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The Intra-Jewish Arena

- This year, Jewish communities have been more concerned with local reactions to political and social developments in various countries around the world than with issues of Jewish identity or goals common to the Jewish people writ large.
- As the political discourse has become more focused and sharpened, opinions have become polarized and Jews within and across communities have experienced even more problems with intra-Jewish dialogue.
- Rising anti-Semitism poses a major challenge to Jews the world over, but in Israel the gravity of the situation has not yet registered, and the necessary adjustments of policy have not been made.
- Israel's cultural richness, and the special culture of Israel's Jews, is deepening the gap between Jews who have different interpretations of Jewish identity. This could impact and widen the gap between Israel and Diaspora communities.

Introduction

In the past year, leaders of the world's major Jewish communities – Israel and the United States – as well as of smaller communities were chiefly concerned with domestic political developments in their respective countries, and with the impact of these developments on the practice, image, robustness, and identity of the Jews. At the same time, all of the communities outside Israel experienced growing concern about intensifying anti-Semitic discourse and its periodic eruptions of violence, sometimes deadly, directed at Jews. This duality – in which the individual communities looked inward while also sharing an awareness of the broader anti-Semitic menace – posed a complex challenge to community leaders. The desire to strengthen cooperation in the face of a shared threat (existential challenges to Israel's security and Jew hatred) frequently proved hard to realize due to major differences in outlook and in the specific needs arising from local developments.

Israel: Repeat Elections

The 20th Knesset dissolved in late December 2018 sending Israelis to the polls on April 9, 2019. The election results seemed to indicate that Prime Minister Netanyahu would have little trouble forming another government based on the religious-right bloc, but several weeks of negotiations yielded no practicable coalition. Consequently, the newly installed 21st Knesset decided to dissolve, and Israel embarked on yet another round of elections scheduled for September 17, 2019.

Although the results of the second round of elections are unknown at the time of this writing (August 2019), major trends can be discerned, and important lessons learned from their very existence. The need to hold two rounds of elections in quick succession has made domestic political machinations Israel's main preoccupation over the past year. This in and of itself points to a problem with Israel's political system. A second round of elections within a so short a timeframe constitutes a costly burden for the Israeli public and its elected officials.

By the time the September 2019 elections take place, Israel will have spent the better part of a year in an undesirable state of governance. The government, of course, continues to function and render decisions on current matters, but the lack of a stable coalition makes it difficult to act on major issues and engage in long-term planning. This can be seen clearly with regard to the budget deficit, whose troubling proportions

emerged as the (first) round of elections was called, and remained inadequately addressed for many months afterward. This deferment in addressing the deficit will oblige the new government, once elected, to take harsher measures than might have been necessary under normal political circumstances.

During election seasons, leaders take stronger, more insistent stands, and sharp contradistinctions between their electorates and those of competing political parties. The Israeli political discourse in 2019 has been characterized by separatism and exclusion – toward the Arab minority (which expressed its own separatism and exclusion), toward leftist groups (“leftist” being loosely defined as anyone who doesn’t support the religious-right coalition aspiring to renew its government hold), toward the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) public (on the part of secular groups, including the secular-right), and toward the right, especially the religious right (on the part of the center and the left). Each of the aforementioned groups has tried to delegitimize the ideas and deeds of the others. The left has been accused of being unpatriotic, the right of harboring fascist tendencies; religious groups have been accused of *hadata* – “religionization” – and so on. The effect of this discourse on the Israel public is to alienate the various groups from each other, and to foment anger, resentment, and frustration.

The publicly claimed cause of political crisis, (and there are doubtless additional causes, including the prime minister’s legal situation),

was the impasse in resolving a contentious and longstanding social issue: IDF enlistment of Haredi yeshiva students. A High Court of Justice-mandated timeframe obliged the political system to make a decision, and the deadline loomed. It became evident that although the differences between various legislative proposals (for a new arrangement regarding the yeshiva-student exemption from IDF service, one that would satisfy the High Court and the Israeli public) were relatively small, no consensus could be reached and, consequently, no viable coalition could be formed. The results of the forthcoming September elections will determine whether and how a majority agreement can be reached with respect to the court-mandated enlistment legislation.

In both rounds of elections, Israeli citizens have been expected, first and foremost, to make a personal decision: do they want to see Benjamin Netanyahu heading the government even after having overtaken David Ben-Gurion as Israel's longest-serving prime minister? The desirability of Netanyahu's continued leadership encompasses a variety of considerations. Some of these pertain to his policy record (avoiding descent into all-out war in Gaza, the ongoing military effort to keep Iran from strengthening its hold on Syria, his close relationship with the US president, and open dialogue with the leaders of Russia, India, China, and other nations, etc.). Other considerations relate to his political approach (alliance with the religious right and the Haredim) and his personal qualities as a

leader who – pending a hearing – is about to be indicted on charges of bribery and breach of trust.

The first round of elections in 2019 showed that Israelis have not abandoned, in any dramatic way, the positions that put Netanyahu and his Likud party in power more than a decade ago. The religious-right bloc, whose advance commitment to strive for a Netanyahu-headed government was one of its defining characteristics this time around, won a large majority of votes. It was only the high election threshold, and the splintering into satellite parties, that kept this majority from being fully reflected in the distribution of Knesset seats, and in the establishment of a stable coalition.

Another prominent feature of the April 2019 elections was its high centrist-Israel voter concentration. Essentially, the two big parties (Likud and Blue and White), which positioned themselves in the center, together won a clear majority of 70 Knesset seats. However, theoretical considerations (can a government function under a prime minister threatened with indictment?) and issues of political strategy prevented (in the first round of elections) the formation of a coalition that would reflect the Israeli public's "centrifugation." The group most

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negatively affected by this sociopolitical trend is the camp formerly identified as the Jewish left. This camp's two major representative parties (Labor and Meretz) garnered, together, only ten Knesset seats (less than ten percent). The share of elected MKs representing the Arab voting public also declined in this election cycle due to political splintering and a substantial drop in Arab Israeli voting rates (an ongoing issue that merits separate discussion).

The recent and forthcoming Israeli election cycles have also called attention to the fact that Israelis are no longer preoccupied by foreign policy issues, on which there is a broad consensus among most voters. In particular, the Israeli-Palestinian conundrum, once a major fault line between political camps, ceased to be a partisan acid test. In its place, personal conduct and corruption issues rose on the agenda, along with the dynamics between the elected legislative and the appointed judicial branches, and religion-state relations. Quite a few members of the main opposition party, Blue and White, strongly – even very strongly – concur with the foreign and security policies of the present government; their criticism touches primarily on the issues noted above: To what degree, if any, do corruption allegations necessitate the introduction of new blood into the governmental system? Is there an urgent need to limit the High Court of Justice's power to intervene in parliamentary legislative activity? And, has the religion-state balance

been harmed (or more explicitly: have the religious-Haredi parties become excessively influential in shaping Israeli public life)?

In this context it is also important to mention that among certain sectors of the public (mainly supporters of the rightwing government but also others), there is a declining trust in legal authorities, the police, the state attorneys and the courts. This decline makes the public discourse on political corruption partisan, as government opponents argue that the government is guilty of corruption while government supporters claim that the legal system is biased against a particular political camp.

The United States: Fear and Politics

In the space of a year, following the murderous attacks on synagogues in Pittsburgh and in Poway, a suburb of San Diego, the American Jewish community entered a new state of consciousness. These two incidents, the first of which was the most serious act of aggression ever perpetrated on a US Jewish institution, as well as an overall uptick in attacks on Jews (online insults, public statements, physical harassment, and the like), have had a real impact on American Jews' sense of security – as can be seen in the Integrated Anti-Semitism Index in this report. As the American Jewish Committee's (AJC) annual survey (conducted between April 10 and May 7, 2019) showed, nearly two-thirds

of American Jews now feel that the status of the Jews is less secure than it was a year ago (65 percent). Last year as well (2018), a majority of American Jews (55 percent) said that the status of Jews in the United States was less secure than it had been the previous year.

Debate within the community has erupted over the causes and effects of this state of affairs, with many Jews looking to the political arena, President Donald Trump's administration in particular. These Jews, who constitute the majority according to the Jewish Electorate Institute (JEI), feel that the president bears at least "some responsibility" for the synagogue attacks. JEI's poll also looked at what Jews think should be done to fight anti-Semitism and found that most believe the solution lies in political action. "Help people get elected with the right values" was the most commonly-chosen response (43 percent), followed by "Work to get Donald Trump out" (39 percent), and "Press Democrats to condemn anti-Semitism" (31 percent). Interestingly, compared with the political options offered, practical solutions on other planes received much less support. US Jewry has relatively little trust in "armed security" (12 percent), or in the idea of becoming more involved in "Jewish social action groups" (12 percent), or in synagogues (4 percent). These findings indicate the degree to which American Jews are directing their concerns about rising anti-Semitism toward the political arena. They also show that there is no

data to support the idea that the anti-Semitic upsurge will cause more Jews to strengthen their ties to the Jewish community.

Next year is a US election year, and it already appears that topics of concern to the Jewish community, directly or indirectly, will be playing a major role in the elections. These topics include attitudes toward Israel, its policies and elected government, and responsibility for manifestations of anti-Semitism. The political left (i.e., most Jews) lays the blame on President Trump, but the right points an accusatory finger at the radical left, and even at elected officials, whose attitude toward Jews is unsympathetic, to say the least. These groups and leaders often focus on Jews' identification or relationship with the State of Israel, aiming to undermine the legitimacy and status of the American Jewish community. Among other things, they argue that so long as Jews support Israel (the prevailing opinion within these circles is that Israel's actions, and for some, its very existence are illegitimate), the American Jewish community is, by extension, complicit.

It must nevertheless be noted that, as we saw in earlier rounds of elections, most American Jewish voters do not place specifically-Jewish issues nor Israel at the top of their voting agendas. Though most US Jews agree that "caring about Israel" is a "very important part" of being a Jew (62 percent, in the AJC's 2019 Survey of American Jewish Opinion), a majority rank Israel relatively low on their scale

of political priorities. The issues of greatest importance to US Jews are health insurance and Social Security, gun control legislation, and efforts to counter the radical right, white supremacy, and terrorism. Still, it should be noted that about two-thirds (65 percent) of American Jews say that candidate positions on Israel affect their voting choices. That is, even if Israel is not a high-priority issue for them, pro-Israel attitudes nevertheless carry weight in American Jews' voting decisions.

US Jews were less concerned this year – at least, they were less publicly and less intensively preoccupied – with issues unrelated to anti-Semitism or politics. Major trends regarding identity and demographics remained unchanged, as shown in the AJC survey. The AJC survey also provided data on respondents' personal status. Nearly half (45 percent) were unmarried. And of those who were married, only two-thirds (34 percent of the total) were married to Jews, while the rest (20 percent) were married to non-Jews. This picture is consistent with the trend identified a few years ago in several different studies, including one published by the Jewish People Policy Institute (Cohen and Fishman). These studies pointed to demographic erosion due not only to mixed marriages, but also, and perhaps primarily, to a paucity of families and children in some Jewish communities.

Anti-Semitism and its impact

Anti-Semitic incidents have an impact on the entire realm of Jewish activity. They affect the desire of Jews to engage with the community and with the Jewish people, to identify as Jews, to give their children a Jewish education, and so on. Such incidents also, of course, affect the image of Jews in their own eyes, and in the eyes of those around them (see the Integrated Anti-Semitism Index in this report). Troubling anti-Semitic incidents, including physical attacks on Jews, were also reported over the last year in other parts of the world (Argentina, home to nearly 200,000 Jews, is one example).

Germany's Jewish community, this year, had to face the question of whether and to what extent Jews should publicly display their Jewishness. More specifically: Should Germany's Jews wear kippot in public, thereby identifying themselves as Jews? Discussion of this issue began when Germany's Commissioner for Jewish Life in *Germany* and the Fight against Anti-Semitism, Dr. Felix Klein, publicly announced that he had reversed his earlier position, and would now be recommending that Jews not wear kippot outside of their homes and synagogues.

"I can no longer recommend Jews wear a kippah at every time and place in Germany," said Dr. Klein. This statement generated a wave of protest and sympathy, with the US Ambassador to Germany himself appearing publicly with a kippah on his head, and *Bild*, a popular German newspaper published a cut-

out kippah along with the editor-in-chief's entreaty that Germans wear kippot in the streets in solidarity with German Jews. These reactions gratified the organized community and caused the government to publicly change its position. However, Klein's warning still resonates, and Jews in Germany understand that their government cannot ensure their safety and that they will likely continue to be subjected to harassment by the extreme right, by Muslim immigrants, and others.

The kippah issue is, of course, emblematic of the larger question regarding the ability of a Jewish community to exist in a modern setting where anti-Semitic elements are growing ever bolder. Half the Jews in France feel that the status of French Jewry has worsened in the past year (AJC survey), yet most of them (60 percent) also believe that Jews have a future in France. On the other hand, nearly a third of French Jews (29 percent) say that Jews should leave the country as soon as possible. This belief is shared by Israeli Jews. While more than half of French Jewry and three quarters of American Jews feel that Jews do have a future in Europe, most Israeli Jews who have an opinion on the matter (46 percent) say that Jews should leave as soon as they can. In any case, there is a certain duality in the views of Israeli Jews, and in the statements of some of their leaders: On the one hand, concern and harsh condemnation of anti-Semitism worldwide. On the other hand, an implicit assumption that Jews have nothing to look forward to in Europe.

Obviously, the question of whether Jews have a future in Europe (or in other countries where anti-Semitism is on the rise) raises secondary questions, such as: How many Jews are required in order to say there's a "future?" Does "future" presuppose the possibility of a full and public Jewish life? Jews have lived in many different countries and time periods, in conditions where they were obliged to limit their interactions with non-Jewish populations and were often forced to maintain a low profile within the broader public. So, we have to ask not only whether Jews in Germany can place lighted Hanukkah menorahs in their windows without fear of reprisal, but also whether a situation where one cannot do this is tolerable, and whether such a situation will cause him or her to refrain from lighting the menorah altogether, or simply hide it from the eyes of non-Jews. In many countries this kind of discussion still seems premature or alarmist, but not in all countries. In certain Jewish communities the situation is reaching the point where such questions will need to be asked. For example, in places where kosher slaughter has been prohibited (in the Flanders region of Belgium, kosher slaughter was outlawed early this year), or where efforts are underway to ban circumcision.

Israel-Diaspora Relations

Jewish ties to Israel can be seen in nearly every index of emotional attachment in the various Jewish communities. A third of Israeli Jews view US Jews as siblings; a third of French

Jews consider Israeli Jews to be siblings. Only a minority of French Jews (16 percent), and a minority (though a more substantial one) of American Jews (28 percent) say they do not regard Israelis as “family.” A minority of US Jews (35 percent) and of French Jews (37 percent) do not agree that “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew.” Only a small minority (13 percent) say that caring about Israel is unimportant. Nearly half of the Canadian Jewish community, the fourth-largest in the world (possibly on its way to becoming the third-largest, overtaking France), have very strong ties to Israel (48 percent).

In parallel, there were growing voices in Israel emphasizing the centrality and dominance of Israel in the Jewish world today. An example of that was a book by Professor Yossi Shain of Tel Aviv University. In his book, *The Israeli Century and the Israelization of Judaism*, Shain writes that “Israel, rooted in sovereign territory, in tribalism and religiosity, is rising in status globally and in the Jewish world, while Diaspora Jewry – American Jewry first and foremost – is fighting for its vitality and communal identity”.

This assertion, with which many Jews will disagree, is nevertheless becoming increasingly widespread, certainly in Israel, and in not just a few other Jewish communities as well. In the JPPI Structured Jewish World Dialogue conducted a year ago, marking 70 years of Israel-Diaspora relations, those relations were shown to be “in a state of flux.” Demographic, military, and economic fortification, as well as

cultural development, have made Israel the Jewish people’s strongest community. Much empirical evidence attests to this, but it was also the belief held by the dialogue participants. Four out of five (81 percent) agreed that Israel is the “center of the Jewish world.” This, of course, was true for a very large majority of the dialogue’s Israeli participants (96 percent), but a significant majority of the Diaspora-Jewish participants also shared this view. Three out of four Americans (77 percent) and four out of five participants elsewhere in the world (82 percent) affirmed Israel’s centrality in the Jewish world.

The Israeli model was extensively presented this year in a JPPI study of Israeli Judaism (Rosner and Fuchs). The model in question is one of identity, whose salient features are: the incorporation of both Jewish tradition and Israeli nationality into an amalgamated identity; being at ease with tradition as a cultural element of the Israeli environment; and lack of fear regarding “Jewish continuity,” which seems assured so long as Israel’s survival is assured. These characteristics highlight the difference between Jewish life in Israel and Jewish life in the Diaspora and make it hard for Israeli and non-Israeli communities to understand each other’s circumstances, cultural challenges, and concerns. This past year, as anti-Semitism has been powerfully felt in the Jewish world, the contrast between the two communities has come into sharper relief. A large proportion of Israeli Jews – second-, third-, and fourth-generation Israelis – have

only a second-hand acquaintance with anti-Semitism. They have heard about it, but do not feel it. Their ability to recognize the essential nature of Diaspora Jewry's plight is, accordingly, diminished.

Diaspora Jews visiting Israel are exposed to this reality to some degree. Data published this year indicate that 40 percent of US Jews have visited Israel at least once in their lives, but the figures for communities elsewhere in the world are higher (eight out of ten Canadian Jews, 65 percent of French Jews). As noted above, studies in all of the communities attest to Diaspora Jewry's strong ties to Israel (even if some in the Diaspora are harshly critical of the country's leadership; periodic reports of an unbridgeable rift between the two communities should be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, the fact that these ties are not identical in quality across all existing communities and subpopulations must not be overlooked; there are groups that unquestionably feel alienated from Israel (and groups within Israel that feel alienated from Diaspora Jewry). We already mentioned the disparity in level of connection to Israel between Canadian and US Jews hardly. Another example: in a study of the Greater Washington, D.C. Jewish community one can detect a disparity in ties to Israel between Jews married to Jews and Jews married to non-Jews, as well as between older Jews (65 and over) and younger Jews. This study's findings also underscore the strong link, one repeatedly substantiated by researchers, between visiting Israel and having emotional ties to it. Among those who have

never visited Israel, nearly a third say they have no sense of connection to the country (29 percent). In contrast, only 2 percent of those who have visited Israel several times attest to a lack of emotional connection.

Diaspora Jews' sense of connection to Israel is affected by many factors, some related to values and political trends, others to personal choice and social trends, still others to developments in Israel/Israeli culture, Diaspora Jewry, and the world generally. Public discourse in the Jewish world commonly emphasizes current affairs and political developments as drivers of general trends. Thus, the fact that most American Jews vehemently oppose Trump administration policy and find Donald Trump personally abhorrent, while Israeli Jews express gratitude and appreciation of the current US president, has given rise to a monumental political dissonance that sometimes spills over into the more complex spheres of identity and values. Similarly, when Israel elects governments that are influenced by the Orthodox parties, difficulties are created for many non-Orthodox Diaspora Jews, for whom Israeli policy on issues of religion and state is a source of alienation.

Nonetheless, it must be stressed that developments on the political plane explain only some of the challenges that characterize Israel-Diaspora relations. No less, and perhaps more significant, are the cultural and social developments underway in both the Diaspora and Israel. The fact that Israeli Jewish culture emphasizes national expression, while Jewish

culture in many other places is religion-oriented, makes it hard to conduct a mutually-understandable dialogue on issues pertaining to the Jewish people's shared future. Once known for its intimate, small-scale feel, Israel has transformed over the past few decades into a teeming populace divided into subgroups, each with its own social agenda and ideology. Israel has a high birthrate and enjoys considerable military/political might and rapid economic growth that puts it well along the path toward a Western-style society of abundance.

Politically, it is dominated by the conservative right, which relies on religious and traditional voters, many of whom are Mizrachim – Jews whose families came to Israel from Middle Eastern/North African countries. Diaspora Jewry, by contrast, is characterized by rising integration in general Western society, diminishing group cohesion (due, among other things, to a fading sense of threat from surrounding societies), an erosion of organized-community power, a shift in philanthropy from community-based to individual, a steep upturn in intermarriage rates, necessarily reflected in changing patterns of Jewish consciousness (given that a large proportion of those belonging to the Jewish community are not Jewish), a growing demand for change in the framework guiding relations with an ever-stronger Israel, and reservations among some groups within the Jewish community on issues of Israeli foreign policy (primarily the Palestinian issue) and religion and state.

Jewish identity

The Jewish People Policy Institute's Israeli Judaism project, mentioned above, made a significant contribution this year to our understanding of Israeli Jewish identity. Among other things, it illuminated the way in which major secularizing trends within Israeli-Jewish society and the Israeli-Jewish public sphere (e.g., a large number of people who do their shopping on Shabbat; religious observance abandoned at higher rates than it is adopted) interact with the demographic and political invigoration of religious subgroups. This study (see chapter, Israeli Jews: Tradition and Nationality) identified four main differences between the Jewish identity that is emerging in Israel, and that of most Diaspora Jews.

The first of these differences: Israeli Jews are not concerned with "Jewish continuity"; they are not worried about it, and do not fear that the next generation will not be Jewish. The second: Israeli Jews do not have to make an effort to be Jewish, to feel Jewish, to be active Jews. The third: Israeli Jews are indeed active Jews. The highly-detailed questionnaire on which the study was based found that, in Israel, hardly any Jews are entirely cut off from Jewish tradition. The fourth difference: For Israeli Jews, Israeliness is a central component of Jewish identity – so much so, that for many of them the distinction between "Israeliness" and "Jewishness" is blurred. For example, they agree that "to be a real Israeli you have to be Jewish."

Of course, these are all generalizations. Neither the Israeli nor the Diaspora communities are monolithic. In both instances there are exceptions that prove the rule. Assuming, however, that these generalizations do reflect the average, we can say that most Israeli Jews feel that living in Israel is an important component (35 percent) or even the most important component (21 percent) of Jewish identity. Not only that, but half of Israeli Jews (54 percent) believe that “to be a good Jew” one must support settlement in the Land of Israel. It is therefore not surprising that two-thirds of Israeli Jews feel that Jewish life in Israel is more meaningful than Jewish life elsewhere (It’s not that they think one can’t be a Jew elsewhere; they understand and accept that it is possible).

Three out of four Israeli Jews (77 percent) believe that to be a good Jew “is to worry about other Jews, whoever they may be.” This is a question that refers to all Jews. Nine out of ten say they feel strongly connected to the Jewish people. This is also a general question about the “people” as a whole. Two-thirds of American Jews (63 percent) say they have a responsibility to take care of Jews in need around the world. Jews “in need” are, of course, a more specific group, not the people as a whole, and the term entails additional questions: What constitutes being “in need?” What about taking care of Jews who aren’t in need? A substantial majority of US Jews say that caring about Israel is an essential part of what being Jewish means to them (87 percent). Israel is also a specific target. We may assume that caring for Israel means something different

from caring for Ukrainian Jews, as Israel is the state of the Jewish people, a national project, while the Ukrainian Jewish community is small and shrinking. And, of course, yet another question presents itself: What exactly is meant by “caring about Israel?” It is altogether clear that “caring” does not mean agreeing with Israeli policy or supporting everything Israel does. On the other hand, the decisive majority – those who feel that caring about Israel is an important component of being Jewish – unquestionably do mean something by it.

Not all Israeli Jews feel connected to the Jewish people to the same degree and, accordingly, not all feel the same level of obligation to care for other Jews. The sense of connection/obligation is most pronounced among right and center-right voters and among the religious, and less pronounced among those who self-identify as secular. Nearly nine out of ten right-leaning voters (87 percent) believe that being Jewish means worrying about other Jews, whomever they may be, compared with four out of ten (41 percent) left-leaning voters. One out of five to ten secular Jews feels that concern for Jews in other places is a highly significant component of Jewish identity. Half of religious or ultra-Orthodox Jews hold this opinion.

A similar gradation exists regarding the question of whether being a good Jew means living in Israel. Those Jews who, more than others, feel that it is important for Jews to live in Israel, are actually the ones more likely to think that it is important to worry about Jews who don’t live in Israel.

When these findings are compared to the findings of studies on Diaspora Jewry and, in a more focused way, to the new study on Canadian Jewry released earlier this year, similarities and differences emerge. One similarity is that Jews the world over attach less importance to religious practice and tend to view their Jewishness as a matter of “culture” (half of Canadian Jews) or “ancestry/descent” (15 percent of Canadian Jews), though for the most part they view it as a combination of culture, ancestry, and religion (33 percent). Slightly different responses were registered in the Israeli survey, and there was no “combination” option; but it is clear that Israelis, who rank “religion” and “nationality” as highest in importance, have a somewhat different outlook. Nevertheless they, like Canadian Jews, do not regard Torah and mitzvah observance as the essential elements of their Jewish identity. Two-thirds of Israeli Jews do not feel that “to be a good Jew is to celebrate Jewish holidays, ceremonies, and traditions.” But a third do feel that way, compared with only a fifth (22 percent) of Canadian Jews – reflecting the differences between a population in which Orthodox observance is low (17 percent in Canada), and a population with over double the percentage of Jews who self-identify as Orthodox (37 percent).

Identical percentages of Israeli and Canadian Jews say being Jewish is “very important” to them: 64 percent. The percentages of those who say that being Jewish is not important to them are also quite similar: 5 percent in Israel; 8 percent in Canada. But again, there

are differences. Regarding, for example, the percentage of those who believe in God or in a higher power: 62 percent of Canadian Jews express such a belief, compared with 79 percent of Israeli Jews. Similarly, with regard to synagogue attendance: more Israelis attend synagogue frequently – but, at the same time, more Israelis never go to synagogue. Israelis can easily express their Jewishness without entering a synagogue, in contrast to non-synagogue-attending Canadian Jews who have a much harder time expressing their sense of Jewish belonging. When we look at home-based Jewish practices, such as lighting Shabbat candles, one finds a gradation in which US Jews (on average) do less (16 percent light candles every week), Canadian Jews do much more (34 percent light every week), and Israeli Jews even more (57 percent). Similarly, half of US Jews celebrate bar mitzvah (51 percent), compared to 62 percent of Canadian Jews, and a much larger percentage of Israeli Jews (78 percent). Nearly all adult Israeli Jews say they have celebrated or will celebrate their sons’ reaching bar mitzvah age (95 percent), or their daughters’ reaching bat mitzvah age (90 percent).

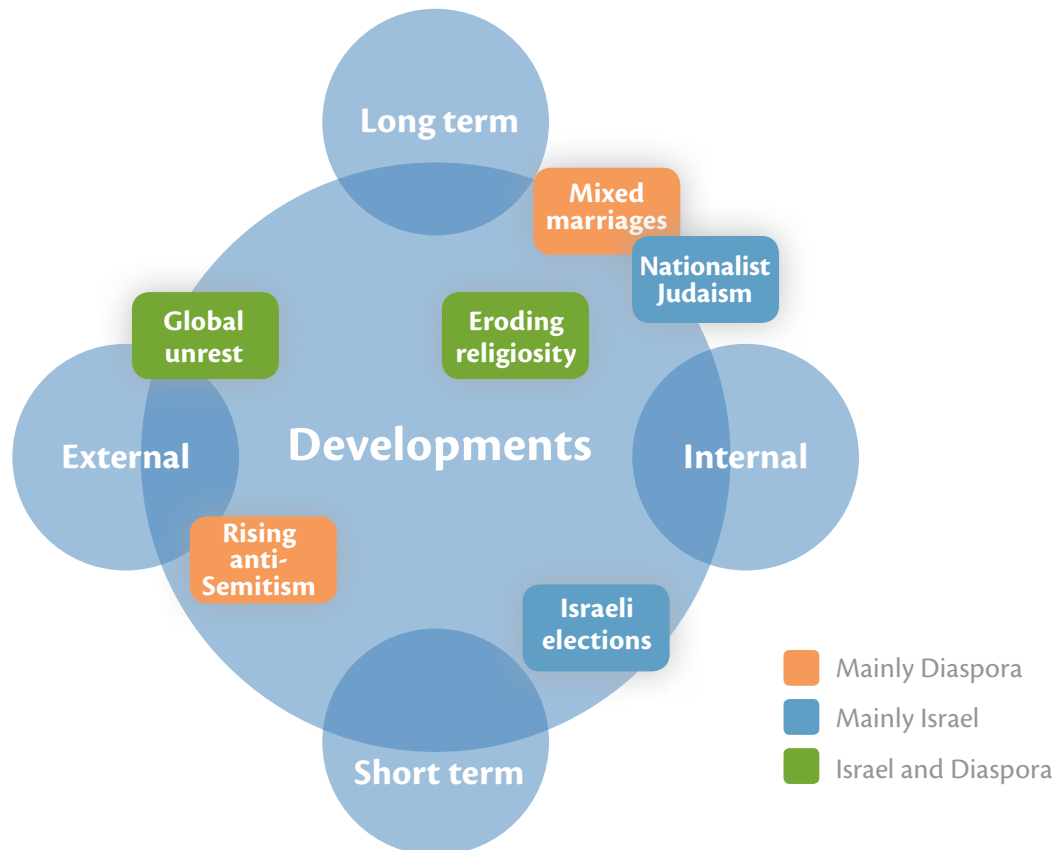
Summary and Conclusions

The situation of the Jewish people is affected by external and internal developments; it is also influenced by short - and long-term developments. In response to rising anti-Semitism, institutions and organizations are developing and deploying various security measures and other initiatives, but history

shows that anti-Semitism is more greatly affected by external events and trends than by what the Jews do (which does not, of course, diminish the necessity of taking action and trying to have an impact, to the extent possible). Similarly, the erosion of religiosity documented among both Israeli and Diaspora Jews is not an isolated phenomenon. Although it certainly has important internal drivers and ramifications, it reflects general worldwide (primarily Western) trends toward a decline in the power of religion and, to an even greater degree, the power of traditional religious authority structures.

The recent uptick in anti-Semitic incidents has been documented over a relatively small number of years. Thus, at this stage, we refer to it as a short-term development, despite strong suspicion (and fear) that it heralds a new era in which anti-Semitism will again be a determinant factor in the trajectory of the Jewish future. Israel's two election seasons in the space of a year are an internal matter with a defined endpoint. However, these elections may also, depending on their outcomes, have effects of long-term impact – on Israel, on Israel-Diaspora relations, and, directly, on Diaspora Jewry.

Some developments affecting the Jewish people, 2019



This chapter utilized the following studies, articles, and books:

JPPI 2019 Pluralism Survey, Camil Fuchs, Noah Slepko, Shmuel Rosner.

JPPI 2018 Israeli Judaism survey, Camil Fuchs, Shmuel Rosner.

JPPI 2018 Dialogue: 70 Years of Israel-Diaspora Relations: The Next Generation, John Ruskay, Shmuel Rosner.

AJC 2019 Survey of Israeli Jewish Opinion conducted by Geocartography.

AJC 2019 Survey of American Jewish Opinion conducted by the research company SSRS.

AJC 2019 survey of French Jewish Opinion conducted by the research firm Ifop.

2018 Survey of Jews in Canada, Robert Brym Keith Neuman Rhonda Lenton, conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research in partnership with The University of Toronto and York University.

Jewish Electorate Institute Poll, Greenberg Research, 2019.

2017 Greater Washington Jewish Community Demographic Study.

Raising Jewish Children: Research and Indications for Intervention, Sylvia Barack Fishman and Steven M. Cohen, JPPI.

Hebrew Texts

The Israeli Century and the Israelization of Judaism, Yossi Shain, Yedioth Books, 2019.

#Israelijudaism: a Portrait of a Cultural Revolution, Shmuel Rosner, Camil Fuchs, Dvir and the Jewish People Policy Institute, 2018.