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Patterns of Contemporary Jewish Identity

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A. Introduction

In this paper I should like to propose a new approach to the analysis of the patterns of homogeneity and heterogeneity in contemporary Jewish communities and specifically to problems of Jewish identity, and to point out some of the implications of this for an understanding of inter-community relations, especially those between Israel and American Jewry.

I shall try first to point out in what ways these contemporary patterns of Jewish life and identity, and inter-community relations differ from those which were prevalent in the "classical" exilic times. Second, I shall try to point out why these patters differ also from the assumptions of those models as to the nature of modern Jewish life, assumptions that were concerned with problems of emancipation, assimilation, nationalism, etc.——which developed in the nineteenth century and have shaped Jewish and Gentile thinking concerning these issues, and hence why a new approach is necessary.

B. Heterogeneity in Traditional Jewish Society

One major aspect of contemporary Jewish reality which is either a complete innovation or has not been present in Jewish history for many centuries, probably since the destruction of the Temple, is the type of social and cultural heterogeneity that can be found today in the communities.

Certainly heterogeneity of lifestyle, as it is to be found in a great number of Jewish communities, is not new in Jewish history. Indeed, heterogeneity is a part of the basic reality of exile. Jewish communities

dispersed throughout the Christian and the Muslim worlds exhibit a great deal of ecological variations; different kinds of economic functions, to a smaller degree differences in the nature of their marginal, "protected" political status. Such ecological heterogeneity has been a basic part of Jewish history for the last 1500 years. It was, of course, connected with a great variability in local customs, cultural activities, and ways of life. But all these, especially when seen from the view point of the nature of Jewish tradition and of Jewish culture, were variations on a common theme. With minor exceptions, they shared the same premises about the nature of the tradition and the collective identity of the Jewish people. The most basic thing which they had in common throughout this long period was the very strong emphasis on the Law or Halacha as the basic framework of Jewish existence. The Halacha, in its "prayer," "ritual", "study", and purely legal aspect was, with all its ramifications, everywhere the common binding sociocultural framework which held the Jewish people together and furnished the institutional context for the continuity of Jewish cultural identity, although it did not in itself always necessarily provide the major symbols for this operation. It is possible that many Jews were not aware that the Halacha made up the major part of their tradition and consciousness, although probably most of them were, but it is certain in any case that during that period the Law served as the major institutional framwork through which continuity of Jewish culture and peoplehood was safeguarded; of this truth, the peculiar combination of a religion, national identity, and several additional factors were a clear demonstration.

It was within this legal framework that all the different elements of Jewish collective identity—and to a smaller degree also the contents of Jewish tradition—were brought together. The most important was, first of all, a "national", "ethnic" identity based upon a strong historical consciousness; connected, second, with a very deep primoridal kinship identity—symbolically expressed in the descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; third, a religious cultural identity, and last—and, in this period only in a latent form—political identity.

These different components of collective consciousness which became synthesised in the formative period of Jewish history—above all in the time of the First and Second Temple, became—in the Talmudic period, and above all in the Exile—very strongly bound together through the primacy of the Halacha, so that they were hardly distinguishable from one another. Most Jews did not differentiate between these strands of identity; they assumed they were all part of the same thing, and that they were held together by the Law and by a full-blown belief system which legitimized the whole structure.

The same was to a much lesser degree true of what may be called the cultural contents of Jewish life which was relatively diversified in the period of the first two Temples and became more homogeneous later on. But there was great richness of purely cultural content among different Jewish communities while the basic framework of the Halacha remained a constant throughout. Thus, for instance, in some communities there was a greater emphasis on study of philosophy; in others more stress was laid on different types of cultural traditions like the Kabala. There were

also, of course, variations in impact with the external culture and different degress of susceptibility to tis influence. But even here in most Jewish communities the basic elements were common, with only local variations.

This conglomeration of traditions generated a certain type of response to the key identity-conflicts which have developed from the outset of Jewish history. One such dilemma, the polarisation between the universal and the particularist strands in Jewish cultural thinking, was solved, in a sense, by indefinite postponement of the possibility of a realization of universalism, of a really open dialogue with other nations, religions, and civilizations. The Jewish reality was a very particularistc one, although with an orientation towards a universalistic goal. But, in light of the real relation that existed between Jews and the broader society before and during the Middle Ages under the humiliating conditions of exile this latent universalistic orientation could not be realized on a practical basis but only existed as a focus for the logical disputes or as a dream. A connection existed, of course, between the resolution of this conflict and that of another dilemma—namely the one between the concrete given reality and eschatological aspirations. Again, Utopian dreams for mankind and the Jewish people were put off for some unknown future, this postponement, of course, closely relating to the fact that temporal concerete Jewish relaity was apolitical while Jewish Messianism did have a very strong political tincture. The apolitical nature of Jewish temporal reality was not necessarily voluntary, but was imposed by the surrounding society, which accorded to Jews at best the status of a secondary, half-tolerated minority, while at worst they were treated

like a persecuted minority, forced to move from place to place without having any real assurance of continuity anywhere.

Hence the viability of "traditional, medieval" Jewish life was assured, not by geographical propinquity nor by active participation in the general political arena, but through the frameworks of Jewish Law and culture. Accordingly also the contacts between the different Jewish communities were either purely commercial ones, legalistic-cultural, or those of family relations. Obviously, during this period they could not be political, except in the very minimal sense of this word—and it was the former types of contacts that maintained the continuity of the Jewish people and tradition.

In this context it is important to stress here one aspect of continuity which was emphasized 70 or 80 years ago by the late Arthur Ruppin, one of the initiators of the scientific study of Jewish demography. He demonstrated, on the basis of a relatively clear demographic calculation, that perhaps half of the Jewish population actually were leaving the fold of Judaism in the Middle Ages. Those who remained, however, remained very strongly within the fold and those who left, left for good. In that period—at least until the emergence of the Marranos, but basically till the 18th century, there was no possibility of an in-between situation.

Another crucial aspect of Jewish tradition at this period was that, because of being the religion of a persecuted minority always on the defense, it was, as compared with other monotheistic faiths, less tolerant

of internal heterodoxy or of deviation from the norm—although some trends such as mysticism and philosophical speculations were accorded a second-place type of recognition. But no alternative interpretations of the Halacha or different ways of looking at the collective Jewish identity, were allowed.

To sum up, in the Middle Ages, despite diversity among Jewish communities with respect to ecological setting, economic structure, and local customs, there was a basic unity of the components of Jewish identity as well as adherence to Jewish law which was the common link uniting all Jewish communities.

This type of Jewish historical experience was made possible by the Jewish tradition as well as an external environment which reinforced these internal tendencies. Jewish diversity, therefore, was external and unimportant and Jewish life was internally essentially homogeneous.

C. The Contemporary Pattern—The Background

Today the picture is different. Owing to the discovery of new continents and the resettlement of Israel, the dispersion of the Jews is, geographically, probably greater than in earlier periods. However, it is not this fact of greater ecological or economic diversity that characterizes the contemporary situation but the new type of pluralism and heterogeneity in the sociocultural life of Jewish communities.

If we look today at the great panorama of contemporary Jewish communal life, in Israel or in the United States, in addition to what we know already about Jews in Russia, or those who remained behind to

rebuild some of the older European communities after the Holocaust, or the Jews in Latin America, we are struck not only by geographical variations, not only by variations in customs or in economic activites, but by the fact that within each of these communities, there is a great divergency in the nature of the kinds of symbols of Jewish collective identity, and in the cultural customs and organizational ways through which Jewish life and identification with Jewish peoplehood are emphasized. The simple facts are very well known. Throughout the Western world, as in Israel, there are many different types of Jewish religious "congregations", Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist in the United States; Orthodox, Reform and Liberal in Europe. Beyond this, there are many Jews who do not belong to any of these religious "congregations" but yet are active in various Jewish cultural and communal activities or only participate marginally and yet do identify themselves as Jews.

How can we explain this heterogeneity? As indicated already above, there developed in modern—and especially in Jewish thought—several intellectual models for evaluating these phenomena.

Since whatever is happening now has its roots in the early period of Enlightenment and emancipation, the first such interpretation was one focused on the assimilationist-traditionalist dichotomy. According to this view assimilation was a continuous process with one ultimate objective but with implications in the cultural sphere and in that of personal identity. This view—as held above all by the traditionalists, but also to some degree by the assimilationists implied that there was no middle position. Assimilation meant not only giving up certain customs, attachments,

fulfillment of the Law, but together with this also losing above all one of the basic components of Jewish identity—the feeling for nationality, for ethnicity—and at most retaining only some religious or familial identity. Surrender of tradition and acquisition of new ways of life was seen as necessarily connected with the giving up of the political components of Jewish collective identity which was regarded as the natural price for integration into European societies. This conception was very strongly related to prevalent ideas of patriotism for the nation-state which, above all in their extreme formulations, made allowances only for minorities which did not base their identity on the same very powerful combination of political, cultural-historical, and even primordial elements on which their own ideology was founded.

Some Jews—above all Jewish intellectuals, liberals, "atheists", rationalists, and socialists—hoped also that by giving up their historical roots and concentrating on the religious-ethnical component of their identity they would be able both to become integrated into the general society and to solve, in a new way, the old dilemma between universalistic and particularistic orientations in their heritage. They would be able to do so by imbuing the general political frameworks in which they participated with some special ethical, rational, or social elements derived from their heritage, but transcending its particularistic limits.

With the rise, in the late 18th century of the various modern Jewish nationalist movements, and above all of Zionism, there emerged the "nationalist" reaction against this view—but a reaction which was based on similar assumptions. The nationalist view accepted, as it were, the

basic premises of the former view with respect to the conditions of integration in the general society, although it had grave doubts about the possibility of its ultimate success. It claimed that within any such modern framework the Jews would be torn between spiritual and cultural annihilation—the undermining of their traditional and communal life by modern economic, political, and cultural forces on the one hand, and physical annihilation due to incomplete assimilation and the inability of modern society to digest this foreign body on the other. Thus Zionist ideology assumed that only in Palestine could a new, modern, viable Jewish society be established, and only in Palestine could a new synthesis of Jewishness and universal human culture, of tradition and modernity be evolved.

Hence the nationalist movements in general and the Zionist movement in particular aimed at providing an opportunity for cultural and social creativity and it is this combination of humanistic values within the framework of a free, modern, self-supporting Jewish society, which accounts for the tremendous emphasis placed on cultural renaissance. In this view a new dichotomy emerged—that between the nationalists and the non-nationalists (whether traditional or assimilationist).

In the period from the French revolution to World War I and to some degree even till the Second World War it was these two basic conceptions that were predominant, and the controversies between them influenced the nature of the Jewish problem in modern society, as seen by Jews themselves and to some degree also as seen by Gentiles.

Certainly, even during this period some Jewish communities—above all those living in societies like England, Holland, or the Scandinavian countries in which the element of civility—and some civil religion, was more predominant than pure nationalist ideology—were undergoing a different type of experience. Some Jewish communities—above all in the United States—were beginning to reformulate some of the problems, but these were not yet central to the total picture of Jewish life and did not greatly impinge on the two basic points at issue.

D. The Contemporary Jewish Scene—New Patterns of Identity, Homogeneity and Heterogeneity

Contemporary Jewish reality cannot be explained in terms of either of these dichotomies. The prospect that the Jews would easily become a sort of a religious and confessional denomination sharing entirely the national or "State" or "peoplehood" identity of their host nation, has not been realized, although it was credited—until the Holocaust—by many Jews in Western Europe. This faith did not last, both because of the tragic events of history, but also because of the internal dynamics of Jewish society and its relations with the host-societies. Although it is probably truer than ever today that there are many Jews who view themselves as a totally integrated part of their societies, they are certainly a minority within the Jewish community. Similarly, the purely ideological universalistic identity, which was fashionable for many years among Jews in Europe, who claimed that the distinctive Jewish contribution to civilization was the upholding of liberalism, socialism or the like—is no longer predominant—although some of its elements are very widespread.

The same is to some degree true of the nationalistic solution based on the assumption that a collective Jewish identity can be only attached through some type of communal nationalism fashioned after 19th century European movements—although naturally the establishment of the state of Israel, and its development into the center of Jewish collective solidarity—has apparently strongly reinforced this presumption.

The ways in which Jewish communities throughout the world try today to express their Jewish identity are much more complex and variable than in the past. First, there is no longer the simple correlation between the "shedding" of traditional ways of life and the giving up of elements of Jewish identity. Many Jews are continually changing life-styles, and most Jews in the Diaspora do not lead lives which are primarily or fully Jewish, but they do not want to lose their Jewish identity, which, however, they attempt to reformulate in the light of the fact that it is no longer their only one nor perhaps not central to their way of life. Today just as in medieval times, although we do not have exact statistics, many Jews actually do leave the fold. However, even this is not so simple today as it was in the past. Now, even intermarriage itself may not necessarily lead to the loss of Jewish identity.

As mentioned earlier, in addition to those Jews who really shed layer upon layer of their affiliation, the majority make continuous attempts to reconstruct the ingredients and symbols of Jewishness, and to recombine them in different ways. This entails, in most cases, both the reformulation and the reintegration of most of the original elements, always combining religious atavism with some element of "peoplehood".

Here it might be worthwhile to mention a very interesting observation based on some research by the Dean of Jewish historians in the United States, Professor Salo Baron which holds true both for Israel and the Diaspora. He indicated that among those customs which even the most non-religious Jews observe, are those which are related to the most primoridal facts of life; circumcision (which is obviously the choice of the parents), Bar-mitzvah, marriage, funeral. Second, there is a strong return to certain traditions or customs which have religious origins, but which have become symbols of collective identity, such as candle lighting on Hannuka and on the Sabbath.

Significantly, these different patterns of reconstruction of religious symbols are not necessarily related to a return to orthodoxy or to the acceptance of the Halacha as the basic framework of Jewish life—although such a process is also taking place. Indeed, the upsurge of orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy which has been also taking place—and which also has not yet been studied systematically—indicated a parallel and connected process.

The second new feature which came into play in the period after the Second World War is that of the emergence of legitimate Jewish political activism. For the first time in exilic history Jewish communities throughout the world have become politically conscious and active as Jews.

The pinnacle of this development was, of course, the establishment of the state of Israel—but what is important is that a parallel, to some degree of independent process has been taking place in many Jewish communities —not only in the United States, but also in Europe—although with the state

of Israel (and to a much smaller degree the rescue of Soviet Jewry) providing its major pivots.

This process of reformulation and reconstruction of different ingredients of Jewish identity is, in most Jewish communities, very closely related to a parallel process in respect to eclecticism within the Jewish tradition.

Here also there is a continuous sense of exploration—about which we know relatively little. The most interesting aspect of this selection process is that, contrary to the presumption mentioned previously, there is no simple relation between attachment to different Jewish customs and traditions and commitment to Jewish political identity. Even within the Orthodox circles, in which, one might think the original quintessence of Jewishness should survive in its most unadulterated form, the picture is very complex. Thus the upserge of neo-orthodoxy has been connected with a growing participation in secular education, occupations, and political Jewish commitment of the new kind—all anathema to the Eastern European traditionalists of the past.

The picture is even more complex among the neo-Orthodox. There is no simple relation between symbolic gestures such as a return to some of the rites de passage mentioned above and the essential nature of Jewish identity and commitment.

Here yet another factor—as compared with the situation of medieval Judaism—is that frequently Jews who are looking for an expression of their individual identity tend to combine this with the search for some sort of

resolution of the tension between universalism and particularism in Jewish collective existence, a dichotomy the former aspect of which had been "repressed" in the medieval period, while, on the other hand, the latter aspect had been so exaggerated in the time of the early assimilationists that it had been taken beyond the scope of Jewish communal activity altogether. In some cases the older "ethical"—liberal, socialist or nationalist—attitude persists but significantly enough even this position is increasingly connected with a more positive Jewish identity and commitment—and often it focuses on some activity in Jewish communal activities and institutions.

To gain an understanding of the contemporary Jewish scene it is important to realize that different Jewish communities go about this task differently—or that even individual communities may change the patterns of their activities. There are different emphases of various components of identity; for different communities, the hierarchy of elements may differ, and there is nowhere a definitive crystallization of some new combination of the elements. Rather, in every Jewish community today there is a continuous process of "playing" with the elements of Jewish identity; no community has settled for a "solution", and all communities are in a state of continual flux. The unifying element, however, is the very variability, the act of experimentation and continuous search, and the mutual awareness of the options offered by different Jewish communities.

Thus, in modern times, one can be Jewish without having a fixed and set notion of what this actually means in terms of actual contents. Since

flux is difficult to compute, Jewish institutions are considerably behind the contemporary mood, although certain issues, such as the establishment of the state of Israel or the problems of Soviet Jewry, do serve as focal points for institutional effort.

Thus a new, paradoxical element has entered into Jewish life—namely the growing multiplicity of what in terms of traditional patters would be seen as heterodoxies with seemingly heretical orientations, and it is these orientations which become the point of growing mutual awareness and sensitivity among different Jewish communities.

Of course, in extreme cases this situation does lead to "total" assimilation. But on the whole this is not the situation—or at least certainly not to the degree that it used to be assumed in the "classical" literature on assimilation.

We do not know very much about this whole field on enquiry—at least partly because we have not asked the relevant questions. Most of the research on these problems has been guided by the older "dichotomic" conceptions, and systematic investigation of the subject should constitute a major agenda for research.

VII

How can we explain this new Jewish reality which differs so greatly from the "classical" notions about the nature of Jewish life and the kind of problems which might arise?

Several factors were of crucial importance here. First, the Holocaust, in a terrible and tragic way, showed the faint likelihood of Jewish participation, on an individual basis or as a religious denomination, in an alien non-Jewish collectivity. The second factor, the roots of which were planted already in the late 19th century and early 20th century but came to fruition only later, was the reconstruction of the great center of Jewish life in the United States. Here, one must remember one very basic factor which has not been fully appreciated in the analysis of American Jewish history—namely, that the major consensus of the American nation is based neither upon a political ideology nor upon primordial historical symbols but, to use R. Bellah's expression—on "civil religion." Because of this it is potentially much more open to collective political expressions of "ethnic" and religious "subgroups" within it than 19th and 20th century European nation-states. I say "potentially" because of course these possibilities are also fraught with tensions and potential hostility. The third factor here is changes in the political culture of Europe itself, leading to the weakening of the old closed homogeneous conception of the nation-state which did not allow for legitimate secondary collectivities.

Last, of course, and possibly most crucial of these developments is the establishment of the state of Israel as an autonomous Jewish political entity in which exists the possibility of full and independent expression of Jewish collective political life. Within the contemporary setting, establishment of the state of Israel and concern with it once it had been set up has become the means by which, throughout the communities, the political dimension of Jewish identity has been more fully articulated.

It is this new dimension which has become one of the most central links in inter-community relations and in the relations between different Jewish communities and the state of Israel; an allied outlet has also been found for this political consciousness in activities such as those relating to Soviet Jewry.

E. The New Pattern—Tensions and Problems

All these developments have fully crystallized only lately—probably only from the mid-sixties on. It was only since then that the major Jewish communities—above all in Israel, North America, and Western Europe—were able to start to reconstruct—on the basis of the new developments mentioned above—their internal activities and self-conceptions, their interrelations among themselves, as well as their relations to the societies in which they were living.

It was above all events or problems connected with the state of Israel—the influx of new immigrants, problems of defense, the Six-Day and the Yom Kippur wars—that helped towards the crystallization of these new trends. What was going on in Israel affected not only political events; they had far more reaching reprecussions on the life of the Jewish communities. First of all relations to Israel proved to be increasingly central in the structuring of Jewish organizational life and the selection of Jewish leadership. Beyond this, these events served also as catalysts in the crystallization of Jewish consciousness and in the intensification of relations and mutual awareness between Jewish communities.

This can be seen first of all in developments in Israel itself, above all, after the Six-Day War. What took place during the war and after it refuted many of the assumptions current in the Yishuv regarding the nature of the links between Israel and the Diaspora and the negligeability of the Jewish strain in the Israeli psychic make-up. Not only did they do this, but they also indicated that the context and predominance of this Jewish affiliation, and the nature of relations between Israel and the Jewish communities abroad, went far beyond accepted ideological "Zionist" or assimilationist formulae.

First, the deep attachment felt by Israelis toward the historic Jewish heritage was revealed, and at the same time the strength of the sense of solidarity between the state of Israel and Jewish communities abroad was demonstrated—a feeling so rooted in mutual bonds with a common past that, although it may be interpreted in different ways by different Jewish groups, it is even strengthened, in a certain sense, by this variety of interpretations. But second, by showing how far the accepted view of the nature of the link between the Yishuv and the Jewish communities derived from the original Zionist, traditionalistic, or assimilationist ideological assumptions fell short of the reality, these developments highlighted the relative weakness of the purely "Canaanite" strain in the new Israeli psychic make-up. Israel's relation with other Jewish communities, and with its own Jewish identity, its contribution to general Jewish life and culture, became both increasingly noticeable and in many ways more problematic—as it became clear that they did not correspond in reality to any of the accepted ideologies.

Parallel demonstrations which, in their depth go beyond the expressions of solidarity with Israel and the general upsurge of Jewish consciousness, took place throughout most Jewish communities—and these have yet to be studied systematically.

Gradually but forcably the place of Israel among the Jewish communities changed. On the one hand, it became a major symbol and center of Jewish identity—a focus of solidarity and primordial sentiments, of hopes and dreams, a potential haven from oppression; a sign of pride because of its achievements—or of criticism because of its failures.

On the other hand, however, it has not become—as presumed in classical Zionist ideology—the sole center of Jewish creativity, the only place in which the social, educational, and cultural renaissance of the Jewish people can develop. The creative impulse of many Jewish communities did not necessarily become focused on Israel, and the pattern for Jewish rebirth that developed in Israel was but one example—even if the most important one.

It was because of this that, departing from basic Zionist ideology, and, unlike during the formative period of the Yishuv, immigration to Israel at this time became only one of the links between Jewish communities and not the most important. Many of the historical, primordial, national and religious bonds between Jews that are so difficult to define, not only lived on but were strengthened. What is more, immigration, even in Israel, in spite of its importance and a concern with the problems of absorption, was only one of the means by which connections with Jewish communities were formed. Other ways of expressing solidarity—through economic ties

with more affluent Jewish communities abroad, through varied philanthropic activities, sentimental ties, tourism, and family visits—were no less important.

These manifestations, which went beyond the accepted Zionist notions as to the proper relation between Jewish groups and the state of Israel, have not only demonstrated the vitality of these links, but have also strengthened them, while at the same time creating new points of departure for self-criticism and evaluation.

Immigration from Russia, which reached relatively large proportions a few years after the war, also increased the types of links between Israel and the Diaspora. Even granting that this influx was to some extent a continuation of preceeding waves of immigration motivated by idealism and even revolutionary fervor, on the other hand, these non-pragmatic tendencies apparently were not ordinary Zionist positions and added to the diversity of the components of the Jewish and Israeli psychic make-up.

All these developments are fraught with manifold tensions. First of all there are the tensions between the Jewish communities and the societies in which they live—even in the more open societies of the West, and certainly in Latin American countries and especially, of course, in Russia.

The Jews in the free Diaspora have to find their own solutions to the problem as to how they should integrate themselves in their host communities and cultures, and how they should define the Jewish contribu-

tion to these cultures. The changes in the bases of political identity in these societies did not do away with antisemitism, discrimination and Jewish-Gentile tensions—even if the way they express themselves has greatly changed.

Because of the very centrality of Israel, these tensions have also become transposed, as is common knowledge, to the international sphere. Here there took place an interesting variant on an old pattern—namely, that it was the rebels against the pluralistic "open" aspect of the Western heritage that were most virulently opposed to the state of Israel and Zionism, and to any expression of Jewish collective identity. In this respect the relations between Jews and Gentiles, both within the framework of their respective societies and on the international sphere, and the possibility of different forms of Jewish self-expression within these frameworks—continue to be, even if in changed forms—a very important test of the internal strength of the Western humanist tradition.

Closely connected to the tensions between Jews and their host societies, there have developed also numerous inter-communal tensions and tensions between the communities and the state of Israel. Here, paradoxically, the growing Jewish awareness and commitment has often intensified the strain.

There are the obvious tensions of possible conflicts between loyalty to the state of Israel and, perhaps, criticism of Israel's policies, between such loyalties and the policies of their respective governments, or between Israel's demands for financial support and local needs.

There are also the not so latent tensions between the dogmatic Zionist presumption of the lack of viability of Jewish life in the Diaspora and the vitality of the Diaspora communities.

Closely connected with the latter, given the very fact of the different structuring of Jewish experience in Israel and in the countries of the Diaspora, above all in the Western world; and also given the fact of the continuous interaction between them, there developed new tensions.

Just because the Jewish experience in the Diaspora is, by definition, a partial one, worked out as it is within broader institutional frameworks which absorb large parts of the lives and identity of the Jews who live there, they, above all in the free world, try to imbue their Jewish activities, and sometimes also their activities within the general society, with some very specific social, political, and cultural significance.

As against this, the Jewish experience in Israel as embedded in the life of a territorial society and state is much more "total". In Israel major institutional organizational and cultural endeavors became embedded in the routine problems of running a relatively small society living in continuous danger; in the necessity to find compromises between different groups, whereas the Diaspora can pretend to live in their relative pristine purity. All of this may be non-productive, and sometimes provincial and chauvinistic.

These basic institutional differences, paradoxically, generate a new type of link and tension between the Jews in Israel and the Jewish

communities in the Diaspora, which is closely connected with the very centrality of Israel to Jewish life.

This bond is based on the old dichotomy in the Jewish tradition between universalism and particularism; on the wider implications of maintaining the universalistic strand; on the confrontation between the premises underlying Jewish universalism and reality. Many Jews who are concerned with the state of Israel tend to complain that it has not yet reached the ideal of a Jewish commonwealth, of a perfect society wit-h universal significance. The vision may be of a religious or secular utopia; socialist or liberal—but it is usually connected with some perception of a harmony between particularly Jewish and some universal elements.

Jews throughout the world are concerned with many of the political and social problems of Israel, the problems of immigration, of equality of life in Israel, the transformation of its socialist vision; its incomplete Jewishness.

In this connection they often make what appears to be unrealistic demands of the political situation in Israel. But whether these demands are justified or not, they reveal a deep sense of connectedness that binds Jews together in a new type of institutional, cultural, and symbolic framework which is beset by grave problems and difficulties, but also with great potentiality for cultural and social renaissance.

In fact, when it comes down to essentials—as when there is a great danger to the state of Israel—most Jews who are concerned at all will

admit that the basic link is rooted in some combination of primordial and national identity. But it is extremely significant that at the same time many of them will also connect this primordial dimension with some "utopia."

There is no easy solution to the discordancies—they will be with us for many years and constitute one of "givens" of the contemporary Jewish situation, paradoxically, however, these very strains provide a potential reservoir of strength, and are a focus to bring Jews together. These hopes are not likely to be realized by not trying to find formulae and prescriptions acceptable to all parts of the Jewish community—but rather by opening up channels of communication between them beyond the political and routine organizational ones; channels of continuous advice, dialogue, and mutual exploration of a common past, present, and future.

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