronted them, none of these writers was much concerned to speculate about the ultimate significance and destiny of the Jewish nation. The one great exception is Paul, who was at one stage prepared to envisage the total condemnation of the Jews for their part in crucifying Jesus and for their refusal to attend to the message proclaimed by the church, but who, in the letter to the Romans, was forced by the pressure of his own theological reasoning to face the question of the role of the Jewish people in the grand purposes of God for mankind.

The drift of Paul's famous argument in Romans 9 - 11 is familiar to most Christians, and is well expounded in many modern commentaries. Its conclusion may be summarised as follows. "The inclusion of the Jewish people in God's purposes, despite all her failures, is something still to be reckoned with. She cannot be treated as any other nation because of her relation to the promises of God; yet that relation has given her no claim on the fulfilment of the promises - indeed it is quite possible for the promises to be fulfilled in some people other than her. On the other hand, it is not true to say that the now predominantly Gentile Church has taken over the character of "Israel", so that everything once said about Israel is now properly to be said of the Church. There have been things said about the nation of Israel that can never be transferred and never repeated." It seems to follow from this that Paul finds it impossible to envisage his own mission to the Gentiles unless it is ultimately crowned and complemented by the conversion of the Jews. This is of a piece with his determination not to let his own work become separated from that of the Jerusalem apostles (Galatians 2.2). But in the face of the stiffening opposition of the Jews, he seems to have come to regard this consummation of his work as something which could only be expected at the end of the world.



This being so, the interpretation of any particular "prophecy" in the Old Testament is a highly complex matter. Account has to be taken, both of the relevance of the original utterance to the situation in which it was made, and of the re-interpretations which the utterance has undergone at subsequent periods. But one thing is definitely excluded, and that is the artificial measurement of prophecy and fulfilment; the calculation that a particular prophetic statement is not seen to have been fulfilled and must therefore at some future date find its fulfilment; the too literal view that supposes that the very claim that a particular statement is the 'word of the LORD' guarantees its fulfilment, if not in one situation, then in another. The discovery of the fulfilment of prophecy in the contemporary occupation of part of Palestine by members of the Jewish community is unrealistic. It restricts the meaning of prophecy in an artificial manner; it bends the prophecy to an artificial application. This is not the way in which the Bible is related to the contemporary world. What the Bible makes possible is a deepened understanding of God's will. In the light of that deepened understanding the contemporary situation has to be interpreted afresh. One small but positive result of the present conflict in the Middle East is that the old naive approach to Old Testament prophecies can be seen to lead to highly questionable conclusions, and may give place to a discovery of the true relevance of the Old Testament to the world of today.

But (it may be asked), even granted that the matter is much more complex than may appear at first sight, surely there is one strand in the Old Testament which is constant throughout, and which remains valid so long as the Old Testament is regarded as authoritative at all: God's promises to his people? Again and again these promises are made, and again and again their fulfilment seems to depend on the people of Israel at some moment in the future having an independent existence, and even a land, of its own. Can it not be argued that, at least in this very general sense, the establishment of a Jewish national home, and the re-emergence of Jerusalem as the focus of Jewish religious life, is but the fulfilment of the constant tenor of God's promises to his people as recorded in Scripture?

This, in fact, was a question which immediately faced the early Christian church as soon as it found itself on the one hand the heir of God's promises, but now separated from and rejected by the Jewish people as a whole; and a full discussion of it is possible only in the light of the New Testament (see the next chapter). But even within the Old Testament itself the matter is by no means as clear as it might seem at first sight. For example: to whom were the promises made? To all the descendants of Abraham? To the successors of King David? To a righteous remnant? To an ideal "people of God"? Or again, what do the promises consist of? A perpetual relationship between God and his people? The possession of a land? A special place in the New Age? A share in life after death? Further: are the promises unconditional, or do they depend on the people's obedience to God? Are they for the benefit of the Jews only, or can they be fulfilled only at the same

\* moment as the ultimate salvation of all men? There are material for all



these answers in the Old Testament itself, in subsequent Jewish and Christian interpretation, and indeed in the views of many Jewish thinkers today.

But behind these questions lies another more fundamental one. What meaning is to be attached to the phrase, "God's promises"? There is certainly a negative implication in it: God is not capricious, he is self-consistent and just. But to go further than this is not so easy. "Promise" is a human concept: can it really be used of God? If we say that God keeps his promise, are we not in danger of bringing God down to our level, of limiting our understanding of him by forcing his action into human categories? And even if it makes sense to say that the action of God - the purpose of God, the promises of God - must all be self-consistent with the very nature of God, and therefore unchanging in an absolute sense, it must still be remembered that there are constantly taking place radical changes in the human scene in relation to which the nature and purpose of God become known. The view that the promises of God are "known" and "irrevocable" both accepts a too literal understanding of the biblical material, and involves a far too simple conception of our knowledge of God.

This is but another illustration of the sheer complexity of the concept of a historical revelation of God to men. The Bible is inspired by God, but it is also conditioned by its human authors. The realization of the extent of this conditioning is one of the most important consequences of the much-trumpeted revolution in biblical studies during the last 100 years or so. Once one begins to take seriously the human conditioning of the written material through which divine truth is mediated to us, it becomes impossible to accept a literalistic approach to scripture, or to seek precise "fulfilment" of prophecy in a particular event of contemporary history in Palestine or anywhere else.

In any case it must always be remembered that the Old Testament does not contain its interpretation within itself. For Jews, its basic constituent is the Law: all else, whether it be the prophecies and other writings within the Old Testament itself, or the immense amount of rabbinical interpretation which has accumulated down the centuries, is seen as, at most, authoritative commentary upon the initial revelation given to men of the manner of life God requires in them. For the Jews, therefore, the true meaning of the Old Testament is something which is expressed in the present practice and the future hopes of Judaism. For Muslims, the Law is also primary: it "came down from Allah upon men." The people of this Book, both Jews and Christians, are still regarded as the privileged recipients of a special revelation, and the great figures of their religious history - Abraham, Moses, Jesus - are deeply venerated. But Muslims believe that both Jews and Christians have mistaken the meaning of this revelation, and that it was for Muhammad to declare the final will of God. For Christians, again, the Old Testament has to be read in the light of the New. No part of it can be regarded as final and fully authoritative unless it is understood in the context of the total revelation of God to men, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ. To this we must now turn.

### III. The New Testament.

The New Testament, as its name implies, is something very different from the Old. Many Old Testament concepts were taken over into it, and most of its writers were consciously engaged in the task of working out a new Christian interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures. But at the same time the Christian faith was realized to be something radically new. It implied a new people of God, a new set of institutions and a new religious vocabulary. Old Testament words and ideas were transformed and given new meanings. Nothing that can be said about an Old Testament concept or proposition necessarily holds good when the same concept or proposition occurs in the New.

Yet, however different it was originally, by about 200 A.D. the New Testament had come to be regarded, along with the Old, as Holy Scripture. The Bible now contained both Testaments, and it became customary to interpret any part of the New on exactly the same principles as the Old. For example, prophecies attributed to Jesus began to be interpreted in the same way as prophecies of Isaiah: they were taken as precise predictions of future events, and Christians became (despite specific warnings by Jesus on the subject) alert to any signs of the times which could be interpreted as decisive and final fulfillments of these predictions.

To this extent, much that has been said above about the Old Testament applies equally to the New. In so far as Jesus stood in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, his prophetic utterances are to be understood, not as enigmatic allusions to events lying in the distant future (such that a Christian two thousand years later would be entitled to believe that he was now witnessing their one definitive fulfilment) but as prophetic interpretations of the actual circumstances of his time, with power (like Old Testament prophecies) to illuminate also the circumstances of later times. The belief, for example, which is still held by many Christians, that Jesus' saying about the fig-tree ("When its tender shoots appear and are breaking into leaf, you know that summer is near," Mark 13.28) is a prophecy of the restoration of the Jews, and that this restoration is therefore a sign that the End is near, is a relic of an older epoch of naive interpretation.

On the other hand, modern study of the New Testament has tended to draw attention to the fact that the "Jewish problem" was one of the most pervasive factors in the composition of the various New Testament writings. Jesus was a Jew, with strong convictions about the reality of the privileges and responsibilities given by God to his people; but at the same time he was in open opposition to many of the forms which Jewish self-understanding assumed in his time, and in the end he was put to death at the instigation of his fellow Jews. The Church, again, began its life as a Jewish institution with a mission primarily to Jews; yet within a few years there was a complete separation between Christians and Jews, and the Jews became the church's bitterest enemies and persecutors. The tension, the polemics, the anguish of this situation can be overheard in many writings of the New Testament.



It is this last point which seems to have inspired the Christian restorationists. From the late Middle Ages onwards it became a commonplace of Christian interpretation of the New Testament that any restoration of the Jewish people could be confidently welcomed as a sign of the imminent end of the world and of the return of Christ; and it was taken for granted that such a restoration would involve a return of the Jews to their own land. Consequently, any serious political move to open up the possibility of such a return (such as Napoleon's oriental campaign, which might have wrested Palestine from the Turks) tended to arouse a wave of enthusiasm among Christians; and the belief is still held by some Christians that any dramatic turn for the better in the fortunes of the Jewish people is a "fulfilment" of the predictions of St. Paul and therefore to be welcomed as an authentic sign of the dawning of a new age for mankind.

It will be seen at once that this involves reading rather more into Paul's argument than is really there. Paul says nothing of a restoration to the land (the Jews after all were still in possession of it when he wrote); he was concerned with finding a secure place for the historic people of Israel, not in human politics and history, but in the ultimate purposes of God. The following words of Handley Moule, written in 1894, would be endorsed entirely by modern scholarship: "No prediction obliges us to think that the Jews will be withdrawn from the wide world by a national resettlement in their Land". There is no basis in the New Testament for the expectation that a Jewish presence in the Holy Land is an essential precursor of the new age to which Christians look forward.

But there is nevertheless a more sophisticated view which is often advanced by students of the New Testament. This is the view that since Paul appears to promise (or indeed predict) an ultimate role for the Jewish people in the history of mankind, it is impossible for Christians to envisage the total disappearance of the Jewish people as such - either by attrition or by deliberate assimilation into other nations; consequently, since the continuance of the people seems to demand some national territory, the Christian is committed to supporting the concept of a Jewish state. Here it would probably be a mistake to concentrate exclusively upon St. Paul (and indeed upon one particular passage in one of his letters.) The question is much the same as was raised in the chapter on the Old Testament, and can be answered only by considering the Bible as a whole: is the total disappearance of the Jewish race a possibility which would be compatible with a revelation of God to men which was made known in the first instance to the Jewish race and which presupposes at every stage the continuing existence of that race in one form or another? This is a very difficult question, and Christians of different traditions might answer in different ways. Some would stress that the Christian church is the New Israel, and that all the promises given by God to the descendants of Abraham have now passed, through Christ, to Christians: on this view, the fortunes of the Jewish people since the coming of Christ have no

more theological significance than those of any other nation or race. Others would argue that the problem tackled by Paul in Romans 9 - 11 is still with us: the mere fact that the revelation was originally mediated through the Jews is sufficient to guarantee to that people some special place in the destiny of mankind. Others again would argue that the Jews have forfeited their claim to special treatment by their rejection of Jesus as the Christ. A case may be made out for each of these views, and this is not the place to advance a judgement between them. But there is one very important point to be made, and that is that whichever way the argument goes it will not help to define what form a Jewish presence in the world today ought to take. Are the Jews today, in their world-wide dispersion, the exact successors of those about whom significant statements are made in the Bible? To what extent have their fortunes down the centuries affected their identity? Does the increasing secularization of the Jewish people, both in modern Israel and in the world at large, affect its claims to be the spiritual as well as the physical successor to the people of the Bible? None of these questions can be answered out of the Bible alone. A great many other factors have to be taken into account before statements about "Israel" which occur in the New Testament can be regarded as relevant to the Jewish people of today.

But an important consequence flows from taking these questions seriously, a conclusion very similar to that of the chapter on the Old Testament. There is no justification for a facile identification of the "Israel" of the New Testament with the modern State of Israel any more than of the "Israel" of the Old Testament. What we are given is not a set of statements and predictions which can be assumed to be applicable to a particular situation in the twentieth century, but rather an insight into the way in which a Christian must be prepared to tackle the relationship of the church to another major religion. In St. Paul's time this religion was Judaism. In the Middle East today there are two, Judaism and Islam. What Paul says about "Israel" was in his own day applicable only to Judaism in a certain stage of its history. In our own time, we must be prepared to learn from the same texts, not only how to understand the destiny and importance of the very different Judaism of our own day, but also of the other great "religion of the book" which is bound up in the history of the same part of the world: Islam. This is a point which must be borne in mind in the chapters which follow.



#### IV THE LAND

To whom does the land belong? The number of names it has borne - Canaan, Israel, Palestine, Outremer, to name only a few - shows that history alone can hardly settle the question. Archaeology has revealed settlements in the Jordan valley which can claim to be among the oldest examples of urban civilization in the world; historical records begin in earnest with the dispossession of the existing inhabitants by the Hebrew invaders, and a spell of about 600 years of domination by the Israelites, followed by another five hundred years of a more precarious Jewish presence in the land and ending in their virtual expulsion from its main cities by the Romans after the Jewish revolts of 66-73 and 135 A.D. Then came five hundred years of pagan Roman and Christian Byzantine sovereignty; then the Arab conquest in the seventh century, inaugurating a long period of Muslim rule that was interrupted only by a century of Crusader Kingdoms and ended with the break-up of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. History has seen too many claimants to the land for the question of its rightful possession to be settled beyond all dispute by a simple appeal to history.

Political and religious regimes have come and gone, but, as always, the actual population has remained more stable. Not all the Canaanites were expelled by the Hebrew invaders at the end of the second millennium B.C. (and it is conceivable that some of the present-day Arab Palestinians are the descendants of those who remained). Not all the Jews were deported to Babylon in the Exile of the Sixth century B.C., and few of the new settlers were displaced when they returned. In the time of Christ, Palestine had a very mixed population; after the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem by the Romans they continued to maintain small settlements in the country, and retained a tenacious presence there through all the vicissitudes which led up to the establishment of the present state of Israel. Meanwhile the Arab inhabitants, who have made their homes and tilled their fields in the country since the sixth century (if not before) have remained a constant element in the population regardless of the frequent redrawing of political boundaries. The attachment of Palestine Arabs (whether Christian or Muslim) to their country is the result of many centuries of unbroken ownership. It is this attachment which lends added pathos to the situation of the hundreds of thousands of Arabs who are refugees as a result of the events of 1948 and 1967. It has often been said that the fact that so few of them have been "re-settled" has been due to political interests: to have assisted them to find new homes would have involved acknowledging that they had lost their own homes for good, and that the state of Israel had established its right to its territory. But in fact the issue goes much deeper than politics. The majority of the refugees are "Palestinians" as much as they are "Arabs", "Muslims" or "Christians". Their sense of belonging to the soil of Palestine is the strongest single element in their sense of identity; and "re-settlement" east of the River Jordan (even if this were practicable for such large numbers) could never have been regarded by them as more than a temporary solution. If long and continuous occupation establishes a claim on a particular land, a very strong claim to the Holy Land belongs \*

\* to the Palestinian Arabs



At the same time, an equally powerful claim, though of a somewhat different kind, is made by the Jews. It is barely possible for Jewish people to think of the age-old Jewish presence in Palestine, and of its comparatively recent transformation into the modern State of Israel, in purely historical or political terms. For them, Palestine is the land promised by God to Abraham and his descendants for ever; it is the land in which Jewish history has had its most glorious and formative episodes, and in which, despite nearly twenty centuries of exile, Jewish settlers have always maintained some foothold, often under circumstances of great hardship. The promise of an ultimate return to Palestine has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to countless generations of Jews in the Dispersion. In that land alone (religious Jews believe) can the Jewish people fulfil their historic destiny: only in the Holy Land can the awaited Messiah institute the new order intended by God. For all Jews, whatever their religious convictions, the land represents an essential link with the past, and for many it seems the only guarantee of a creative future for the Jewish people.

This sense (which is shared by the vast majority of Jews) of belonging to the Land of Israel, and of the Land of Israel in some way belonging to them, has been greatly strengthened by recent events. The creation of the State of Israel at a moment when the Jewish people had undergone the most brutal persecutions of its history at the hand of the Nazis, its preservation and growth through the difficult years between 1948 and 1967, and its amazing victories against great numerical odds in June 1967, are seldom regarded by the Jews as fortuitous historical developments. They see the hand of God in these events as surely as in the narrative of the Old Testament. For most Jews, it is impossible to doubt that the Jewish people has an inalienable right to this land, where so much of its history has been enacted, and where it would seem that its ultimate destiny is to be fulfilled.

Moreover, it can hardly be denied that the Jewish people has a de facto right to that part of Palestine which was recognised as the State of Israel by the Great Powers in 1948-9 and which became a member of the United Nations in 1949. It is true that the circumstances of the state's creation were such that the Arab States are still bitterly hostile to its very existence. But no visitor to Israel can doubt that this twenty-year old state is here to stay. Historically, many states have come into existence at the expense of the interests of their neighbours; but after a certain time, the circumstances of their birth cease to be a live issue. Once a nation has established itself as a stable political entity, it has the right and the duty to protect its citizens from attack and to assure them in the permanent possession of their own land. The State of Israel now has as much right to its own territory as any other nation, and through one of its first constitutional acts, the Law of Return (under which any Jew is a citizen of the State of Israel from the moment of his arrival as an immigrant), it in effect confers a right to this territory upon all Jewish people scattered throughout the world.



This basic right could be called into question only if it could be shown that the Arab minority in Israel has been exploited, ill-treated or victimized. Criticism is often heard on these points, and the facts are not easy to establish. But even if the Arabs in Israel have not yet achieved full political equality with the Jews, there is little evidence that Israeli policy towards them has been wilfully unjust. In theory, Israel is a democratic country, and all its inhabitants enjoy the basic rights and freedoms. In practice there are doubtless many shortcomings, and recent events have necessarily made the Israelis uncertain of the loyalty of the Arabs in their midst; but Israel could not be said to have forfeited its right to exist by reason of its treatment of the Arab minority. Indeed, in its treatment of the land, it may positively be said to have earned its right to exist. Far from merely appropriating and enjoying the fruits of other's labours, the Israelis have made their country vastly more productive than it was in 1947. Economically they have done well by their part of Palestine.

However, when a citizen of modern Israel claims a right to the land, he is not usually appealing merely to the twenty-one years of existence of his country. Consciously or unconsciously, he is appealing to the many centuries during which the Jewish people had their national home in Palestine, and to the constantly reiterated proposition to be found in the pages of the Bible that this land was one of God's gifts to his chosen people. This appeal takes an extreme form when used to support certain Zionist aspirations, which have not stopped short of claiming that the rightful frontiers of modern Israel are those of Solomon's kingdom, far to the east of the River Jordan. Not many people would accept this extreme formulation as a justification for further territorial expansion. But a more moderate version of this appeal to the past is believed without question by a great many Jews, and finds a measure of ready acceptance among non-Jews in the West, whose culture has been influenced by the Old Testament for many centuries.

Taken at its face value as an appeal to history, this claim has a certain weight. It was in Palestine that the Jewish nation first achieved its full identity, and it was in Palestine that it lived through the most glorious pages of its history. It is therefore perfectly understandable that Jewish people should have a sense of belonging to the soil of Palestine, and of the soil of Palestine (in a sense) belonging to them. When the founders of a Kibbutz turn up the ruins of an ancient synagogue in their fields, they are discovering the roots of their own life in the very soil on which they are now establishing themselves. But this appeal to history, though it amply justifies a continuing Jewish presence, can hardly be used to support the idea of an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine. The Jews are not the only people who have a historical connection with Palestine; and any argument based on history alone would have to allow a claim upon the land to others besides the Jews.

In fact of course the claim does not rest purely on history. The most powerful factor which has helped the Jewish people to maintain its identity

down the long centuries of its dispersion has been the religion of Judaism. This religion is based on the Old Testament, which not only presupposes that the Jewish people is in possession of Palestine, but repeatedly declares this to be the will of God. Moreover it is an ancient tradition of Judaism that it is impossible fully to obey the Law anywhere but on the soil of Palestine; and it is believed that it is only in the Holy Land that the New Age, to be inaugurated by the Messiah, can come into existence. The land itself is an element of the religion, and since the religion is in its turn a vital element in the identity of the people, the very right to be a Jew seems to imply some kind of right to the land. Yet even so, the fact that the association of the Jewish people with Palestine is so deeply rooted in the Jewish religion does not establish a right which can be sustained against the rights of other peoples to the same territory. Judaism is only one of the great religions of the world. Those who do not belong to it are in no way bound to accept the claims made by its adherents. Even Christians, who share so much of the Jewish spiritual heritage and who also regard the Old Testament as a vehicle of divine truth, must be prepared to re-examine their understanding of the Scriptures if they find themselves predisposed to accept territorial claims which purport to be based upon them.

But even if the history and religion of the Jewish people do not in themselves establish the right of the Jewish people to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, there are other considerations which must be taken into account. The continuing identity and solidarity of the Jewish people after nearly two thousand years of dispersion is a remarkable phenomenon in the history of mankind. Precisely what constitutes this identity - whether it is a matter of race, or culture, or religion - is a question to which different answers are given by the Jews themselves, and has recently been a subject of sharp political debate in Israel. But whatever it is which makes a Jew a Jew, his consciousness of being distinct from non-Jews, and of in some way sharing the destiny of a distinct people, is something which has remained a powerful force down the centuries and which shows little sign of diminishing today. This phenomenon of a people which has retained its national or racial consciousness despite its lack of any territorial possessions or national home is a historical fact of considerable significance. It is capable of enlarging our understanding of what the concepts of "people" or "nationhood" may imply; and it also challenges us to consider whether it would be just if this pertinacious people were never to find an abiding home on earth. Unless we adopt the purely negative attitude that it would be simpler and better for the Jews to become completely assimilated in the countries in which they live and to cease to exist as a distinct people, we are bound to give serious consideration to the claim of the Jews to a land of their own.

Nor is this merely a matter of national independence. However much individual Jews may have contributed to the culture of other nations, and however much Jewish communities may have played an important part in the economic and political life of the countries in which they have lived, the



Jews cannot be expected to feel that their destiny as a people is likely to be fulfilled unless they are sovereign in their own country and free to form their own institutions and follow their own distinctive way of life. The recurrent pattern of persecution and expulsion which they have endured at the hand of other nations may have had a profound and formative influence on the Jewish character, but it is not a fate to which they should continue to be exposed. For this reason, alone, there is justice in the claim that the Jews deserve a land of their own. But more than this, their religion and their way of life is such that many of them believe that they can only fully realize their own destiny when they have the freedom to govern themselves according to their vision of a human society living in obedience to the commands of God. There is a deep yearning in the Jewish heart to build the Kingdom of God on earth: if the Jews are able to achieve something new as a nation, many of them will think of it as having been for the sake of mankind as a whole. The right to make such an attempt is one which deserves consideration. Room to pioneer a distinctive way of life is a right which it often seems reasonable to accord. And the history of mankind would have been poorer if attempts to create a new kind of society had never been made.

But granted that the Jews have a right to a land of their own, does it follow that this land must be Palestine? The question is a burning one, in so far as the creation of the State of Israel in Palestine has in fact resulted in the displacement of a large number of its long established inhabitants, and has caused such powerful resentment among the Arab peoples that the very existence of the State continues to be threatened. However strong the arguments may be for the right of the Jews to establish a national home, this right can never over-ride the right of the existing inhabitants of any country to continue in possession of their own lands. It is precisely this which in Arab eyes has made the establishment of modern Israel appear as a gross injustice, and it is this which makes the whole question of the right of the Jews to a home in Palestine such an agonizing one for the outside observer.

Could the Jews have made their national home elsewhere? The question is not entirely theoretical, since at one time the possibility of a settlement was seriously considered in East Africa, and an attempt was actually made to found such a home in Siberia. In fact, however, it would be admitted by the most ardent advocates of a Jewish national home that it is very unlikely that such a thing would ever have been successfully established elsewhere. Despite the impulse given by periodic persecutions of the Jews in Europe, the call to leave the relative security of a European home and way of life in order to plant a Jewish colony in a different continent and under totally different living conditions was one to which only a small number of Jews might have responded, had it not been for the tremendous religious and psychological impulse given by the fact that the land in question was "the land of their fathers". The hard existence offered by a land that was partly desert and still largely undeveloped by modern standards became an exciting challenge when the reward was a restoration of the Promised Land to its destined fertility and prosperity;

and the faith which inspires the majority of the new Israeli settlers is the conviction that the land of the Bible is now at last receiving its proper cultivation at the hands of those who feel it to be truly their own. Whether or not any other part of the earth's surface could have been made available to the Jews for establishing a Jewish State, this was the only one which had any chance of attracting a sufficiently large number of settlers.

But apart from this purely practical consideration, there were powerful religious and psychological reasons which made the choice of Palestine inevitable. In the course of the annual Passover ritual, every Jew throughout the world is accustomed to pray "Next year in Jerusalem". In the grace which Jews say after every meal occur the words, "And rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily and in our day". Admittedly, during the long centuries when the idea of an actual return to Palestine was remote from the minds of all but a few visionaries, this prayer was interpreted in a symbolic sense, and there are still many Jews who would resist any literal interpretation of phrases in Scripture or devotion which refer to the promise of a return. Nevertheless, once the possibility of a Jewish migration to Palestine had become familiar to people's minds, these phrases began to awake a powerful longing. Moreover, in the early and most formative centuries of Judaism, the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine after A.D. 70 was always regarded as something temporary, a state of affairs which God could hardly allow to continue indefinitely for his people. Thus even though the promise of ultimate return had been largely spiritualized and re-interpreted during the period when no such return seemed possible in physical terms, once the possibility was grasped, the idea of a return to Palestine as a religious and psychological necessity quickly gathered momentum. In short, once it is granted that the Jews had a right to establish a nation of their own within their own frontiers, it is difficult to see how in practice this right could have been exercised anywhere except in Palestine, or how the Jewish people could have remained faithful to its religion and its traditional culture had it let slip the opportunity that presented itself to return to the land which is so intimately involved in the most formative period of its history, and which is at the centre of its hope for the future.

The Christian is therefore obliged to give due weight to the claim of the Jews to a land of their own, and to be sympathetic to the reasons which make Palestine the one country where such an ambition may be fulfilled. At the same time, it is impossible to disregard the rights of those inhabitants of Palestine who had been established there for many centuries before the creation of the modern state of Israel; and the Christian is thus committed to finding a solution which so far as possible does justice to these two conflicting claims.



## V. HOLINESS AND HOLY PLACES

Palestine is a "Holy Land", and Jerusalem is a "Holy City" for the three faiths of Islam, Judaism and Christianity. An attempt will be made, in the course of this chapter to distinguish the "Holy Places" cherished by each of the faiths, and to illustrate the differing importance attached to them.

It would be a mistake to imagine that each of these faiths has a distinct attitude of its own to "holiness". It is rather the case that within each religion there is a wide range of possible attitudes, and in this matter a follower of one faith, who holds a particular view about holiness, may feel a greater affinity with followers of other faiths who hold a similar view, than with members of his own faith whose view is quite different.

Broadly speaking, all three faiths which we are considering (and indeed others) contain within themselves a tension between devotion to something fixed and tangible (whether it be a Shrine, a Book, an Institution or a Tradition) and the realization that God is too great to be confined within any such things and that religion must transcend these if it is to bring the worshipper into his presence. This tension is perhaps at its clearest in the Old Testament, where the revelation of God's will in the form of Law stands side by side with the insistence of the prophets upon deeper motivation and bolder faith, but where both the Law and the prophets are found to be necessary for a full apprehension of the kind of life required by God. The same tension is apparent in Christianity, where one extreme is represented by a slavish devotion to traditional institutions and interpretations, the other by an exclusive reliance upon the Holy Spirit and a distrust of any symbol or any ritual which may seem to obscure either the transcendence of God or the immediacy of the Christian's access to him. Similarly again in Islam - God is too great to be properly described by human names and attributes; yet Muslim prayer and worship take it for granted that such names and attributes are necessary if the human mind is to make any serious attempt to grasp the nature of God. This tension seems to lie deep within religion itself: it would be a great mistake to imagine that the more "advanced" a religion is, the less it needs to make use of "holy things" in order to approach the holiness of God. On the contrary, it is the experience of all those faiths that visible and tangible symbols are essential to the fullness of faith, an experience which finds its culmination in the Christian understanding of physical things as "sacraments", and of the ultimate self-revelation of God as "Incarnation" - even though concern for these symbols must always be balanced by a strong sense of the absolute transcendence of God.

In this sense, the attachment of a member of any of these faiths to "Holy Places" or the Holy Land is an example of a fundamental religious urge. This attachment may take different forms. For some, the most important feature of "holy places" may be the element of historical association with an event in the life of Abraham, Jesus or Muhammad. For others, the important thing is the possibility of pilgrimage to a place which symbolizes \*

\* The historical beginnings of their religion; others again may be moved

chiefly by the continuity of devotion at a certain place down the centuries. Few people would regard access to and regular devotion in a particular "holy place" as indispensable to the practice of their religion; but most would recognize the power and value which holy places may have in stimulating faith and devotion. The New Testament revelation is of a God who is to be worshipped, not in any particular place, but in spirit and in truth. This frees the Christian from the necessity to regard any particular spot as specially "holy"; nevertheless he is bound to recognise the importance of tangible things which mediate the reality of God to men, and therefore both to cherish the holy places of Christianity and to be sympathetic to the devotion of others to their own holy places. The following factual survey of these holy places, however brief and inadequate, may help the reader to see the kind of realities which are at stake for each of the three major faiths in the Holy Land.

Jewish Holy Places

For the Jews, the land of Israel is, and always has been a land that is "holy". There is a very ancient tradition that only in this land can the Law be properly observed; and whatever power happens to be sovereign in it, all Jews have a religious and moral obligation to live there. The concept of "holiness", for them, attaches in the first instance to the land itself; and this primary concern must be borne in mind in any consideration of Jewish Holy Places. It is mainly because this holiness is focussed in the city of Jerusalem that Jerusalem is "The Holy City".

Within the Holy Land, the developed religion of the Old Testament allowed for only one "Holy Place", the Temple on Mount Moriah. It was here that God had "made his name to dwell", and ascribing sanctity to any other place was regarded as a dangerous tendency towards idolatry. In the period immediately before 70 A.D. there is admittedly evidence for interest in and a certain veneration for "the tombs of the prophets"; but none of these attained a "holiness" remotely comparable with that of the Temple.

It is therefore understandable that after the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. there was no attempt to create a new "Holy Place" elsewhere. When the Jews were allowed access to the Western Wall - which is in effect one side of the immense Herodian sub-structure of the Temple area, though it may of course rest on older masonry - this immediately became a natural focus for their devotion. It was the nearest they could get, so to speak, to that "place" where (they believed) God could be said to "dwell" on earth, and to a certain extent prayers offered there came to be regarded as the best substitute that was available for the worship which had previously been offered in the Temple itself. At the same time, those who worshipped at the Wall could not but be conscious of the tragedy and humiliation it represented, and their prayers naturally came to include lamentation for the destruction of the Temple. Hence the name given by non-Jews: the Wailing Wall.

The effect of the destruction of the Temple on the Jews of the Dispersion was far less devastating. For them, the synagogue had become the focus of their worship, and the study of the Law had taken the place of the Temple \*

\* ritual. Despite the large number of Jews from all over the world who made



the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festivals, the majority of the Dispersion Jews were not essentially attached to the Temple worship as such, and its cessation made virtually no difference to the practice of their religion. The evidence of contemporary Hellenistic Judaism is clear on this point: the destruction of the Temple was not regarded as by any means a crisis for the faith or the identity of the Jewish people. It was mainly Jews of the Orient who felt the full anguish of this event; and it was therefore mainly they who began to make the Western Wall a focus of their devotion.

The same has been true down the centuries until quite recent times. It was the Jews living in or near Palestine for whom the Western Wall represented a special "Holy Place"; the worship of the Jews of the Dispersion gave little importance to it - it was in any case inaccessible to all but a very few of them. Jewish visitors and pilgrims to Jerusalem were of course keen to offer their prayers there also, and for many this was a natural object of pilgrimage. But the Wall cannot be said to have been of cardinal importance in the development and the continuity of Judaism.

The return of large numbers of Jews to the Holy Land in this century produced in effect a new body of people in need of a central point for their religion in Jerusalem, and it was natural that the Wailing Wall should begin to fill precisely this need. The long tradition of Jewish piety associated with it was a source of inspiration to the newcomers, and it was a cause of very great bitterness that in the years between 1948 and 1967 political circumstances made it impossible for any Jews to have access to the Wall at all. During this period, when the only historic "Holy Place" was inaccessible to them, the Israelis transferred some of its associations to the "Tomb of David" which lay inside Israeli frontiers on Mount Zion. This tomb (of doubtful historical authenticity) became in effect a national shrine, and was also used to commemorate recent events in Israeli history. In the course of this evolution, it inevitably became something of a "Holy Place", though again its sanctity never approached that of the Western Wall.

There are of course many other sites in Jerusalem and in the Holy Land which are associated with great events or saints in the history of Israel. In particular, the Tombs of the patriarchs at Hebron were regarded as a holy place in the time of Herod the Great, and for centuries Jews have worshipped on the steps of the mosque which now encloses them. Today, Israelis set great store by all monuments of the past which are directly related to the history of the Jewish people, whether they be the remains of the buildings of Solomon or places connected with the Jewish Revolt of 66-73 A.D. There is also a move at present to accord greater veneration than in the past to the so-called "tombs of the Prophets", and it is perhaps this more than anything which is responsible for the plural in the phrase, "The Jewish Holy Places". Nevertheless, there is still only one place on earth which is really "Holy" for the Jews, and that is the site of the Temple itself. In their eyes, this has been desecrated irremediably in the course of the last two thousand years, and can be restored only when the Messiah will have come; but the Western Wall naturally remains a place of the very greatest sanctity.

### Muslim Holy Places

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem owes its holiness in the first place to the belief (shared by many Muslims) that it was here that Abraham made the supreme sacrifice of offering his son Isaac on the altar. But the event commemorated by the Dome of the Rock and the El Aqsa Mosque is an episode in the life of Muhammad. This episode is possibly alluded to in the Quran, but the details of it are preserved in Islamic tradition. According to this tradition, Muhammad was carried by a winged horse from Mecca to Jerusalem, whence he rose to heaven and had a vision of God; a mark on the sacred Rock is regarded as the actual footprint he made at his ascension. As a result of this, Jerusalem came very soon to be regarded as one of the three holy cities of Islam, and after its capture by the Caliph Omar in 636 the original Temple area (already long desecrated by the Romans and left ruinous by the Byzantine Christians) was made into a sacred precinct, and the first major piece of Islamic architecture was erected over the Rock - a building of which the beauty and the splendour survive with little alteration to this day. Apart from a brief interval of Crusader rule, this precinct has been under the control of Muslim authorities ever since.

Jerusalem, therefore, has important historical and religious associations for Muslims. Besides the great buildings in the sacred precinct, there are a number of historic mosques and schools in the city. But apart from these, the main importance of Jerusalem to Muslims is as a place of pilgrimage. The main objects of Muslim pilgrimage are of course Mecca and Medina. But Jerusalem soon came to be regarded as an important station on the way, and as the third city of pilgrimage. For centuries pilgrims have made their way to it from distant countries, and in recent years the flow of pilgrims has reached huge proportions. Busloads of pilgrims from all parts of the Muslim world - from Montenegro, Cyprus and Turkey as much as from the countries of the East - have streamed into Jerusalem at the season of pilgrimage (the Hajj). Ever since the twelfth century there have also been regular pilgrimages to the "Tomb of Moses" (Nebi Musa), a shrine which lies off the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, looking out over the Jordan valley towards Mount Nebo. The fact that these pilgrimages are now virtually impossible for the whole of the Arab world is one which is perhaps not sufficiently realized in the West, and the necessity of free access to Jerusalem for all these pilgrims is something which must be borne in mind whenever there is talk of the political future of Jerusalem.

But Muslim devotion is by no means confined to Jerusalem. Abraham is an important figure for Muslims - he is the "Friend of God", the father of Arabs as much as of Jews. His tomb, and those of other Old Testament patriarchs, at Hebron have been a Muslim shrine for many centuries, and the great mosque there incorporates masonry which was originally erected by Herod the Great. Great bitterness has been caused by the limitations on Muslim worship in the mosque imposed by the Israeli authorities after the occupation. Other famous



shrines include those at Nablus, Shechem, Ramlah, Lydda and Acre, and some of the mosques are of great magnificence, such as the superb eighteenth-century mosque of Ahmed al-Jazzar at Acre. Apart from these, there are countless local shrines, preserving the memory of holy men in Muslim tradition, scattered all over the country. Indeed the sheer number and antiquity of Muslim shrines in the Holy Land bear eloquent testimony to the strength and continuity of Arab attachment to the country.

#### Christian Holy Places

The religion of the Old Testament narrowed down the concept of "holy places" to the single place in Jerusalem where God had "made his name to dwell". The teaching of Jesus Christ implied a radical criticism of even this amount of localization of worship, and proclaimed that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and not in any particular place. As a result, when the Jews were expelled from Jerusalem in 70, and still more when Jerusalem was rebuilt as a pagan city in 135, the local Christians (most of whom were Jews) had few "places" which they could identify with certainty as those which had played a significant part in the gospel story. When, in the second century, Christian pilgrims began to visit Jerusalem, they came for two purposes: to see for themselves, in the ruins of the old Jerusalem, the judgement which God had passed on his people for their crucifixion of Christ, and to pray in places where Jesus had prayed. For both purposes, because of its magnificent view over Jerusalem, and because of its many associations with the life of Jesus, the Mount of Olives offered the ideal situation, and it was here that the earliest pilgrims found what they had come to seek.

An important change came with Constantine. It was now possible and appropriate to build magnificent basilicas in Palestine as in other parts of the Empire, and it was natural to build them on sites which had been made holy by the presence of Jesus. But since the city of Jerusalem had been totally destroyed and rebuilt (on a slightly different site) since the time of Jesus, there was virtually nothing left in existence which could be confidently identified as a place associated with any event in Jesus' life. The only things which had survived were more or less indestructible natural features such as caves and hills - and in fact Constantine's first great basilica was built over a cave on the Mount of Olives which had no certain association with Jesus but which was regarded by Christians as the likely site of some important episodes at the end of Jesus' life. Only the site of the Holy Sepulchre offers an exception. This had been covered under a mass of debris and lay under the Roman Forum of Hadrian's city. Constantine's excavators, remarkably enough, seem to have known where to dig, and found what they were looking for - a tomb cut out of rock. It is of course far from certain that this was the actual tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid, but recent archaeological evidence has tended to make it seem increasingly probable that this was at least the area in which the body of

\* Jews may have been buried. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which still

embodies much of the masonry of Constantine (though it has been destroyed and rebuilt many times) is thus one of the most venerable of Christian sites, besides commemorating the most important event of the gospel story.

In due course - and mainly for liturgical reasons - it was felt necessary to build churches on other spots which featured in the gospels. Barely any of these could now be identified with certainty; but this did not prevent the building of a large number of churches in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, all claiming to commemorate some event relevant to the life of Jesus. The subsequent history of these churches has varied. Many of them disappeared altogether in the successive destructions which overwhelmed Jerusalem, while the sites of others were preserved and the churches rebuilt. A large number of these sites now have churches standing over them, and belong to many different denominations. Most of them mark the place where Christian devotion has been offered ever since ancient times, even if they cannot be archaeologically identified with an episode in the life of Christ. Some of them are also the cherished possession of particular denominations of the Christian church, where pilgrims of that denomination find a focus for their own devotion and sense of identity with the history of their own church.

In these various ways, the Christian Holy Places in Jerusalem are a part of the long and complex history of the Christian faith in the land where Christ lived, died and rose from the dead. Christians of different traditions react to this history in different ways. The evangelical approach is on the whole somewhat indifferent to any particular spot as a centre of Christian devotion, whereas familiarity (for instance) with the veneration of the relics of saints makes it easy for Catholic and Orthodox alike to take for granted the sanctity of places where so many generations of Christians have worshipped and prayed, witnessed and died. In addition, many of these sites represent for local and indigenous Christians a precious sign of the historic continuity of their church and indeed of their national and religious identity from very earliest times.

Thus even though the Holy Places represent nothing vital for the practice of the Christian faith - for Christian worship has been from the beginning essentially something liberated from the limitations of any particular place whatever - nevertheless the history of the Christian custody of, and devotion in, places associated with the life of Christ has made the possession of these places a matter of very great concern to certain Christian communities, and the pilgrimage of Christians who visit them has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement to countless individuals. It is possible to question the authenticity of almost all these places on archaeological grounds; but for the majority of Christians who visit them or who worship in them it is sufficient that the church has received them as authentic for many centuries. Their very existence is a powerful sign, for the believer, of the essential historicity of the gospel record. At the very least, most of them mark a spot where Christians have prayed since as early as the fourth century \*

\* A.D., and for Christian remains and traditions of such antiquity every Christian has cause to be grateful.



## VI. TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES AND NEW FACTORS

These chapters have been much concerned with the influence exerted by religious beliefs on people's attitude to the modern state of Israel. But again and again it has become plain that there has been an almost equally profound influence in the other direction. That is to say, the existence and policies of the State of Israel are making it necessary for religious people to question many of their traditional assumptions. Muslims, for example, who are theoretically committed to a "Holy War" as soon as Jerusalem falls into the power of an unbeliever, are in fact prevented from launching it, not just by practical barriers, but by the realization that Jerusalem can never again be exclusively "theirs"; it must always be shared to some degree between the three great faiths which have in fact so much in common. Islam, like all great religions today, is being forced to pay respect to the legitimate claims of other faiths; and this may be expected in time to have its effect on traditional Islamic teaching about sovereignty and conquest. Christians of the West are finding that much of their traditional sympathy with Zionist aspirations was based on an interpretation of the Old and New Testaments which is now outdated, and are being shocked by the implications of this naive approach into a serious reconsideration of their beliefs about the nature of the biblical message. And the Jews themselves are beginning to find that the existence of a national home raises as many questions as it solves. If the tradition is valid, that the Law can be properly observed only in the Holy Land, what is the status of those Jews who choose to remain in other countries? How far can the State of Israel become secularized and still represent the object of Jewish religious aspirations? Is it the case that Israel has become a rallying point for the Jewish faith throughout the World, and that serious questions about the nature of contemporary Judaism and about the true identity of the Jewish people have been thrust aside as a result? Questions of this kind have been made still more pressing by the recent successes of Israeli arms, and will continue to arouse earnest discussion in Jewish circles in the years ahead.

A particularly striking instance of this reverse influence is the predicament of Arab Christians in the face of the establishment and recent enlargement of the State of Israel. Articulate statements of the theological position of Arab churches over against the State of Israel are not easy to obtain; but during one of the debates in the Vatican Council there was a reaction from the Synod of the Catholic Melkite Church (an Arab church mainly represented in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon) which vividly illustrates the difficulties in which such a church finds itself. The point at issue was the projected declaration of the Vatican Council on the Jews. This was immediately taken as a partisan movement by Western Catholics in support of the State of Israel, and was objected to on two grounds:

i) The Old Testament prophecies which appear to refer to a "return" of the Jews to the Holy Land (and which are exploited by sectaries such as Jehovah's Witnesses to support the Zionist policies of the State of Israel) were all fulfilled, either in the time of Joshua, or in the historical return from exile in the sixth century B.C. They have no relevance to modern times.

ii) The gospels clearly prove the responsibility of the Jews in crucifying Jesus, and there is no reason to call this into question. At the same time the Melkites were anxious to stress that Christ died for all and pardoned all, and that Christianity teaches no hatred for any nation. The attempt of the Vatican Council to combat antisemitism and to promote a more constructive attitude among Christians towards the Jewish people thus provoked a very sharp reaction from Arab Christians, for whom any language of this kind seemed to imply support for the State of Israel.

In point of fact, the difficulties of many Arab Christians go deeper than this. Many of the Arabic-speaking churches in the Near East are descended from Syriac speaking churches of early centuries, churches which evolved their theology in an atmosphere of particularly violent anti-Jewish polemic. Their traditional theology still preserves much of this bias, and seems to have progressed very little from a time when it was common to use a word meaning "crucifier" as a synonym for "Jew". When Christians of this tradition are confronted by a situation in which (as it seems to them) the Jews have once again committed an immense injustice, this time by displacing Arab people from their own lands, it is clear that they find themselves in a considerable dilemma. They must either indulge in a powerful anti-Jewish polemic which they will know to be "unchristian", or else they must re-examine their traditional doctrines with regard to the Jewish people. The Catholic Melkite Bishops at the Vatican Council went as far as they could in seeking a compromise between the more liberal approach of Western Christendom and their own inherited bias. But it was clear that the present situation has stimulated them to do some radical thinking about the implications of their faith.

This is one side of the predicament of many Arab Christians. Another side has already been touched on in the chapter on the Old Testament. Most of them have inherited a fairly literal understanding of Old Testament prophecies, and it is difficult for them not to see these prophecies as having been fulfilled in the establishment of the State of Israel. But for them this State represents a gross injustice. They find it inconceivable that its existence and its policies are in accordance with the will of God. They are therefore tempted to jettison the Old Testament altogether. It must be admitted that for the simple Arab Christian the situation has been made still more difficult by the use of the name "Israel" itself for the modern State. Every time he reads the word "Israel" in the Old Testament he receives a



psychological jolt. It is little wonder that increasing numbers are ceasing to use the Old Testament altogether and are even consciously avoiding the word "Israel" in the New.

In ways such as this, the emergence of the State of Israel has placed thousands of Christians in the Middle East in an agonizing predicament. Only a thorough-going attempt to distinguish between Christianity's inheritance from the Old Testament on the one hand, and the Judaism which is encountered in modern Zionism on the other, will enable them to preserve their Christian faith in its historic forms. The will is doubtless there: again and again Arab Christians (and indeed Arabs in general) proclaim that they have no enmity towards Jews as such. All Western manifestations of anti-semitism are totally alien to them: it is only "Zionism" which they oppose. Whether or not the distinction is a real one (for many Western Jews deny that it is possible to be truly a Jew without being a Zionist), it gives Christian thinking something to work on. But so far little progress has been made; and the shock-effect on Christian beliefs has been profound.

Less dramatic, but similar in kind, may be the effect on Western Christians of having to come to terms with the existence of a state bearing the name "Israel" and arousing many overtones in the mind associated with Christian origins and the Christian hope. They too may begin to receive something of a psychological jolt whenever they read the word "Israel" in the Scriptures. The chapters on the Old and New Testament have indicated the kind of approach which this may stimulate to the Bible: methods of interpretation which have long been accepted by scholars may at last make their way among a wider circle of Christians, once the bankruptcy of more literal interpretation is exposed. But the issue is of course a much wider one than merely the proper use and application of Sacred Writings in relation to contemporary circumstances (important though this is for the three major faiths represented in the Holy Land). For centuries Christians have been taught to regard Muslims as "infidels" and Jews as "deicides". These attitudes have now given way to an increasing respect for, and desire to learn from, both Islam and Judaism. Convinced of the contribution which these faiths (at least at their best) still have to make to the progress of humanity, and stirred by the clash and contact between these faiths in the present conflict in the Middle East, the Christian must return to the historic sources of his own faith in order to be able to grasp anew the significance of the religious and political involvement of Muslims, Jews and Christians in the destiny of the Holy Land.

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As was said in the opening chapter, much of this study has necessarily had a somewhat negative character. A great deal of religious-sounding language clings to the present conflict in the Middle East, and it is necessary to alert even well-instructed Christians against the danger of being swayed by naive appeals to alleged "fulfilments of prophecy" or by superficial attempts to show that the hand of God is to be seen in the course of a particular and localized series of events. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that there is no single solution to the present immensely complex situation in the Middle East which can be commended purely on religious grounds.

But at the same time there are some positive things to be said. If recent events have called into question more sharply than ever before a still wide-spread and naive approach to Scripture, they will have helped Christians to react more seriously and responsibly to the pressing issues of our time. Freed from the narrowness of much traditional interpretation, they may begin to find an insight in scripture and tradition which enables them at last to give proper weight to the legitimate claims of a religion such as Islam, and to sympathize more deeply with both the Jewish and the Arab sense of "belonging" to the Holy Land. In particular, they can begin to enter imaginatively into the religious needs and yearnings which are satisfied in all three religions by the existence of "Holy Places", and must insist that no political settlement is acceptable which prevents Christians from an Arab country such as Egypt or Muslims from any part of the world from making their pilgrimage to Jerusalem as freely as Jews or Christians from the West (as the present situation undoubtedly does). Despite the present formidable political difficulties, Jerusalem remains a centre of great potential power for contact and interaction between the three great religions for which it is "Holy". It is not for nothing that "Jerusalem" has for centuries been a symbol of a new age which is still to dawn for mankind. With their confident faith in the ultimate sovereignty of God over human history, Christians are hardly in a position to abandon this vision. But not only Christians. A belief in providence, a concern for "holy things", a desire for pilgrimage and historic roots for a universal religion - these things are present, in different degrees, in each of the three great monotheistic religions, and are elements deeply rooted in our common humanity under God. Only those who are sensitive to the power of such things can hope to make any serious contribution to peace in the Middle East.



CHRISTIANS SUPPORT UNIFIED JERUSALEM



PREPARED BY THE  
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## INTRODUCTION

A growing number of prestigious and representative Christian leaders are opposed to proposals for the internationalization of Jerusalem and want the city to remain under Israeli jurisdiction. That is the primary conclusion that emerges from a survey of Christian public opinion compiled by the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee.

Conducted as a "trends analysis" report, the survey sampled public statements, speeches, news articles and editorials issued in recent weeks by Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical leaders and organizations in the Christian communities. While far from comprehensive, the sampling covered various regions of the United States, as well as Europe, Latin America, and Israel.

In addition, conversations held between American Jewish Committee representatives and many of these Christian spokesmen have led us to the conviction that these views which support the present status of a reunified Jerusalem under Israeli jurisdiction - while recognizing the legitimacy of Arab rights - represent in fact the feelings of thousands upon thousands of Christian people in this country and abroad whose voices thus far have been far from adequately heard.

Those who have charged with incredibly polemical language that Israel was engaged in "the Judaization of Jerusalem" and in "the suffocation of Christians and Muslims" in the Holy City have managed to attract the overwhelming attention for their viewpoint in the general mass media and especially in the Christian journals and media. To the uninformed, the impact of that anti-Israel -- and in some cases anti-Jewish -- publicity has been to suggest that there is a monolithic, or at least a majority, Christian sentiment that opposes the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. The recent UN Security Council debate undoubtedly has reinforced that impression, especially since the Jordanian representative cited a whole range of Christian spokesmen -- from Pope Paul VI to the National Council of Churches -- as being uniformly identified with the Muslim position. (The Muslim position calls for the return of East Jerusalem to Muslim control, which was established in 1948 in the wake of the Jordanian military occupation of Jerusalem in violation of the 1947 UN Partition Plan.)

The frank intent of this document is to demonstrate that there is a substantial and growing body of respected and responsible Christian leadership whose positive sympathies toward Israel deserve to be

taken into as serious account as those other Christian voices who have been more vocal and aggressive in advocating their anti-Israel positions. This leadership covers a broad range of the Christian communities - academic and intellectuals; seminaries, colleges and universities; clergy; religious teachers and nuns; theologians; committed Christian laymen and writers and editors of Christian journals.

At least five major issues emerge in this survey which command a consensus on the part of these Christian leaders:

1) They oppose any possible internationalization or division of Jerusalem on the grounds that internationalization has never worked and would not be a viable solution since both Jordan and Israel adamantly oppose the plan. They share a widespread conviction that Israel should have complete control of the unified city of Jerusalem for historic reasons ("it is peculiarly and uniquely significant to the Jewish people as to no other people in the world") as well as for practical reasons ("they are proving responsible trustees as is not likely true of any other group.")

They encourage further creative efforts by Israeli leaders to provide for "special (jurisdictional) arrangements" for Arab areas of Jerusalem. Several expressed the fear that an internationalization plan would lead to the introduction of troops from atheistic countries which could hardly serve the positive interests of any religious community in the Holy City.

2) They applaud the behavior of Israel with respect to the holy places, characterizing it as "exemplary." Israel has already achieved the main purposes of internationalization which is to provide protection and free access. A Brazilian Catholic priest, who is also a member of the Brazilian House of Deputies, proposed "the internationalization of all holy places within the Israeli capital - Jerusalem; a proposal which is now being actively explored by the Israel government with Vatican, World Council, Eastern Orthodox, and Muslim officials.



3) They deny categorically recent accusations that Israel has been "suffocating" the Christian and Muslim populations in Jerusalem and in Israel. Christians living in Israel for many years declare that such charges do not coincide with the true situation. While there has been Christian Arab emigration, this is not a current phenomenon, since it has existed at least for the past thirty years. In fact, they state, the contrary is true: since the end of 1948, the Christian and Muslim population of Israel has more than doubled. They also report that the exodus from Jerusalem is far less than that of the actual exodus of many Arab Christians from Arab Countries. They describe as "false" the charge that Israel is "abolishing Jerusalem's Christian character," and testify that "the Israeli authorities do not hinder us in accomplishing our mission." Finally, they assert that Western Christian churches receive their information from sources that are mainly Arab and therefore "it is understandable how the presentation of this problem is influenced."

4) They conclude that the housing programs in East Jerusalem are "legitimate efforts on the part of the Israeli government" to renew slum areas of the City and to rehouse Arabs and Jews in new dwellings. The development plans are in no sense designed to oust the Arabs nor to "suffocate" the Christian and Muslim populations. Nor do they believe that the building plans on the outskirts of Jerusalem would diminish the sanctity of Jerusalem, any more than "modern building plans for the suburbs of Washington, D.C., would deprive the White House and the area around it of their historic meaning." (Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher).

4) Of especial importance are the statements of various Christian theologians who, for the first time, affirmed that no theological reasons exist for opposing the return of Jerusalem to Jewish sovereignty. While evangelical Christians have acknowledged in the past that the restoration of the Jewish people to Jerusalem represented the fulfillment of Biblical prophecies, the declarations by Father Karl Rahner, one of the most authoritative Catholic theologians, and by Father

Marcel Dubois, Dominican philosopher in Israel, among others, were precedent-setting and of potentially great importance for the future of Christian theological understanding of Israel. "I cannot see that the return of Jerusalem to Israel constitutes a real theological problem for a Christian such that reasons of faith would compel him to oppose the return," Father Rahner has written. Against the background of declarations of Church Fathers in the first four centuries, medieval polemicists, and the Papal statements to Theodor Herzl, founder of Zionism, all of whom regarded the destruction of Jerusalem as God's punishment of the Jews, Father Rahner's statement and those of other Christian theologians writing in these terms assume especial significance.

An individual but significant view was expressed by Father M. Nobre, of Rio de Janeiro, a Roman Catholic priest and member of the Brazilian House of Deputies, when he urged Pope Paul to move "to establish diplomatic ties with Israel," calling that "the desire of all Catholics the world over." Five other Brazilian deputies expressed full solidarity with the priest's views.

In sum, it is our hope that the study and wide dissemination of these statements will contribute to a balance and perspective in the mounting discussions over the status of Jerusalem, resulting in the avoidance of invective and the searching out of solutions that will reconcile Muslims, Christians, and Jews and one to another. For that is what Jerusalem, the City of Peace, ultimately is all about.

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum  
National Director of Interreligious Affairs  
American Jewish Committee  
October, 1971



INTERNATIONALVATICAN POSITION ON JERUSALEM FIRM

Vatican City, October 5, 1971

A spokesman for the Vatican's Secretariat of State declared here this weekend that there has been no change in the Holy See's position on the question of Jerusalem since the Pope's speech on this issue June 21. The Pope on that occasion called for the granting of an international status to the holy places in Jerusalem. Vatican circles have since explained that this suggestion is different from internationalizing the city. The latter, they noted, is a strictly political matter while the former is a juridical one. The Vatican's announcement was made at the conclusion of the visit to Rome by Msgr. Pio Laghi, the Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem. The Catholic prelate had consulted here with the Vatican's Secretary of State and other high officials on what the Catholic Church's reaction should be to the recent United Nations Security Council Resolution on Jerusalem and Israel's reaction to it. (Jewish Telegraphic Agency)

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GREAT BRITAINCHRISTIAN ATTITUDES ON JEWS AND JUDAISM ...

"A City at Unity in Itself"

A plea for the present administration of Jerusalem was made by C. Witton-Davies, Anglican Archdeacon of Oxford, in the course of a review, in the London Catholic Weekly The Tablet, 7 August 1971, of the new book by Dr. Walter Zander, Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom (London. Weidenfeld and Nicolson). The Archdeacon writes:

For the present, Jerusalem as the rest of the Holy Land, is united and open to all comers, as had not been the case since 1948 before the June War of 1967. Jews, Christians and Muslims can approach their sanctuaries freely and conduct their respective religious ceremonies there. Externally at all events Jerusalem

is again a city at unity in itself, as it had been up to 1948, after which it was divided by the no man's land that ended the war following the termination of the British Mandate. Beneath the surface there remain divisions and suspicions, but no one in their senses wishes to see a return to the pre-1967 divided State. The Jerusalem municipality is well administered under the mayoralty of Teddy Kollek, who has earned great respect and even affection from Jew and non-Jew alike. No other seems likely to achieve such a measure of cooperation as he can claim to have achieved. His administration is fair to all alike who will respect the rules and conform to civic normalities.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to say anything about Jerusalem or about any part of Terra Sancta that cannot be construed as politically biased one way or the other. But opinions must be expressed, whatever the hazard. So I say, with the advantage of the experience of three pilgrimages since the June War of 1967 as well as over five years' residence during the latter days of the British Mandate and half a dozen visits during the years of military partition, that the present has within it the seeds of a just and lasting settlement of the many problems inherited from the past.

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LATIN AMERICA

Brazilian Deputies Urge Vatican to  
Establish Diplomatic Relations with Israel

RIO DE JANEIRO, AUG. 9 (JTA) --

Six members of the Brazilian House of Deputies of both the government and opposition parties have asked the Vatican to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. They also proposed internationalization of the holy places in Jerusalem. The deputies took that stand at a special session of the House in Brasilia which was dedicated to Israel in connection with the transfer of the Israeli Embassy from Rio to Brasilia. One of the deputies, a member of MDB and a Catholic priest, M. Nobre, praised Israel's "political and administrative form of humanitarian socialism" and the "voluntary kibbutz system which characterizes the State's progress." Emphasizing that the anniversary of Israel's creation was "a great date in world history," the prelate warned against "increased anti-Jewish activities around the world and censured the Catholic Church for maintaining "until not long ago" anti-Jewish expressions in prayer books. He also criticized Christians "who under the pretext



of serving God, "were spurring "furious anti-Semitism." He urged Pope Paul to move to establish diplomatic ties with Israel, calling that "the desire of all Catholics the world over." He also proposed internationalization of all holy places "within the Israeli capital--Jerusalem." At the same session, the other five deputies expressed full solidarity with the prelate's speech.

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### ISRAEL

The following story appeared in the September 26, 1971 issue of Maariv:

"CHURCH LEADERS REJECT REQUEST TO SIGN A PETITION TO THE U.N. CONCERNING THE 'JUDAIZATION' OF JERUSALEM."

Moslem public figures in East Jerusalem, recently met with Church leaders in the capital, and asked that they sign the petition to the Security Council of the U.N. on the subject of "Judaization of Jerusalem." The Church leaders rejected the suggestion for various reasons.

Jordanian authorities sponsored several meetings between Moslem personalities and Church leaders to convince them to take the same stand as they, on the eve of the Security Council discussion regarding the unification of Jerusalem.

It became known that most of these meetings, seven in number, were held with Catholic priests. During these meetings the Moslems made it clear that the silence of both Christians and Moslem public figures of East Jerusalem will be interpreted as a reconciliation with the unification of the city, and so they have a "public obligation" to voice their opinions.

All the priests that met with the Moslem leaders preferred to listen to the claims raised before them. As for taking a stand on the issue, the priests claimed that they are in Jerusalem to live here, and political matters concerning the city, should be the concern of the Church centers."

## ISRAEL

CHRISTIAN ARABS SPEAK OF ISRAEL AS FULFILLED PROPHECY

## JERUSALEM POST

Two Christian Arabs yesterday voiced apparent support of the fundamentalist belief that the establishment of Israel is the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The pair were speaking at the third session of the Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy at Binyenei Ha'ooma.

Mr. Fouad Sakhnini, pastor of the Baptist Church in Nazareth, noted that politics had caused a division of opinion among Christian Arabs on the subject. Speaking of his own view, he said: "We Christian Arabs believe in prophecy with justice, recognizing the rights of Jews and the rights of Arabs."

Mr. Sakhnini said that Moslem Arabs completely reject the Jewish claim to the land as "political theology." "The Jews claim the right to a land that was theirs 2,000 years ago. The Moslems claim that the land was theirs 23 years ago (Israel) and four years ago (East Jerusalem and the administered areas.) They ask who has more right to the land."

A strong condemnation of Arab hostility to Israel was voiced by Mrs. John W. van den Hoeven, wife of the warden of the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. Mrs. van den Hoeven, an Arab born in Sudan, said she had been brought up by her parents to hate and despise Jews. "Before 1948 it was because they killed Christ, even though my parents didn't care a penny for Christ. After 1948, the reason for hate was because they stole part of the Arab land from the Palestinians, even though my parents didn't care one bit about the Arab land or Palestinians."

Mrs. van den Hoeven, most of whose relatives are Moslems, said that the attitude of many Christian Arabs had been "tainted" by the Moslem majority among whom they lived. "Quite a few Arab (Christian) believers hate the Jews. The fault lies with the English and American missionaries who didn't teach us that to love Christ is to deny hate. I was born a Greek Orthodox, but I have become a Jew through the blood of Jesus Christ. I must love my brother, the Jew." Mrs. van den Hoeven said: "God has given the land to the seed of Abraham, which is Isaac not Ishmael (as the Moslems claim.)"



CHRISTIANS IN ISRAEL VIEW THE JERUSALEM DEBATE

The following article appeared in a recent issue of Ma'ariv written by Ada Luciani and Yosef Tzuriel, reporters in Rome and Jerusalem:

"Because of the fact that United Nations is about to consider its fate, we are dedicating this special issue to the city which, for the past 400 years, has been the center of world history." This giant headline appears on the important Italian weekly La Espresso, that publishes in its latest issue a special article on Jerusalem including an analysis of the city's history and its religious, social, political, economic and architectural problems.

In a long article - after objectively analyzing Arab and Israeli viewpoints pertaining to the present and future of the city - Victor Zeigelman quotes Christians who do not agree with the Vatican's fears and accusations of the "abolition of the Christian character" of the Holy City.

In the opinion of Father Tournay, President of the Welfare Organization "Caritas" in East Jerusalem, the Vatican's accusations "do not coincide with the true situation. The Israeli authorities do not hinder us in accomplishing our mission. As to Christian Arab emigration, it is true that three thousand Christians have left Jerusalem in the past four years.

"However, this is not a current phenomenon," continues Father Tournay. "Christian emigration from the Middle East has always existed, at least for the past thirty years. The Christian emigration has always been thought of as more important than the Moslem emigration. The Vatican receives its information from sources that are mainly Arab. Therefore, it is understandable how the presentation of this problem is influenced."

Another member of the priesthood, who remains anonymous also does not think that deliberate steps are being taken for the "abolition of the Christian character" of Jerusalem. "They do not disturb Jerusalem's Christian character, but they add Jewish character," he said. "The Phenomenon of Christian emigration goes back many more years than the Israeli conquest."

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## MINIS - IN AMMAN TOO

Israel should not be blamed should not be blamed for all sins. On the subject of the mini-skirt, for example, the same priest said: "People say the Israelis caused minis to be seen in East Jerusalem, but they may be seen in Amman as well."

The Archbishop Appleton also denies any "real pressure" upon Christians and he points out the economic motivation causing Christians to leave.

In the opinion of Father Jean-Marie Van Kang, from the Monastery of Saint Stephen, "The extreme Arab viewpoints are not to be taken to heart." He suggests an ideal solution, in his opinion-making Jerusalem "a free city, with its status assured by international pledges."

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AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES  
"HIDDEN ANTISEMITISM"

The Dominican Father Marcel Dubois, professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, firmly denies the accusations against Israel. "No one speaks of abolishing Jerusalem's Christian character...All this is false. Where were all these sensitive people when the Jordanians abolished the Jewish character of the Mount of Olives, when they destroyed the cemetery dating hundreds of years back? No one of the Christian world protested as the desecration went on before our very eyes."

"In Israel, however, opinions are voiced against the appropriation of Arab lands in East Jerusalem," says Father Dubois, who is critical of the Vatican.

"If the Church does not look at Israel in a Christian manner, if it does not recognize theologically, that this nation has a national goal that can only be fostered in Zion, then it has no right to pass judgment on Israel. The Church feels a bit paralyzed because it only recognizes the existence of the wandering Jew while the Israeli state and nation have no share in its theology. There is also that hidden antisemitism exist....We would have more right to ask Israel to be faithful to herself, to heed the Arab problem, which is after all Israel's problem too, after we recognize Israel's right to exist."

"The Christians are leaving Jerusalem"--thus protest the Vatican and the Jordanian government once every few months. If they had



only made the effort to check out the numbers of emigrating Christians in the last decade, or to learn the facts from the directors of the churches themselves, who are permanently situated in Jerusalem, they would have seen reality differently.

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#### NOT PERMANENT AND ROOTED

The emigration movement of Christian Arabs from Jerusalem to other lands did not originate after the Six Day War. The elders of Christian communities charge that the Christian population of the city has never been permanent and rooted. The reasons for that are mainly economic. The younger generation could not fit into the economic framework and therefore left the Holy City seeking new places to live. Many times it happened that at an older age, after saving up money and property or after tiring of the way of life in other countries, those of the younger generation who had left returned to their parents' homes in Jerusalem.

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#### NO INTERFERENCE

The Fathers of the churches do not approve of comparisons made between Israeli and Jordanian authorities concerning East Jerusalem. They are careful not to refer to this subject in official talks. But in unofficial talks with Israelis, they speak of difficulties put in the way of the Christian communities during the Jordanian rule in order to limit their freedom - starting with permits for building through giving entrance permits to Christians, and including setting up educational institutions.

Only in one field was liberalism shown by the Jordanian rule: they encouraged the foundation of welfare institutions by the Christian communities.

Since the unification of Jerusalem, the heads of the churches benefit from a much more liberal attitude than was prevalent during the Jordanian rule. They can come and go from Israel more easily; the Israeli Government does not interfere at all in the internal affairs of the Christian communities; they are exempted from taxes if necessary; they help them protect their holdings.

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## UNIFICATION OF FAMILIES

Apparently most of the Christian communities have no accurate record of births and deaths, of emigrations and visits among the members of their communities. But from the annual report of the Latin Patriarchate it appears that last year its population reached 4,000. That year there were 111 births and 34 emigrated. It can be argued that here there is no emigration in the true sense of the word, because the majority who left Jerusalem joined their children or parents who are in European countries and in the United States.

This proportion of emigrants is almost certainly the average rate of goers and comers among the Christian communities in Jerusalem. At any rate, there are no other figures. When governmental bodies sought to obtain details on the movement of emigrants from the heads of the churches, they were greeted with a shrug of the shoulders as if these facts have no significance. There were those who said that the number of the community was more or less constant.

At first Israeli officials turned to the heads of Christian communities, seeking details and explanations, whenever information was published by Vatican circles about Christian emigration from Jerusalem. Today nobody takes the trouble to verify or refute such declarations.

The first to adopt this approach were precisely the heads of the Christian communities themselves. Afterwards Israeli officials learned to do the same. Today, they all know that pronouncements and reality are not the same.

They know - although they don't say so openly - that political considerations guide the Vatican and the Jordanian rule in their declarations. Therefore, they prefer to keep their silence, as if nothing were said on a subject so well known to them.

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EVANGELICAL POSITIONSThe Future of Jerusalem

Dr. W. R. White

President Emeritus, Baylor University  
Past President, Texas Baptist Convention

It is our profound conviction that Israel should have complete control of the city of Jerusalem. It is peculiarly and uniquely significant to the Jewish people as to no other people in the world. They are taking an interest in it and are proving responsible trustees as is not likely true of any other group.

The Mohammedans have their sacred city of Mecca, wholly in their hands as is proper. Although Israel wrested a part of Jerusalem by force from their possession, it was previously wrested from them by force by the same people from whom they have recently taken it.

To internationalize the city is not the solution for any problems involved.

The Christian world is profoundly interested also in Jerusalem but in the main they prefer that it be kept in the hands of Israel. They have proved to be superior custodians of the city and its sacred places. Any problem with the Mosque of Omar and similar shrines can be remedied by the proper treaty.

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Internationalization of Jerusalem  
Opposed by Denominational Leader

By Religious News Service (6-23-71)

SEATTLE (RNS) -- Dr. Arnold T. Olson, president of the Evangelical Free Church of America, said here that he joins other evangelical leaders in opposing a proposal that Jerusalem become an international city.

Dr. Olson noted that since 1967 the Israeli government has shown willingness and ability to grant freedom of worship and freedom of access to the Holy Places.

The president was here for the 87th annual conference of the Evangelical Free Church, coming to Seattle directly from Jerusalem where he was keynote speaker at a conference on Biblical prophecy.

In opposing internationalization of Jerusalem, Dr. Olson said the Israeli government had been "open" in its rule of Jerusalem. He also argued that internationalizing of cities has always failed. There are no humanitarian problems in Jerusalem and there are "signs of Israel improving the living conditions of the Arab people," he added.

A Declaration on the Status  
Of Jerusalem

We, the undersigned Evangelical Christians, committed to the integrity of Jerusalem, the Holy City, as the birthplace of our faith, want to commend the State of Israel for the scrupulous care with which it has protected Christian places and people.

Taking note that, throughout history, Jerusalem has never been the capital of ANY people except for the Jewish people, we are struck by the fact that since the Six Day War, all people are free to worship in the place of their choice, unlike the situation that pertained during the period 1948-1967.

The unity of Jerusalem must be preserved at all costs; internationalization, an idea which has never worked in history, would not be a viable solution.

Dr. Arnold T. Olson, president of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

Dr. Harold J. Fickett, Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Van Nuys, Calif.

Dr. John F. Walvoord, president, Dallas Theological Seminary.

Dr. G. Douglas Young, president, American Institute of Holy Land Studies, Jerusalem.

Dr. Myron F. Boyd, member of Board of Bishops of North America, Free Methodist Church, Winona Lake, Ind.

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, professor of History of Christian Thought, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill.

Jerusalem, Israel

June 17, 1971

It should be understood that the signers speak in their own name and not necessarily represent organizations or institutions to which they are attached. - Evangelical Beacon, July 27, 1971



ROMAN CATHOLIC POSITIONS

THE REV. KARL RAHNER, ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGIAN

September 24, 1971

Is Jerusalem part of Christian Dogma?

Once again the United Nations Security Council debates the status of Jerusalem. Once again the City of Peace is a city of controversy. And once again Jews will wonder what Christians really think about Jewish sovereignty over the Old City for the first time since the decades following the life and death of Jesus.

In the middle ages, Christian polemicists regularly proved that the Jews had been rejected by God, by pointing to the destruction of the Temple and the passage of Jerusalem into non-Jewish hands. Many Jews, hearing in their minds the echos of those old debates and recognizing how difficult it is to uproot the stereotypes of centuries, will wonder if, somehow, those old attitudes are not still around.

The Papacy has only intensified such rumination. Last May, the official Vatican publication, "Osservatore Romano," spoke of the "Judaization of Jerusalem at the expense of the non-Jewish population." Last June, the Pope spoke to the College of Cardinals about Jerusalem's "mysterious destiny" and called for the internationalization of the city. Why? Why had 20 years of Jordanian rule produced no such statement?

As a professional theologian, I felt that it might be possible to clear up one aspect of the problem: is control of Old Jerusalem a theological matter for contemporary Roman Catholicism? I therefore wrote to Fr. Karl Rahner, generally recognized as the greatest living Catholic theologian and the intellectual father of Vatican Council II. I asked him if the old notions about Jerusalem were to be found in modern Catholic literature and, more important, what his teaching on this topic was. His answer is as notable for his directness and lack of equivocation as it should be useful in clarifying the Catholic theological status of Jerusalem. And at the end of his letter, please note, he extends his discussion to the question of the status of the State of Israel as a whole. Fr. Rahner has given permission to publish his letter. The translation is by Henry Schwarzschild.

Eugene B. Borowitz:

In response to your question, I should like to make the following comments:

- 1) I have never given close consideration to the problem of the renewed sovereignty of Israel over the Old City of Jerusalem. I can therefore only make a few general remarks. For the same reason, I cannot point to the literature on this subject. I assume, however, that this literature, insofar as it exists, is referred to in the "Freiburger Rundbrief," with which you are surely familiar. It may also be appropriate to refer to Msgr. Oesterreicher's commentary on the declaration of the Second Vatican Council "Nostra aetate," in the second volume of the Council Commentaries, which are part of the Lexicon of Theology and Church, in order to understand the background of this question more fully.
- 2) I do not know what reasons might have prompted Pope Paul VI to support the internationalization of Jerusalem. I should have to restudy the relevant declarations, but I do not have them at hand now. I gather that you know them well. Among the reasons that are at least objectively possible I can think only of the desire for a peaceful compromise between Israel and the Arab states and the opinion that the "holy places" of Christianity could best be safeguarded in this manner. One may differ about the weightiness of these reasons, but they should be judged calmly and objectively. In any case, they do not in my opinion comprise a real theological problem.
- 3.) I cannot see that the return of Jerusalem to Israel constitutes a real theological problem for a Christian such that reasons of faith would compel him to oppose the return. Christians once conducted crusades out of an historically conditioned mentality which is not, however, identical with the true nature of Christianity. After the crusades, Christians accepted the domination by Mohammedan peoples and states as a fact, without being prompted by their faith to undo that fact. I therefore do not accept the notion that Christians ought to oppose, on grounds of faith, the Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, especially since Christians are well aware of the ties by which the people of the New Covenant are spiritually connected to the Tribe of Abraham (Nostra aetate 4). I believe that Christian dogmatic reasons would be grounds for opposing this sovereignty only if there were a decisive objection on theological grounds to the very existence of a Jewish state (which sees itself as a political, not a theological, datum). But I am not aware of



such objections or of such a theological problem that Christians have intensively considered in theological terms.

(from Sh'ma, a journal of Jewish responsibility")

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ATLANTA, SEPTEMBER 10

The National Coalition of American Nuns today called for continuation of Jerusalem under Israeli control. In a statement issued by the Executive Council of the 2,000 member body, the Coalition opposed "any possible internationalization of the Holy City."

The statement continued, "Jews have always been in Jerusalem. It is their spiritual home and the daily prayer of the Jewish people voices their enduring historic relation to the city. Further, Israel has rebuilt Jerusalem pouring into it millions of dollars and more especially, untold human resources. Jerusalem is now available to all faiths and never before have the holy places been so protected and maintained."

The National Coalition of American Nuns is organized to study, speak and work for social justice. Its Executive Council met in Atlanta during the Leadership meeting of Women Religious, September 5th-10th.

TEXT OF STATEMENT ON JERUSALEM BY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
OF THE NATIONAL COALITION OF AMERICAN NUNS

The National Coalition of American Nuns expresses strong support for the current status of Jerusalem under Israeli control. We oppose any possible internationalization of the Holy City. Jews have always been in Jerusalem. It is their spiritual home and the daily prayer of the Jewish people voices their enduring historic relation to the city. Further, Israel has rebuilt Jerusalem pouring into it millions of dollars and more especially, untold human resources. Jerusalem is now available to all faiths and never before have the holy places been so protected and maintained.

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JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN STUDIES DIRECTOR ACCUSES JORDANIAN BISHOPS

by NC News Service - April 22, 1971

SOUTH ORANGE, N.J. (NC)--Jordanian bishops grossly misrepresented Israeli plans for Jerusalem in their recent letter to Pope Paul VI, charged the director of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies here.

Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher, who heads the institute at Seton Hall University, said he found it difficult to take the bishops' accusations seriously, but felt compelled to issue a countering statement to clarify what he called the letter's "various falsehoods."

In their March 1 letter the Jordanian bishops urged the Pontiff to oppose Israeli plans for Jerusalem. They expressed fear that the Holy City would become a Hebrew city, with free access denied to Christians and Moslems, unless action were taken to preserve "its universal character unique and sacred to all mankind."

Signing the letter were Auxiliary Bishop Nemeh Simaan of Jerusalem, who heads the Latin-rite vicariate in Amman; Melkite-rite Archbishop Sabe Youwakin of Petra and Philadelphia, who also lives in Amman, and Greek Orthodox Bishop Diodoros.

The three bishops told of building plans by Israeli authorities "on the hills in the outskirts" of Jerusalem and proclaimed that such a project would radically change the complexion of the Holy City.

Msgr. Oesterreicher said that their claim is like saying that modern building plans for the suburbs of Washington, D.C., "would deprive the White House and the area around it of their historic meaning."

The monsignor said that the bishops' "notion that the buildings to be constructed in the hills of Judea would turn the Old City into a 'suffering ghetto' sounds more like a feverish expression or a propaganda device than a considered judgment."

The bishops are not content, however, "with frightening Pope Paul and the world that there will be a new stream of refugees," Msgr. Oesterreicher said, adding:

"They also want him and us to believe that the 'Hebrew Belt' will make free access to the Holy Places almost impossible.



Their fears would have some semblance of rationality, if that 'Hebrew Belt' was a series of military fortifications or a row of police stations, and not a scattering of apartment houses.

"Whoever sold the bishops the idea that these dwellings will stop the free flow of pilgrims must suffer from an imagination run wild. What interest could the Israelis have in drying up so formidable a source of income as pilgrimages? As a matter of fact, the (Israeli) Ministry of Tourism uses every available means to encourage them."

Msgr. Oesterreicher said that "one could simply write off the bishops' predictions as highly emotional, did they not pass over in silence the fact that access to the Holy Places was greatly restricted under Jordanian rule."

Going further on the question of free access to Holy Places, once the Israeli building program is completed, the bishops asked the Pope: "Can we remain in silence confronted with such injustices and such an abuse of power?"

Msgr. Oesterreicher said he finds "such rhetoric totally unconvincing, not to say insincere."

"What I deplore most in their letter is not that the bishops are alarmists, which is bad enough, but that they pretend to sound the alarm in the name of Jesus," he added.

The bishops had written that "As Jerusalem is entirely and actually occupied by Israel, we feel that we are obliged--before God, before history, and before our conscience--to raise the voice of Christ...."

To this the monsignor responded: "May I be so bold as to remind the three bishops that Jesus, God's Word to all men, was a Jew, not a Jordanian. It is my hope, however, that in His all-embracing love, He will repeat over them the unique prayer: 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they are doing.'"

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PROTESTANT POSITIONS

L.I. BLACK CLERIC LAUDS ISRAEL:  
'HAS SOMETHING U.S. LOST'

by  
Charlotte Ames

LONG ISLAND PRESS, SEPTEMBER 24, 1971

Israel appears to be on its way to becoming the Promised Land, says a black Long Island clergyman.

The people there "have something we in America have lost -- the feeling of belonging and wanting to contribute to a great venture," is the opinion of Rev. Samuel R. Holder of Laurelton. "But we can recapture it. We must!"

How?--"First we have to conquer our fear of each other, then get to work eliminating our prejudices and then we can begin to change the face of our cities, working together to upgrade the standard of living of the less fortunate."

Rev. Holder, pastor of Dunton United Presbyterian Church in Ozone Park, is president of the Queens Interfaith Clergy Council. He was among 28 clergymen and college educators from throughout the U.S. chosen by the American-Israel Cultural Foundation for a study-tour of Israel aimed at better understanding between Christians and Jews.

He says he was unaware of any discrimination in Israel, and in fact "felt 100 per cent freer and safer than in America. There's scarcely any crime in Israel and people can safely walk the streets in the cities at night, something we here have lost the privilege of doing."

In most parts of Israel black people are a rarity, and there were times when young mothers apologized to him because their children were so curious, he being the first black man they had seen.

"I gathered that political leaders there welcomed black people but don't particularly want them living in group segregation, preferring them to be dispersed and integrated," he says. There is one community of black Jews, mainly from America, and, in Haifa, he visited the International Training Center for Community Service, where some 1,000 Africans and Asians and 500 Israelis



study nutrition and basic education together, the outsiders eventually returning to their homelands to teach others.

Perhaps the moment Rev. Holder feels most thrilled about was a meeting with former Prime Minister David Ben Gurion. "He told us that for 3,000 years the Jewish people throughout the world had been praying for the building of the Temple and now their prayers are being answered."

"Our most moving experience," he recalls when we climbed to Masada, the mountain citadel where in 72 A.D., rather than be captured by their Roman attackers the Zealot men slew their wives and children and then each other."

The group met with the mayors of many communities -- Beersheba, Nazareth, Haifa, among others; studied for ten days at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem -- "Intensive studies of the development of the State of Israel, biblically and historically, up to the present and looking to the future," visited holy places dear to men of many faiths; spent a day at the Immigrants Absorption Center of Haifa. There, he says, people live for several months after arriving in Israel, are schooled in its language and customs and learn technical skills so they can step right into a job.

"At the center I met an American Jewish scientist who left the U.S. with his family because his daughter was on heroin. They are happy there, and the daughter is working and enjoying life in a kibbutz--and off heroin."

Rev. Holder says he "never appreciated this earth of ours so much as after seeing the deserts out of which these remarkable people are creating cities.

"We need to have this same kind of dedication to our country and to improving our communities. They are doing what seems totally impossible, and if we shared our goods and our talents, if each of us sought to contribute as these people do, life here would be so much more meaningful for all of us."

He is impressed with the clean cities -- "You don't see trash and dirt in the streets!" -- and with the priority given to schools and education.

He believes that "Our society in America will become more decadent and end in total failure unless we eliminate dilapidated

school buildings, poor programming and lack of good teachers in black and other minority communities.

"Children must receive the best education possible to bring out their talents and constructively build our society."

He reports the Israeli people are "constantly improving their relationships with the local Arab people and improving their economic life."

"It's really unfortunate," he says, "that there is this apparent hate by many Arab heads of state for Israel, when you consider the fantastic job they have done. I'm convinced the same thing could be done in any part of the Mideast, but only if people will learn to rid themselves of religious and racial and national bigotry.

"From what I learned from both leading Israeli politicians and Arab leaders within Israel, the State of Israel makes technical and scientific skills available to those less fortunate, regardless of religion or race.

"I believe peace can come," he concludes, "but only if both sides negotiate together."

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#### CLERIC REPORTS ON ISRAEL

NEWARK SUNDAY STAR-LEDGER, OCTOBER 3, 1971

Peace must be restored in the Middle East before Israel considers the return of Arab lands seized in the six-day war, according to a prominent New Jersey clergyman who toured Israel for two months.

Rev. Paul L. Stagg, general secretary of the New Jersey Council of Churches, said Israel "must always maintain a military presence in the former Arab lands, even if they are returned to the Arabs.

"I doubt, however, whether Israel would give up the Golan Heights because the kibbutz in the valley just below would be an easy target for the Arabs."

Under Israeli occupation, the Old City of Jerusalem, where most of the religious shrines are located, is easily accessible



to persons of all faiths, he said, while under Arab control it was not.

"When it was proposed in the United Nations that Jerusalem become an 'international city' the Arabs partitioned it," he said.

After the implementation of the 1917 Balfour Declaration in 1948, in which Great Britain offered Palestine as a "national home for the Jewish people," the UN decided that both Arabs and Jews had an equal claim to the area.

"The Jews, he said, "accepted this decision, but the Arabs never did."

In reference to the Arab refugees who fled Israel after the war, Rev. Stagg asserted, "they fled because of Arab propaganda, not Israeli persecution.

"The Arabs in Israel are living better than before the country became a nation in 1948. They have better homes, food and education. The same Arabs who were in control of villages within the Israeli borders before the 1967 war are still in control of them today."

Israel, he believes, has no desire to be an occupying power. "The country's real desire is to affirm the lives of the Arab people within its borders as well as its own."

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ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS POSITIONS  
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Statement of Concerned Christians  
Adopted at Emergency Conference  
on Jerusalem and Israel

As Christians concerned about peace and justice for all in the city of Jerusalem, we wish to take issue with recent statements in the general and church press which speak of the "Judaization" of the Holy City and the "suffocation" of its Christian and Muslim population. These statements also call for the "internationalization" of the entire city as a remedy for these alleged evils. Our purpose is to contribute to the debate provoked by these statements considerations we believe to be essential to a full and accurate perspective on these issues.

Our inquiry into the question of public housing in the Old City and environs has convinced us that the construction of these buildings is a legitimate effort on the part of the Israeli government to effectuate a renewal of certain slum areas of the City, to rehouse in new apartments Arabs from these quarters, to provide living space for a Jewish population increased by immigration, and to re-introduce a Jewish presence into the Old City from which it had been forcibly barred after the war of 1948. The development plans are in no sense designed to oust the Arabs, nor to "suffocate" the Christian and Muslim population. While we are concerned about the sacred character of the City, we believe that this housing is sufficiently removed from the holy places to avoid the charge of diminishing the sanctity of the City.

We believe, further, that the claim that the Christian-Arab population is diminishing in Israel is incorrect. Since the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the Christian and Muslim population of Israel has more than doubled. The trickle of Christian emigration has not affected this upward trend. In Jerusalem, the non-Jewish total (Christian and Muslim) has increased steadily in the last three years. The question of emigration should be judged in contrast with the actual exodus of many Arab Christians from Arab countries, particularly from Lebanon and Egypt.

It is apparent to us that internationalization of the entire City of Jerusalem is no longer a viable solution to the problem of conserving the peace, security and sacred character of the City and its Holy places. Since both Israel and Jordan are adamantly opposed to the plan, it is unworkable. Further, the



behavior of the government of Israel with respect to the Holy places has been exemplary. It has achieved the main purpose of internationalization, which is to provide protection and free access--the chief goal of religious groups--and therefore must be considered a political rather than a religious concern. We recall with regret that no Christian bodies or national governments expressed concern about the denial of access for all Jews, or for Christians and Muslims in Israel, to their holy places during the Jordanian administration of the Old City. The same can be said about the desecration of cemeteries and synagogues during this period.

Should Jerusalem be internationalized at this point in history? The internationalizing body (the United Nations) now includes a large proportion of officially atheistic countries, or countries with no interest in or ties to the holy places of Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. Internationalization has never worked and the world has had its fill of divided cities. Both alternatives, internationalization and division, are undesirable.

There are many other possible formulas, short of internationalization of the city, which would better serve the aim of protecting the holy places. We believe that the choice of the best method should be left to negotiations carried on at the peace table between Israel and Arab countries. At that point the Christian churches, synagogues and mosques can voice their opinions as to the particular needs of their communities and properties in the area.

We are encouraged by such creative efforts as those already initiated by Israeli officials with Christian ecumenical and Arab civic leaders for special jurisdictional arrangements over the holy places and in Arab areas of Jerusalem. On the other hand, we regret all interventions that fail to take into account the political rights and sovereignty of the State of Israel.

The signers of this statement speak in their own name and do not necessarily represent organizations or institutions to which they are attached.

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\* \* \* \*

STATEMENT BY PROF. FRANKLIN LITTELL, CHAIRMAN OF "CHRISTIANS  
 CONCERNED FOR ISRAEL" AT PRESS CONFERENCE ON JERUSALEM,  
 JUNE 10, 1971, NEW YORK CITY

Four years ago the relationship between Christians and Jews suffered a severe shock. Just twenty-five years after the destruction of European Jewry a "Second Holocaust" was threatened: for the third time in two decades the Jews of Israel were facing a massive assault, announced on enemy radio and in battle commands as a Holy War to kill the Jews. By a providential combination of courage and fighting skill, that disaster was averted.

But when the little nation was saved, Jewish leaders realized with grave emotional and intellectual shock that with 1/3 of the world's Jewish population already murdered in Christendom another major sector might have been wiped out in a Muslim jihad without any significant action by the United Nations to prevent it. Worst of all, where some of us sat -- after forty years of apparently meaningful interfaith discussion and cooperation -- the crisis was met by a thunderous silence in the churches. Such was the apparent lack of concern in the Christian churches! A statement even appeared under date of 7 July 1967, in the name of the General Board of the National Council of Churches, which talked of the continuing tensions in the Middle East without even mentioning any of the most important factors: 1) Christendom's guilt for the Holocaust, 2) The prostitution of Islam in the threatened crusade against the Jews, 3) The Soviet Union's complicity in the attack, through heavy financing and arming of the aggressors.

Today the public is more aware, after the show trials in Russia, of the way in which Marxist governments are tied up with political

anti-Semitism. But to some of us, who are Christians -- and not Marxists or Muslims -- the moral insensibility and theological wrong-headedness of the churches has focussed attention. Since the "Six Day War" there have been several striking developments, indicating how a growing number of people of the churches is aware that our whole understanding of the relationship of the church to the Jewish people must be changed.

There is the Wayne State University Project on the Church Struggle and the Holocaust, now going into its third year of research and writing among Christian and Jewish scholars of different academic disciplines. Men like Eberhard Bethge, William Niemoeller, Emil Fackenheim, Eli Wiesel, John Conway, Gordon Zahn, Uriel Tal, etc. are working together in this effort to master the lessons of the recent past. There is the Seminar on the Holy Land in American Thought and Literature, jointly taught by Prof. Robert Handy of Union Theological Seminary and Prof. Moshe Davis of the Jewish Theological Seminary. There is a very vigorous Working Party of 10 Catholic theologians and 10 Protestant theologians, under the aegis of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Council of Churches, going into its third year of work; the theme - "Israel: the People, the Land, the State." Within the last six months several hundreds have joined a movement -- "Christians Concerned for Israel"-- which reflects a growing consensus among Christians that just as Anti-Semitism is the litmus test to identify emerging police states, so hostility to Israel is the specific sign of the rejection of Holy History by the Gentiles. For over a century - and especially in the Left Wing and Right Wing Extremism of different parts of what was once blandly called "Christendom" -- the most cruel blows borne by the Jewish people and the Church have come from renegade Jews and apostate Christians.

We might mention other signs of a recovery: the number of rabbis teaching in Catholic and Protestant seminaries and graduate schools of Religion ... the plan to add a resident Jewish scholar to the staff of the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at Collegeville, Minnesota, and so on... I think it is safe to say that the various Christian initiatives share certain common convictions.

1) that the Holocaust was the major event in the recent history of Christianity - and not just a misadventure of Jews;



2) that much Christian teaching about the Jewish people has been wrongheaded, indeed wicked, and that we must learn to think and act rightly on this front at the same time Catholics and Protestants are learning -- after four centuries -- to think and act as fellow-Christians;

3) that the Church needs the Jewish people for several imperative reasons -- to keep us from the "cheap grace" (Bonhoeffer) which is tossed around when God's Law is not taken seriously, to keep us from anti-historical and speculative heresies, to teach us in many ways to honor the covenant of fathers and sons;

4) that the renewal of the spiritual life of the Jewish people, so soon after Hitler's victory over European Jewry and the slumbering conscience of Christendom, is irrevocably tied to the rebirth of Israel as an historical nation.

We believe that the enemies of the Jewish people -- who are also the enemies of the Christian faith, although not usually recognized as such so quickly -- must be confronted by confessing Christians. After Auschwitz, there is no place for balcony-sitters on this issue! The threats to Israel's existence are both overt and covert, of open attack and subtle infiltration and corruption -- in the pincer play which we now know so well from studies of anti-religious policies in the Third Reich and the Soviet Union and in the attacks on Israel since 1948.

Most unhappily, church organs and agencies have not always been immune to skillful manipulation by agents of Communist and/or Arab League propaganda -- not to mention the wretched rise of fascist-type Anti-Semitism in the back woods of American church life. Recently there has been a mounting campaign to isolate Israel from friends, and to remove from her by indirect means and the pressure of public opinion what could not earlier be won by military attack.

This campaign has focussed on the issue of "internalization" of Jerusalem and "recovery" of the Holy Places. A few days ago an Emergency Conference was held in New York, bringing together Catholics and Protestants of distinction from all over the country, and a Statement was prepared for the guidance of the people of the churches. We present it to you now with no illusions as to our own infallibility, but with consciences now schooled in the certainty that in such a situation of all sins indifference and silence are the worst.

Houston Group Voices Christian Concern for Israel

On Wednesday, June 30, an ecumenical group met at St. Francis Episcopal Church to discuss the present urgent need for Christians to express their concern for Israel.

Recalling the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust and the continuing threats to the survival of Israel, the ad hoc group decided to seek affiliation with the national organization of Christians Concerned for Israel. Organized four months ago in the eastern U.S.A., Christians Concerned now numbers 300 members under the chairmanship of Dr. Franklin H. Littell, head of the Department of Religion at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Recently an emergency meeting of Christians Concerned met in New York City, later issuing a statement in support of the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli jurisdiction. After discussing the position taken by the national group, the Houstonians issued the following statement:

We appreciate the recent statement of Christians Concerned for Israel, and we commend the thrust of their recent news releases. Today it is particularly imperative that Christians speak out, voicing their concern regarding the great dangers which continue to threaten the well being, even the very existence of Israel as a free, sovereign state.

We commend Israel for having made Jerusalem available to worshippers of all faiths. Therefore, we see no religious need to internationalize the city, nor do we consider internationalization a practical solution for political difficulties.

We are deeply afraid that this proposal to internationalize Jerusalem - with its strongly prejudicial overtones - will be used by some to obscure the primary issue, which is the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign state.

At this time, we call on all Christians in the community at large to join with us in expressing this concern. Anyone wishing to become a member of the Houston group is urged to contact Mr. Philip Libby At the local office of the National Conference of



## Christians and Jews. (228-5081)

The meeting was called by Sister Ann Gillen, Co-ordinator of Project Awareness, and Mr. Philip Libby of the N.C.C.J. Other members at the meeting included: Rev. Warren Dicharry, Rector of St. Mary's Seminary, already a member of the national Christians Concerned organization; Rev. Benedict Ashley, Research Professor at the Texas Medical Center Institute of Religion; Rev. Cal Rutherford, St. Francis Episcopal Church; Rev. Michael Falls, Palmer Memorial Church; Rev. Bryant Young, St. Stephen's Methodist Church; Rev. John Craig, Central Presbyterian Church; Dr. Lee Porter, First Baptist Church of Bellaire; and Judge Woodrow Seals, Chairman of the Board of Christian Social Concerns for the United Texas Methodist Conference.

The signers of this statement speak in their own names and do not necessarily represent the organizations or institutions to which they are attached.

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CHRISTIAN PRESS REACTIONMIDDLE EAST - VATICAN'S VIEW

by

Father John B. Sheerin CSP

Catholic Northwest Progress (June 11, 1971)

The already complex situation in the Middle East has been further confused by a very disturbing editorial in the *Osservatore Romano* of March 22-23. The editorial claims that the cause of peace in the Middle East has been harmed by Israeli efforts to bring about a measure of urban renewal in Jerusalem. The editor says that this is being done "at the expense of the non-Jewish population."

Why has the Vatican daily paper chosen to stir up this controversy at this time? The precipitating cause was undoubtedly a letter sent by three Catholic bishops in Jordan urging the Pope to oppose Israeli plans to redevelop the holy city by means of high-rise apartments and other new housing. "Thus, through the fanaticism of a people and its chiefs, the old Zionist dream is to be realized: to make of Jerusalem the exclusive center of the rallying of the Hebrew nation and the capital of Israel." The bishops warned that Christians would be encircled in "a suffocating ghetto" and the Christian holy places would become "museums."

I had never previously heard of bishops in one country protesting to the Pope about urban redevelopment plans in another country. Yet as I read the news dispatches about the bishops' protest, I said to myself: "Here we are again. We have been here before." During Vatican II in the 1963 session, bishops from Arab countries demanded the withdrawal of the Jewish declaration. Notable among them were Cardinal Tappouni, Patriarch Maximos IV and Patriarch Stephen I. In the 1964 session, opposition to the Jewish text narrowed down to Cardinal Tappouni who spoke in the name of all the bishops of Arab countries, demanding the text be dropped. In the 1965 session, (cf. Rene Laurentin's commentary on the Jewish declaration, Paulist Press). Arab diplomacy had an opportunity to intrude into the theological discussion of the term "deicide," the upshot of which was that the text was slightly modified.



More suprising than the Osservatore's (and the bishops') non-placets on high-rise apartments in Jerusalem were the editor's remarks on the "internationalization" of the holy city. He declared that Vatican policy favors "internationalizing" Jerusalem, basing his opinion on a talk recently given by Pope Paul in St. Peter's Square. The Pope said that "We have a grave right and a grave duty" to safeguard the holy places of Palestine, the continuing Christian presence there and "the statute of Jerusalem." This statute formulated the 1947 UN plan for internationalizing the city.

I think I am safe in saying that the common impression among Catholics in recent years has been that the Vatican had abandoned "internationalization" as impracticable. On numerous occasions Pope Paul had, with seeming deliberateness, refrained from using the word "internationalization" and it is noticeable that he did not use the word in the March 14 address. Nor has he registered any protest to the effect that the Israelis have been barring access to Christians to the holy places.

What could possibly have induced the Pope to shift his position? Some say that Spain and France, being pro-Arab, have influenced the Pope to shift position. This seems most implausible as the Pope is very much aware of how American Catholics would feel about allowing Russia to get a foothold in the holy city, which would be almost inevitable under a UN plan of internationalization.

The NCC release says "Israeli government officials are increasingly worried by--and irritated at--what they see as the Vatican's developing pro-Arab, anti-Israel policy." American Jews are equally disturbed, especially in view of the extremely good relations now existing between Catholics and Jews in the US. All we can do is to let our Jewish friends know that Osservatore Romano is not an official publication of the Holy See and that we Catholics await as eagerly as Jews a clear statement of the official position of the Holy Father on "internationalization."

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A CATHOLIC REVIEWPOINT

## ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM

Editorial comments by A.E.P. Wall

The Catholic Review, April 16, 1971  
Baltimore, Md.

Jerusalem, the holy city, continues to be not only a center of struggle but an object of struggle.

Israel, which controls the city, has stirred dismay throughout much of the world because of plans to build housing units in areas captured from Jordan. The U.S. Department of State has criticized the housing plans because the status of the city remains unsettled. U Thant has charged that the housing project violates United Nations Security Council resolutions. Objections have come also from those who believe that the housing project is inappropriate in terms of the beauty, and the special character of Jerusalem.

The project is not without its critics within Israel, and it is to be hoped that the Israeli government will act swiftly to review plans that do not appear to harmonize with the unique nature of Jerusalem.

While it is not possible for outside observers generally to support a poorly-conceived housing project, it should be possible to understand Israel's feelings about its capital city. An Israeli sees no more reason to internationalize Jerusalem than to internationalize Washington, Rome or Cairo. There are about 200,000 Jews and about 70,000 Arabs in Jerusalem.

Both L'Osservatore Romano and L'Osservatore della Domenica have recently published criticisms of Israeli positions on Jerusalem.

It might be more useful to the cause of brotherhood, which is so closely related to the cause of peace, for the Vatican and Israel to exchange formal diplomatic recognition. Normal diplomatic conversations between the two could produce not merely a happier frame of mind than can result from editorial criticisms, but they could lead to a discovery of much wider areas of cooperation.

There is absolutely no reason why normal diplomatic relations, one of the marks of a civilized society, should work against



the interests of Arab Christians, as some seem to fear. Quite to the contrary, those interests might be served far better.

There is today, as Prime Minister Golda Meir said earlier this month, "complete freedom of access" to all holy sites in Jerusalem for members of all religions. This was not true before the Six-Day War in 1967. As Mrs. Meir observed, the world "remained silent for 19 years, while Jordanian authorities prevented access to Jewish holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem."

It is vital that Christians ponder not only the open persecutions that have brought pain and death to Jews by the millions, but that recognition be given to the special threats and insincerities of modern times.

There is talk today about creating a United Nations force, or some other international force, to preserve the peace of the Middle East. But Israel does not need a long memory to recall that only four years ago the United Nations Emergency Force was recalled from Egyptian territory along the Israeli border the instant Egypt demanded it.

Israel has never known secure frontiers or friendly neighbors. History gives the Jewish people reason to be cautious about the assurances of others, and history requires Christians to help remove the cause of that caution.

Neither political fervor, economic considerations nor sectarian interest should permit words or actions that have even the appearance of prejudice or hypocrisy.

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#### WAR, PEACE AND RELIGION

The Catholic Review, April 16, 1971  
Baltimore, Md.

Emotions run high, and so do anxieties in the Middle East today. It is essential that the Church stand well above nationalistic influences in its support of peace with justice.

Clergymen in many parts of the world have prayed for the success of the armies of their homelands. During World War II, prayers were offered in Germany for an Axis victory even while they were being offered in Britain for an Allied victory.

It is possible for a priest, a bishop, a minister, a rabbi, to identify so strongly with a patriotic cause that he feels free to seek the institutional backing of his religion.

Three bishops in Jordan have appealed to Pope Paul VI to take a position on the Jerusalem question that would, in fact, favor Jordan. The three are Auxiliary Bishop Nemeah Simaan of Jerusalem, who heads the Latin rite vicariate in Amman; Melkite rite Archbishop Sabe Youwakim of Petra and Filadelfia, who also lives in Amman; and Greek Orthodox Bishop Diodoros.

In voicing their criticism of an Israeli housing plan for Jerusalem (see our editorial above) the three bishops wrote these unyielding words to the Pope:

"Thus, through the fanaticism of a people and of its chiefs, the old Zionist dream is to be realized: to make of Jerusalem the exclusive center of the rallying of the Hebrew nation and the capital of Israel."

The bishops went on to speak of a "Hebrew belt" and to warn that Christians would be encircled in a "suffocating ghetto," terms that hardly point the way to brotherhood.

There is little doubt that the three bishops are convinced that they are serving broad and lasting interests in their appeal to the Pope. In fact, however, they make it more awkward for the Holy See to seek peaceful solutions in a dispassionate and impartial way.

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The Pilot

Boston, May 1, 1971

To the Editor:

Having just returned from a three-week visit in Israel, I am compelled by what I saw and heard there to take very strong exception to most if not all, of what Rev. Joseph L. Ryan has to say on page 12 of the April 24 issue of THE PILOT.

The article fails substantially to prove anything at all about Israeli bias; it does perambulate from one reference to another and from one quotation to another, but there is, therein, no essentially honest facts from which one can conclude that "the Israeli government is engaged in discrimination and injustice against Moslems and Christians."

Father Ryan's use of the syllogism is very badly handled in the conclusions he reaches from the meeting of Pope Paul and Marshal Tito in spite of the fact that we of long memory can quite agree that the latter is an authority on aggression. We, of Roman Catholic persuasion, have come to expect much better rhetoric from Jesuits, but, frankly, Father Ryan's article is very bad propaganda and I wonder to what degree his views are slanted by his former academic position at Al-Hikma University in Baghdad.

A Spanish Catholic guide in Nazareth paid tribute to the efforts of the Israeli government in their use of world-wide contributions for purposes of remodeling the Church of Anunciation there. It appears that the government is administering the archaeological excavations beneath the edifice as well as supervising the magnificent mosaic art in the Church of the proper three levels above. Were that things were going so well in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, where for many decades, I understand, Christian denominations have been unable to get together on necessary shoring of the structure.

It was a distinctly rewarding religious experience to have been able to attend the High Mass at the Holy Sepulcher on Palm Sunday. Isn't it true that during Jordan's occupation of Jerusalem, I would not have been permitted to do so? Isn't it true that Christians had access to this holy place

only at Christmas time? And in addition, also, in the area of religious tolerance, isn't it true that Arabs in Israel are not even now permitted to pilgrimage to Mecca? The restriction is not the Israeli government's. What is true is that the Roman Catholic Patriarch of Israel could hardly be more harassed by the Israeli government than he was by Coptic Egyptian Christians on Palm Sunday morning. The Coptic's Services to the rear of the tomb of Christ were conducted concurrently with ours and the cacophony, however devout, was certainly, if not deliberately, an interruption of the Latinium ritual.

I have many reservations about Christian shrines in the Holy Land. I very much wish that I did not see so many things that I did see. It is imperative on Christians to get their own house in order. The threat is in no way from the Israeli government, the threat, rather is from within. But I want to add and very strongly, that the Roman Catholic administration of religious matters here is in the very good hands of Franciscan monks and with their performance, I have no argument whatsoever.

The Judaization of the Holy City of Jerusalem is becoming popular phraseology and Father Ryan impels himself to its use. The terminology refers to no new plague among the species. I feel it refers to the new housing units in E. Jerusalem, required by the expansion in the population of Jerusalem. These new apartment houses are in good taste, made of Jerusalem stone and modern in their functional usefulness. They are on the outskirts of the city, nowhere in juxtaposition to the Holy City, and are of concerned interest to the growth and development of the city. The new housing is consistent architecturally with the new Hebrew University, the new government center and the Knesset (the Israeli House of Parliament). All of this new construction is merely the reflection of a new vitality in the Middle East--a vitality which may very well lift not only Israel but its neighbors as well into a new era of social and economic tranquility. Let us Christians prayerfully hope that this is so. The Jews against great odds and with the sweat of their brow have built what they have and deserve no less.

Louis Murray,  
Ashland



