PEOPLEHOOD – THIN AND STRONG: RETHINKING ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONS FOR A NEW CENTURY

Yehudah Mirsky[1]

This paper is being presented to the JPPI's October 2010 consultation in order to guide and stimulate discussion. It certainly does not seek to provide the last word in Israel-Diaspora relations, a well-worn subject which, after decades of discussion, still regularly evades hard-and-fast understanding. It seeks rather to trace basic avenues of thought and suggest policy-relevant directions that will reframe the issue, as demanded by the imperatives of our times. It begins with some conceptual foundations, proceeds to some of the political issues bedeviling Israel-Diaspora ties, turns to basic educational challenges, and closes with some – hopefully stimulating – insights and questions for further thought.

Conceptual Foundations

The Global and the Local

Throughout history, societies and cultures have tried to manage complex relationships between, in the realm of ideas, the particular and the universal, and in the dimension of space, the global and the local. Today, we are living through an historical moment

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1 This paper is indebted to the JPPI's project on a new paradigm for Israel-Diaspora relations ("Arevut, Partnership and Responsibility") submitted in 2009 to the Israeli Cabinet and the Jewish Agency Executive. That project was both an intellectual adventure, and a professional delight, thanks to the other members of the project, Meir Kraus, Harriet Gimpel, Yogev Karasenty and Dov Maimon. I have also benefited, once again, from conversations with other JPPI colleagues. The errors and infelicities herein are mine.

which rings particularly complicated changes on these relationships. The welter of forces to which we refer in shorthand as 'globalization' and 'the internet' are collapsing distances of space, and of time (including distances between the past and the future). They do not present a unidirectional vector of linear progress, or of decline, but rather reconfigure, familiar notions and questions of belonging goading us in challenging new ways to articulate purpose and meaning in a time of multidirectional change.

We must bear this new changed reality in mind in looking at the challenge of Israel-Diaspora relations, even though, in many ways, the basic outlines of the question have been quite clear for the past six decades. And we must bring to bear a longer historical memory than that, as we recall the profound ruptures, crises and transformations which have been the very stuff of Jewish history for the past two centuries.

In our world today, as throughout history, Jews present one among many diasporic communities, and we will return later on to some of the ways in which comparison with other diasporas can deepen our understanding, and enrich our policy thinking. For now we will focus on the distinctive outlines of the complex relationship between Israel and the world Jewish Diaspora. Throughout, we will, of necessity, devote great attention to U.S. Jewry, the world's largest and in many ways most significant Jewish community outside of Israel.

Israel and Diaspora – State and Community

Israel is a state, while Diaspora communities are voluntary groups within other sovereign states, each of which has its own political and social makeup and relationship with Jews and other religious and ethnic groups and minorities. The key value of a state – and particularly in democratic regimes – is citizenship, a relationship to the state's political bodies common to all citizens regardless of their particular ethnic or cultural affiliations or beliefs and commitments. Identity and the sense of belonging, by contrast, are in many ways a function of ethnic, religious and cultural affiliations, beliefs and commitments, certainly in the Diaspora and regularly in Israel as well. Identity is itself a complicated idea and we will have more to say on it below.

For Diaspora Jews, Israel is one possible element of their Jewishness; for some it is central and even at times the core element of their Jewishness. For others it is less central, and still others define themselves as avowedly un- or anti-Zionist while for some it may not figure at all.

For Israeli Jews, Jewishness is one possible element of their Israeliness. For some it is central, and indeed Jewishness and Judaism are the central terms of their Israeli life. For some it is less central, others define themselves as avowedly un-or anti-Jewish (at least in religious terms) and for some it may not figure at all.

The divide between Israeli and Diasporic life-worlds is great, and Israel has neither the sole responsibility nor the unaided ability to bridge it. But, as the core state of the Jewish people, it can and should take a major part in enhancing Jewish identity in each and every corner of the world where Jews live. It cannot complete the work, but neither is it free to desist from it.

Mapping Jewish Global Trends

Diaspora communities exhibit great institutional and cultural diversity. One need only think of Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, the U.S. and Canada, the Former Soviet Union, Latin America, Australia and South Africa and their respective Jewish communities to recognize the vast range of experiences, organizations and individuals that fall under the heading 'Diaspora.'

Recent years have seen growing attention, research, and policy-making regarding the relationships between home countries and their respective diasporas. The concept of diaspora is itself being reformulated to reflect the multiple and cross-hatched ways in which geographically dispersed groups engage their home countries and one another in transnational networks of multiple belonging and affiliation.[2]

Throughout the Jewish Diaspora, in particular, two fundamental defining facts obtain. First, Diaspora Jewishness is chosen. Despite its great internal diversity, Diaspora Jewish identity is voluntary in powerful and defining ways in which Israeli identity simply is not. Choice in some ways diminishes the salience of Jewishness in people's lives, in other ways it makes the choice to belong more intensely meaningful.

Second, the Jewish Diaspora is in demographic decline. Not only has the Jewish community worldwide been unable thus far to restore its pre-Shoah numeric strength, but Jewish communities everywhere are, with few exceptions, in demographic decline. Arguments among demographers focus on the rates of decline, with some

2 see Appendix 2 of this paper for a more detailed discussion.

forecasts gloomier than others, but the fundamental trends – at least among core Jewish populations – are depressingly clear. What is unclear (and equally depressing) is whether certain Jewish communities will be able to maintain a sufficiently critical mass to sustain even their core members in coming years.

Both phenomena – choice and demographic decline – are driven by the same features of contemporary life in Western civilization, at multiple levels: secularization, autonomy, the recasting of meaning in the form of individual fulfillment – including the meaning derived from group identity. Indeed identity has itself been deeply privatized in the Western world.

Another emerging feature of our world, in both political and civil society, is a shift from the primacy of large organizations to more diffuse cross-hatched networks of communication and action. This is not to say that large organizations, be they governments or Jewish federations, are by any means becoming obsolete. But their role in shaping concrete policies and the social imagination is changing, and they are being called upon to redefine their self-understanding, and concrete policies, accordingly.

Israel's Place in World and U.S. Jewry

The place and status of Israel within the totality of Jewish existence differs between the Jewish community in the U.S.A. and other communities around the world. World communities generally accord centrality to Israel, are interested in its contribution to their educational systems, regard it as an address for their needs, and expect its involvement. In contrast, for parts of U.S. Jewry, Israel is just another component in their Jewish identity. Certain portions of this community challenge the centrality of Israel and question its central position to the Jewish people as a whole in our times. Some Jews even at times regard Israel as a needy community which needs help and support. While in the U.S., as in the rest of the communities, the Israel experience is regarded as the most effective means of strengthening Jewish identity, such an approach could weaken the connection between U.S. Jews and Israelis.

Israelis, on the whole, have little knowledge of Diaspora Jewry and its communities, achievements, challenges or huge contribution to the State of Israel throughout the years. The prevailing sense of Jews around the world is that the average Israeli has no real interest in the Jewish people residing outside the State of Israel, although there

are studies which do not corroborate this sentiment. An effort to strengthen Jewish identity and the connection with Israel of youngsters around the world necessitates a parallel effort by Israelis to strengthen their Jewish identity, awareness of their belonging to the Jewish people as a whole, and familiarity with Jewish communities abroad.

These disconnects can have very concrete, practical effects. In the Diaspora, philanthropy and Israel advocacy are regularly not only an expression of Jewish identity but are its very constituent elements. Philanthropy in particular generates questions about the nature and extent of Diaspora Jewish involvement in shaping Israeli life and even politics (as demonstrated by controversies over overseas donors ranging from Irving Moskowitz to the New Israel Fund, not to mention the shady and possibly corrupt dealings of donors such as Martin Schlaf). There is no comparable movement of Israeli private monies to the Diaspora.

In sum, there is a deep asymmetry at work in the relationship as a whole, one with deep ideological and historical roots. The classic Zionist stance of "shelilat ha-golah," ("negation of the Diaspora") explicitly sought to diminish the salience of Diaspora as a form of Jewish life, and did so with great educational success. One ironic measure of that success is the fact that Israelis who live abroad do not find themselves naturally drawn to local Jewish communal life.[3] Another is that Diaspora has so vanished from consciousness that it is no longer even viewed negatively. For growing numbers, exiting Israel is no longer considered yeridah but rather "relocation," according to the rules of the new, fluid, global economic order.

By contrast, Diaspora Jews, since 1948, made no comparable ideological effort to delegitimize Israel (aside from handfuls of intellectuals and ultra-Orthodox figures), even as they chose physically to stay where they were, and still are. As a result, for many Diaspora Jews today, Israel functions as a, and at times the, key element of identity and focus of activity. It is for them the vessel of Jewish meaning and the locus of belonging. The same is not the case for the vast majority of Israelis for whom Diaspora and its Jews simply do not figure as core elements of identity.

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3 My thanks to my colleague Shlomo Fischer for this observation.

Which is What, Exactly?

Jewish Identity – the Limits of a Concept

Jewish identity is a complex and slippery term that aims to capture religious commitment, social, ethnic and national belonging, cultural affiliation separately and together. The entire subject of Jewish identity in its contemporary form itself reflects modernity's displacement of the traditional religious beliefs and practices which constituted Jewish life for millennia, and of the social networks and frameworks which sustained them.

There are many Jewish identities and articulating the precise content of Jewish identity, normatively or descriptively, is at best challenging and at worst futile. Yet it does give us a handle on the complex web of issues that affect and define Jewishness. Moreover, its couching of truth and moral claims in terms of their expressing the situations and subjectivities of those who make them is very much of a piece with the fundamental contemporary restructuring of Jewish identity which we are trying to understand.

For our purposes, a decent working definition of Jewish identity – and perhaps any identity – are belonging and meaning as lived in practice. Through identity people affirmatively belong to a collective and derive moral, social, spiritual and aesthetic purpose, in other words meaning, from that belonging.

Many Jews find their Jewishness richly compelling in diverse ways. And yet, as a result of developments such as secularization, an absence of powerful meaningful experiences, a perception by many that traditional religion has been insufficiently responsive to change, a decline in direct contact with classic sources and the lack of a common language, more and more Jews find it difficult to experience Jewish meanings relevant to their lives. Equally, belonging is diminished by such elements as individualism, a general drifting away from established communities and organizations and the decrease in the suasion of ethnic identity, all of which weaken traditional social connections which have been preserving the community. Moreover, Diaspora Jews, overwhelmingly middle class and higher, and Israeli elites are themselves deeply enmeshed in the global, internet-age ethos which dissolves strong local attachments in the ether of cyberspace and its economic, social and cultural precincts.

At the same time, on the cultural, intellectual and even spiritual front, writers, artists and intellectuals whose deep connections to Judaism and Jewish life are unmistakable, are registering increasing discomfort with the centrality of Israel as a defining feature

of Jewish identity. One version of this rethinking is emerging in the renewed interest in the legacy of thinkers such as Ahad Ha-Am, whose vision of cultural Zionism stood as counterpoint to Herzlian Zionism, or Simon Rawidowicz, who argued for a Babylonia-Jerusalem model of cultural parity and exchange between Israel and the Diaspora. Another, stronger version is the tendency among artists and intellectuals to promote Diasporism, not as a complement to Israel, but as an alternative.

For younger Jews, particularly in the Diaspora, and including those committed to Jewish life, belonging as such, certainly as defined by external threats, is far less compelling than meaning. In the evocative phrase of Joseph Soloveitchik, they are less likely to commit themselves to a Jewish covenant of fate than to a covenant of destiny. That is the fundamental matrix within which today's Israel-Diaspora relations must take shape.

Political Dimensions

There is no denying the hard realities of power, threat and response which set the stage on which Israel and Diaspora meet. Several issues are particularly salient:

- Israel's policy on matters relating to issues such as who is a Jew, conversion, and religion and state in general, are regularly a divisive factor between Jews and the State of Israel.
- Israel's conduct and image in the context of its conflict with the Palestinians, as well as its attitude to the minorities within it, diminish the Jewish state's luster as an exemplary country. At the same time, and a little surprisingly, survey research indicates that these factors are less dispositive than who is a Jew as far as basic identification is concerned, and that Jews variously understand and interpret these geopolitical factors in terms of their pre-existing Jewish commitments.
- Jews in various communities expect that the Government of Israel, in its decisions on various issues, would be sensitive to the implications that such policies may have on their lives. Many feel that this is not the case today.

Supporting Israel and the Place of Dissent

Historically, mainstream Jewish organizations have been fundamentally supportive of the elected government in Jerusalem, of whatever political stripe, out of the sense that a) it is not the business of American Jewry to dictate policy b) on balance the elements

of political, economic and military support which the U.S. Jewish community can help provide Israel are of a broadly consensual nature c) and the same is true at the more fundamental level, i.e. the key responsibility of American Jewry, namely ensuring the fundamental support of the U.S. government and people for the existence and well-being of the State of Israel.

It bears noting that the Jewish establishment has been willing to confront and disagree with Jerusalem on issues not directly related to Israeli security. Thus, to take one example, American Jewry successfully resisted efforts by Israel to deny Soviet Jews the option of exit to the West (and Soviet Jews began heading to Israel in large numbers only after the U.S. tightened up its visa policy in 1989). Today organized Jewry challenges Israel on questions of conversion and who is a Jew?

This fundamentally "statist" orientation was put to the test twice in recent decades, with the election of Menachem Begin and ascendancy of the Likud in 1977, and the Oslo Accords of 1993. In the former case, the election of a right-wing government was a jolt to organized American Jewry's fundamentally liberal orientation; in the latter, American Jewry was – along with the U.S. government and the Israeli people themselves – taken by surprise by a dramatic diplomatic and strategic volte-face which, at a stroke, overturned decades of longstanding Israeli policy vis-à-vis Yasir Arafat and the PLO (earlier efforts by Secretary Shultz to secure recognition of the PLO notwithstanding). In both cases the establishment, after registering its initial shock, regained its footing and gave its support to the duly elected government in Jerusalem.

Over the years various groups sought to challenge the statist orientation of mainstream Jewish organizations. The American Council for Judaism of the early years of statehood, in the 1970s Breira and New Jewish Agenda and, from the 1980s on, the circle around Tikkun magazine, mounted challenges from the left; on the right the Zionist Organization of America and numerous Orthodox groups have challenged the Jewish establishment's support for the Oslo process and actively support the settlement movement, including when doing so entails opposition to the elected government in Jerusalem.

None of these groups became significant players, for several reasons. The left groups were never able to win enough foot-soldiers, or speak for a solid social base of consequence to the Jewish community, even if some of their proponents were themselves distinguished members of the establishment. This was both because of their fundamentally intellectual – counter-cultural orientation, and their swimming

against the powerful generational ties to Israel of Jews for whom the emergence of Israel after the holocaust was a formative and living memory.[4] For their part, groups on the right similarly were not able to win mass followings, and much of their water is at any rate carried by the generally right-leaning Orthodox community.

New changes are being rung on this situation by the ascent of J Street, which explicitly seeks means to challenge the American-Jewish establishment, and AIPAC in particular – not by operating as counter-cultural (as did New Jewish Agenda et al) but as a kind of alternative establishment, one which bears the lineaments of the establishment's grass-roots support, professionalism and insider status (albeit to a lesser degree) while steering a different political course.

J Street's entry onto the scene illustrates broader trends. The organized Jewish community of today reflects a more broadly pluralist cultural orientation than in the past. Even in strictly organizational terms, the decline in mass-membership organizations and the rise of smaller entities, and of family-based foundations, points to greater internal diffusion within Jewish organizational life. Many youthful radicals of the 1960s and 70s are themselves now established members of the community. In substantive political terms Israel's inability to resolve the status of the territories to anyone's satisfaction makes for an open wound (This also would seem to account for the willingness of figures with well-established credentials as longtime supporters and defenders of Israel to sign the open letter circulated by JCall, the newly-formed European counterpart to J Street). And while the linkages between the Obama administration and J Street should not be overstated, certainly some elements of the administration seem well-disposed to it, both on substantive policy grounds, and perhaps as a counterweight to the established community.

The emergence of J Street and JCall may also be said to reflect changes wrought by globalization. Ironically, just as asyemmetrical warfare has shifted the positions of the front lines and the rear, so too – albeit in a far less violent way – has globalization shifted the positions of front line and rear with regards to Israel in the battle of ideas. Diasporic Jews bear the brunt of assaults on the legitimacy of Israel, and some find themselves held accountable in the court of public opinion for Israeli policies with

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4 Americans for Peace Now and the Israel Policy Forum, the latter formed in the 1990s to support the Oslo Accords, have maintained good standing in the organized community, and yet, like the groups mentioned above, have not managed to galvanize a large constituency.

which they disagree. At the same time, they have, via new media, access to more and varied forms of information, and to more varied ranks of Israeli society and its internal dissenters, than they have had before.[5] Of course J Street's future remains uncertain — and just how uncertain became vividly apparent with revelations in late September 2010 about its duplicity regarding the sources of its funding and its efforts to open doors on Capitol Hill for the Goldstone Report's author, Richard Goldstone. These two revelations severely damaged two key elements of J Street's image — its ostensibly being a good government organization, and its being a four-square "pro-Israel" entity, albeit of the left.

While these actions of J Street obviously partake of run-of-the-mill political mendacity, they also, as thoughtful commentators have noted, derive from its inability thus far to define for itself what it is and it wants to be, how it understands the shape and form of being pro-Israel.

Notwithstanding its initial organizational achievements, J Street's future is unclear, not least because of the very genuine differences among its members regarding ideological fundamentals of support for Israel and Zionism. Three things, though, are clear, and pertinent to the broader discussion:

- The emergence of avowedly pro-Israel groups which are nonetheless critical of Israel may serve, paradoxically, further to marginalize the more strongly post-and anti-Zionist elements of the Jewish community, viz. if J Street is too pro-Israel for you, then you really are no longer part of the conversation.
- Second, while developments such as J Street, or the much-discussed essay by Peter Beinart earlier this year in the New York Review of Books do not reflect the views of all Jews who are actively engaged in communal life and advocacy, it does reflect some of them, and certainly reflects the views of large numbers who are willy-nilly part of American Jewry's demographic makeup and social and cultural presence; their views and concerns, however contrary to establishment views, cannot simply be discounted or dismissed.
- Third, it is imperative that American Jewry, and Diaspora communities in general, develop a discourse of peoplehood which reflects a fundamental care and concern for the well-being of the flesh-and-blood people of Israel, and of world Jewry, and

5 I am indebted for these observations to my colleague Dov Maimon.

that political views of whatever stripe be articulated with that fundamental goal mind. This suggests a more pragmatically-oriented political discourse in which as much as possible ideology takes a backseat.

One last comment: Jewish history has never been static, but the last two and a half centuries have seen especially formidable internal and external changes in Jewish life. Religiously, politically, socially and culturally, today's Jews negotiate their relationship with Jewish tradition across a vast historical and linguistic divide. As a result principled disagreement is not only inevitable but is the very lifeblood of Jewish tradition, and creating the basis for principled disagreement, sustainable over time, is a *sine qua non* of Israel-Diaspora relations.

The Educational Challenge

"Israel education" has, in one form or another, been a staple of Jewish educational programs for decades, formal and informal, frontal and experiential, text-based and multimedia and everything in-between. Thematically, Israel is and has been presented, depending on the institution or program's focus or orientation, as, Holy Land, safe haven, besieged democracy, national and cultural center, battleground of religious pluralism, home of Hebrew pop music and falafel. Educational goals vary with the institution or program's focus or orientation, be it Aliyah, religious commitment to the State (or, for ultra-Orthodox communities, religious demurral from the State), political support, cultural literacy and appreciation, and so on. The diversity of themes and objectives reflects the diversity of Diaspora Jewish education as a whole. Yet, all share a basic objective of fostering a sense of Israel as a central feature of the students' life-worlds.

By contrast, formal "Diaspora education" exists in Israel in only the most limited forms, if at all. While elements of Jewish history are taught in Israel's highly centralized system, contemporary Jewish life outside of Israel is dealt with negligibly by religious and secular streams alike. (Indeed, it may well be that the seconding of soldiers to Birthright trips seems to be the most extensive form of Israeli "Diaspora education" yet undertaken.) This reflects the classical Zionist conception in which the Jewish state is properly not only the center of Jewish life, but in fact supersedes the Diaspora as the historical bearer of Jewish civilization, peoplehood and, for Religious Zionism, spiritual and religious authority.

The reasons for this asymmetry are not only ideological. Israeli students are called upon to serve in the army and encouraged to forego more comfortable circumstances outside of Israel, a reality which militates against presenting rich Jewish identities in the Diaspora. Moreover, and most prosaically, Israel's public education system is chronically under-funded, making Diaspora education an unaffordable, and readily dispensable, boutique item. It is hard to imagine, under present circumstances, most Israeli school principals diverting precious and limited resources from English and Mathematics to "Jewish civilization." A frame of mind that would make that even thinkable would require a significant sea change.

To be sure, there are good reasons for finding ways to enhance Diaspora education within Israel. Precisely because we are living in a time in which globalization is a central feature of economic, political and cultural life, young Israelis deserve to be taught that the global culture in which they will be participating has distinctively Jewish elements as well. But precisely that reframing of the meaning of Diaspora implies a corresponding reframing of Israel's place in the global network of Jewishness.

Education lay at the heart of JPPI's report to the Israeli Cabinet on Israel-Diaspora relations, whose gist was presented at last year's October consultation and is reproduced as an appendix to this paper. Central to its recommendations is increasing the web and weave of connectivity between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora through a range of frameworks and points of interaction, especially between the ages of 15-35.

Yet those policy directions by no means exhaust the subject. Indeed, as indicated above, making Diaspora consciousness in one form or another a meaningful dimension of Israeli education requires substantial and creative rethinking. The place of Hebrew, in both Israel and the Diaspora cries out for creative ideas, as do the fundamental philosophical questions which must inform the educational enterprise as a whole.

What Might the Future Look Like?

JPPI's recently completed 2030 project, written by Avi Gil and Einat Wilf, laid out several possibilities for the future shape of Israel-Diaspora relations: Thriving, drifting, defending and nightmare. The details of their analysis are laid out in an Appendix to this paper. Briefly, and most salient for our purposes, thriving is characterized by a shared sense of positive, forward-looking purpose, drifting by apathy and a steady mutual disengagement, defending by a sense of common danger as the tie that binds, and nightmare as the inability to act in concert even in the face of real peril.

External factors of course play a key role in all these scenarios, yet potential responses to those threats are themselves a function of the robustness and suppleness of Israel-Diaspora ties. Yet deep structural factors embedded in the very fabric of the evolving global civilization of which Jews are very much a part – and in whose success they are in many ways deeply invested – will, absent considered intervention, likely lead to a nearly inexorable drift apart.

Jewish survival will require a process of creating new and powerful forms of Jewish meaning and content, which may take many years. We cannot foresee the ultimate results, as indeed the process should be dynamic, continuous and unending, and involve poets, pietists and philosophers as much as, if not more than, policy-makers. Yet policy makers can seed this process and foster the human and institutional wellsprings of creativity. They can set to work on enhancing and renovating the frameworks of belonging, revitalizing institutions, improving existing formal and informal structures, and finding ways to enable people to think and build something new. The test of success will be, as it has always been throughout Jewish tradition and history, the concrete manifestations of Jewish meaning and belonging in practice.

The State of Israel and the Jewish people can together raise resources to encourage creative rethinking, foster global partnership and conversation, establish mechanisms for sharing experiences and best practices, fund innovative initiatives, establish international professional networks and empower potential future leaders. Israel should become one of the hubs of this global network of Jewishness.

Israel-Diaspora Relations as an Open-ended Portal

One model for how constructively to think about this new paradigm in Israel-Diaspora relations may be provided by the architecture of the Internet, whose founders wisely decided to pursue an 'end-to-end' design model. Working with the 'end-to-end' model they created platforms on either end with maximum freedom in-between, portals of engagement and capability, and enabled people to fill them with whatever content they wish. Put simply, the 'end-to-end' model lets the network perform only a limited job of transmitting the bits of information among the users, while avoiding involvement in the contents.

An end-to-end model in Israel-Diaspora terms would mean the creation of structures aiming to facilitate the maximum flow of information, ideas and collaboration between Israeli and Diaspora institutions and individuals, with minimal top-down engineering. Those institutions and individuals would bring to these engagements their own concerns, passions and engagements, and do with them whatever they wish.

The Israeli role here is that of a portal, opening onto a large and open field, to be populated as various actors desire. "Portal" here means not any one specific website or program, but a way of thinking about what it is that the State of Israel and the organized Jewish communities of the world are trying to do, as per the above-mentioned Israeli government's decision, and that is to create the conditions for continuous conversation on myriad levels between Israel, Israelis, Diaspora communities and Jews.

How central, in this way of thinking, would the Israeli portal be? Is this a gentle recasting of the traditional model of "center-periphery," of the bi-polar model of "Babylon and Jerusalem," or, is it a more diffuse and pluralist model in which all portals are equal partners in setting the tone, and in determining policies and priorities? That can only be answered, if at all, in the doing.

Concluding Reflection

A precondition for any Israel-Diaspora conversation is some common culture – not for the sake of uniformity, but so that there may be a shared basis both for conversation and for principled disagreement. Thus it is essential that we take as an immediate and preliminary goal the increasing of Jewish cultural literacy at every possible level.

In the end, there is no substitute for conviction or belief as guarantors of Jewish existence, certainly not a meaningful existence. In the conditions of contemporary Jewish life, uniform belief and conviction are neither attainable nor desirable. That said, our aim is not to try and influence the contents, which should be conceived, developed, discussed and transmitted by the general audience of the Jewish people, but to create appropriate frameworks for new thinking and fruitful discourse.

It is a truism that Judaism has few if any dogmas. Yet no Jewish thought, or faith, can sustain itself without a living relationship to a living Jewish people and its culture. This is the bedrock truth on which Israel-Diaspora relations will rise or fall.

That not all Jews are Zionists or pro-Israel goes without saying. Nor does belief in Jewish peoplehood necessarily entail support for the policies of any given Israeli government or even for Jewish sovereignty. Modern Jewish history has known a number of non- or anti-Zionist groups: the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael, the Socialist Bund, the territorialism championed by the great historian Simon Dubnow, to name a few. All, however, shared a passionate commitment to Jewish thought, culture, and practice, however understood, as well as to the sheer physical well-being and flourishing of their fellow Jews. This they shared with the myriad ideological streams (and rivulets) of Zionism.

Today, too, a disciplining frame for any discussion of the meaning of peoplehood must surely be the physical and cultural survival of what is now the world's largest Jewish community, comprising millions of individual Jews living in a mind-bending thicket of geopolitical danger and moral complexity. With that commitment in place, debate can freely proceed. Without it, there is little point.

The title of this paper refers to a distinction developed by the philosopher Michael Walzer, between "thin" moral ideas, representing key intuitions and commitments, basically and simply stated and thus widely shared (such as demurral from slavery or torture), and "thick" moral ideas, which richly elaborate moral ideas in the context of particular histories and cultures (such as Confucianism or Scandinavian social democracy). Turning to our subject, and as ideas go, "peoplehood" is thin, and wide, and best kept that way: not an end in itself but a vessel for the discussion of substantive values, beliefs, and ideals. Like all vessels, this one is home to living, breathing human beings. Unless their welfare and survival are assured, there will be nobody to talk with and nothing to argue about. With that commitment to Jewish physical and cultural survival in place, there is much to argue about and hopefully for a long time to come.

APPENDIX 1

JPPI Recommendations to Government of Israel, 2009

Recommended Policy Directions

In light of the above analyses of the elements of identity and the insights it yields, we posit the following array of policy directions as a basis for our recommendations.

- Positioning Israel and strengthening its status as a focus of identification for the Jewish People.
- Dissemination of Jewish knowledge, cultural treasures and Hebrew language among ever larger circles.
- Anchoring Jewish identity in a platform of moral normative values including social justice and working towards Tikkun Olam, in both material and spiritual terms as they arise out of the richness of Jewish heritage.
- Expanding and enhancing the weave of connectivity among Jews and between Israelis and Israel and Diaspora Jews.
- Enhancing Jewish identity and the consciousness of belonging to the Jewish People among Israeli youth.
- A program that includes action strategies based on these policy directions could contribute substantially to the strengthening of Jewish identity and the link between Israel and the Diaspora.
- The Government of Israel will see to it that every Jewish young man and woman who may want to, will visit Israel at least once between the ages of 15-35 through a variety of programs targeted at the entire range of populations and ages.
- The Government of Israel shall act to disseminate Jewish knowledge and cultural literacy and its intellectual and cultural riches, including contemporary Israeli culture, Hebrew language teaching, and the inculcation of the tradition of study as a Jewish value, among Jews around the world, through a variety of formal and informal activities and collaborative projects.
- The State of Israel will serve as a center of training, support and consultation for Jewish education in the Diaspora and assist in establishing schools for the study of Jewish culture and heritage.

- The Government of Israel shall act to encourage and establish Tikkun Olam ventures, in which young men and women from Israel and overseas communities will work together on issues of social justice and humanitarian concern.
- The Government of Israel shall act to strengthen Jewish identity and sense of belonging to the Jewish People among youth in Israel through the educational system and other means.
- The Government of Israel shall work towards establishing a global Jewish Foundation for supporting innovative ventures and initiatives by or for Jewish young men and women, aimed at strengthening Jewish identity, deepening of the sense of belonging to the Jewish People, and intensifying the links with Israel.

APPENDIX 2

Nationals Abroad: Comparative Perspectives

Comparative study yields a rich and growing tool-kit of policy options. Today, some 70 countries around the world actively formulate policy guidelines and courses of action vis-à-vis their dispersed populations, on a varying scale and via different approaches. Such policies constitute an emerging trend, both in terms of the growing number of countries who are addressing the issue, and in terms of the various and increasing layers of such policies. While it is true that the "Jewish case" is unique in the sense that most of the Jews in the Diaspora have never been citizens of Israel and the majority of them are not the descendants of former Israeli citizens, this does not preclude a comparative review of the policies of core countries regarding their dispersed populations.

Many countries regard their dispersed populations as a source of strength and 'soft power,' far beyond simply economic-utilitarian considerations. The reality of the 'global village' encourages affirmative policies by core countries towards their Diaspora populations, due to the many advantages derived from the presence of these dispersions in various locations around the globe. In several countries – such as Mexico, Australia and Turkey – there is even a discernible calculated and deliberate shift in their attitudes to dispersion, to the extent that the somewhat censorious and alienating stances that previously characterized their attitude have been replaced by terms of partnership and brotherhood.

In looking to relevant comparisons for policy purposes, we may look to two broad categories. One is core states reaching out to, and formulating a specific policy to address, its own expatriates, who would be analogous to Israelis abroad (referred to in traditional Zionist ideology as yordim). In some places we see full-fledged Ministries or Authorities for Diaspora Affairs, far more robust than the Israeli version which is invariably an under-funded epiphenomenon of coalition politics. Full-fledged Diaspora agencies see to the consular and economic needs of citizens living and working outside the borders of the core country, and administer the flow of financial and human resources from the core country to the Diaspora and back. In some countries (India is a prime example) the body is charged with helping expatriates manage their legal and economic affairs and may indeed present a model for Israelis living abroad. Elsewhere, (e.g. Greece, South Korea) the body formally designates quasi-governmental NGOs, foundations or entities

to disseminate language and culture and maintain ties with citizens living abroad. In most cases, the foreign ministry is charged with these responsibilities and maintains designated bureaus or sub-ministries to that end.

Some countries (Italy, Hungary) have sought to grant civic and social rights of the core country to citizens residing outside its borders, often entailing tax payments and other duties. These moves have often come under domestic criticism, especially when they seem to be advancing revanchist or broadly nationalist policies with insufficient support at home.

Culture and Language Dissemination

A more relevant comparison for broader Israel-Diaspora purposes are efforts by core countries to cultivate consciousness, identity and a broad sense of belonging through the dissemination of national culture and language. Close to twenty countries, some of which are large and influential – the U.S.A., Britain, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, China and Japan – and some smaller – such as the Czech Republic, Greece, Sweden and Ireland – have in place fully or partially state-operated bodies entrusted with the dissemination of their cultures and languages around the world.

In most countries, actions aimed at cultivating the identity and sense of belonging of expatriates are coordinated by their respective Foreign Offices, often through heavily staffed divisions. In some of the countries we find inter-ministerial high-level committees which are responsible for this task in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with representatives from Education, Labor and Treasury ministries. In others, we find official collaborations – often anchored in specific legislation – between governments and authorized non-governmental agencies, such as foundations and other institutions. Leading examples of these are the British Council, the Goethe Institut the Alliance Française, and China's Confucius House.

APPENDIX 3

EXCERPT FROM 2030: ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE, AVI GIL AND EINAT WILF, PROJECT DIRECTORS (JEWISH PEOPLE POLICY PLANNING INSTITUTE, 2010)

Israel – Diaspora Relations

Background

The establishment of the State of Israel radically ruptured the continuity of Jewish history. It will take at least two or three more generations to resolve the primary issues resulting from this radical event. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, the relationship with Diaspora Jewry has mostly been based on Diaspora communities giving aid to Israel and serving as a source for new immigrants. Israel has perceived its primary tasks as defending its existence and absorbing new immigrants. Fundamentally, since its inception, the State of Israel has – as its founding ideology - viewed itself as the sole solution to the Jewish problem and as the only hub for the ingathering of exiles. But in practice and also in its changing ideology, Israel has come to terms with the existence of Jewish life in the Diaspora and regards it increasingly positively and also as important for the future of the Jewish people as a whole.

Overall Trends

The overall trend in the relations between Jews in Israel and the Diaspora is for the younger generation in both Israel and the Diaspora to be less and less interested in the fate of their fellow Jews overseas. Relations between Israel and the Jewish people in the Diaspora are strong, but are likely to face decline. The younger generation in the Diaspora is removed from the dramatic historical events that accompanied the establishment of the State of Israel. The younger generation is more likely to be exposed to negative views of Israel and its policies and has almost no experience of identification with Israel as a source of pride. It is less concerned about Israel and its future and has less of an emotional attachment to the country.

Another factor is the radical and growing difference between living as a Jew in Israel and as a Jew in the Diaspora in terms of Jewish individual life experience, socio-economic

structures and public agendas in so far as Jewish issues are concerned. However, in other matters, the lifestyles, ambitions, and hopes of Jews living in Israel and the Diaspora are converging as part of broader trends of cultural globalization and westernization. This means that while the experience of being Jewish in Israel and the Diaspora may be different, the experience of being a teenager, for example, in Israel and outside Israel is increasingly similar. This may mean that while the younger generation of Jews is less connected through familial and institutional bonds, it is likely to have more opportunities for real and virtual connections based on shared interests. These kinds of connections are less well understood and studied and it is not clear to what extent they translate into a sense of collective belonging. They are less understood and studied also because the major institutions mediating Israel-Diaspora relations have shown themselves to date unable to respond to these opportunities and translate the emergent personal and Internet networks into a sense of collective belonging and action.

Possible Changes in Trend Projections

For Israel-Diaspora relations to become even worse than projected several factors could come into play. These are: decline in number of children receiving Jewish education; apathy in the young generation toward Israel and Jewish community; decline in national unity, collective identity and ability for coordinated activity; and significant decline in Jewish knowledge and education; dilution of the Jewish attributes of Israel in favor of normalization and regional integration; no significant Jewish creativity in Israel; and deepening corruption and lack of effectiveness of the national leadership in Israel.

On the other hand, Israel-Diaspora relations would be strengthened if Israel is a Jewish state whose Jewishness is manifested in various ways, both public and individual; Israel's security position is stable; Israeli society is economically and qualitatively attractive to Jews; Jewish creativity is blossoming in Israel and in the Diaspora; there is cultural and economic growth in large communities; Jewish children, even in out-marriages receive Jewish education; many learn and speak Hebrew; Jewish people enjoy unity with diversity with expanded ability for collective activity; Israel and the Diaspora are more closely woven through networks and internet. This would be especially aided by an integrated educational system that brings together the Jewish and the general elements of a collective modern Jewish identity into one agreed basis for national solidarity.

Evaluation of Future Projections

The current trends appear to be leading towards decline in the institutional relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. However, the institutional relationship may be replaced by new forms of relationship that take advantage of new technologies and new types of community. The quality and strength of these relationships are currently difficult to assess.

APPENDIX 4
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