ZIONISM AND JEWISHNESS OF ISRAELIS

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To what extent do Israelis feel part of the Jewish people in the world? This may seem a paradoxical question, especially when speaking of Jewish Israelis. It may seem even more paradoxical to ask Jewish Israelis if they consider themselves to be "Zionist". But these two questions are indeed pertinent and essential to the understanding of the identifications of Jews living in their homeland. An Israeli may realize that he is Jewish, but not necessarily feel that he is part of a people spread throughout the world. He knows he is living in the Promised Land, but this may not necessarily imply "Zionism" for him.

The data to be reported on here show that most Israelis do indeed feel that they are part of the Jewish people, while a high (but lesser) proportion also consider themselves "Zionist". The feeling of identification with each of these social entities may vary somewhat with time, being influenced by certain events.

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The history of Israel is short, and research on the phenomena of identification of Israelis is even shorter. Our first systematic field observations began shortly after the Six Day War (June 1967). The latest observations were made in March 1975. In between occurred varied events, the most outstanding of course being the Yom Kippur War (October 1973). The data were gathered as part of the Continuing Survey conducted jointly by the Israel Institute of Applied Social Research and the Communications Institute of the Hebrew University. The Survey was on a trimesteral basis (three times a year) before the Yom Kippur War, and virtually on a weekly basis after the war.[1] However, questions on identification were asked at only a few points of time. In March 1975, the Continuing Survey devoted a special section of some 20 questions to the identification topic, so we are able to make an analysis of their

[1] The population studied by the Continuing Survey is the adult urban Jewish population of Israel: those over 20 years of age in Jerusalem, Greater Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa, Beersheba. The trimestral samples included 2,000 respondents each. The weekly samples include 500 to 600 respondents each. Our March 1975 data are for two weekly samples, or 1,080 respondents.

interrelations at this given point in time. This analysis will be the main burden of the present report, but we shall also make comparisons of the dynamics of change over the available previous points of time.

The State of Israel contains but a fifth of the Jewish people in the world. The interaction between Jews in the diaspora and Jews in Israel is a most interesting and important phenomenon. There are those who think that the continuation of the Jewish people depends on the State, and those who think that the continuation of the State of Israel depends on the Jewish people abroad. Accordingly, it is of interest to see how the Israeli Jews assess the interaction and its implications. What is the Israeli's conception of himself in the roles of Jew and of Zionist? What is his conception of diaspora Jews in the roles of Jews and of Zionists? And how do these various assessments relate to each other: which go together and which are relatively independent of each other?

STUDY of the intercorrelations among the relevant variables shows that a basic framework for understanding the interrelationships among the attitudes consists of two facets: *from* whom is behavior to be expected, and *for* whom? Each of these two facets has two major elements: Jewish and Zionist. Thus the four possible combinations can be exhibited as in the following Figure 1. "From whom" divides the Figure vertically, and "for whom" divides it horizontally, altogether yielding four regions. Within these are shown the nineteen variables studied, divided into seven areas of life.

The drawing is intentionally rectangular in order to show the empirical results about the relationships amongst the variables concerned. Each little circle in the diagram represents the position there of a variable studied. The greater the empirical relation between two variables, the closer together are their positions in Figure 1. That one sector appears larger than others means that some variables within that sector are less closely related to each other. Similarly the way variables depart from each other between the sectors shows how the correlations decrease between sectors. Written inside each little circle is the percent giving an apparently favorable response to the indicated question in the last survey reported (March 1975).

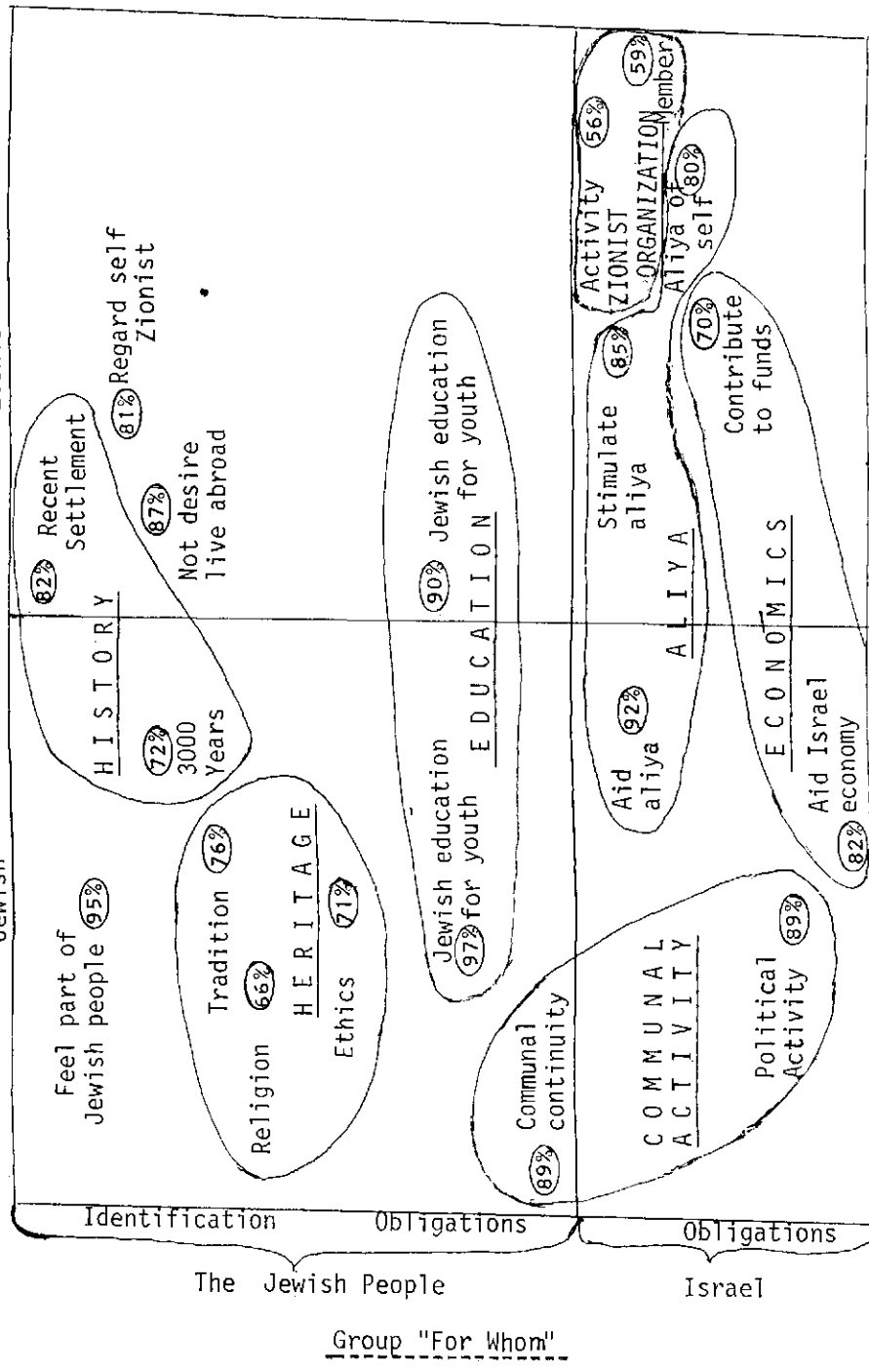
In all this work, we have not gone into definitions of the concepts "Jewish people" or "Zionism". Instead, we have attempted to ascertain the reaction of Jewish Israelis to the concepts as the respondents themselves understand these. For example, the one question studied most often is the following: "Do you consider yourself to be a Zionist?" We did not attempt to define what is meant by "Zionist" for the respondents, but let each interpret the term in his own way. In a sense this is the realistic way to approach the problem, if one is to work in the context of everyday communication. Actually, in some previous research we did ask the population a series of questions on the *components* of Zionism as defined by the Jerusalem Program adopted by the Zionist Congress held in 1968. We did not tell them that this was the Jerusalem Program, but just asked about the components.[2]

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[2] The following is the text of the Jerusalem Program which was adopted in 1968 by the 27th

FIGURE 1

Graphic Presentation of the Empirical Interrelations Among Jewish and Zionist Obligations and Identifications



An interesting finding is that the support of the components of the Jerusalem Program is very high both among those who do and those who do not consider themselves Zionist. However, this support of components is higher than for support of the "Zionist idea". That is, labelling a thing specifically as "Zionist" reduces support from those who consider themselves non-Zionist. They are affected by the wrappings and not by the contents of the program.

Correspondingly, there are relatively small correlations between support of the (unlabelled) components of the Jerusalem Program and feeling that one is a Zionist. There are relatively high correlations amongst those things labelled as "Zionist": the Zionist idea, Zionist movement, and feeling Zionist. When the "Zionist" label is removed, the correlations are reduced. These correlations are shown in part in Figure 1, and are substantiated in more detail by an earlier study (Summer 1970).

The nineteen variables in Figure 1 can also be divided (horizontally) into two regions corresponding to "identifications" and "obligations". Two varieties of identification variables are (a) one's personal feelings of identification already mentioned: as Jew and as Zionist, and (b) the motivation for, or influences on, one's wanting to identify with the Jewish people, possible influences being history and record of the Jewish people. The duties and obligations are those that Israelis think Jews abroad should assume in order properly to assume the role of Jew and/or of Zionist. As Figure 1 shows, the identification variables all tend to correlate substantially with each other, while there are wide differences among the correlations for the obligation variables: some correlations are large, but many are small—depending "from whom" the behavior is expected.

THE question "To what extent do you feel a part of the Jewish people?" was asked for the first time in the midst of the Yom Kippur War of October 1973. Over 90% gave a positive response (replied either "Yes" or "Definitely Yes"). This feeling remained uniformly high throughout the period studied (through March 1975) with but slight variation, as shown in Figure 2. During the Yom Kippur War there was a peak of some 96% positive. There followed a slight decline to about 88% in the Spring of 1974 before the massacres of Kiryat Shemona and Maalot, which switched to a continuing rise until the end of the period analyzed, returning to some 95% positive.

Even greater variation than shown in Figure 2 is apparent when one looks only at the most extreme positive category "Definitely Yes". At the height of the War, almost two-thirds of the respondents chose the extremely positive category, whereas a half year after the War (April 1974) only

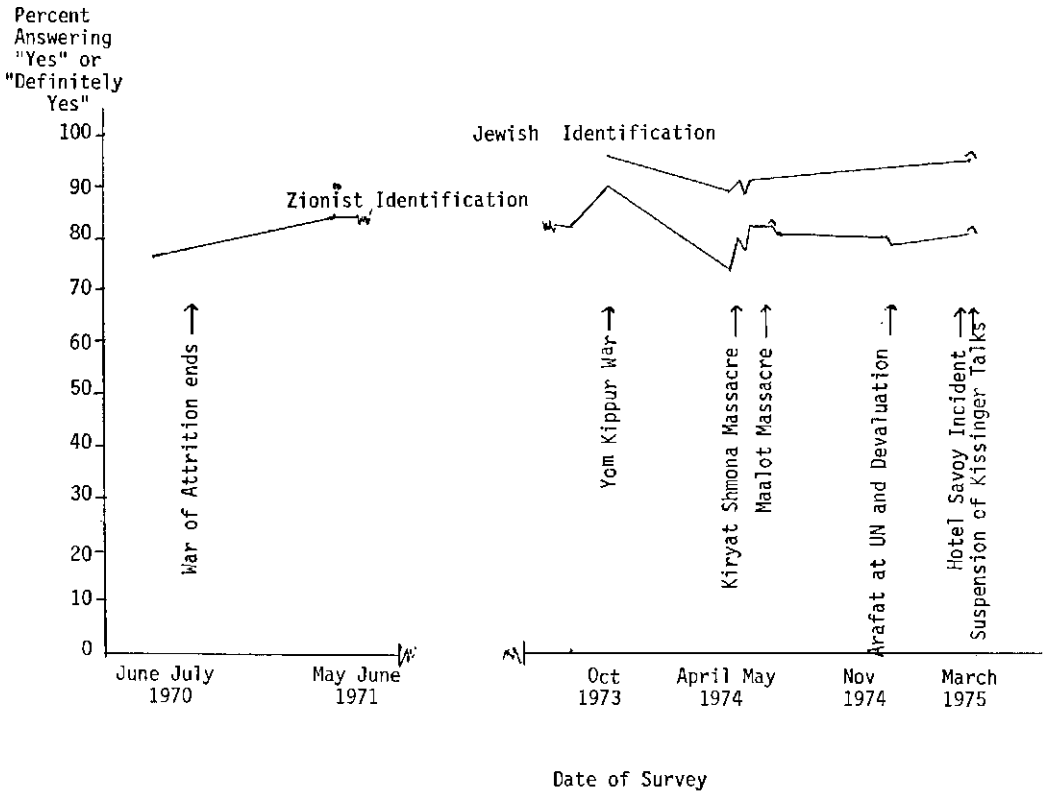
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Zionist Congress which was held in Jerusalem. The aims of Zionism are:

* The unity of the Jewish people and the centrality of Israel in Jewish life;
* The ingathering of the Jewish people in its historic homeland, the Land of 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.

FIGURE 2

Zionist and Jewish Identification of Israelis
June 1970 — March 1975



about half (47%) gave the extreme response. In March 1975 the distribution returned to be similar to that of the Yom Kippur War: the proportion in the extreme category again reached two-thirds. Jewish identification in the Spring of 1975 was substantially strengthened in its intensity compared with that existing in April 1974.

This heightening of intensity occurred at the period of the suspension of the Kissinger talks, which may lead to an hypothesis that the atmosphere following this suspension may have begun to resemble that of the Yom Kippur War. Whether or not to attribute this change also in part to the Savoy Hotel incident is a moot question, because such a dramatic increase in intensity did not occur following the Kiryat Shemona massacre. (We have no data for the period immediately after Maalot.) The safest conclusion may be that periods of stress associated with war or the possibility of war lead to intensification of the feeling of cohesion with the Jewish people.

THE phenomenon of differential intensity of identification occurs in an interesting fashion with respect to feeling

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF JEWISH IDENTIFICATION BY EXTENT OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE (in Percentages)

	Feeling of Identification with the Jewish People			
Religiosity	*Definitely Yes*	*Yes*	*No*	*Total*
Strictly observe all religious obligations	85	13	2	100
Observe to a great extent	74	25	1	100
Observe somewhat	67	29	3	100
Totally unobservant, completely secular	56	34	10	100

of religiousness. Even among Israeli Jews who say they do not at all observe Jewish religious precepts, 90% feel that they are a part of the Jewish people in the world. This may be compared to the 96% or more who give a positive answer among those who profess partial or total orthodoxy. However, a stronger difference appears when one looks at the "Definitely Yes" category, as shown in Table 1. Amongst those professing no attachment to the Jewish religion, 56% give the extremely positive response, compared to 85% of the most observant. The other two groups have correspondingly intermediate percentages (67% and 74% respectively).

The relatively low identification of the unobservant still leaves the majority of them in the extreme "Definitely Yes" category. This phenomenon is true—and even stronger—when the population is divided into strata by traits other than religiosity. Stratification by background variables such as age, sex, education, income, country of origin, and length of time in Israel yields smaller correlations with identification than does religiosity. In each of the background strata (old, young, male, female, rich, poor, etc.), the majority say "Definitely Yes" to feeling part of the Jewish people in the world. Considering also the category "Yes", the overwhelming majority in each stratum has positive Jewish identification.

Feeling of belonging to the Jewish people expresses itself in correlations with other aspects of the identification problem. What do Israeli Jews think are the duties and obligations of Jews abroad concerning the continued existence of the Jewish people in general, and of the State of Israel in particular? To what extent do Israelis recognize mutual dependence between Israel and the diaspora? An answer given by the research findings is that there is great recognition of mutual dependence.

Three-fourths of the respondents agree to the proposition that Israel would not be able to exist without a strong relation with the Jewish people. A somewhat smaller majority (68%) agrees to the companion proposition that the Jewish people abroad will not be able to continue to exist without

the continuation of the State of Israel. The correlation between the responses to the two propositions is substantial (monotonicity coefficient .43), but far from being perfect. In effect, the Israelis see the State of Israel as a state for the Jewish people as a whole, and essential for the continuation of Jews in the diaspora. A certain asymmetry exists in the perception of the *direction* of the dependence to be enlarged on below.

THE question "Do you regard yourself a Zionist?" was first asked in June-July 1970 during the War of Attrition with Egypt. It was asked again a year later, and further repeated just before the Yom Kippur War, in the midst of the Yom Kippur War, and at several points of time thereafter to March 1975. The temporal trend in the responses is shown in Figure 2 above. The summer of 1970 shows some 78% giving a positive answer ("Yes" or "Definitely Yes"). A year later registered a rise to 84%. No information is available for the intervening period to just before the War, but apparently Zionist identification remained at about the same level until the midst of the Yom Kippur War, when it rose to a peak of 90%. There was some decline thereafter to just before the Kiryat Shemona massacre, followed by an increase stimulated by the Maalot massacre. Since then the feeling has remained relatively stable at the 80% level. Some change in the extreme response also occurred, especially after the Maalot massacre and the suspension of the Kissinger talks, in the Spring of 1975.

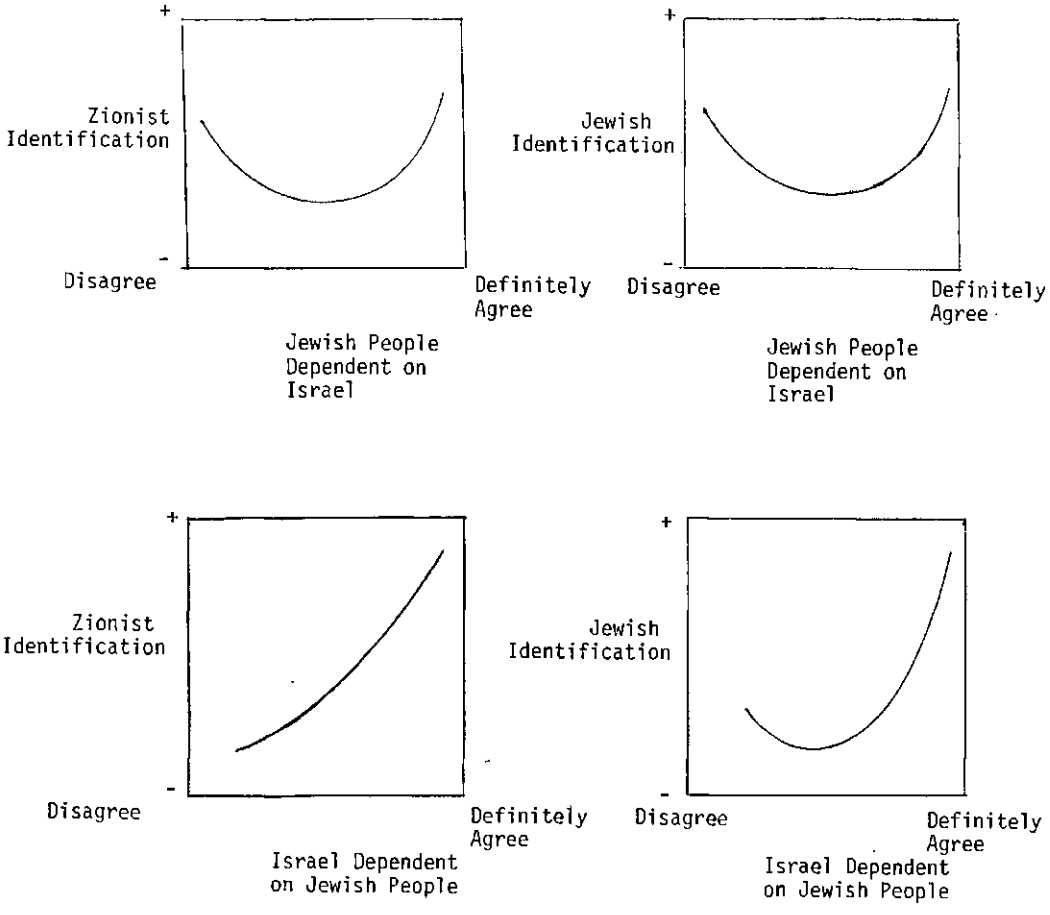
Positive identification with Zionism holds for the majority of each segment studied of the population. With respect to age, there are differences in that the younger people feel less positive than the older ones, but even the youngest are two-thirds (68%) positive. Among those 55 years of age or more, the percentage reaches 90. With respect to country of origin, sabras express less Zionist feeling than those born abroad. Those of European or American origin are more Zionist in their identification than those who immigrated from Eastern or African countries. But again, regardless of origin, at least 70% in each subpopulation responded in the positive direction.

An interesting finding is on how the assessment of dependence of the Jewish people on the State of Israel relates with one's Zionist identification. Curiously, both those who *strongly* affirm and those who *strongly* deny the dependence are more Zionist than those who are intermediate in their assessment of the dependence. This duotone relationship does not occur with the companion proposition about whether Israel can survive without the Jewish people abroad. In this case a monotone relation occurs: those who most strongly affirm the proposition also have the strongest Zionist feeling, while those who most strongly deny the proposition have the weakest Zionist feeling.

A similar asymmetry occurs with respect to Jewish identification. In the following Figure 3 the asymmetries are shown simultaneously for both Zionist and Jewish identification. In the upper half of Figure 3 are two U-shaped curves, showing how the two identifications have a double-barrelled view of the dependence of the continuation of the Jewish people on the State of Israel. The bottom half of Figure 3 shows the relatively monotone relationships of the two identifications on the converse dependence: that of the State of Israel on the

FIGURE 3

Shapes of Relationships of Zionist and Jewish Identification with Assessment of Interdependence of the Jewish People and the State of Israel



Jewish people in the world. Note that in the lower right-hand corner there is a slight tendency to duotonicity, reflected by the slight J-shape of the curve. This is but a slight tendency; by and large the relationship is monotone.

Another way of seeing the double-barreledness is to look at the upper half of Figure 3 and to note that if one is extremely identified—either as Zionist or as a member of the Jewish people—one can either *strongly agree* that the continuation of the Jewish people depends on Israel, or *strongly disagree* with this proposition. Those who are low in their identification tend to be neutral about dependence of the People on the Land. In contrast, in the lower half of the diagram, those most extremely identified also *strongly agree* that Israel is dependent on the Jewish people, while

those who are least identified (either as Zionist or as Jew) tend *strongly to disagree* that Israel is dependent on the Jewish people.

Thus, we have two basically different perspectives on the interdependence between the People and the State on the part of those who are extreme in their identifications. All those who are strongly identified tend to agree on the dependence in one direction (that of Israel on the Jewish people), but can differ entirely among themselves with respect to the reverse dependence (that of the Jewish people on the State).

Out of the background features of the Jewish people, five possible sources of influence were selected for study in the present project. Three of them are from the Jewish heritage (tradition, religion, ethics), and two from history (history of three thousand years, and history of the Jewish community in Israel in recent times). The respondents were asked to assess each of these possible factors with respect to its influence on their desire to belong to the Jewish people. Such questions were asked in several surveys: two weeks after the Six Day War (June 1967), February 1969, March 1970, October-November 1972, during the first week of the Yom Kippur War (October 1973), and after the Hotel Savoy incident in March 1975. At each period of time the respondents attributed a great deal of influence to each of these sources of influence, but the extent of the influence varied from topic to topic. Each criterion of identification revealed the same relative rankings of these influences. At the top of the list of self-estimates is the history of the settlement in Israel in recent times, and at the bottom is the Jewish religion. Between these are found the tradition, ethics, and history over three thousand years. Table 2 gives the percent of positive assessments ("much influenced" or "influenced") for March 1975. These do not differ much from the results of previous periods.

TABLE 2

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF FIVE SOURCES OF INFLUENCE ON ONE'S DESIRE TO BE PART OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE (MARCH 1975)

Source of Influence	*Assessment of Influence* *Subjective (Percent Positive)*	*Objective (Correlation with Jewish Identification)*
History of Jewish settlement in Israel in recent times	82%	.24
The Jewish tradition	76	.43
Jewish history of over 3,000 years	72	.40
Jewish ethics	71	.41
The Jewish religion	66	.37

These are *subjective* estimates of influence, and presume that a person knows how he is influenced by other things. Such self-knowledge, of course, need not obtain. Fortunately the data on hand enable a cross-check in a more objective fashion. This is done by studying the empirical correlation between the feeling of belonging to the Jewish people and the assessment of each of the possible influences just mentioned. The checking turns out to be important: the objective correlations give a different ranking from the subjective, as shown in the last column of Table 2. Of the

five possible influences, the weakest is now the recent history of the settlement in Israel (monotonicity coefficient .24), while the heritage influences of tradition and ancient history give the strongest relationships (monotonicity coefficients ranging from .37 to .43). The fact that objective correlations give such a reversal from the subjective estimates indicates that the respondents are not well able to assess what influences them to identify the way they do. They give too much emphasis to recent events and not enough to the heritage of the past.

There is some difference between the rankings of influence by those who profess strict religious observance and by those who claim to be not at all religious. Among the latter, there is a stronger similarity between the subjective and the objective assessments of influence. Those less religious are objectively more influenced by recent history than by the heritage from the ancient past.

WHAT should a Jew abroad do in order to be considered a good Jew and a good Zionist? The respondents were asked a series of questions on their perception of such Jewish and Zionist obligations. For technical reasons, we were not able to study the opposite problem: what obligations must a Jewish *Israeli* fulfil in order to be a good Jew and a good Zionist?

The respondents were asked two subsets of questions. In one subset they were to express the extent of their agreement to the possible obligations of Jews abroad—in the role of Jews—for the continuity of the Jewish people in general and for the State of Israel in particular. The second series asked about similar obligations, but in the role of Zionists. The Jewish duties can be ranked according to their percentages as in Table 3. Similarly, the ranking of the duties in the role of Zionist is given in Table 4, according to the percentages.

As perceived by the Jewish Israeli, the roles both of Jews abroad and of Zionists abroad require first of all attention to Jewish education. In second place for both roles in encouraging aliyah—immigration—to Israel. The role of Jew is to help the absorption in Israel, while the role of Zionist includes also self-fulfilment—settling personally in Israel.

In somewhat lower ranks for both roles are activities of economic assistance, organizational activities, and political support. All of these remain, of course, at a high

TABLE 3

ISRAELI PERCEPTION OF OBLIGATIONS AS A JEW ABROAD (IN PERCENTAGES)

Obligation to Support	*"Definitely agree" or "Agree"*	*"Definitely agree"*	*"Agree"*
Jewish education	97%	75%	22%
Immigration and absorption of Jews in Israel	92	59	33
Political activities for Israel	89	51	38
Continuity of Jewish community abroad	88	47	41
Economic needs of Israel	82	41	41

level of obligation. Only formal belonging to a Zionist organization, or to be active in a formal Zionist movement, receives percentages below 60%. No matter *by* whom or *for* whom the obligation, the emphasis is on the actual doing rather than on the formal institutionalization of the doing. Activities directed towards individuals (education and aliyah) are more emphasized than institutional activities.

A striking phenomenon is that Israelis do not deny the importance of the continued existence of the Jewish people abroad. The vast majority (89%) "strongly agree" or "agree" that a good Jew must be concerned with the continuity of his community abroad. Furthermore, according to the ranking of obligations in the role of Zionist—and the correlation coefficients which are far from perfect between these obligation—Israelis do not regard aliyah as the outstanding and central requirement for being a Zionist abroad (even though 66% think that it is a must).

All segments of the population—whether divided by sex, age, education, length of time in Israel, continent of origin, and extent of religious observance—tend to give similar assessments of the obligations of Jews and Zionists abroad, despite some differences remarked on above in their identifications.

Three of the questions on obligations of Zionists abroad had been asked earlier as well, in the Summer of 1970. Comparing the earlier results with those of five years later shows relatively little change in their distributions. The details are shown in Table 4. The trend, if any, is to even greater emphasis on Jewish education and to a slightly reduced emphasis on formal Zionist affiliation, with no change on the attitude toward fund-raising.

ISRAELIS see a close connection between the future of the Jewish people as a whole and that of the State of Israel in particular. They differ among themselves somewhat as to the direction of the dependence of one on the other. Per-

TABLE 4

ISRAELI PERCEPTION OF OBLIGATIONS AS A ZIONIST ABROAD, AT TWO POINTS OF TIME (IN PERCENTAGES)

Obligation	*Percent answering "Very necessary" or "Necessary"*	
	March 1975	*June–July 1970*
Support Jewish education	90%	85%
Encouragement of Jewish immigration to Israel	85	—
Personal immigration to Israel	80	—
Contribute to funds for Israel	70	69
Belong to a Zionist organization	59	64
Be active in the Zionist movement	56	—

sonally, most Israelis regard themselves to be both part of the Jewish people and Zionist. They ascribe similar obligations to Jews abroad as to Zionists abroad, especially with the emphasis on Jewish education there. Israelis are not opposed to the continuation of Jewish life in the diaspora, nor do they believe that settling in Israel (aliyah) is required of all Zionists.

Objective correlation shows that Jewish identification is rooted most in Jewish culture of some 3,000 years, and less in more recent Jewish history—despite a prevalent subjective feeling to the contrary.

By and large, all sectors of the Israeli Jewish population tend to have similar distributions of identifications and perceptions of obligations, some exception being according to the extent of religious observance.

The success of the first Zionist Congress in Basle (1897) was astounding. I do not know how much fate will still permit me to see of the realization of our idea, whether I will be present when the Jewish people begins to make the land of our fathers fruitful and flourishing, to build streets, harbors, railroads, canals, water works, houses, fine cities, and the temple. But this I do know, that in Basle I experienced something tremendous, perhaps the greatest thing that the whole movement has to give. On that day, the Jewish people found itself once more. Two hundred representatives of organizations from all over the world gathered together in Basle, and they declared amidst sobbing and shouts of jubilation that there is still a Jewish people, that this people has not succumbed and does not want to succumb. That is the main thing. When once a people's consciousness and a people's will are in evidence then all that remains is to find sensible ways and means to realize them. A people is inexhaustible in strength, just as it is not limited by the time limits of an individual.

Theodor Herzl
1899
From "Theodor Herzl: A Portrait for This Age," edited by Ludwig Lewisohn (World Publishing, 1955).