



המכון מקבוצת ראית
The Institute by Reut

Conceptual Framework

The Future of the Nation State of the Jewish People: Consolidation or Rupture?

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This conceptual framework is dedicated to the memory of our friend, Martin Ben-Moreh (z"l), who dedicated his life to 21st Century Zionism.



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Guidelines for Quick Reading / Note on English Translation

This document can be skimmed by reading the bolded phrases. Each paragraph contains only one idea, captured in the bolded sentences. Endnotes do *not* contain new ideas, but examples, sources, and references.

This document is a non-verbatim translation to English of the Hebrew original.



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Prologue: 2017 - A Critical Year for Israel-Diaspora Relations

This Reut Institute document deals with the State of Israel's role as the nation state of the Jewish People in the 21st Century, and the mutual connection between the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry. This connection has great importance for the future of the State of Israel: First, the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora serves as a central pillar of Israel's national security. Second, and perhaps more significantly, this connection fundamentally relates to the essence of the State of Israel, its vision, mission, and purpose.

The Reut Institute began this research project in response to several indicators demonstrating a consistent decline in the connection between the two major centers of the Jewish People – the State of Israel and large Jewish communities in the United States. Among others, this decline is fueled by an increasingly complex relationship between Israel and the younger generation of American Jews, and the weakening of organizations that traditionally served as important mediators between Israel and the Diaspora. This decline continues despite significant efforts by the Israeli government and many organizations in Israel and the Jewish World. In light of these developments and others, 2017 is likely to be a critical year for Israel-Diaspora relations. 2017 is the site of a convergence of worrying events and trends, which lead to a 'perfect storm' that could greatly affect the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora.

The answer to this challenge must come from the State of Israel. Israel must recognize the complexity of this challenge and design relevant approaches both in the Knesset and the government. In parallel, the answer must also emerge from civil society. Israel must harness the abilities of civil society at large, including social entrepreneurs, public intellectuals, and thought-leaders.

2017 is Potentially a 'Perfect Storm'

2017 is likely to be a critical year for Israel-Diaspora relations. Its importance emerges from the convergence of three major trends: *First*, 2017 marks several key moments in Zionist and Israeli history including the 100-year anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the beginning of the 70-year anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel, and the 50-year anniversary of Israel's victory in the Six Day War. 2017 also marks 50 years of Israeli control of the West Bank and its Palestinian population. As a result, 2017 will be a central year in determining how these events are remembered and commemorated, as well as a central year in defining their influence on future outcomes. The convergence of these events will further highlight the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its implications for Israel-Diaspora relations. The resolution of the conflict is a working assumption of leading organizations in the American Jewish community, including AIPAC, the World Jewish Congress, and Jewish Federations of North America. Due to a decline in the prospects for a Two-State Solution, and the lack of an agreed upon alternative, these organizations increasingly struggle to deal with a complex Israeli reality.

Second, 2017 is likely to be the site of renewed conflict around the status of Progressive Judaism in Israel. In 2017, this conflict will reach new heights due to the Israeli government's failure to deliver on its promised 'Kotel Compromise.' Conflicts such as these negatively affect the ability of a growing number of individuals, as well as Jewish communal organizations, to maintain a meaningful connection to Israel.



Third, in 2017, Israel and the American Jewish community will continue to deal with the repercussions of Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 US Presidential Election, in the face of strong opposition of progressive Jews in the United States. The present Israeli government's strong support for the Trump Administration and the lack of progress in negotiations with the Palestinians, are likely to place most American Jews and the Israeli government on two different sides of the political arena. Consequently, American Jewish organizations will be compelled to take clear sides on Israeli political issues, including Israeli settlement policy and the status of the Orthodox Rabbinate. These developments will create significant organizational dilemmas where every outcome comes with significant costs.

The veteran leadership of American Jewry seeks to contain and ease these contradictions. In contrast, many young American Jews show signs of polarization in relation to Israel. An increasing number of young American Jews no longer actively support Israel. Young American Jews are also growing distant from veteran communal institutions and organizations. For example, Hillel International, which serves students on 400 campuses throughout the United States, is experiencing deep tension between the population it serves, which is young, mostly liberal, and religiously progressive, and the donors who fund its activities.

The combination of these three trends create a potential 'perfect storm' which may weaken central organizations in the American Jewish community and erode the established mediators of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. These trends are also likely to create tensions in Israel, specifically around commemorations of the 50-year anniversary of Israeli presence in the West Bank, and Jewish sovereignty over holy sites. These events may create a significant threat to one of the central pillars of Israel's national security and the basic legitimacy for its existence: to be the national home for the entire Jewish People.

What does it mean for Israel to be the national home of the Jewish People?

Israel was founded to be the "nation state of the Jewish People." This was Herzl's central vision and the vision of Zionist leaders who followed him. For many decades, it seemed that this definition had clear and practical implications: Israel must be open for Aliya, redeem the land and settle it, and aspire to create a model society. Within this frame an arrangement was formed: The State of Israel served as the vessel for the Jewish People to realize its national historic mission, and in return, the Jewish People existed to serve the State of Israel and provide it with financial and political support. Throughout the years that followed, public discourse on the essential questions of Israel's role as the nation state of the Jewish People waned, and the historic arrangement between the Diaspora and the State of Israel was taken for granted.

However, there existed a competing approach, equally Zionist, which declared that **because the State of Israel was created to be the nation state of the Jewish People, it was obligated to serve the continued existence, security, and prosperity of the entire Jewish People, which included the existence of a vibrant Diaspora.** According to this approach, the State of Israel ought to take into consideration the needs of the Diaspora, in addition to the interests of the residents of the State of Israel. In other words, the connection between the State of Israel and the Diaspora should be understood, not only from a utilitarian perspective, which defines the Diaspora as a central pillar of Israel's national security, but also as an essential value that emerges from Israel's role as the nation state of the Jewish People.

The benefit of the first approach, which sees the Jewish Diaspora as a resource of the State of Israel, is simple: because the Diaspora must unconditionally support the State of Israel, it is unnecessary to



understand the specific needs of Jewish communities in the Diaspora or the trends that affect them. It is also unnecessary to include them within the Israeli decision-making process. In contrast, the second approach, which believes that the State of Israel ought to serve the needs of the Jewish People, obligates the Israeli government to acknowledge and appreciate in depth the developing trends affecting the Jewish People, and requires it to examine how the State of Israel influences the Jewish People on several levels:

Legally – What are the legal areas that affect the Diaspora? Are there issues that Israel should consult with Jewish communities in the Diaspora before legislating or creating government policy? Are there issues that the State of Israel should refrain from legislating due to the adverse effect they might have on Jewish communal life outside of Israel? For example, defining ‘Who is a Jew?’ under the Law of Return, the law that embodies the idea of Israel as the national home of the Jewish People; tax legislation that provides financial benefits upon immigration to Israel; or judicial action integrating Jewish Law into Israeli Law.

Religion – How does the administration of religion in Israel, including the Rabbinat, the status of rabbis, and the administration of holy sites, affect Jewish communities in the Diaspora and the nurturing of Jewish identity outside of Israel?

Political representation – Should there be structures of political representation for Diaspora Jews in the Knesset and the Israeli government? How should Jews outside of Israel take part in internal Israeli political dynamics?

Security – How should the security considerations of Diaspora Jewish communities be integrated into discussions of Israeli national security?

Education – How should the history of the Jewish People be taught? Specifically, how should the subject of the Diaspora be integrated into the Israeli education system? Does Israel have an obligation to support Hebrew language education in the Diaspora?

In Israeli foreign policy – How should Jewish communities in the Diaspora play a role in Israeli foreign policy? How can Israeli diplomats serve Jewish communities throughout the world? How should Israel deal with the fight against Delegitimization and the BDS Movement, when these subjects impact not just Israel, but also Jewish communities in the Diaspora?

These questions and others must be asked within Israeli society. Ignoring these questions weakens Israel’s status as the national home of the entire Jewish People. This document will seek to address many of them.

Gidi Grinstein, Founder and President; Netaly Ophir-Flint, CEO; and Avraham Infeld, Mentor



Executive Summary of the Challenge

In 2015, Israel suffered a significant political failure in its attempt to thwart American support for the Iran Deal. Throughout the public debate surrounding the Iran Deal, Israel tested the loyalty of its American Jewish supporters, by asking them to publicly oppose an initiative of the President of the United States, for the sake of Israeli interests. **This event exposed deep divisions within the American Jewish community,** and destabilized the delicate balance between the civic loyalties and political opinions of American Jews and their connection to Israel. While the Israeli side interpreted this failure as simply a tactical one, for American Jewry, this was a ground-breaking event that continues to echo in Jewish communal institutions.

This event also exposed a significant Israeli ‘blind-spot;’ the widening gap between Israel’s aspiration to be the ‘nation state of the Jewish People,’¹ and an emerging reality that continuously challenges this aspiration. Israelis believe that the State of Israel is an asset and source of strength for the entire Jewish People, and that Israel provides deep meaning and spiritual significance for every Jew, wherever they live. As such, the Jewish People will always uphold Israel’s right to exist and defend itself. However, Israel’s status as an asset is eroding. For many Jews in the Diaspora, Israel does not provide the meaning that it used to. For some, Israel has become a burden associated with serious political, social, and economic costs. The decline of Jewish identification with and support for the State of Israel, especially among young Diaspora Jews, is a primary example of this trend. **This trend has far-reaching implications for the security of the State of Israel, its character, and the future of the Jewish People.**

These developments are likely to weaken the Jewish People in the long-term. Instead of strengthening the resilience, prosperity, unity, and leadership of the Jewish People, the State of Israel will become a factor that deepens divisions within the Jewish People. As a result, **the State of Israel will have failed to achieve the purpose for which it was founded: to be the nation state of the entire Jewish People, and to ensure the Jewish People’s continued existence and prosperity.** This failure will undermine the basic justification of the existence of the State of Israel: to be the embodiment of the Jewish People’s right to national self-determination.

These developments will also weaken Jewish communities in the Diaspora. For many communities in the Diaspora, Israel serves as the central project of the Jewish People and the best anchor of communal institutions. Israel serves as a pillar of Jewish identity for many Jews in the Diaspora. As Israel gradually becomes a factor of division, communal institutions will find it harder to provide a broad-based foundation for Jewish communal life.

The answer to this challenge requires changes on the Israeli side of the Israel-Diaspora relationship. We must integrate ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches, leveraging both the Israeli government and Israeli civil society to answer the question: **What does it mean for us, in Israel, to be the nation state of the Jewish People in the 21st Century?** This document will introduce necessary changes in Israeli public consciousness, structures relating to the Israel-Diaspora relationship, and Israeli policy.

This subject has significant political and social implications for non-Jewish minorities in Israel. Therefore, the central challenge of the State of Israel is to define its character as the nation state of the Jewish People, in such a way that will also promote the full integration and equality of its non-Jewish minorities.²



Introduction

1. **This document seeks to highlight the growing gap between the role of the State of Israel – to be the nation state of the Jewish People – and an emerging reality where this role is in decline.** This document will examine the significance of this gap and propose actions to close it.
2. **Israel's role as the nation state of the Jewish People is one of the core aspects of 21st Century Zionism.**³ Zionism, as the Jewish movement to actualize Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel, is inherently linked to the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. However, for much of the Israeli public this subject is a 'blind-spot,' that currently lacks a conceptual understanding.
3. To reduce the increasing distance between the State of Israel and the Diaspora, changes must take place in both communities. However, the present document **will focus on the Israeli side of the challenge:** the ways that the Israel-Diaspora gap is formed, internalized, and experienced in Israel, and the responsibility of Israeli communities and leaders to act to reduce this gap. We believe that the wide array of Zionist leadership in Israel must ask itself **what it means for the State of Israel to be the nation state of the Jewish People. Leaders in Israel must understand that Israel plays a role in the creation of the problem, and therefore also plays a role in its solution. Within Israel, this solution requires changes in conceptual understanding, communal structure, and policy.**
4. The document is divided into four sections: First, we present historical background and current relevant trends; Second, we describe the prevailing Zionist-Israeli mindset used to interpret the relationship between the State of Israel and the Diaspora,⁴ and the changing reality which challenges this mindset; Third, we present the significance and implications of this gap for the State of Israel and the Jewish People. In the final section, we present a vision for the Israel-Diaspora relationship, including several ideas, policies, and actions that can shrink the gap between the two communities.

Historical Background

This section describes the historical background and emerging trends relevant to the current lack of conceptual understanding, within Israel, of Israel-Diaspora relations.

5. **The collapse of basic concepts relating to Israel-Diaspora relations has created a conceptual vacuum** – Throughout the last two decades, **the working assumptions that previously guided the traditional relationship between the State of Israel and the Diaspora have become irrelevant.** Classical Zionism was based on the 'negation of the Diaspora;' the belief that the Diaspora was only a temporary condition of Judaism, and that mass Aliya would bring this stage of Jewish history to a close. The relationship between Israel and the Diaspora was defined by shared principles, which included the paradigms of 'rich uncle – poor cousin' and 'blood for money.'⁵ Today, these paradigms no longer define the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora, and their collapse has created a conceptual vacuum.⁶ It is no longer clear which shared principles and goals define the relationship between the State of Israel and the Diaspora. Concurrently, the national ethos of 'Israeliness' is growing stronger, and Israel is gradually becoming the biggest Jewish population center in



the world.⁷ These developments weaken the definition of ‘Jewish identity,’ and may even replace it.

6. **1967 was the “Year of Zionization” for many Jewish communities in the Diaspora** – 1967 was the year that Zionism and connection to Israel became a central and meaningful aspect of Jewish identity and communal life outside of Israel.⁸ **However, this year was also the source of future points of conflict.** 1967 included questions of occupation and military rule over a civilian Palestinian population, together with the return of a nation to its ancestral homeland, and control over Jewish holy sites.
7. **Inherent tensions in Israel-Diaspora relations** – Since the creation of the State of Israel, tensions have existed between the centralized and sovereign State of Israel and the decentralized network of Jewish communities in the Diaspora, especially surrounding issues of representation and loyalty.⁹ Jewish communities outside of Israel rely upon local leadership and develop voluntarily. In contrast, the State of Israel, as a sovereign entity with formal authority, can legislate and institutionalize subjects at the core of Jewish life¹⁰ and exercise physical force. As a result, the State of Israel has a greater ability to dramatically affect the Jewish People, both in Israel and the Diaspora.¹¹
8. **In the past, these structural tensions were handled by strong ‘mediators’ who nurtured an effective relationship between Israel and the Diaspora**¹² – These ‘mediators’ included: shared institutions, such as the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund; strong communal leaders such as Chaim Weizmann and Rav Joseph Soloveitchik; shared values such as the importance of the Land of Israel; and above all – the need to maintain the physical survival of the Jewish People following the trauma of the Holocaust. However, in recent years **the strength of these traditional ‘mediators’ has declined, their representativeness is in doubt,¹³ and their ability to bridge structural tensions between the communities is steadily decreasing.**
9. **Israel: From weakness and need, to strength and economic stability** – For many years, the State of Israel was the shared project of the Jewish People. **For decades, the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora was defined by Israel’s weakness, its dependence on external assistance, and the Diaspora’s obligation to strengthen and defend the State of Israel.** In recent years, these positions have gradually switched. Today, Israel has established its military, political, and economic strength. This reversal reached its climax in the 2008 Financial Crisis, which demonstrated Israel’s economic resilience, especially in comparison to the challenges confronting large Jewish communities in the Western World. Therefore, **in contrast to the past, when the question that faced the Jewish People was: ‘How can the Diaspora serve the State of Israel?’ Today, the question is: ‘How can the State of Israel serve the Jewish People?’**
10. **The challenges of Diaspora Jewry are increasing** – while the State of Israel is becoming strong and prosperous, Jewish communities in the Diaspora are experiencing several challenges. Many Jewish communities are struggling with intermarriage, which in the United States has a rate of more than 50%. The Diaspora also struggles with assimilation. Many institutions find it difficult to attract young Jews to established Jewish communal frameworks, such as synagogues and federations.¹⁴

On certain levels, the Israeli government does understand that it has a significant responsibility towards Jewish communities in the Diaspora, not just to those suffering



existential threats,¹⁵ but also to those that are stable and successful. The Israeli government invests many resources in strengthening Jewish communities in the Diaspora and fighting anti-Semitism.¹⁶ However, **for Israeli society at large, the relationship with the Diaspora is not a matter of existential identity. This reality accelerates and deepens the disconnect between the two communities.**¹⁷

11. **The collapse of the Two-State Solution paradigm and the resulting political rift over Israel's character** – For the past three decades, Israel's image as a peace-seeking country has been inextricably linked to its commitment to peace negotiations, particularly with the Palestinian Authority. As the difficulty in achieving a Two-State Solution, or any other stable solution, continues, political rifts in Israel and in Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora grow wider. These political rifts frequently involve questions relating to the essential character of the State of Israel. **The political right appears to be growing closer to the State of Israel, while the political left grows more distant. In Israeli society and in Jewish communities in the Diaspora, this phenomenon is demonstrated by deep political divisions, which leave no place for indifference, and demand clear political stances. These developments signify the end of both bipartisan support and automatic Jewish support for Israel.**
12. **Distancing or attachment?** – The discourse within research and organizational circles surrounding the connection between Israel and Jewish communities throughout the world, and especially in the United States, mostly deals with the questions: “Is the Diaspora growing more distant or more attached to Israel?” “Is this a new phenomenon?” **The reality is that both distancing and increasing attachment are occurring at the same time.** The reasons for different definitions of this phenomenon emerge from diverse definitions of Judaism, Zionism, Jewish values, and the very definition of connection to Israel. Some interpret increasing criticism of Israel as distance, while others interpret this criticism as a new form of attachment. These different explanations also emerge from different collections and interpretations of data. We believe that today, it is possible to identify varying types of increasing attachment, both supportive and critical, in certain areas, and distancing in others. **This dynamic emerges from conflicts surrounding the character of the State of Israel, within and outside of Israel, which have grown stronger in the last decade.**

The Current Mindset in Israel: Israel is the National Home of the Jewish People

The current mindset, common among most Israelis, holds that the State of Israel still serves as the national home of the Jewish People. Most Israelis believe that:

13. **The State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry share a common destiny** – A strong and secure State of Israel means a strong and secure Jewish People. Therefore, Jews in the Diaspora must help and support the existence and security of the State of Israel.¹⁸
14. **The State of Israel is an asset to the Jewish People** – Israel provides the Jewish People with several advantages and strengths, which the Jewish People lacked for many generations:
 - a) **The State of Israel is a refuge for all Jews** – Israel provides an ‘insurance policy’ for all Jews, including those living in communities not facing current threats. Israel promises



that it will accept and protect any Jew.¹⁹ Because of the existence of the State of Israel, there will never be another Jewish refugee problem.²⁰

- b) **The State of Israel has political tools and soft power, which can protect and defend Jews in the Diaspora that are not able to defend themselves** – The State of Israel uses the tools of policy and diplomacy to protect individual Jews and Jewish communities throughout the world, when they are in danger.²¹
- c) **The State of Israel is a Jewish and democratic state, ‘the only democracy in the Middle East’** – The connection of Diaspora Jews to a liberal and democratic nation state strengthens the status of Jews throughout the world. Israeli democracy strengthens Jewish identity and demonstrates that civic democratic loyalty is congruent with Jewish values.²²

15. **The State of Israel provides meaning for the entire Jewish People.** Israel provides spiritual meaning and a feeling of deep purpose for all Jews:

- a) **The State of Israel is a place of full Jewish life** – Israel is the only Jewish State in the world, which enables a rich, free, and fully Jewish life experience, not only in private, but in the public sphere as well.²³ This includes characteristics such as: Saturday as the national day of rest, state-sponsored kashrut, management of holy sites, and others. These characteristics establish Israel as a place of deep religious significance for Jews throughout the world, even if they choose to live in the Diaspora.²⁴
- b) **The State of Israel is a source of pride and identity for Jews throughout the world** – Israel was established to be a model society, and the realization of the Jewish mission to be a ‘light unto the nations.’ Israel is the cultural and spiritual center of the Jewish People, which provides meaning to Jewish identity in the Diaspora, as well as a feeling of pride and a source of inspiration.²⁵
- c) **Zionism and Israel are sources of unity for the Jewish People** – The Land of Israel is the historic home of the Jewish People, where the Jewish People and its culture were formed, and where Zionism became a State, not just an idea. Even today, Zionism and Israel are sources of basic unity for the entire Jewish People, despite occasional internal disagreement.²⁶

16. **The Jewish People will always protect the State of Israel’s right to exist.** Because Israel is an asset to the Jewish People, Diaspora Jewry will defend the existence of the State of Israel.

- a) **Jews unite against threats to Jewish survival** – The State of Israel was established after the Holocaust, which demonstrated the great danger of being a nation without sovereignty or a state. Diaspora Jewry will always stand with the State of Israel against existential threats.²⁷
- b) **Jews will be the first to defend the State of Israel’s right to exist** – Today, the existence of the State of Israel provides Diaspora Jewry with security, which strengthens the Jewish People’s ability to prosper more than any time in its history. Therefore, Diaspora Jews will always be the first to defend the State of Israel and its existence, on the levels of diplomacy, security, economy, and politics.²⁸



The Changing Reality: Israel - A Divisive, Instead of Unifying, Force for the Jewish People

Emerging trends undermine the foundational assumptions described above, rendering them irrelevant. These trends exist in different combinations and to varying degrees among most Jewish communities throughout the world. Today, they are most evident among the young generation of American Jews.

17. **Today, the State of Israel and the Jewish People lack a shared inclusive struggle, where they can consistently work together** – In the past, the prosperity of the State of Israel and challenges facing Diaspora Jewish communities in distress constituted the shared projects of Israel and the Jewish People. However, with the end of the joint Israeli-Jewish struggle to free Soviet Jewry, there is no longer a clear challenge shared by the State of Israel and the Diaspora.²⁹
18. **For many Jews, the State of Israel's status as an asset has eroded. For some, the State of Israel has even become a burden with social, political, and economic costs** – The reasons for which Israel was an asset to the Jewish People in the past are no longer relevant in the same ways today. Israel, which in the past was an asset that fostered Jewish identity in the Diaspora, has instead become a burden for Jewish communities that complicates efforts to instill Jewish communal values and transmit them to the younger generation of Diaspora Jews.³⁰ Israel is no longer a unifying factor that inspires identity and pride. Instead, it is a sensitive topic that needs to be dealt with carefully, to avoid damage.³¹
 - a) **Most Jews are not seeking refuge, and refuge-Aliya is no longer relevant** – Today, most Diaspora Jews do not face existential threats. With the end of the large waves of immigration from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, most Jews no longer consider Israel to be a country of refuge.³² Additionally, because Israel faces more direct security threats than most other Western countries, Israel is no longer seen as a particularly safe refuge.³³
 - b) **Israel's soft power is being challenged, and the decline of Israel's image may even endanger Diaspora Jews** – Today Israel is seen as the 'Goliath' in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.³⁴ Israel's soft power is eroding, and Israel has failed to provide stable political and diplomatic support to both Jews and Israelis.³⁵ This development is demonstrated by anti-Semitic and anti-Israel riots targeting European Jews during times of conflict in Israel.³⁶ An additional example is the BDS Movement, which in practice causes more damage to the conditions of Jewish communities in the Diaspora and Jewish unity, than it does to the State of Israel.³⁷
19. **The basic values of the State of Israel, as a Jewish and democratic state, are being undermined in the eyes of Diaspora Jews:**
 - a) **Jewish: The Orthodox monopoly alienates many Diaspora Jews** – The lack of separation between religion and state and the concentration of state religious institutions under Orthodox control, alienates and distances Conservative, Reform, and even many Orthodox Diaspora Jews from Israel. The Jewish State does not respect, and even rejects, their Judaism and their faith.³⁸



While issues of religion and state are a site of conflict for internal Israeli politics, they also limit the ability of Judaism to serve as a broad shared foundation for Israel and the Diaspora: Internal Israeli approaches to conversion and religious pluralism leave many Diaspora Jews ‘outside the tent.’ The lack of separation between religion and state and the Orthodox monopoly over religious issues also contribute to an image of Israel as an illiberal state that does not value freedom of religion.³⁹ As a result, religious policy in Israel indirectly damages the unity of the Jewish People and contributes to the alienation of Diaspora Jews.⁴⁰

- b) **Democratic: Israel is perceived to be a state that does not meet the standards of a Western liberal democracy** – Israel’s responses to security challenges, its control over Palestinians in the West Bank, and its relationship with minority populations within Israel, lead to a great deal of international criticism. These frictions affect the relationship between Diaspora Jews and the State of Israel.⁴¹ For a growing number of Diaspora Jews, the State of Israel is not a source of pride, but rather a source of embarrassment and a legitimate object of criticism.⁴²
- c) **Continuous and ambiguous violent conflict creates moral dilemmas** – In the past, Israel’s wars were characterized by a clear enemy, a clear victor, and a defined end. In contrast, today, Israel’s security situation is defined by a series of low-level conflicts, which take place among civilian populations in Gaza and the West Bank. Within the context of this routine, every departure from the international standards of war, human rights, and the moral guidelines Israel has defined for itself, adds to the moral confusion that many Diaspora Jews experience regarding Israel. These perceived violations cause an erosion in Diaspora Jewish support for Israel in times of violent conflict.⁴³

As a result, many Diaspora Jews experience a contradiction between their Jewish-liberal values and their loyalty to Israel. Diaspora Jews, as members of a minority, generally consider liberal values, including equality and the rights of minorities, to be Jewish values.⁴⁴ Today, many Jews feel that these values are not represented by Israel’s policies. **When Israel is perceived to take steps that contradict Jewish and liberal values, Israel contributes to the erosion of Diaspora Jewish identification with Israel as a Jewish State.**⁴⁵ The gap in values is particularly felt by the young generation of Diaspora Jews, who feel that they are forced to choose between their personal Jewish-liberal values and support for the State of Israel.⁴⁶

- d) **Instead of being a source of unity for the Jewish People, the State of Israel has become a cause of division. At the same time, in some contexts, Zionism has become politically unacceptable** – In the past, Israel was an agreed basis for the development of Jewish identity in the Diaspora.⁴⁷ However, today, topics relating to Israel have become sources of tension within Jewish communities, and Israel has become a divisive factor, rather than a foundation for communal unity.⁴⁸ As a result, Jewish communal organizations in the Diaspora are engaging with Israel less, and the number of Diaspora Jews who identify as Zionist is gradually declining.⁴⁹

The factors that allowed Israel to be an asset to the entire Jewish People are in decline. This trend challenges the State of Israel’s ability to be the nation state of the Jewish People. In parallel, the following trends are also apparent:



20. **In response to the decline of Diaspora Jewish support for Israel, both in quantity and quality, Israel is searching for alternative allies to replace the Jewish communities who provided unconditional support in the past.**
- a) **The end of bipartisan support** – In the past, support for Israel was a non-partisan issue in many countries. Today, support for Israel has become a political issue associated with specific political parties and movements, generally those that are more conservative.⁵⁰ This trend is likely to further challenge Diaspora Jewish support for Israel, especially among Jews who do not associate themselves with conservative political parties in their countries.
 - b) **Jews no longer automatically support Israel** – For decades, Israel enjoyed unconditional support from large Jewish communities in the Diaspora. However, this is no longer the case, especially among the young generation of Diaspora Jews. Today, Diaspora Jews no longer support Israel unconditionally nor with the same strength that they did in the past. In the United States, the ‘era of unconditional support for Israel’ has ended, and the pro-Israel consensus that previously united American Jewish communities has eroded. Israel has become a site of political division that threatens communal unity. Today, Jews do not hesitate to criticize Israel and its policies in the public sphere.⁵¹
 - c) **The loss of the ‘Jewish inner circle’ in the struggle against the delegitimization of Israel** – One of the more extreme examples of the decline in Diaspora Jewish support for Israel is the fact that the campaign to delegitimize Israel is led, in part, by Diaspora Jews.⁵² A more common phenomenon is the frustration many Diaspora Jews feel in response to being ‘forced’ to serve as ‘ambassadors’ of Israel and Israeli policy.⁵³
 - d) **The State of Israel, which is aware of the declining support of its natural allies, seeks alternative partners** – The State of Israel is actively searching for new allies who will provide it with consistent and unconditional support. As a result, in recent years the State of Israel has strengthened its partnerships and connections with Orthodox Jewish communities⁵⁴ and Evangelical Christian communities.⁵⁵ Because these communities typically support the Republican Party in the United States, this development also contributes to the decline in bipartisan support for Israel.

Significance and Implications

There is a conceptual gap in Israeli society regarding Israel-Diaspora relations. Today, Diaspora Jewish communities no longer provide Israel with unconditional support. For many communities, Israel is the subject of disagreement, questions, and misgivings. The current Israeli mindset, based on Classical Zionist principles and the negation of the Diaspora, is not prepared to deal with the evolving status of Zionism and the State of Israel within Diaspora Jewish communities. Israel is not sufficiently prepared to safeguard its mission to be the nation state of the entire Jewish People.

If this Israeli mindset does not change, the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry are likely to continue to drift apart, and even separate completely. The first elements of this trend are already evident today. In the Diaspora, Israel contributes to tension and division within Jewish communities, and Jewish communal institutions have become battlegrounds for conflicts over Israeli policy and Israel’s character.⁵⁶ The Israeli government, which senses these changes in the



relationship between Israel and the Diaspora, is focusing its efforts on finding alternatives to Diaspora Jewish support. Israel is deepening its ties with more conservative actors, including Evangelical Christian communities.⁵⁷

Therefore, if there is no change in the Israeli mindset:

21. **The Jewish People will be damaged in the long term** – The State of Israel was created to serve the Jewish People, to strengthen its resilience, prosperity, unity, and leadership. However, today, Israel drives division within many Jewish communities. **The danger to the Jewish People is that this dynamic will damage the elements of identity that are shared by all Jews, so much so, that two separate communities will be created, each built on the negation of the other.** The strengthening of a specifically Israeli identity, which is built in part on the negation of the Diaspora, will create a negative response from the network of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. These communities will be compelled to construct their identities independent of Israel, and with a greater emphasis on the values and identities that differentiate them from the State of Israel. This gradual opposition, or ‘negation of the other,’ is likely to damage the very foundation of the Jewish People, which is characterized by the cultivation of both shared values and diversity; a foundation that has allowed the Jewish People to survive for thousands of years.
22. **The State of Israel’s justification for its existence will continue to erode** – The basic legitimacy of the State of Israel's existence stems from its role as a national home for the Jewish People. When the State of Israel is perceived to be disconnected from large sections of the Jewish People, **Israel no longer fulfills its role as the nation state of the Jewish People. This development undermines Israel’s justification for its existence, and is likely to strengthen the arguments of those seeking to delegitimize the State of Israel and deny its right to exist.**
23. **The ‘Big Tent’ of Zionism will continue to shrink** – Zionism is struggling with complex challenges from within and without. These challenges include: the rift between the State of Israel and Diaspora Jewry; the rise of ‘**Defensive Zionism**’; and the contradictory yet complimentary tension between the Jewish and democratic characteristics of the State of Israel. **The growing gap between Israel and the Diaspora will separate Israel from the various Jewish and democratic influences that emerge from Jewish communities in the Diaspora. This gap will further strengthen the isolationist aspects of Zionism as an Israeli-Nationalist movement, and erode the wide foundation that Zionism can provide for the Jewish People.**⁵⁸

Outside Israel, ‘Zionism’ has become a ‘dirty word’ that provokes argument and conflict, rather than a word that signifies shared values and a broad communal tent. **This development is also likely to occur in Israel.** In Israel today, Zionism remains a widely-shared value. However, as **Zionism is increasingly used to describe controversial political directions, and in argumentative political discourse, Zionism’s ability to signify a broad values-based vision shared by most of Israeli society will be diminished.**
24. **Israel’s international standing will be damaged** – The relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jews has many significant advantages. The decline of this relationship is likely to have two key outcomes: **First, a weaker relationship with the Diaspora would mean the loss of a potential support network in the event of security or economic emergencies.**⁵⁹



Second, a decline in the widespread support of American Jews, is likely to weaken the relationship between the United States and Israel. The United States is a global power, and the American Jewish community has a significant amount of influence in its decision-making processes. If American Jewish support for Israel declines, it is likely to negatively affect American policy towards Israel.⁶⁰

25. **Jewish communities in the Diaspora will be weakened** – For many years, the State of Israel served as a source of unity for Jewish identity in the Diaspora. Although in most Diaspora communities, Israel is still a significant factor in the development of Jewish identity, some Diaspora Jews increasingly find Israel to be a burden on the development of Jewish identity.⁶¹ This development challenges traditional Jewish communal institutions, erodes the Jewish mainstream, and exacerbates political radicalization within Jewish communities in the Diaspora. These trends further weaken Jewish communities in the Diaspora.⁶²

The Vision for the Future:

A State of Israel That Serves the Resilience and Prosperity of the Entire Jewish People

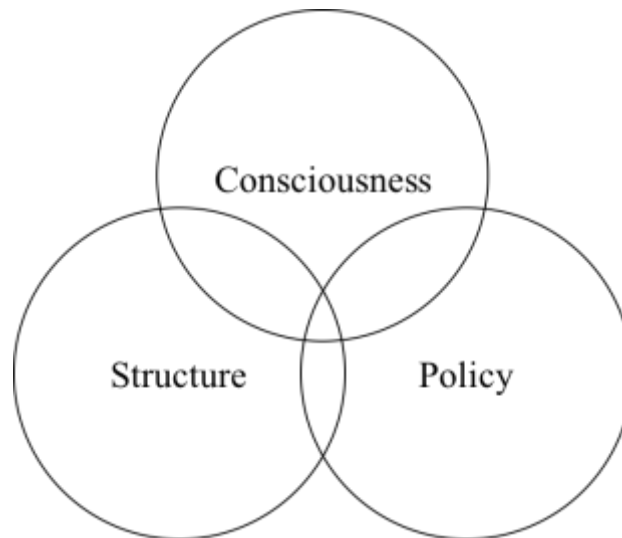
26. Today, the State of Israel is firmly established, and a shared “covenant of fate”⁶³ no longer serves as a reliable foundation for stable relationships within the Jewish People. As a result, the State of Israel must create a new understanding of its role as the nation state of the entire Jewish People. This future understanding should be tied to the following mission:

The State of Israel will aim to be the nation state of the Jewish People, by ensuring the resilience and prosperity of the entire Jewish People. The State of Israel and Israeli society will recognize and respect the unbreakable bond between Israel and the Diaspora. The State of Israel will work to strengthen both the position of Jewish communities in the Diaspora and its relationship with them. Israel will be a central source of meaning for the entire Jewish People, by developing a deep Jewish consciousness and a Jewish mission, which draws upon Jewish history, the diversity of Jewish communities, Biblical sources and the Land of Israel, and its existence as a Jewish and democratic state. As a result, the State of Israel will be a source of strength, and an asset to the entire Jewish People.



The Response

27. The next section will focus on **the required changes on the Israeli side of the Israel-Diaspora relationship. This section proposes three general areas of change that are necessary to ensure that the State of Israel renews its mission to be the national home of the Jewish People, and works to preserve the resilience and prosperity of the entire Jewish People.**



Change in Consciousness

28. This change will harness a broad range of relevant people and organizations in Israel, who are committed to preserving the unity of the Jewish People in the long-term, to create a “base of consciousness.”
- The State of Israel should aspire to develop a widespread consciousness among Israeli Jews, which emphasizes the basic assumption that the State of Israel is the nation state of the entire Jewish People – The State of Israel should reinvigorate Israeli consciousness, and create a collective Jewish consciousness shared by members of the Jewish People both in Israel and in the Diaspora. Consciousness-raising organizations in Israel can play a central role in this change.**⁶⁴ These organizations include formal and informal educational institutions, based both in Israel and in the Diaspora. **This change requires a deep clarification of the value the State of Israel provides to Diaspora Jews.**
 - Moreover, **Israeli society should ask itself what it can learn from the richness, diversity, history, and culture of Diaspora Jewry, and what it can do to actively connect with Jewish communities throughout the world.**

Structural Changes

29. A structural tension exists between the State of Israel and the organization of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. This tension emerges from the inherent lack of alignment between the hierarchical structure of a centralized state and its institutions, and a collection of volunteer-based communities, managed by local leaders. **In the past, the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora was managed by strong mediators and dominant institutions.** These mediators included figures such as Chaim Weizmann and Rav



Soloveitchik, and organizations like Jewish Federations, the Jewish Agency, and other Israeli government institutions. However, **today, the representativeness and influence of these mediators has eroded. As a result, their ability to manage the relationship and its structural tensions has declined.** Additionally, in today's global and 'flat' world, this relationship requires a **new, more resilient, and decentralized structural model, to support the continuation of the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora.** This model will provide a broader basis for a variety of partnerships between Israeli society and Diaspora Jews.⁶⁵ Because the ability of traditional mediators to serve as a bridge between Israel and the Diaspora has declined, an updated structure is required to preserve the unity of the Jewish People.

- a) **Updating the traditional mediators** – The organizations and institutions that in the past managed the relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jewry, such as the Federations, the Jewish Agency, KKL-JNF, and others, must be modernized and updated in accordance with these developments, in order to remain relevant to the changing realities in Israel and the Diaspora.⁶⁶
- b) **Highlighting 'new mediators' to serve as a 'living bridge'** – At a time when the representativeness and abilities of traditional mediators are declining, the significance of 'new mediators' is on the rise. These 'new mediators' have a unique leadership role in confronting this challenge. **The 'new mediators are people, who because of their identities, can serve as a living bridge between Jewish communities throughout the world and Israel. The most significant tool they have is the power of personal encounters and relationships,** especially those that are long-lasting and not impeded by distance. These groups include: **Jewish immigrants to Israel, the Israeli Diaspora,⁶⁷ and continuation programs for Israeli emissaries.⁶⁸** These groups share a large untapped potential to deal with the gap between Israel and the Diaspora.
- c) **Jewish Kin-Civil Society** – **This new organizational structure focuses on Israeli civil society. The State of Israel must aspire to maintain kin-state relationships with Diaspora Jews, based on an active and connected Jewish civil society.** A Kin-State is a state that citizens of other countries relate to as if it was their homeland, ethno-geographic place of origin, or a state that has great significance to their culture and identity, even though they themselves do not live there or have formal citizenship.⁶⁹ In this frame, Jewish Kin-Civil Society means that Israel must shift its self-conception to understand that Israeli civil society extends beyond the residents of the State of Israel. It also includes Diaspora communities who, although they do not live in Israel, feel connected to Israel as their Kin-State.⁷⁰

Changes in Policy

30. **Recognition that certain policies widen the gap between Israel and the Diaspora** – Most Israelis perceive certain issues to be areas of internal domestic policy. Israeli society must understand that these policies contribute to the growing distance between Israel and the Diaspora.⁷¹ Three areas that require a 'wider lens'⁷²:
 - a) **The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israel's commitment to peace** – In the past, Israel was perceived as a peace-seeking state that was dragged, against its will, into wars with Arab States and the Palestinians. This image of Israel as a peace-seeking state created a perception of Israel as a David that preserved its moral superiority, while facing a Goliath



that sought to destroy it. In contrast, today, the image of Israel as an occupying and aggressive power that disproportionately responds to small-scale attacks, embarrasses many Jews in the Diaspora, and distances them from the State of Israel. This phenomenon emerges from several sources, including the high standards demanded of Israel as a western liberal democracy, the discomfort felt by Diaspora Jews toward the use of violent force, the moral complexities involved in violent conflict, and especially the control over a large civilian population in the West Bank that does not hold Israeli citizenship. Many Diaspora Jews perceive Israel as straying from the peace-seeking path, and interpret this as a moral sin and a preservation of injustice.⁷³

- b) **The State of Israel's relationship with Israeli-Arabs and other minorities** – The Jewish memory of being a persecuted minority, together with the Biblical commandments to “remember that you were slaves in Egypt” and “love your neighbor,” are significant pillars of Jewish identity. Therefore, one of the key questions facing Israel today, both in the eyes of the Western world, and in the eyes of many Diaspora Jews, is how the same group which suffered persecution, hate crimes, and anti-Semitism as a minority, treats other minorities, now that it has gained sovereignty in its own country.
 - c) **The status of religion in Israel** – The lack of separation between religion and state in Israel, exclusive Orthodox control of state religious institutions, and a lack of recognition of non-Orthodox Judaism, prevents many Diaspora Jews from feeling a sense of belonging to Israel. For the State of Israel to be able to fully define itself as the nation state of the entire Jewish People, it must recognize the variety of denominations that make up the Jewish People.
31. **Acceptance of criticism that comes from a feeling of belonging and responsibility** – In the context of these policy issues, which widening the distance between Israel and the Diaspora, it must be noted that criticism of Israel does not necessarily signify distance from Israel, or that critics are ‘anti-Israel.’ In the past, Jewish communities related to Israel in two ways: Indifference or strong support. Today, however, it is important to recognize a third way of relating to Israel; a desire to influence the character of the State of Israel in a variety of ways, including through criticism. This third way is increasingly common among the young generation of Diaspora Jews. For the most part, this criticism emerges from a feeling of personal connection and responsibility towards the Jewish State. Israeli society must engage, internalize, and work with this criticism, and not label this third method of engagement as ‘anti-Israel.’⁷⁴
32. Additionally, there are several policy areas that have complex dynamics that relate to the relationship between the State of Israel and the Jewish People. **These areas also include a hidden potential for positive action on the Israeli side:**
- a) **Limiting government intervention on core issues of Jewish Peoplehood** – For thousands of years, the Jewish People depended on a flexible and decentralized structure of decision-making, based on the communal level. The State of Israel, which has the power to legislate and define the character of the Jewish People, is endangering this flexibility, which in the past preserved the unity of the Jewish People. Therefore, **it must be understood that there are areas relating to the essential core of the Jewish People, where Israeli legislation endangers the very fabric of Jewish communities.** Limiting government intervention in these fields includes modifying existing legislation and



limiting possibilities for future legislation, based on the understanding that the State of Israel has responsibility for Jews who live outside of Israel as well. These areas include: issues of ‘Who is a Jew?’ (conversion status), halachic decision-making (the status of the Rabbinate in Israel, the use of Mikvehs), and the administration of holy sites (the Kotel Compromise). Historically, these issues were decided by religious authorities from various communities in a decentralized manner. **Today, the State of Israel is damaging the Jewish People’s natural resilience and its natural ability to develop and adapt, by determining these issues in a centralized manner.**

- b) **The question of representation** – There are many models of Diaspora political involvement. These include Diaspora participation in the elections of heads of state, representative members of parliament, and others. Israel should weigh the possibility of allowing a higher level of representation for Diaspora Jews in Israel, in a way that strengthens the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora,⁷⁵ while preserving Israel’s democracy and the status of its minorities.⁷⁶
- c) **Including Jewish Peoplehood in Israeli decision-making processes** – The State of Israel must seriously consider the ways its actions influence Jewish life in the Diaspora. Formally and consistently anchoring Diaspora Jewry as a core issue in Israeli decision-making, will help Israel fulfill its original mission to be the nation state of the Jewish People.⁷⁷
- d) **Rethinking the allocation of resources** – The State of Israel views the erosion of Jewish identity in the Diaspora as a challenge it seeks to solve. **The insight that the State of Israel can serve the Jewish People today, as the Jewish People served the State of Israel in the past** is an important insight which needs to be broadened and deepened into other fields.

“If a land is destroyed, but its people are still full of life and strength – they will rise to her. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah and the people will return and build it again; but if a people is destroyed, who will rise up for them, and where will help come from?” (Ahad Ha’am).⁷⁸



End Notes

- ¹ For more on the complex nature of the definition of the State of Israel as the ‘Nation State of the Jewish People,’ and the significance of the subject, see: Gavison, R. “Conditions for Israel’s Prosperity: Without a Vision, a Nation Gets Lost – A Super-Purpose for Israel, and its Consequences. (Hebrew)” ([Samuel Neaman Institute](#), 2006). p. 40.
- ² **The Reut Institute** will address this topic in depth in a future version of this document.
- ³ The **Reut Institute** defines 21st Century Zionism as a vision of a prosperous and secure State of Israel, in the Land of Israel, which functions as a center for the entire Jewish World, actively integrates its Jewish character with democratic values, and is a leader among the nations.
- ⁴ This document deals with Diaspora Jewry as a whole. However, in many cases, Jewish communities in the United States, and especially the younger generation of American Jews serve as the most tangible or dramatic example of the impact of the trends we describe.
- ⁵ See: “A New Covenant between Israel and the Jewish World: Nationalism to Peoplehood, Classical Zionism to New Zionism.” ([Reut Institute](#), November 2009). p. 2.
- ⁶ For more on the collapse of the ‘Old Covenant’ between the State of Israel and the Diaspora, see: “A New Covenant.”
- ⁷ When the State of Israel was founded, the proportion of Jews in Israel to Jews in the United States was 1:9. Today, the proportion between the two communities is 1:1. See: Kramer, M. “Unspoken Reasons for the American Jewish Distancing from Israel.” ([Mosaic](#), 04/14/2016).
- ⁸ For French Jews and Jews in the USSR, Zionism was not a significant aspect of their Jewish identity before 1967. See: Wasserstein, B. *Vanishing Diaspora*. (**Harvard University Press**, 1997). pp. 82, 86.
For more on this topic, see: Pinkas, A. “The Watershed Year 1967 and the Emergence of the ‘Special Relationship.’” In “Israel – a Unifying or a Divisive Issue Among American Jews?” ([University of Haifa and Ruderman Family Foundation](#), January 2017). p. 17.
- ⁹ The 1950 Blaustein-Ben-Gurion Agreement demonstrates one attempt to resolve this inherent tension. In the agreement, Ben-Gurion declares that American Jews are full citizens of the United States, and that they have only one political loyalty, to the United States. Concurrently, Blaustein declares that the United States was not “exile,” but rather a “Diaspora,” and clarified that the State of Israel did not formally represent Diaspora Jews to the rest of the world. See: “Statements by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and Mr. Jacob Blaustein on the Relationship Between Israel and American Jews.” (*In Vigilant Brotherhood*, [American Jewish Committee](#), 1961). pp. 64-69.
- ¹⁰ For example, if in the past, the question “Who is a Jew?” was a question for religious leaders in dispersed communities, with the creation of the State of Israel, this question became intertwined with various rights and privileges in the State of Israel, including citizenship, and the right to marry a Jew. See: Borschel-Dan, A. “What Happens When Two Jews Means Two Different Peoplehoods?” ([Times of Israel](#), 03/14/2016).
- ¹¹ For example, legislative, military, and police power. The use of sovereign authority and force to intervene on ‘Jewish issues’ is unprecedented in modern Jewish history.
- ¹² An example of the relationship between “mediators” is the 1950 Blaustein-Ben-Gurion Agreement, mentioned above. This agreement is a foundational document in Israel-Diaspora relations. In the agreement, Ben-Gurion recognizes that the “negation of the Diaspora” does not apply to American Jewry, and Blaustein formally declares his support and the support of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) for the State of Israel. See: [“Statements by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion...”](#)
- ¹³ See: Sasson, T. *The New American Zionism* (**NYU Press**, 2013). Sasson claims that the decline in representativeness of American Jewish communal institutions is evident in the greater support for organizations that have specific goals, instead of organizations that represent a widespread communal consensus.
The decline in representativeness of American Jewish communal institutions was the subject of the December 2015 General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America. See: Sichel, J. “At Federation’s General Assembly, Grappling with Less Authority and More Division.” ([Jewish Journal](#), 11/10/2015).
This decline was also evident in attempts to prevent the Iran Deal. See: Gitlin and Cohen, “On the Iran Deal, American Jewish ‘Leaders’ Don’t Speak for Most Jews.” ([The Washington Post](#), 08/14/2015).



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- ¹⁴ Additionally, Jewish identity in America has transitioned from an identity connected to community, ethnicity, and political belief, to one that is private, individual, and religious. See: Cohen and Kelman, “Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel.” ([The Jewish Identity Project](#), 2007). p. 3.
- ¹⁵ For example, in July 2016, the Israeli government declared the “Week to Strengthen the Bond with Diaspora Jewry,” which sought to strengthen the connection and mutual responsibility between the State of Israel and the Jewish People, in the face of many complex challenges. See: Klein, Z. “The Ministers Approved: Week to Strengthen the Bond with Diaspora Jewry (Hebrew).” ([NRG](#), 07/10/2016).
- ¹⁶ This investment is described in the following articles: Sheleg, Y. “No Longer Dependent on You: Israel on the Rise, Diaspora on the Decline (Hebrew).” ([NRG](#), 06/04/2013); Kahane, A. “The Israeli Government is Worried: The Jewish People are in Danger (Hebrew).” ([NRG](#), 02/10/2013).
- ¹⁷ See: Roth-Toledano and Sheffer, *Who Leads? Israeli-Jewish Diaspora Relations* (Hebrew). ([Van Leer Institute / HaKibutz HaMeuhad Press](#), 2006). pp. 55-58.
- ¹⁸ A 2016 **Pew Research Center** survey demonstrated that 75% of Israeli Jews believe that Jews in Israel and the Diaspora have a shared destiny. See: “Israel’s Religiously Divided Society.” ([Pew Research Center](#), 03/08/2016).
- Additionally, “At the beginning of the 1990’s, close to ¾ of Israelis believed that Israeli Jews and Diaspora Jews shared a similar destiny. 68% of respondents agreed with the assumption that Israel would not continue to exist without close relationships with Diaspora Jews, and most Israelis (77%) adopted the parallel idea, that Diaspora Jews would not continue to exist without Israel.” See: “On the Centrality of the State of Israel to the Jewish People (Hebrew).” In Roth-Toledano and Sheffer, p. 57.
- ¹⁹ A survey conducted by the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs found that 87% of Israelis agree that Diaspora Jewry is indebted to Israel because Israel serves as a safe refuge for all Jews in the case of danger. See: Tzezna, S. “Survey: 79% of the Public Sees Israel as Responsible for the Security of the Jews of the World.” ([Israel Havom](#), 08/10/2016).
- ²⁰ The centrality of refuge Aliya is demonstrated by PM Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech in January 2015, at the Great Synagogue of Paris. Netanyahu called upon French Jews suffering from anti-Semitism to immigrate to Israel: “Jews in our time are blessed with the right to join their Jewish brothers in their historic homeland, the Land of Israel.” (5:00). See: Peled, S. “Exodus from France: Rise in Terror Emphasizes the Identity Crisis of French Jews (Hebrew).” ([Nana10](#), 07/11/2016).
- ²¹ For example, the [Israeli Criminal Code \(Hebrew\)](#) includes a section that allows the State of Israel to try in court anyone who attacks a Jew for being a Jew, even if the crime was not committed in Israel, and even if the defendant is not an Israeli citizen.
- Additionally, a Jewish Agency survey conducted for the Knesset Caucus to Strengthen the Jewish World, found that 91% of Israelis think that the State of Israel should defend Jewish communities throughout the world when they are in danger. See: “91% of the Public Thinks that Israel Must Help Jewish Communities Outside of Israel in Cases of Anti-Semitism (Hebrew).” ([The Jewish Agency-News](#), 03/20/2012).
- Similarly, according to a survey conducted by the World Jewish Congress in October 2001, 86% of respondents said that Israel is obligated to help Jews in danger, wherever they may be. See: Roth-Toledano and Sheffer, p. 57.
- For more on this topic, see: Klein-Halevi, Y. “Ben-Gurion’s Mistake (Hebrew).” ([Darsheni](#), Summer 2011).
- ²² Prof. Ruth Gavison adds that Israel is “democratic and liberal, not just because of desired ideals, but also because the unique composition of its population, its history, and its unique purpose, require it to have this character.” See: Gavison, R. “The Jewish State: A Principled Justification and its Desired Character (Hebrew).” ([Tchelet](#), Fall 2002).
- ²³ Prof. Ruth Gavison deals with the Jewish character of the state and argues that the public culture of the state is Hebrew-Jewish (the language is Hebrew, the day of rest is Shabbat, etc.). See: Gavison, [“The Jewish State.”](#)
- ²⁴ Accordingly, 82% of Israeli respondents agreed with the statement that every Jew, including Reform and Conservative Jews, should feel that the Kotel belongs to them, and every Jew should feel welcomed in Israel. See: Klein, Z. “82% Want Reform Jews to Feel Comfortable at the Kotel (Hebrew).” ([NRG](#), 11/26/2015).



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- ²⁵ For example, in his Rosh Hashana Greeting to Diaspora Jews in 2014, PM Benjamin Netanyahu states that the State of Israel is and will continue to be a source of pride and strength for Jews throughout the world. See: “PM Netanyahu’s Rosh Hashana Greeting.” ([YouTube-IsraeliPM](#), 09/22/2014).
- ²⁶ Naftali Bennet, Minister of Education and Diaspora Affairs, claims that the Israeli Declaration of Independence represents the story of the entire Jewish People. See: Bennet, N. “Rogel, You Undermine Our Existence (Hebrew).” ([Haaretz](#), 07/10/2016).
- ²⁷ For example, see: “American Jewry Continues to Express Strong Support for Israel (Hebrew).” ([PressPectiva](#), 06/05/2014).
- ²⁸ In a survey conducted for the World Jewish Congress, in October 2001, “76% of respondents said that they see Diaspora Jews as loyal allies of Israel.” See: Roth-Toledano and Sheffer, p. 57.
- ²⁹ See: Sarna, J. “The Economic Downturn and the Future of Jewish Communities.” ([Institute for Jewish Policy Research](#), September 2009). p. 7.
- ³⁰ There is a growing tendency to see connections to Israel as causes of discomfort in personal and communal life. See: Rosner and Herzog, “Jewish Values and Israel’s Use of Force in Armed Conflict- Perspectives from World Jewry (Hebrew).” ([Jewish People Policy Institute](#), 2015). p. 16.
See also: “The Chief Rabbi of Mexico: When Netanyahu Tweeted, Anti-Semitism Started (Hebrew).” ([Globes](#), 01/30/2017).
- ³¹ This sensitivity is most apparent among young liberal American Jews. However, other Jewish communities throughout the world experience similar dynamics. For example, in Europe, the decline of Jewish institutions and internal communal disagreements (including those about Israel), were included as two of the top three biggest threats facing Jewish communities in Europe, alongside anti-Semitism. These communal disagreements surrounding Israel are more common today in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. See: Kosmin, B. “Findings from the Third Survey of European Jewish Leaders.” ([JDC’s International Centre for Community Development](#), 02/28/2016). p. 7.
- ³² At the same time, other reasons for Aliya are increasing, including Aliya for higher standards of living, values, or religiously motivated Aliya. Prof. Bar-Yosef argues that “those making Aliya are primarily Haredim and the Modern Orthodox...” See: Avraham, Z. “In Spite of it All: Who are the People Who are Still Choosing to Make Aliya? (Hebrew).” ([mako](#), 07/27/2016).
- ³³ Naftali Bennet, Minister of Education and Diaspora Affairs, has made a similar point. See: Golan, A. “If Zionism is a Refuge, there are Safer Places (Hebrew).” ([NRG](#), 02/09/2016).
- ³⁴ For more on this topic, see: Muravchik, J. *Making David into Goliath: How the World Turned Against Israel*. ([Encounter Books](#), 2014).
- ³⁵ The Economist determined that the State of Israel is losing its soft power and its friends on the international stage, a trend which ties Israel’s hands and limits its ability to act to defend Jews in Israel and throughout the world. See: “The Economist: Israel is Losing its Friends (Hebrew).” ([Ynet](#), 05/24/2015).
- ³⁶ 62% of Jews in Western Europe believe that the policies of the State of Israel have a direct impact on anti-Semitism around them. See: Kosmin, p. 26.
Research conducted by the **ADL** also shows an increase in anti-Semitic incidents during Operation Protective Edge in Summer 2014. See: “Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents.” ([ADL](#), 2015).
Additionally, many Jews believe that this trend endangers Diaspora Jews, who see themselves as ‘Israel’s Homefront.’ See: Farkash, T. “Rocket Shrapnel on Diaspora Jews: ‘We Feel Close to a Pogrom (Hebrew).’” ([Ynet](#), 07/14/2014).
- ³⁷ Eran Shayshon, CEO of the **Reut Group**, discusses this in the following article: Shayshon, E. “To Help Israel, Jews Must Broaden the Tent.” ([JTA](#), 08/14/2011).
- ³⁸ “There is a dissatisfaction among Jews, in particular those in North America, but not only, caused by religion and state relations in the State of Israel.” See: Fisher, S. “Annual Assessment: The Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People 2014-2015 (Hebrew).” ([Jewish People Policy Institute](#), 2015). p. 121.
Within the context of the cancellation of Rabbi Lookstein’s conversions in Summer 2016, an article was written dealing with the centralized ability of the State of Israel to affect questions of “Who is a Jew?” The article argued that this ability should worry all Jews, including Orthodox Jews in the Diaspora, and not just Progressive
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Jews. See: Mandel, B. “After Orthodox-Only Mikveh Law, Time to Rein in the Israeli Rabbinate.” ([The Forward](#), 07/29/2016).

- ³⁹ For example, Rabbi Rick Jacobs, President of the **Union for Reform Judaism**, argues that the way the State of Israel deals with Women of the Wall causes many Jews to believe that “Something has gone wrong with our Zionist vision.” (10:00). See: Rosner, Y. “Fighting Wall: American Jews Protest Following Arrests of Women of the Wall (Hebrew).” ([Nana10](#), 06/05/2016).
- ⁴⁰ For example, Rabbi Haskel Lookstein protests the Israeli Rabbinate’s decision to cancel the Orthodox conversions he performed in the United States: “For the first time, perhaps since the writing of the Talmud, the rabbinate in one state does not respect the work of the rabbinate in another state. This is the aleph-bet of Judaism, and it appears to be a systemic problem.” See: Klein, Z. “Who is a Convert? (Hebrew).” ([Makor Rishon](#), 07/27/2016).
Additionally, PM Netanyahu received a letter from six senior representatives of the Conservative and Reform Movements that expressed deep disappointment at the lack of implementation of the Kotel Compromise, and the continued validity of the present Mikveh Law, which discriminates against Progressive Jews, who make up most of World Jewry. See: Shamir, S. “Rabbis in the US and Israel are Worried by the Racism Against Them: ‘Not Just Religious’ (Hebrew).” ([Maariv](#), 07/28/2016).
- ⁴¹ Israeli policy in a variety of areas causes “tension between loyalty to liberal values and love of Israel,” and contributes to “the potential distancing of young liberal Jews, who express revulsion and disgust towards Israel’s policies.” See: Fisher, pp. 61, 166.
- ⁴² Michael N. Barnett argues that American Jews are less connected to Israel, less proud of Israel, and even embarrassed at the way Israel behaves. See: Barnett, M. *The Star and the Stripes*. (Princeton University Press, 2016). p. 258.
- ⁴³ Israel is perceived as an aggressive state, especially among the younger generation of Jews who were born in the 1970’s and onward, who did not experience wars considered to be more ‘acceptable,’ including the Six Day War. Instead, their perception of Israel is influenced by wars and conflicts ‘of choice,’ that lack clear definitions and outcomes. See: Cohen and Kelman, p. 3.
There is a clear correlation between trust of Israel and support for Israeli actions in armed conflict. “As trust in Israel declines, the feeling that the IDF operates morally or for moral reasons also declines.” See: Rosner and Herzog, pp.10, 30.
- ⁴⁴ Non-Orthodox American Jews developed an ethos of Jewish values based on liberal ideals of inclusion and social activism. A 2016 **Pew Research Center** survey demonstrates that American Jews tend to see personal and social values as necessary to their Jewish identities. See: Borschel-Dan, A. “What Happens When Two Jews Means Two Different Peoplehoods?”
- ⁴⁵ In a panel of experts convened by the **Jewish People Policy Institute**, most of the participants reported that Israeli legislation emphasizing or preferring the Jewish character of the state over its democratic character negatively affects Jewish identity in the Diaspora, because it strengthens the narrative that claims that Israel is not a democracy. See: Fisher, p. 26.
- ⁴⁶ This values discourse is demonstrated in the increase in Jewish activism directed against Israel and establishment Jewish institutions in the name of Jewish values. This increase is led in part by [Tikkun Magazine](#) and organizations like [If Not Now](#). Additionally, support for this argument can be found in: Beinart, P. “The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment.” ([The New York Review of Books](#), 06/10/2010).
- ⁴⁷ For example, Jay Sanderson, President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, told Haaretz: “In my generation, Israel may have been the first driver of Jewish identity, but it’s not going to be any more in the same way. Israel’s too complicated...[it] used to be, [you] learn about Israel first, and then through Israel, find out about your Jewish self.” See: Maltz, J. “Israel Should Back Off anti-BDS Fight on U.S. Campuses, Jewish Leader Says.” ([Haaretz](#), 03/14/2016).
- ⁴⁸ Discourse on Israel immediately becomes harsh disagreement in Jewish communities, and many Diaspora Jews prefer to avoid participating in these tense discussions. See: Rosner and Herzog, p. 11.
Additionally, Yehuda Kurtzer, President of the **Shalom Hartman Institute of North America**, claims that in the past, the relationship between American Jews and Israel was a defining aspect of American Jewish identity. In contrast, today this aspect of identity is being challenged and even disappearing. Kurtzer also argues that while in the past Israel was a one of the biggest organizing factors in American Jewish identity, today it is one of the biggest factors of disorganization. This claim does not apply to all segments of American Jewry, as in the



Orthodox community for example, Israel is still a meaningful organizing factor. See: “Yehuda Kurtzer: American Jewish Engagement with Israel” ([YouTube-Shalom Hartman Institute](#), 06/16/2016).

However, in recent years, there has also been stormy discussion within the Orthodox community in America, surrounding the reasons why younger members leave the community. Some claim that the stubbornness of the American Orthodox community, and the lack of openness to criticism of Israel are possible factors that lead many to leave the community. See: Margolese, F. *Off the Derech*. (**CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform**, 2005).

See also: Klein, Z. “Is the Jewish Community in the US About to Break Apart? (Hebrew).” ([NRG](#), 05/07/2016).

⁴⁹ For example, in response to the question: Would Israel’s destruction be a personal tragedy? 80% of those 65 and older answered yes, compared to only 50% of those 35 and older. See: Cohen and Kelman, p. 9.

⁵⁰ A recent **Pew Research Center** study shows that although in the past, both political parties in the US had high percentages of support for Israel, among those born between 1980-1990, there is a new trend: In the Republican Party support for Israel remains strong (75%). However, in the Democratic Party, there is a rise in support for the Palestinians (29%). See: Speyer, L. “Pew Poll: Sympathy for Palestinians Among American Millennials Sees Dramatic Rise.” ([The Algemeiner](#), 05/05/2016).

The danger in losing multiparty support for Israel is expressed strongly by Jewish communities in the Diaspora: “They [American Jews] see a dangerous possibility that Israel will become an issue of partisan disagreement between political parties in the US, in such a way that will force American Jews to choose between their support for Israel and any other issue they care about.” See: Fisher, p. 49.

This trend is also evident in other countries as well. In the United Kingdom, see: Calamur, K. “The Rift Over Israel in Britain’s Labor Party.” ([The Atlantic](#), 04/28/2016); Mendoza, A. “The New Special Relationship: The British Conservative Party and Israel.” ([Fathom Journal](#), Summer 2015).

In Australia, see: Goldberg, D. “Australia’s Labor Party Wants to Ban Israel Trips for its Members.” ([Haaretz](#), 02/04/2016); Pileggi, T. “Australia’s Labor Party Signals Support for Palestinian State.” ([The Times of Israel](#), 07/26/2015); Goldberg, D. “Jewish Support Swinging Toward Liberal Party in Australian Election.” ([Haaretz](#), 08/27/2013).

⁵¹ See: Waxman, D. *Trouble in the Tribe*. (**Princeton University Press**, 2016). pp. 3-4.

⁵² For example, **Jewish Voice for Peace**, which supports the BDS Movement. See: “[JVP: Mission.](#)”

⁵³ Today, “the Jewish community in the United States remains a central partner in the fight against delegitimization on college campuses.” See: Fisher, p. 12. However, many Jews oppose the assumption that they should serve as the State of Israel’s ‘ambassadors’ during periods of armed conflict. See: Rosner and Herzog, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Even though Orthodoxy is the smallest denomination of American Judaism, it provides the strongest and most consistent support for the State of Israel, and is the fastest growing and most stable segment of the American Jewish population. See: Waxman, pp. 175, 208.

⁵⁵ Research from **mako** and **Molad** shows that the State of Israel is actively seeking strategic partnerships with Evangelical Christians. See: Gal, S. “This is How Christian Money Flows to the West Bank (Hebrew).” ([mako](#), 02/13/2015); Schlesinger, L. “Dangerous allies: Emerging alliance between U.S. Christian right wing and Israeli right wing harmful to Israel.” ([Molad](#), 02/15/2015).

⁵⁶ See: Pinkas, p. 27.

⁵⁷ A report published by the **Jewish People Policy Institute** warns European Jews against political alliances with the radical European right. However, it also argues that “for the State of Israel, pragmatic cooperation with ‘New Radical Right-wing’ parties and fundamentalist Christian political parties could fit well with Israel’s national interests, and in the face of expanding delegitimization of Israel in Europe, perhaps the Jewish State cannot afford to be too picky in choosing allies.” See: Fisher, p. 207.

⁵⁸ For example, in its attempt to legally define the Jewish characteristics of the State of Israel in the 2014 Nation State Law, Israel did not consider the impact of this effort on the Jewish People as a whole.

⁵⁹ A survey conducted by **NRG** shows that 59% of Israelis think that the distancing of American Jews from Israel endangers Israel’s national security. See: Klein, “82% Want Reform Jews to Feel Comfortable at the Kotel (Hebrew).”



- ⁶⁰ “The growing distance between Israel and the liberal Jewish community, which mostly supports the Democratic Party, has domestic political implications for the US, and the relationship with the Israeli government, which has already suffered due to conflicts on Iran, the peace process, and the individual relationship.” See: Fisher, p. 55. Additionally, former Undersecretary of Defense, Dov Zakheim argues that the declining relationship between Israel and American Jews is a “serious problem” from a “national security perspective.” According to Zakheim, “The American Jewish community has been a force in pushing for the security of Israel... Today, however, American Jews are increasingly less supportive of the Jewish state... To me this is a national security threat to Israel.” See: Borschel-Dan, A. “At Knesset Diaspora committee meeting, US Jews work to convince the convinced.” ([The Times of Israel](#), 01/11/2017).
- These negative effects could include: Clear policy changes (refusing to veto UN decisions on Israel), implied policy changes (lack of behind the scenes diplomatic support for Israel, reduction in or a refusal to raise financial support for Israel), a decline in technological cooperation (in cybersecurity or projects like the Iron Dome), a reduction of Israel’s ability to be a player on critical international issues, or damage to the perception of Israel’s security capabilities (if the relationship between the US and Israel declines, the ‘security network’ that the US provides to Israel will be weakened, which will incentivize various actors to attack Israel).
- ⁶¹ An example of the relationship between Israel and Jewish identity: “It is clear that the Jews who have a stronger connection to Israel are those who have a higher general connection to Jewish identity. Similarly, there is a clear connection between inter-marriage and a declining connection with Israel... On the other hand there is research that demonstrates the connection between political positions and connection to Israel.” See: Fisher, p. 121.
- ⁶² “One of the hardest policy challenges facing the American Jewish community is the fact that ‘middle’ is shrinking. The ‘Jewish middle’ is made up of Jews who feel deep commitment to the Jewish People and the Jewish community but are not necessarily committed to ritual observance or religious practice (even if they belong to Conservative and Reform synagogues). Alongside their strong commitment to the Jewish People, they are meaningfully integrated in general American life, and on average, they are well-off, highly educated, and in good professions.” See: Fisher, p. 127.
- ⁶³ For many years, Israel was the central project of the Jewish People. Due to the trauma of the Holocaust and the subsequent need to establish a national home, the creation and establishment of a state were shared goals of the entire Jewish People. This project was described by Rav Joseph Soloveitchik as a “covenant of fate.” Today, the Jewish People must establish a “covenant of mission,” not just a “covenant of fate.” For more on this topic, see: Navon, H. “The Religious-Zionist Worldview of Rav Soloveitchik (Hebrew).” ([Herzog College – Deot: Limudei Yehadut V’Ruach](#), 02/18/2007).
- Additionally, “Within the frame of the crisis narrative, support of Israel was an obvious response for Jews in danger, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, and at the same time, Israel was also an investment in the protection and future of the Jewish People.” See: Hartman, D. “Israel and World Jewry: A New Paradigm is Required (Hebrew).” ([Darsheni](#), Summer 2011).
- ⁶⁴ This change includes ‘peoplehood education,’ defined as “a required process of educational intervention to create a collective Jewish consciousness, which is characterized by a practical commitment to the Jewish collective and the ongoing creation of a Jewish collective.” For more on this topic, see: Ravid and Refaeli, “Jewish Peoplehood Education: Vision and Practice (Hebrew).” ([The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education](#), 2012).
- ⁶⁵ Sasson argues that today there is a unique role for direct cooperation between Israelis and American Jews. See: Sasson, p. 87.
- ⁶⁶ For example: **Hillel International** has shifted its focus from a global Jewish-religious organization to an organization that promotes Jewish peoplehood; The **Israeli American Council** has shifted from a sole focus on the Israeli community in the United States, to one that also seeks to strengthen the bond between Israelis in the United States, the local American Jewish community, and the State of Israel.
- ⁶⁷ **The leadership role of the Israeli Diaspora** – The Israeli Diaspora can serve as a living bridge that rehabilitates the relationship between the State of Israel and the Diaspora. Many Israelis who have chosen to live in the Diaspora still feel connected to the State of Israel and see it as a deep source of meaning. Additionally, Israelis in the Diaspora are familiar with both communities and can identify and connect with both Israelis and Diaspora Jews, through shared experiences and characteristics. As a result, this community can serve as a living bridge that allows the State of Israel and the Jewish People to unite and work together. See: “Engaging the Israeli Diaspora: Toronto as a Case Study.” ([Reut Institute](#), 06/17/2013).



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- ⁶⁸ **The leadership role of continuation programs** – Program communities and many alumni organizations exist in Israel. These organizations include many former emissaries to Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Additionally, Diaspora gap year programs in Israel have existed for many years. Various leadership, education, and values-based organizations in Israel struggle to create meaningful alumni organizations, that strengthen the educational and personal experience of their participants and maintain continuity. Creating meaningful alumni organizations focused on the challenge of maintaining the unity of the Jewish People can realize a great deal of untapped potential. These alumni, who have had meaningful experiences among different Jewish communities, can serve as a living bridge between Israel and the Diaspora.
- ⁶⁹ For more on this topic, see: “Kin-State.” ([The Reut Institute](#), 03/20/2008).
- ⁷⁰ A Jewish Kin-Civil Society (including both Israelis and non-Israelis) could organize around shared values, such as Tikkun Olam. See: [Tikkun Olam Makers](#), an initiative of the **Reut Group**.
- ⁷¹ Rabbi Eric Yoffie, who previously served as the president of the Union for Reform Judaism for over two decades: “The Prime Minister of Israel does not have just one audience of constituents or just one electoral district. The Prime Minister has constituents in Israel as well as Jewish people throughout the world, and it is his job to worry for, support, and nurture all of them.” See: Shamir, “Rabbis in the US and Israel are Worried by the Racism Against Them: ‘Not Just Religious’ (Hebrew).”
- ⁷² There is significant overlap between areas of Israeli policy that contribute to the fundamental delegitimization of Israel and areas that contribute to the growing distance between the State of Israel and Diaspora Jews.
- ⁷³ PM Netanyahu’s statement, “I’m asked if we will always live by the sword. The answer is yes,” created significant discomfort among many Jews in the Diaspora. See: Gordis, D. “A Dose of Nuance: Decency is a National Security Interest.” ([The Jerusalem Post](#), 10/09/2015).
Additionally, in the run up to the 2016 US Presidential Election, the Republican Party published a platform that did not include a reference to the Two-State Solution. According to Republicans, a similar attempt was made in 2012, but AIPAC opposed the change because the Two-State Solution is a position that most American Jews hold and identify with. See: Tibon, A. “Not Committed to a Two-State Solution: The Man Who Changed the Republican Party Platform (Hebrew).” ([Walla](#), 07/14/2016).
- ⁷⁴ Sasson argues that today, more than in the past, more American Jews care enough about Israel to act to influence its policies and its character. See: Sasson, p. 163.
- ⁷⁵ Although most Israelis are open to receive criticism of Israeli policy, A **Jewish People Policy Institute** survey from 2014 shows that 63% of Israelis oppose formal representation of Diaspora Jews in the Knesset, and in Israeli decision-making. See: “Jewish and Democratic: Perspectives from World Jewry.” ([Jewish People Policy Institute](#), 2014). p. 61.
- ⁷⁶ Croatia is an example of a state that provides full citizenship, including voting rights, to all members of the Croatian Diaspora, in any state, without conditions or requirements. For more on this topic, see: “Kin-State.”
- ⁷⁷ A large majority of Diaspora Jews think that Israel should take their opinions into account when making decisions, even when making decisions during armed conflict, because these decisions influence their lives. See: Fisher, pp. 41-46.
- ⁷⁸ Ahad Ha’am, *Truth from the Land of Israel (Hebrew)*. **HaMelitz**. Sivan 13-24, 5651 (July 1891).



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