A CONTEMPORARY PARADOX

ISRAEL AND JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD

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IN COMPARISON with the past contemporary Jewish life is characterized by three factors: an absolute decline in the extent and intensity of Jewish religious practice and belief; a relative rise in importance of the ethnic dimension of Jewish identity; and the over-towering presence, inspiration and claims of the State of Israel. This article examines the way in which these factors are currently inter-related in the light of historical developments, and their impact upon contemporary Jewish peoplehood. It also analyzes some of the consequences of the existence of independent Jewish political sovereignty in Israel alongside minority Jewish communities, particularly those in the secular democratic and pluralist societies in the west.

Religion and Ethnicity

The contemporary basis of Jewish ethnic identity particularly in secular pluralist western societies, in which membership of the Jewish community is by the formally free choice of the individual, is no longer as straightforward and clear-cut as it was in the past. Despite ready acceptance of Jewishness by both non-Jews and Jews alike, the bonds that currently hold these Jewish communities together are something of a mystery. The Jewish religion, previously the unquestioned source of collective and individual behavior has reached a plateau of convenience and formality. Yiddish and Zionist cultural life have gone into decline. In every sense the average Jew in the west is less Jewish than his counterparts in Europe before the emancipation, and than those in Eastern Europe as recently as fifty years ago.[1] Yet, paradoxically, Jews seem more closely bound to each other than at any time in recent memory, contribute in-

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[1] I have developed this theme at length in "Equality and the Shrinkage of Jewish Identity" in a forthcoming book, edited by Moshe Davis, on the President of Israel's Continuing Seminar on *World Jewry and the State of Israel,* held in July 1975.

creasingly greater sums for Jewish causes, and appear more united, whilst formally organized Jewish community activities and structures have become strengthened. Part of the explanation for this state of affairs can be found in the changing nature of Jewish identity, and in the fact that the Jewish religion as the key defining characteristic, motivating force and central focus of loyalties has become overlaid (but not completely replaced) by ethnic aspects of Jewishness. These can be best described as a sense of peoplehood or even of national identity, as distinct from nationality.

Judaism was always a highly conscious ethnic religion (confined to and coterminous with one people) even though its sense of mission and its messianic end-goals were universalistic. The people of Israel, and land of Israel and the religion of Israel were inextricably woven together so that both the people and the land (ethnic elements) were invested by the religion with the highest religious significance. The people became a people by virtue of the religious covenant. The land was sanctified, and given to them (under conditions of maintaining religious precepts) by the same covenant. In that sense, in its original form Jewish ethnicity was invested with the highest religious significance.

The religion itself, furthermore, made the test for membership of the group not one of religious performance but one of ethnic origins. To join the group, and be subject to its rights and obligations, it was sufficient to be born of a Jewish mother. Similarly one could not leave the group or be disqualified by not performing religious precepts, or even by active and vocal denial of the most important religious beliefs. Thus while one could be a member of the Jewish people without following the Jewish religion, one could not adopt the Jewish religion without becoming a member of the Jewish people. In fact the only instance of a religious test for membership of the group was that of conversion, for those who did not pass the ethnic test and in fact could never pass it. Only in such a case did the religion ordain religious criteria for membership.

The Emancipation and Its Effects

In pre-emancipation Europe political legal and social separation further emphasized Jewry's group distinctiveness. Having specific political rights and duties for which they had to bargain politically, and which were symbolized in and maintained by their corporate self-governing institutions, constituted Jewry as a people, if not a nation, apart.

Emancipation which promoted the concept of equal citizenship within the framework of the nation-state destroyed the independent political existence of Jewish peoplehood. As citizenship and nationality became coterminous not only in the formal legal sense, but in the cultural sense as well, peoples that did not have nation-states found their legitimacy as separate and independent entities challenged. As minorities not only were they no longer granted rights of autonomous self-government, they were under pressure to become incorporated within the new wider entity *as individuals*, not as groups. Political identity was directly related to citizenship, whilst citizenship was either formally or informally connected to national identity and culture. An individual who was not solely and com-

pletely committed to the dominant national cultural values was regarded and sometimes treated as a second class citizen.

For Jews this had a number of effects in addition to the loss of separate political identity. Paradoxically, while the practice of religion declined in significance within the Jewish world, it became more central as a defining and identifying characteristic of Jews for both non-Jews and Jews alike. To the extent that ethnic and peoplehood concepts lost their legitimacy, Jewishness became to some Jews narrowly defined in religious terms. This was particularly so among Jews who sought to exploit the available freedom of opportunity to become fully integrated as individuals into the political, cultural, national and intellectual life of their societies. Treating Jewishness merely as a religion, made it possible for both Jews and non-Jews to argue for its compatibility with the national cultural tradition.

An opposite tendency also developed. This emphasized Jewish peoplehood and nationality as a culturally independent form of group existence that derived its legitimacy from the Jewish people and from its cultural values, as distinct from the national and cultural values of the people and the society within which Jews happened to be found. Major manifestations of this trend were variously, Zionism in all its forms; movements for Jewish autonomy in Eastern Europe; and the Bundist variety of the socialist solution. What divided these groups was the way in which expression could most appropriately be given to this sense of Jewish peoplehood, bearing in mind the political realities of the time. In a certain sense they attempted to reassert some of the political distinctiveness and separateness that preceded the emancipation.

Within the Jewish world these developments had direct consequences with regard to the relationship between religion and ethnicity, particularly when many Jews in the more liberal, pluralistic and secular societies ceased to observe Jewish religious practices. The decline in the authority of religion and of religious leadership produced within Jewry a conscious and articulated *equality of membership* of all Jews based on criteria of birth in place of a conscious and articulated *hierarchy of membership,* based upon religious performance or scholarship. All Jews were formally equal, and in terms of the ethnic denominator of birth all were equally Jewish. Second, as the relationship of Jews to Jewish values became attenuated, the key element joining Jews with each other no longer was their common pursuit of these goals and aspirations, *but simply their common ties.* Jews were now tied to each other on the basis of the lowest common denominator—the accident of birth. This increased emphasis upon common ties as such was radically heightened by recent events in Jewish history, the Nazi holocaust and the establishment of Israel. Both in different ways emphasized the unity of Jews everywhere on the basis of the ethnic criteria of birth and peoplehood.

This emphasis upon common ties as such has been particularly accentuated in modern western societies, where the physical boundaries and social constraints separating Jews from the other members of society have been broken down. In these societies, various studies have shown that the most characteristic and common expression of contemporary Jewish existence

is in intimate friendship, and through fairly widespread organizational affiliation characterized more by the fact of membership than by its intensity or degree of commitment.[2] Both aspects affirm the common ties as such, and thereby increase their significance as compared with other aspects of Jewish existence. Because they are now made to carry a much greater part of the load of Jewishness, these common ties have become more central than in the past, mainly because they have been stripped of their value and culture components. What was formerly the unarticulated basis and foundation of a rich and varied community and national life has now become a major part of the total substance of that life. To understand the meaning of contemporary Jewish peoplehood therefore, we must more closely examine and analyze the nature and consequences of this modern emphasis upon common ties as such.

Primordial Loyalties

Clifford Geertz's analysis provides the starting point for this examination. According to him:

> By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the "givens"—or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed "givens"—of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the giveness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves. One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbour, one's fellow believer, *ipso facto;* as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself.[3]

The crucial elements of this analysis are two-fold. Firstly that Jewish ethnic ties ("blood, speech and custom") are inescapable "givens." Secondly they may give rise to a powerful intensity of belonging which attributes an "absolute import" to the "very tie itself," merely by virtue of its existence. For those members of the Jewish people who accept the "giveness" of their situation (and probably for many who do not), Jewishness constitutes a tie of this kind.

But it is insufficient simply to assert the existence of these ties, even if one can point to their clear effects in action, without assessing their substance and content. Taking the analysis further suggests three basic constituents of contemporary Jewish ethnic ties: a biological sense of kinship and family; a psychological sense of loyalty reinforced by a sense of honor; and a cul-

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[2] See G. Lenski, *The Religious Factor,* New York 1961; M. Sklare and J. G. Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier,* New York 1967. For Australian evidence of the same phenomena see P. Y. Medding, *From Assimilation to Group Survival,* Melbourne 1968, P. Y. Medding (ed.), *Jews in Australian Society,* Melbourne 1973, and S. Encel et al, *The New South Wales Jewish Community: A Survey,* (mimeo), 1972.

[3] Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States" in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States,* Free Press, Glencoe: 1963, p. 109.

tural and national sense of shared peoplehood. These are basic only in the sense that they are minimal; but they themselves and others may be developed much further, and to that extent they are not intended to be a statement of goals or ideals. They are more an attempt to point to what currently exists empirically. Whether these minimal criteria are sufficient to ensure future Jewish survival, whether they are strong enough to maintain themselves and whether they are rich enough to continue to engage Jewish loyalties and so remain at the basis of Jewish existence are separate and vital questions.

Contemporary Jewish Ties

It has been argued that Jews are loyal to the Jewish community "because the Jewish community, current and historic, is a family, literally a family of families."[4] Such loyalty to the family as a primitive psychological, even biological, mode of relating to the bio-social group into which we have been born needs no explanation. "It makes as little sense to ask why one is attached to one's family as to ask why an infant loves its mother. It is characteristic of infants that they love their mothers; they cannot do otherwise. In the same way it is characteristic of all humans that they cling to their families, overtly or covertly, consciously or unconsciously."[5]

This deep-seated primitive biological mode of belonging is accompanied at the conscious level, as Milton Himmelfarb has recently reminded us,[6] by a sense of honor derived from belonging, or perhaps put more incisively, by the fear of dishonor that would be aroused either by conscious denial of membership, or by actual conversion to Christianity. When this was a real option in the past, most Jews did not avail themselves of it, though some individuals certainly did, both before and after the emancipation. But this was regarded by Jews as thoroughly dishonorable, because it generally seemed to be a matter of expediency and convenience, an attempt to escape from disadvantage, rather than a matter of deep conviction or commitment.

After the emancipation Jews maintained their "ineffable" biological and psychological ties even as they participated more fully in the life of the general society. Honor demanded not only the non-denial of ties and loyalties, but their affirmation whenever the occasion demanded. What is more, some societies not only did not put pressure on the individual to divorce himself completely from his primordial community, but, on the contrary, encouraged loyalty to it as a general social value. Thus ethnic honor as a positive value was reinforced by broader national values and goals. By the same token the path of honor is currently easier and less demanding; it merely involves accepting one's ethnic identity and affirming it, and the costs and disadvantages of doing so are

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[4] M. Ostow, "Jewish Youth in Dissent" in D. Sidorsky (ed.), *The Future of the Jewish Community in America*, Basic Books, New York: 1973, p. 234.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] See Milton Himmelfarb, *The Jews of Modernity*, Basic Books, New York: 1974, pp. 3–21. Leonard Fein has taken up the same theme in an essay "The New Left and Israel" in M. Chertoff (ed.), *The New Left and the Jews*, Pitman Publishing Corporation, New York: 1971, pp. 132–151.

clearly less than in the past. The question of honor is particularly reinforced when Jewish physical survival is actually in danger. To refuse to affirm membership or to deny it under these conditions, can incur high social and psychological costs in terms of dishonor.

This analysis also suggests that we should reconsider the common assumption that membership of the Jewish community is entirely voluntary. While this may be true in a formal sense, it misses the point that membership of the Jewish group is hardly a voluntary matter, and there is little distinction between membership of the Jewish group and membership of the Jewish community. Membership of the Jewish group is involuntary in two senses. There is the immediate and obvious sense in which birth is involuntary, and it is birth that creates the family and ethnic connection. Second, even if affiliation is formally free and voluntary, the social and psychological costs of non-affiliation and disaffiliation may be so high as to cease to be a real option.

The third constituent element of contemporary Jewish ethnic ties is the sense of shared peoplehood. This sense of shared peoplehood facilitates the *tangible* expression of the broad family ties and of honor. It consists of an affirmation of the sense of ethnic continuity in the personal sphere: "these are the people of my ancestors, therefore they are my people, and they will be the people of my children."[7] At the cultural level it is an affirmation of the historical continuity of tradition, culture, and custom. Because of the traditions, cultural values and historical memories of their common ancestors members of the same ethnic group enjoy a sense of indissoluble and intimate identity,[8] which is shared and is to be passed on to their offspring. These two combine to produce that sense of interdependence of fate so characteristic of Jewry, that feeling of "being ultimately bound up with the fate of these people."[9] Such a sense of shared peoplehood may and often does given rise to a more articulated form of cultural expression, in specific religious, and national values, practices and customs, and to elaborate and coherent value systems, philosophical approaches and world views —the perpetuation of which become ends in themselves. Clearly these give rise to various specific institutions seeking to further such goals, and these in turn reinforce the senses of family, honor and peoplehood. While this may be obvious both historically and logically, what is not so obvious is whether and the extent to which the minimal criteria of family, honor and peoplehood will be able to maintain and perpetuate themselves in the absence of articulated and conscious commitment to these elaborate value frameworks.

In Pluralist and Secular Societies

Geertz also contrasts primordial and ethnic ties with civil sentiments. The latter involve allegiance to the state and to the particular form of political system and are closely connected with concepts of political loyalty, national identity and citizen-

[7] M. M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life,* O.U.P. New York: 1964, p. 29.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 53. The general line of thought is of course that of Kurt Lewin.

ship. In his view, primordial sentiments and civil sentiments represent "not just competing loyalties, but competing loyalties of the same general order, on the same level of integration."[10] Both engage aspects of personality close to the core, and if intensely felt may come into conflict as mutually exclusive. That is why tribal, ethnic and religious conflict within states often leads to demands for separation, autonomy, partition and self-determination, as means of resolving such intense conflicts. But clearly some primordial and ethnic loyalties may and do coexist within states without being in conflict, and certainly without threatening the integrity of the state. Differing primordial loyalties therefore are not *necessarily* in conflict, but are always *potentially* in conflict.

Competing loyalties of the same order of integration, however, can create tensions capable of causing considerable unease, insecurity and anxiety, even if they do not actually threaten the integrity of the state. Much of the unease and anxiety stem from the recognition, that although currently not so, the competing primordial loyalties are *in the last resort* mutually incompatible and incapable of coexistence if held intensely and uncompromisingly. Thus, the potentiality of future conflict, however hypothetical, may lead to certain aspects of such potentially conflicting loyalties being underplayed and others reinforced in order to increase their degree of integration and thereby to relieve the tension. There is, however, nothing permanent about such compromises and no guarantee that they will always be successful. In general terms, this is the situation with Jewry and its particular set of primordial loyalties in the context of modern democratic pluralist secular nation states and bears further analysis.

[10] C. Geertz, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

The Role of Israel

The primordial feelings of Jewish peoplehood focus upon Israel, this being the only territory that exercises any legitimate Jewish claims upon the members of the Jewish people. This means that Jewry outside of Israel has its sense of peoplehood continually reinforced by the various connections with Israel, and the greater the pull of Israel the less the claims for any kind of Jewish autonomy in countries outside of Israel, which were a feature of Jewish politics prior to the existence of Israel as an independent sovereign Jewish political entity.

Israel serves to reinforce the Jewish sense of peoplehood as a primordial loyalty, more strongly than even before. What was previously inchoate, vague and unconscious is now real, specific and highly visible. But at the same time Israel as the *permanent* focus of Jewish peoplehood generates conflict with certain demands of national identity in the nation-states. The conflict may not always be close to the surface, and it may be underplayed, but it exists nonetheless, and ought to be recognized as such however much unease this may create.

The Religious Tension

One main area of tension and anxiety arising from the existence of the primordial sense of Jewish peoplehood in modern secular, pluralist societies relates to the question of secularism and religious neutra-

lity. Irrespective of the exact nature of the relationship of Jews with Judaism as a religion, even after the emancipation Jews have been united among themselves and separated from the rest of society, at least in the fact that they, unlike the surrounding majority, were not Christian. And, as we pointed out above, as other differences lessened, the religious distinction increased in significance.

The vision and the promise of the emancipation was to break down the shackles, prejudices and widespread denial of rights of the traditional society by creating a "neutral society." Such a society was not only meant to be politically egalitarian as regards citizenship, but also embodied a secular vision of universality and complete indifference both to religion in general and to specific religions. And as Jacob Katz has pointed out this was also the "vision that had sustained Jews when they first started to leave behind the boundaries of their traditional society. This vision embraced the free contact between Jew and non-Jew that would lead to cooperation and friendship resting on personal association, unhampered by the prejudices which clung to the image of the Jews."[11]

However, rather than creating a fully neutral society completely indifferent to the existence of religion, the emancipation produced at best a "semi-neutral society" where both Christians and liberal secularists did not expect Jews to remain Jewish. And where they remained Jewish, their inferior status was ignored "more by conscious effort rather than eliminated by actual equality."[12] The result was that Jews remained socially distinct and fulfilled their social needs, then (as now) in all-Jewish social circles.

"Secular" practice, as distinct from the secular vision, either expected Jews to give up their own form of particularism as part of the universal rejection of religion or expected them to join the majority by becoming Christian. Both possibilities were made possible by the emancipation's promises of liberty, equality and fraternity. As time went on neither expectation was fulfilled. Jews wished to remain Jews, even if Jewish secularists—not neutral secularists, and certainly not Christians. The majority also made it clear that it would not fully accept Jews, even after they had become Christians. The vision of the emancipation in the religious sphere had to learn to live with the continued existence of various religions, and be satisfied with the non-establishment of religion, its free exercise, and the separation of church and state, or whichever other formulation was used to convey the concept of the "semi-neutral" secular state.

None of these arrangements and formulations, however, alters the fact that today the history, traditions and cultural values of the majority of the members of those states are in fact Christian. Despite the states' formal secularity these are regularly embodied in many aspects of daily life, national symbols, holidays and celebrations, thereby infusing nationality and citizenship with Christian religious values and symbolisms. As Milton Himmelfarb has cogently argued, for Jews in modern

[11] Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation*, 1770–1870. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1973, pp. 201–2.

[12] *Ibid.*

pluralist secular societies, therefore, there are really only two options, to be Christian or to be Jewish. The third option, to be secular, does not exist, because secularism is so infused with Christian values and symbols that it does not exist as a separate and meaningful neutral option.[13] Given such options, historically most Jews have chosen to remain Jewish, thereby limiting their capacity to identify with important national values, symbols and historical associations to the extent that these are either manifestly or latently Christian.

Such limitations are expressed in the inability of individual Jews to identify with, accept and incorporate major aspects of the national culture. It also creates marked problems for the legitimacy of distinctive group participation in the workings of the pluralist society. If society is secular and religiously neutral (not anti-religious), then it makes difficult group participation based on religious values, because the latter ought not to play any role in public life. But if society is Christian, then Jewish religious values and group claims seek recognition and legitimacy for a religious value system, however attenuated, which is antipathetic in basic beliefs to that of the majority, and which questions its major tenets and presumptions at every turn.

The Citizenship Tension

In contemporary secular pluralist nation-states a second major area of tension for Jewry may develop over the extent to which citizenship and national identity are coterminous. This involves not the formal legal requirements and obligations of citizenship, but rather the nature, degree and intensity of the loyalties involved in citizenship, and the extent to which they involve primordial components. If citizenship is construed as being coterminous with national identity so that only the "true" unhyphenated national is the "true" citizen, this must inevitably create severe problems for Jewry because of the primordial peoplehood aspects of Jewishness.

In integrated nation-states there is a strong and inherent tendency for nationality and citizenship to coalesce and overlap. The sense of peoplehood felt by the members of the society is generally more or less identical to the sense of citizenship. American citizens generally feel that they belong to the American people and no other, French citizens to the French people, and no other, and so on. In other words, they have come to develop a sense of peoplehood which enables all, including the immigrants, to say that even if these are not literally the "people of my ancestors," they are the people with whom I share a special kind of intimacy, and what is most important in this context, they will be the people of my descendants.

The Jewish sense of peoplehood, by way of contrast, informed as it is with the lessons of Jewish history and constantly reinforced by the existence of Israel, cannot so easily, if at all, develop such an unqualified sense of peoplehood identification either in the past or present with any other people, even the people sharing a common citizenship loyalty, however liberal and accepting that concept of citizenship may be. The possibilities of present and future identification are greater in so-

[13] Himmelfarb, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–36.

cieties where Jews are accepted as equals, but in the last resort it comes down to the question of whether it is possible to have more than one family. At best, what happens is that two senses of peoplehood and identity develop at one level, but at a deeper level only one exists, relating to the group with which one shares that special intimate sense of past, present, and future identity.

But the existence of Israel as a *sovereign* political entity creates problems for this capacity to maintain two senses of peoplehood simultaneously. It is quite possible that states within which Jews are citizens, may come into conflict with Israel, and the political demands of citizenship may force individuals to make a choice between their two peoplehood obligations. That this has not yet happened in western societies should not lead us to ignore either the possibility that it might happen, or the tensions and anxieties which this potentiality currently create. Neither is the fact that conflicts have so far been at the policy level any guarantee that they will always remain so, or that Jews will continue to be able to seek to influence policy at the political level without their citizenship loyalty being called into question. In democratic societies, citizens may attempt to influence foreign policy, and to do so may even be regarded as one's civic duty. But in circumstances of long-standing treaty, alliance or bloc arrangements, not to speak of war, the opportunities for influence are narrowed, whilst national identity and citizen loyalty may be demanded in support of government policy and action. Under such conditions to oppose government policy may involve serious questions of national loyalty and civic obligation which conflict with Jewish ties and loyalties. There is no way of predicting beforehand precisely how such conflicts would be resolved.

Nor can one predict all the courses of action, policy stands and international alignment which future governments of Israel might take. In this context, one must ask the question whether there is a peoplehood obligation for Jews throughout the world to underwrite and support any action or policy of the government of Israel. Israel's future acts, therefore, may create problems of Jewish peoplehood identification, causing Jews to draw away from it in opposition to its policies, irrespective of whether the governments of the states in which they are citizens support Israel or not.

The contemporary situation in most western societies is characterized by capacity to maintain a sense of citizenship and national identity together with a sense of Jewish peoplehood, even if accompanied by ambivalence and ambiguity. It is also marked by a high degree of identification with the policies and acts of the government of Israel. Generally the societies in which Jews are citizens *permit* such a pattern of identification, even if they do not encourage it. But in the long run this Jewish peoplehood identification prevents the unimpeded development among Jews of the full sense of nationality implied in the concept of citizenship. That these societies do not demand such a total commitment and are prepared to function without it, does not diminish the limitations which Jewish peoplehood imposes upon Jewry as compared with other citizens in the unfettered development of national identity.

Two-sided Effect

The immediate implication of this analysis is that the effect of Israel upon Jewish peoplehood is ultimately two-sided. Israel has, on the one hand, become the central symbol of Jewish existence, the main rationale for its continuation, and the permanent focus of a heightened and expanded sense of Jewish peoplehood. At the same time, as is well known, its existence has made a major contribution to the "normalization" of Jewish psychological attitudes, and removed some of the tensions of minority existence, by providing an example of ongoing majority living and by enabling Jews to feel pride, honor and a sense of vicarious participation in its achievements.

On the other hand, Israel has sharpened the abnormality of the Jewish political situation in western liberal secular societies by reinforcing religious and citizenship tensions, which we analyzed above. It has also served as a more "respectable" target of hostility to Jewish interests and a seemingly more "legitimate" outlet for anti-Jewish antipathies and prejudices than traditional antisemitism, with its racist demonology. The existence of Israel, and its trials and tribulations, therefore, have added a unique dimension of permanence and urgency to these tensions, because of the central place which Israel occupies in the Jewish world, and the hopes, aspirations, and extensions of individual Jewish personality anchored in its continued existence—in short, because the stakes are now so high.

Problems of religious and citizenship integration are not new for Jewry in the western world, and it is clear from the history of the last 200 years that Jews have had great difficulties in adjusting to them. What is unique in the current situation (above and beyond the fact that the stakes are high) is that Israel—as a tangible fact, the values it represents, and its role as an actor on the international stage—highlights these tensions and problems more clearly than ever before. As the center of independent Jewish national existence, Israel suggests the seemingly permanent irreconcilability of the religious, citizenship and nationality demands and tensions facing Jews in western societies, and the ultimate impossibility of their resolution by synthesizing or integrating them into a new overarching totality. At the same time, the constant focus upon the Israeli connection makes it difficult to resolve the tensions by ignoring them.

The international dimension and impact of these issues exacerbates such tensions. The demands of Israel and the commitments to be made towards it, are expressed not only in feelings, sentiments, values and beliefs, but often result in direct and intensive political activity aimed at influencing the foreign policy actions and commitments of the countries within which Jews are citizens. Israel has therefore become a major, if not the major, universal Jewish political interest and the concern for its security the top priority item on the Jewish political agenda. Such international Jewish political concern is permanent, total and unquestioning (in public at least), and is thus qualitatively different from the foreign policy concerns and views of other groups in such societies. In political systems where the publicly committed groups and the key issues tend to change frequently as the political agenda changes, the very permanence of such commitments

may lead directly to the questioning of domestic political loyalties both by traditional political allies as well as by opponents. And within the context of a total commitment to Israel one must also take account of the specific acts of Israeli governments and political leaders, which may give rise to severe complications and tensions in political relationships with groups with whom Jews are allied for internal domestic political reasons even if they do not immediately arouse questions of national identity or citizenship loyalty.

The Paradox

Such factors increase both the actual and potential pressure of these tensions. In general individuals need to find mechanisms for dealing with such tensions, and the greater the threat or pressure, the greater the need for their satisfactory resolution. Ideally if the elements creating tension are valued, then strategies will be devised to enable the continued existence and development of all these elements in some form. If suitable synthesizing, integrating, or compartmentalizing strategies are not found, it is not only possible but likely, that tensions will be resolved by the fundamental weakening or even eradication of one or other element, or by the radical strengthening and reinforcement of the other. In the specific terms of our case, where the tension is sharp and seemingly irreconcilable either the nationality or citizenship elements will be made to give way or the Jewish elements will be made to give way.

Resolution of these tensions by adoption of the latter alternative represents a fundamental challenge to Jewry which could lead to an erosion of even the minimal ethnic ties and sense of peoplehood, which we analyzed above. Under these conditions Jewish life everywhere would be impoverished, and consequently Israel's global situation, to the extent that it rests upon the support of world Jewry, would be greatly weakened.

Herein lies the paradox of Israel for Jewish peoplehood. Its existence may so heighten the sense and meaning of peoplehood for Jews elsewhere that sharp tensions are created, the resolution of which may in turn lead to a dramatic attenuation of the Jewish commitment and to a consequent weakening of Israel.