FROM THROWING STONES TO GATHERING STONES: THE IMPACT OF THE SECOND INTIFADA ON AMERICAN JEWISH IDENTITY

MOLLY GABRIELLA KANE

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Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinical Program
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Advisor: Dr. Lisa Grant

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Molly Gabriella Kane

Summary

This thesis seeks to analyze the nature of American Jews' relationship with Israel during the second intifada and beyond. The first chapter traces the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the British mandate to the Disengagement from Gaza in 2005. The second chapter examines the history through the eyes of American Jews and their response to historic events and time periods in Israeli history. The third chapter is a summary of two focus groups I conducted with young American Jews ages 24-31who were in college at some point during the second intifada.

Both primary and secondary sources were used for this analysis. Material came from research from studies of the American Jewish community, books about the Arab-Israeli conflict, journal and magazine articles about the second intifada, newspaper articles about historical events, and personal interviews. In addition, personal stories and histories were gleaned from two focus groups with young American Jews.

American Jewry has long struggled with the role Israel should play in cultivating Diasporic Jewish identity. This thesis is significant in contributing to the exploration of the ongoing challenge of making Israel relevant and important to American Jews today. By seeking to understand the trajectory of how Israel identification either flourishes or deteriorates (if a process of identification even begins at all) will help future Jewish professionals teach and discuss Israel.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to my advisor and teacher Dr. Lisa Grant for her mentorship, insight, and editing. The time she spent with me discussing the topic and pushing me to grapple with big questions and ideas truly nourished me and sharpened my intellectual capabilities. Thank you to Dr. Andrea Weiss for helping me to hone my writing skills and teaching me that writing can be an enjoyable craft. I am very appreciative to all the focus group participants, Rabbi David Ellenson, Steven M. Cohen, and Yehudit Werchow for taking the time to share their stories with me.

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Thank you to my friends, classmates, and loved ones who have kept me going throughout this process. And last, but certainly not least…I am grateful to my parents Pearl and Paul Kane for sharing their passion and joy for Israel and the Jewish people with me since I was born. Thank you for sending me to Israel at 16 years old with NFTY, it truly changed my life.

Contents

Introduction

American Jewish children of the Baby Boomer generation were raised on euphoric notions of the State of Israel and *Am Yisrael*. Their Jewish education about Israel perpetuated the foundational narratives that early Zionist thinkers put forth; the establishment of the state of Israel as the redemption of the Jewish people after the Holocaust, Israel as the safe-haven for Jews, and Israel as the idyllic place to lead a Jewish life. With this education in their back pocket American Jews who went to college during the second Intifada were presented with an altogether different face of Israel; an aggressive and violent Israel, an Israel with a complicated history and past, and Israel as "occupier." At the same time, they were faced with an Israel where Jews were being blown up on buses, at b'nai mitzvah celebrations, and in malls. It was far from a black and white situation. They were faced with anti-Israel and anti-Zionist sentiment on their college campuses and they began to question what role Israel really had to play in their Jewish lives.

My own experience closely parallels the above description. I am a child of baby-boomers and the events of second intifada had a profound effect on my relationship with Israel. Growing up, my parents viewed Israel the way many of their generation did. For them, Israel is the homeland and safe haven for the Jewish people. Their relationship with Israel rooted in their parent's memories of loosing family in the Holocaust and the subsequent founding of the State of Israel. My parents lived during the terror of the Six Day War and then the jubilation of Israel's triumph. Since, they both have worked for the mainstream Jewish community my entire life, they have raised money for Israel in times

of trouble, assisted in bringing to Israel Jews in distress from around the world , and have traveled there several times. My parents raised me on the mythic narratives of Israel's miraculous creation and Israel's triumph in the face of annihilation. This was the Israel they knew and loved.

I remember seeing the movie *Exodus* for first time and feeling proud to be a Jew as a result of its heroic narrative. I remember at 8 years old my parents dressed me up in an Israeli flag t-shirt and sweat-bands in order to be the poster child for the Chicago "Walk with Israel." I could not have been prouder. As a teenager, I remember my Mother telling me to stay home from school to watch Yitzak Rabin's funeral after his assassination. My mother viewed the tragedy as equal to the national tragedy of the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

At 16, my parents sent me to Israel for the first time with NFTY. The trip changed my life because through the trip's education and experiences I got to "live" the mythic narrative I had been raised on. We traveled and learned about the Holocaust by visiting the Jewish ghetto Terezinstat near Prague, we took an "illegal" boat from Cypress to Israel, and upon arrival we celebrated as if it was 1947 all over again. Through the Jewish community of my travel group and experiencing Israel as an ideal way to live a completely Jewish life, Israel became a spiritual homeland for me. I began college in the fall of 1997 with Israel as a central tenet of my Jewish identity.

I do not remember Oslo so well or Camp David, but I do remember the outbreak of the second intifada. Images of bombings and Israel's incursion into the West Bank flooded my television most of my senior year of college. A key turning point for me in my view of the conflict came from heated discussion I had with my very liberal

housemate. She majored in peace and conflict studies and had done her semester abroad in Amman, Jordan. She felt incredible sympathy for the Palestinian people and questioned how I could support Israel as an occupier. For the first time in my life I had to defend my Zionism and my relationship with Israel.

Through my conversations with her I did for the first time see Israel in a different light. I started to question Israel's policies and actions myself: Why did Israel have to use so much force to defend herself? Has Israel done all it can to work towards peace with the Palestinians? What is Israel's responsibility towards the Palestinians' quality of life? When have the Jews ever been the more powerful group? My whole life I grew up with the idea that Israel both the people and the state were always the "victim." So, the second intifiada confused me. Israel was not just a victim anymore. Israel had power and used it frequently to defend itself yet the whole world seemed to criticize her for doing so.

Similar to my experience, many young American Jews began to question Israel during the second intifada, resulting in a changed outlook towards the Jewish State. Whether simultaneously or as a result, young American Jews appeared to be showing signs of detachment from Israel. It is unclear whether this generational difference has always occurred, where the younger generation feels less attached and then grows in attachment as they age or whether this is a unique characteristic of the current generation of young American Jews. In any case, the events of the second intifada in combination with a generation that already had a waning relationship with Israel created a paradigm shift within the American Jewish community regarding Israel.

The shift manifested itself in several ways, but most noticeably in how the American Jewish community focused its attention on engaging young American Jews

with Israel. Just before the second intifada began, the Jewish Agency and major Jewish philanthropies invested in free trips for young Jews to go to Israel known as Taglit-Birthright. Additionally, Hillel and other mainstream Jewish organizations created Israel advocacy organizations to help connect young American Jews to Israel and to help combat anti-Israel rhetoric on campus. The paradigm shift created multiple voices in Israel lobbying efforts in Washington D.C. and changed many non-orthodox Jews' view of the peace process and the Palestinian people's desire for self-determination. In addition, Israel's new complex reality during the intifada and beyond prompted disappointment and disengagement with Israel for many American Jews.

This thesis seeks to analyze the nature of American Jews' relationship with Israel during the second intifada and beyond. The first chapter traces the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the British mandate to the Disengagement from Gaza in 2005. The second chapter examines the history through the eyes of American Jews and their response to historic events and time periods in Israeli history. The third chapter is a summary of two focus groups I conducted with young American Jews ages 24-31who were in college at some point during the second intifada.

The analysis provided in this thesis is intended to help better understand American Jews' relationship with Israel over the past 10 years and offer insight into the minds of young American Jews and their relationship with Israel. From these observations it is my hope to provide some thoughts about how to think about Zionism in the future and discuss how Israel might play a role in American Jewish identity in the years to come.

The challenges with such an investigation are that the second intifada and the years after are not so long ago. Therefore, it is possible that hindsight is not yet 20/20. Additionally, this paper is written from a very specific point of view. I write with my own Israel "baggage," a complex love for a country that has been a stronghold for my Jewish identity and a motivation for wanting to serve the Jewish people as a rabbi.

As part of my rabbinate, I hope to approach Israel education and engagement from both the "myth and miracle"[1] standpoint as well as the more difficult reality of day-to-day Israel. Israel is engaged on a regular basis with both internal and external struggles and continues to wrestle with its own identity as a Jewish state. This paper hopes to reinforce that American Jews have a stake in these conversations. In order to learn how to effectively have such dialogue it is important to look at the past to gain a detailed sense of the history and how it has impacted American Jew's relationship with the conflict.

[1] As phrased by Dr. Lisa Grant.

Chapter 1
The History of the Second Intifada

Understanding a specific period of time within the Israeli/Palestinian conflict requires taking a wider view of the conflict's history. Three significant factors led to the outbreak of the second Palestinian *intifada* in late September 2000: the failure of the Camp David peace talks in July of 2000, the difficult life under Israeli occupation since 1967, and the corruption of the Palestinian authority since its inception after the Oslo Peace agreements. Of course, previous historical incidents contributed to these events.

Jews and Arabs have lived in the territory now called Israel and Palestine for over 2,000 years. Indeed, this small piece of land has been contested throughout history, sometimes between two sides and sometimes between multiple sides. The land has gone through a multiplicity of different rulers, owners, and occupiers. The answer to "whose land is it?" has never been simple. Every attempt to try and discern how the land will be divided and ruled has often resulted in some type of violence. The second *intifada* is yet another example of this motif, though it changed the nature of this multi-decade conflict significantly. In order to understand how and why this occurred one must go back in time.

The British Mandate Period

Under the Ottoman Empire, Palestine as a political entity did not exist. Once the Empire collapsed at the end of the First World War, Great Britain and France split up the Middle East. As a result, Palestine came under British mandatory control. Similar to actions taken through the colonial era, these western powers drew borders without much

consideration for the actual people living on the land. Michael Oren contends, "Many historians of the period would agree that the effort to construct a new and viable Middle East from the debris of World War I was an unqualified failure—and the cause of much consequent bloodshed."[2] The Palestine Mandate made no stipulation that the country would work towards its independence like Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Instead the Mandate incorporated language taken from the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which favored Palestine as a national home for the Jewish people. M. E. Yapp asserts that the mandate advanced the fulfillment of the Zionist program of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine.[3] The Mandate required facilitation of Jewish immigration to Palestine and encouraged settlement by Jews on the land. The implementation of the Mandate and the Zionist program created tensions between the indigenous Arab population in Palestine, the British administration, and the Jews coming to build a Jewish homeland. In the early 1920s, the British government sought to create a unified Palestine by setting up a legislative council that would have given all populations a voice in governance of the land, but the Arabs rejected the proposal because of the limited power the council would have.

In June of 1922, Britain attempted to redefine the Mandate through a document known as the White Paper, which emphasized Britain's support of the Zionist movement, but at the same time tried to play down the implications of Zionism for Palestine. The paper sought to regulate how many new Jewish immigrants could enter Palestine. As a result, the Zionists strongly criticized the White Paper. Ultimately, the White Paper did not change policy and tensions grew between the Jewish and Arab populations. In August

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[2] Oren, 395.
[3] Yapp, 124.

of 1929, riots broke out over Jewish access to the Wailing Wall, causing the Jewish community to fear and distrust the Arab population and the British to think once again about the mandate.

This uneasy status quo remained until 1936, when "The Great Arab Revolt" broke out. For the first time in the 20th century, the entire Arab population joined forces. Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal explain, "It mobilized thousands of Arabs from every stratum of society, all over the country, heralding the emergence of a national movement in ways that isolated incidents and formal delegations simply could not accomplish."[4] The Arabs revolted not only against the Zionists and the British, but also again the privileged sector of the Arab population. Two types of Palestinian Arab leadership emerged from the revolt. The first category, were leaders who influenced specific geographical regions. The second group, were those who claimed to speak for the entire Arab population of Palestine, but lived outside of the country.[5] Outside Arab states involved themselves in the revolt in order to assert their own power and interests in Palestine. They did this by trying to squash the revolt and then bargain with the British, but the British ultimately refused to make any concessions to the Arab states in exchange for their help.

In 1937, the British established the Peel Commission to investigate the cause of the Arab revolt. The Commission concluded the mandate, "unworkable because the Jewish and Arab communities were irreconcilable and it recommended partition as the

[4] Kimmerling and Migdal, 102.
[5] Kimmerling and Migdal, 103.

best solution."[6] While Britain accepted the Commission's recommendation the Zionists were divided about the partition plan, and the Arabs rejected the proposal.

The Arab rebellion continued until March 1939. The uprising caused the break down of economic and social institutions, as well as, the temporary break down of government and administrative structures. As a result of this disorder, the British abandoned any hopes of partitioning the land. The Arab population no longer wished to work with the British government and the Zionists were skeptical of the possibility of being able to live side by side with the Arab population.

Between 1937 and 1939, Britain attempted to bring the Arabs and the Zionists together to negotiate an agreement for the future of Palestine. These "peace talks" failed. As a result, in 1939 the British released a new White Paper that announced Palestine would become independent in 10 years. Until that time Britain would establish self governing institutions and Jewish immigration would be limited to 75,000 per year. Britain also planned to have strict control over land sales. The Zionists rejected this Paper because it eliminated any possibility of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Arab population also took issue with certain aspects of this White Paper.

World War II and The Holocaust

World War II prevented the full implementation of the plan. Britain became occupied with defending itself against Nazi Germany and military operations in the Near East. Partition became less and less a priority. After the war, the British needed to decide whether to continue the plan put forth in the White Paper of 1939 or to try for partition

[6] Yapp, 130.

again. In trying to decide the long-term fate of Palestine, the British faced the short-term issue of the European Jewish refugees looking to make a new home in Palestine.

The diminished power of the British in Palestine and the increase in power of the Zionists certainly factored into the soon creation of the Jewish state. The Holocaust made the matter imminent. Over one-third of the Jewish people were killed in the Holocaust making it the largest mass murder in history.[7] Those who survived this atrocity were left without homes and families. The need for a Jewish homeland because of the mass murder of so many Jews increasingly became common rhetoric. David Ben Gurion wrote in 1944,

> "We are nearing the end of the war. City after city and country after country are being liberated—but we Jews are not sharing in this joy, for almost the entire Jewish population of the newly liberated lands has been wiped out...The desert of our land is calling us, and the destruction of our people is crying to us."[8]

The Proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948 also clearly states that the Holocaust made the need for a Jewish state urgent. The Proclamation proclaims,

> "The Nazi holocaust, which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe, proved anew the urgency of the reestablishment of the Jewish State, which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish people to equality in the family of nations."[9]

After the Holocaust, most Jews accepted the basic principle of Zionism: Jews needed a state of their own.[10] In addition to the Jewish world, the Holocaust had a tremendous impact on the entire Western world. Dowty illustrates this, "As the dimensions of the

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[7] Dowty, 80.
[8] Hertzberg, 617-618.
[9] Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 629.
[10] Dowty, 81.

horror became known, shock and guilt shaped attitudes toward 'the Palestine issue.'"[11] As a result, sympathy and support for a Jewish state grew.

UN Partition Plan

In 1947, the United Nations took over control of Palestine from the British and declared that the British Mandate would terminate no later than August 1, 1948.[12] After considerable analysis, the UN developed several different plans for partitioning Palestine. The UN called for a Jewish state and an Arab state, with Jerusalem as an international city under UN authority. The UN proposed boundaries for the two states and described a process for the implementation of authority within these two states. Another option proposed the establishment of an independent federal state that would be comprised of an Arab state and a Jewish state with Jerusalem as a capital with a single Palestinian nationality and citizenship. Ultimately, the UN decided on November 27, 1947 to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. For the Palestinian Jewish leadership and perhaps for Jews around the world, this UN resolution gave legitimacy and recognition to the Jews right to self-determination and a sovereign state. For the Palestinian Arabs, who received less territory, but populated two thirds of the land, the UN vote was a defeat.[13]

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[11] Dowty, 82.
[12] Laqueur and Rubin, 97.
[13] Dowty, 84-85.

1948

In May of 1948, a Provisional State Council of Jewish leaders, declared the independence of the Jewish state. The Zionist dream had come true. A Jewish homeland in Palestine, named Israel, was born. The 1948 War or the War of Independence had begun months earlier when the UN voted on partition. The day after Israel declared its independence marked the formal attacks of five Arab states (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq) on Palestine. The fighting lasted through the middle of July until an unlimited truce was imposed on July 18th. The war left Israel in possession of about 78 percent of the former Palestinian Mandate, as opposed to the 56 percent outlined in the 1947 partition plan.[14] Egypt controlled what is called the Gaza strip today and Transjordan occupied what is most of the West Bank today.

The Arab-Israeli war of 1948 transformed what was once just a conflict between two communities: the Jewish settlers and native-born Palestinians to a conflict between states. For the Jews in Palestine and the Jewish world in general the creation of the state of Israel after 2,000 years of exile was a historical moment of epic proportions. In some ways with the holocaust in the very recent past, it was a moment of redemption for the Jewish people. For the Palestinians the creation of the state of Israel is referred to as *al-nakba*, "the disaster." The 1948 war created a massive Palestinian refugee issue and in many ways eliminated the Palestinians as an integral group from the conflict for the next several decades.

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[14] Dowty, 88-89.

Palestinians, As A People

After 1948, the Palestinians were a shattered community. About half of the Palestinian Arab community became refugees, scattered in the West Bank, the Gaza strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Around 150,000 remained in territory under Israeli control.[15] The Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki summed up the situation for the Palestinians in 1948 in the is way, "The nation of Palestine ceased to be. Its original inhabitants, the Palestinian people, were dubbed Arab refugees, sent regular food rations by the UN, and forgotten by the world."[16] Both the external and internal refuges felt displaced and powerless. Not until the 1960s did the concept of a Palestinian national identity begin to emerge.[17]

Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza strip were far from ideal. Jordon hardly invested in the livelihood of Palestinians living in the West Bank. Palestinians there were isolated from those living on the east side of the Jordon and those in the Gaza strip and other Arab countries. Additionally, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) became an overpowering force in the refugee camps and villages in the West Bank. As a result, most camp dwellers depended on UNRWA for their sustenance. At its inception in 1949, the agency's purpose seemed temporary, but it took on a permanent role within the camps. The presence of the UNRWA created a dependency for the Palestinians living there on its services, but at the same time provided them with a sense of impermanency. Therefore despite years passing many believed one day they would

[15] Dowty, 92.
[16] Kimerling and Migdal, 215.
[17] Dowty, 100.

return home. The refugees living in the camps never fully integrated into Jordanian society nor did they have any leadership representing them within the Jordanian Parliament. Meanwhile, Palestinians who lived outside of the refugee camps became fully integrated into Jordanian society. Particularly, as economic conditions improved within the entire Arab world, Palestinians living in Jordon advanced socially and economically.[18] The ability to live outside of the refugee camp and in Jordan proper depended in large part on the economic situation of the family. Therefore, the educated and wealthier Palestinians population mostly integrated into Jordanian society while the poor and uneducated remained in the refugee camps.

Refugees in the Gaza strip faced much more brutal conditions. After 1948, Gaza became one of the most densely populated regions in the world. Three quarters of Gaza's Palestinians lived in eight refugee camps with very few comforts.[19] In comparison to those in the West Bank, Gazan refugees had little opportunity for upward mobility and very little economic growth. Egypt did not annex the Gaza strip like the Jordanians did with the West Bank, which reinforced a sense of temporariness. Egypt did not want to fold the Palestinian refugees living in the Gaza strip into Egyptian society and restricted migration of Palestinians from Gaza into Egypt. The only exception was the opening of Egyptian universities to Palestinians and the granting of jobs as village teachers to Palestinian graduates of UNRWA vocational schools.[20] Education became the key factor in the creation of a national Palestinian identity.

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[18] Kimmerling and Migdal, 221-226.
[19] Kimmerling, and Migdal, 227-228.
[20] Kimmerling and Migdal, 230.

Education became a strategy for survival within the Palestinian refugee camps. Kimmerling and Migdal maintain education offered, "hope of 'economic security in a situation where political security was virtually unachievable,' and of escape from the misery of camp life, it was a strategy for survival."[21] Jordanian Palestinians were mostly responsible for the establishment of a Jordanian university in 1962. As a result, of a new generation of university educated Palestinians, new leadership emerged for the Palestinian people as well as an increase in physical mobility. University graduates spearheaded the transformation of the Palestinian people into a mobile, internationally oriented society. Through travel and education rising Palestinian leaders learned from the rest of the world about creating a nationality. They no longer wished to looked towards other Arab states for identity and leadership, rather they began to focus their attention within their own people to find direction. Self-generated organizations developed in the West Bank, Gaza, and Lebanon. Between 1959 and 1963, as many as 40 secret organizations had been formed with anywhere from 2 to 400 members, expressing "frustration with the passivity of their parents-as well as with the Arab states' propensity to use the Palestinian issue for their own purposes."[22] Thus, in the 1960s a new Palestinian leadership emerged. They came from a place of poverty and disorientation and had moved themselves to a place of economic stability and leadership.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) or *Fatah* established in the late 50s and early 60s and was headed by Yasser Arafat, a descendant of the wealthy Husayni family who had headed the Palestinian Students' Union in Cairo. The PLO grew out of a

[21] Kimmerling and Migdal, 235.
[22] Kimmerling and Migdal, 238.

time where guerrilla warfare and popular resistance echoed throughout the Third World.[23] From 1965, the PLO and other groups carried out cross-border raids into Israel with the intention of starting a war.

1967

Several factors led to the outbreak of war in 1967, but for the purposes of this paper the results of the war are more significant. Michael Oren supports this when he writes, "the Six-Day or June War opened the door to even deadlier conflagrations...the war was indeed a storm that altered the region's landscape it also exposed the underlying nature of the Arab-Israel conflict its bedrock."[24]

The Six Day War Oren asserts, broke out as a result of a series of incidents triggered by Palestinian guerilla raids and Israel's retaliations against them.[25] In May of 1967, Egypt and Gamal Abdul Nasser was focused on Arab unity and the civil war in Yemen. Quiet mostly existed on the border between Egypt and Israel allowing for Israel to ship goods and maintain a peace-like state with Egypt. Israel's other boarders experienced much more instability as a result of the guerilla group attacks coming mostly from Jordanian territory. This triggered Israel's retaliation, but neither Jordan nor Syria appeared to want to engage in a war with Israel especially without Egypt's involvement.

Tensions grew between Israel and Syria as June approached. The Soviet Union warned Egypt that Israel was going to attack Syria and in response Egypt moved troops into the Sinai Peninsula towards its border with Israel. Both sides then requested the

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[23] Dowty, 101.
[24] Oren, "Six Days of War," 327.
[25] Oren, 329.

withdrawal of the UN Emergency Force, which had been in place since the Suez Canal crisis in 1956. On May 22nd, Egypt announced that it would once again close the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli ships. As the crisis escalated, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan concluded mutual defense agreements.[26] On June 5, 1967 Israel launched an air and land attack and within six days conquered the Gaza Strip, the Sinai, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Israel's image was transformed in the region. Yitzak Rabin concluded that the war, "had changed the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, not by making Israel any less repugnant to the Arabs, but by convincing them that it could never be eliminated by force of arms."[27] In November of 1967, the UN Security council adopted Resolution 242, which purported that Israel would return territories occupied in 1967 in return for Arab recognition and peace. The resolution instituted the infamous notion "land for peace," which has been the basis of much negotiation throughout the conflict since 1967. Only Egypt and Jordan accepted it at the time. Syria indirectly accepted it after the Yom Kippur war. The PLO and other Palestinian groups rejected it completely.[28] The PLO declared: "unresolved, the Palestinian problem will continue to endanger peace and security not only in the Middle east, but in the entire world."[29] Israel now controlled the West Bank and the Gaza Strip uniting the territory of the old Palestine mandate and brining the majority of Palestinians under Israeli control. Palestinians in the two territories and Israel were able to reunite for the first time in almost 20 years. Approximately, 250,000 did flee to Jordan as a result of the war. The Palestinians now faced the Jews once again as they had during the British mandate. This time however the

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[26] Dowty, 106.
[27] Oren, 313.
[28] Dowty, 114.
[29] Oren, 326.

Jews controlled the land. The Palestinians seemed to be a population shuffled between different dominating powers. As a result, emotions were charged. The PLO, led by Arafat quickly began to take this opportunity to seize power.

1970s, 1980s, and the First Intifada

Three developments during the 1970s are significant to the historical context of the second intifada. First, after the Yom Kippur and the Israel-Egypt peace treaty Arab states primarily disengaged from the "Arab-Israeli" conflict. On the one hand, this allowed for the Palestinians to be seen as independent from the rest of the Arab world, which facilitated their ability to construct their own national identity. However, this dramatically changed the nature of the conflict. Israel no longer faced an interstate conflict rather now the main protagonist, the Palestinians were essentially within its borders. The occupied Palestinian territories now became the "central axis" of Israeli politics.[30]

The second development resulted from the absence of the other Arab players in the conflict. Without the support and leadership of Arab states the Palestinians needed their own strong leadership. Palestinians believed they now had to fight their own fight.[31] Therefore, revolutionary guerrilla warfare became an attractive means of showing opposition to Israeli occupation. The fighting groups, led by Arafat's *Fatah* organization took over the PLO in 1969. They rewrote the PLO charter, which paved the way for a new direction for the Palestinian people; focusing on Palestinian identity and particularity.

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[30] Dowty, 120.
[31] Dowty, 120.

The third development was a shift in Israeli politics in 1977 with the election of Menachem Begin as prime minister. The Israeli government changed from being a more left-wing government to a more right-wing government; from the Labor party to the Likud party. A growth in religious nationalism catalyzed this shift. Religious national ideology grew rapidly after 1967. The movement believed in the notion of a "greater Israel" and that divine providence, allowed for the capture of remaining areas of the Land of Israel.[32] In 1968, *Gush Emunim* (Bloc of the Faithful) established itself as a settler movement seeking to spread a Jewish presence throughout the homeland. A strong religious and historical nationalism inspired the movement. The Labor governments of Eshkol, Meir, and Rabin who held power from 1963-1977 publicly opposed Jewish settlement building outside of designated areas, but fostered the building of some. In fact, even in September of 1967 handfuls of Israeli citizens began to move into the *Etzion Bloc* in the West Bank. With the rise of power of the Likud party and the national religious movements public support for settlement building increased. Significantly, challenging the possibility of a future two-state solution.

While it was the Likud party that spearheaded the returning of Sinai to Egypt when it came to the West Bank they were strongly opposed to doing anything beyond granting limited autonomy to the Palestinians. From the point of view of the Likud party, the PLO was a terrorist organization and not a possible negotiating partner.[33] The PLO became Israel's greatest enemy. In the early 1970s, PLO leaders established organizations in Lebanon creating a threat to northern Israel that the Israeli government decided it could not ignore. Israel invaded Lebanon in June of 1982. The international

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[32] Dowty, 121.
[33] Dowty, 127.

community condemned this First Lebanon war as a result of the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian refugees in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla. Lebanese Maronite forces conducted the massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps in Israeli controlled Beirut. It took Israeli forces almost 36 hours to end the violence. The international world and many factions of Israeli society loudly protested Israel's campaign in Lebanon. Both the international world and Israelis themselves had mixed feelings about the war to begin with, but opposition only grew after the massacres in Sabra and Shatilla. Israel ended its military campaign with minimal gains. The PLO had fled Lebanon, but new radical groups took their place such as *Hizbollah.*

Several factors led to the outbreak of the first Palestinian intifada. After 1967, Palestinian livelihood in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was extremely dependent on the Israeli economy. Palestinians became cheap labor for the Israeli economy. Palestinians no longer worked for fellow Arabs. Most of their employers were Jewish. In the West Bank, Jordanian companies and banks were now all Israeli. In the 1970s, many Palestinians migrated to higher paying jobs generated by the oil boom in the Persian Gulf.[34] However, the Palestinians did not control any of these economic conditions. Palestinian resentment grew as a result of this, which then generated sympathy for the PLO.[35] When the economies in both Israel and the Middle East began to slow in the late 70s and early 80s, economic conditions in the territories deteriorated. Additionally, under the Likud government about 100,000 Jewish settlers took up residence in the occupied territories by the end of the 1980s.[36] These settlers received different rights than their

[34] Kimmerling and Migdal, 285.
[35] Kirmmerling and Migdal, 286.
[36] Kimmerling and Migdal, 287.

Palestinian neighbors such as preferred access to water and land, and special security arrangements.[37] These factors in conjunction with the building of colleges in the West Bank that became "centers for interpreting the occupation's common meaning"[38] led to growing Palestinian unrest. By December of 1987, Palestinians felt they had little to lose and for the first time since the occupation began, Israeli forces lost control of the Palestinian population. Civil disobedience and violence erupted, earning the name *intifada* or "shaking off."

Oslo and The Failed Peace Process

In December 1988, Arafat renounced terrorism and called for a two-state solution.[39] As a result, by 1989 Likud changed its mind and adopted a conditional formula for talking with the PLO. If the PLO recognized Israel and renounced terrorism, the government would engage in negotiations with this Palestinian leadership. The first intifada had restored Palestinian pride and self-confidence, but did little to advance their desire for self-determination. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, a reconfiguration of the global economy, the lasting impact of the first intifada, and the Gulf War conditions became ripe for both sides to work towards resolving the conflict. Starting in December of 1991 in Madrid through August of 1993 in Oslo, Palestinians and Israelis outlined a framework for future negotiations that could end their conflict. On September 13, 1993 Yitzak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shook hands on the White House Lawn. Dennis Ross

[37] Kimmerling and Migdal, 288.
[38] Kimmerling and Migdal, 290.
[39] Dowty, 136.

describes the event as, "a new beginning."[40] The handshake symbolized the possibility for not just peace, but healing. Ross articulates this in his commentary on Rabin's speech that day, "Rabin's speech spoke to the emotional trauma many Israelis felt in embracing Arafat and the PLO, given their history of terror against Israelis."[41] Arafat's speech also inspired the possibility that both Israelis and Palestinians could coexist together without violence. He said that day,

> "Our people do not consider that exercising the right to self-determination could violate the rights of their neighbors or infringe on their security,' he said. 'Rather, putting an end to their feelings of being wronged and of having suffered a historic injustice is the strongest guarantee to achieve coexistence and openness between our two peoples and future generations."[42]

For the first time each side accepted the legitimacy of the other's existence. Oslo was a milestone event in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Unfortunately, many things went wrong in its implementation.

That day brought about great hope and optimism amongst not just Palestinians and Israelis, but the entire world. Almost immediately, Israeli and Palestinian extremists who disagreed with the negotiated terms of the peace accord sought to derail the implementation of the plan. Hamas and Islamic Jihad launched a series of attacks on Israeli soldiers, settlers, and civilians including bus bombings, shootings, and other attacks throughout the country. On the Israeli side Jewish settlers attacked Palestinians. Most influential in the breakdown of the peace process was the assassination of Yitzak Rabin on November 4, 1995.

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[40] Ross, 121.
[41] Ross, 121.
[42] Friedman, "Rabin and Arafat Seal Their Accord as Clinton Applauds 'Brave Gamble."

As the decade continued, the Israeli government transferred governance to the Palestinian Authority (PA) of most of the Palestinian populations of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[43] However, both sides faced instability in their governments. The Netanyahu government elected in 1996 continued the Oslo plan minimally, viewing every Palestinian gain as a loss on the Israeli side. Arafat too face political instability as he had been in power for almost 8 years and had made little headway in improving economic conditions in the territories. Additionally, the Islamic extremist group Hamas was draining energy on both sides as it threatened the unity of the Palestinians and the security of the Israelis. While Oslo had been a huge step in the right direction for Palestinians, many felt that some of their key concerns were never addressed. The refugee situation still had no solution and Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip continued to grow. Therefore, the possibility of a sovereign Palestinian state looked quite bleak. Even though Israeli troops no longer remained in Palestinian cities, they still controlled 60 percent of the land area in the West Bank and had established check points that greatly limited Palestinian movement throughout the area.[44]

Camp David

The election of Ehud Barak on May 17, 1999 inspired much hope amongst supporters of the peace process. Many believed Barak would carry on the legacy of Yitzak Rabin. Barak passionately worked to get the peace process back on track. Top Israeli and Palestinian officials met at Camp David with US officials led by then President Clinton during July 11-24 in 2000. However, the two sides did not reach an

[43] Kimmerling and Migdal, 334.
[44] Dowty, 152.

agreement. Disappointment and loss of hope over the failed peace talks spread throughout both populations.

In Israel, Barak told news sources that he had done everything to try and make peace including dividing Jerusalem. In the eyes of most of Israeli society, Arafat and the Palestinians were greedy and unwilling to make peace. By insisting on the right of return of millions of Palestinians, Israelis felt they were trying to annihilate Israel.[45] Arafat, who was mistrusted by much of Israeli society all along, was no longer a viable partner for peace.

Daniel Bar-Tal takes a more slightly nuanced view of what took place, writing that the Palestinians and Arafat were not solely to blame for the breakdown of the talks at Camp David. Bar-Tal's investigation reveals that many published accounts conclude that there were insufficient Israeli proposals and the Americans were not prepared. Not to mention that the future Palestinian state that was on the table would not be a viable sovereign state, rather it would be three separate enclaves with key areas remaining under Israeli control.[46]

Neither side seemed to be ready for the degree of compromise that would need to take place in order to continue the peace process. Kimmerling and Migdal argue that, "Jewish public opinion in Israel and in the Diaspora was simply not sufficiently prepared for the far-reaching historical compromises that the Barak government proposed in 2000."[47] Barak laid no groundwork for proposals such as: nearly complete withdrawal from the West Bank or sharing control over Jerusalem. On the Palestinian side,

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[45] Bar-Tal, 116.
[46] Bar-Tal, 117.
[47] Kimmerling and Migdal, 382.

Palestinians were not ready to compromise on the refugee issue. Many villages that refugees yearned to return to had long since disappeared or were now completely inhabited by Jews. Despite being aware of this the Palestinian leadership never brought this issue for debate within Palestinian society. In addition to speaking to their own populations both sides of leadership needed to be willing to speak publicly to the other's constituencies. Acknowledgement of pain, suffering, and injustice on the parts of both people is instrumental in gaining popular trust and support for compromise. Both Rabin and Arafat attempted to do this in their speeches after the signing of Oslo, but Bark and Arafat failed to do this during Camp David. Without popular support and acknowledgment of injustice on both sides no agreements could be sustainable.

The failure of the peace process generated deep despair. On the Palestinian side hopes had soared at the possibility of undoing the occupation. The Israelis believed that the Palestinians had finally recognized their right to a state, but when Arafat rejected Barak's concessions for peace because he would not allow a return of all refugees, Israelis understood this move to mean they did not recognize the right for a Jewish state after all.[48] A return of all Palestinian refugees would create a Palestinian majority in Israel eliminating the Jewish nature of the state. Michael Oren's summarizes this moment writing, "As in 1947-48, the issue was not merely the borders of the Jewish state, but its very existence."[49]

The failure of the Camp David peace talks demonstrated Arafat's crippled leadership of the Palestinians at the end of the century. Arafat only allowed his constituents to see him as hero, "who would win for the Palestinians everything for which

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[48] Oren, 329.
[49] Oren, 329.

they longed."[50] He never asked his people to be active players in the peace negotiations allowing them to face the possibility that difficult compromises were essential to peace. An already growing mistrust of Arafat and the PA increased within the Palestinian populace. Violence seemed to be the only method that Palestinians believed led to Israeli concessions.[51] In 2001, a survey indicated that 71 percent of Palestinians supported a return to negotiations, while 61 percent stated that armed confrontations helped achieve Palestinian rights in a way negotiations could not.[52] This clash in viewpoint reflects the mixed messages the Palestinians received from Arafat and the PA. Arafat constructed a Palestinian national identity based on opposition to Israel, while at the same time Israel also had to be the Palestinian partner in peace. These mixed messages of who Israel was in relationship to the Palestinians only damaged public support for negotiating with Israel. Ultimately, this led to increasing public support of violence as a viable method for achieving self-determination.

Simultaneously, as support for violence grew the economic situation for the Palestinians continued to deteriorate. By Oslo in 1993, Palestinians' standard of living had already taken a downward shift since the mid 1980s. The fall in oil prices, the first intifada, and an end of the remittances from Palestinians in Kuwait, who were expelled at the end of the Gulf War, were the chief culprits in precipitating a sharp downturn in the Palestinian economy by the time of Oslo.[53] The Declaration of Principles signed at Oslo promised an influx of capital from outside sources for the development of economic infrastructure and social institutions for the Palestinians. The assumption that peace

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[50] Kimmerling and Migdal, 383.
[51] Kimmerling and Migdal, 383.
[52] Kimmerling and Migdal, 384.
[53] Kimmerling and Migdal, 386.

would help the economic needs of both the Israelis and the Palestinians initially motivated both parties towards peace. Kimmerling and Migdal propose that, "There was an economic euphoria that overlooked the obstacles caused by long-term hatred and ethnic divisions."[54] However from 1995-2000, the Palestinian economy lagged far behind expectations, causing tremendous disappointment amongst Palestinians. Aid money did in fact flow into the PA, but it did not make it into the people's pockets. The PA kept the money to pay for PA employee salaries and other governmental agencies.[55] The PA lacked any standard accounting procedures, which discouraged many from abroad who had promised loan and aid money. The PA also gained the reputation of corruption as rumors spread about certain official's use of international funds. The corruption of the PA strengthened public support for the Islamic opposition and contributed to the demoralization of the Palestinian population.[56]

On September 28, 2000 Ariel Sharon, in his capacity as "opposition leader,"[57] visited the Al-Aqsa mosque plaza of the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem, escorted by Likud party officials and a large force of Israeli riot police. The Temple mount is the holiest site for Jews. Also known as *Har-HaBayit*, it is seen as the area where the holy of holies once was located in the First and Second Temples. For Muslims it is the third holiest site. It is known in Arabic as *Bait-ul-Muqaddas* or "Noble Sanctuary." It is the place where Muhammad is said to have journeyed to Jerusalem and ascended to Heaven. Palestinians considered the visit a deliberate political move to assert the Israeli right to visit the Temple Mount, which had been restricted at the time by

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[54] Kimmerling and Migdal, 386.
[55] Kimmerling and Migdal, 387.
[56] Kimmerling and Migdal, 388.
[57] Shamir and Shikaki, 66.

Israeli security and forbidden by a rabbinical injunction. Sharon's visit, seen as a provocation, did not result in any violence on that particular day. However, on the following day riots erupted in the Old City of Jerusalem. Four Palestinians were shot and killed, and 160 were wounded. Fourteen police officers also were wounded.[58] Sharon's visit and the violence the day after mark the beginning of the second intifada or the *Al-Aqsa Intifada.* However, most historians agree that tensions had been rising. The flaws in the Oslo process, the disappointment in Camp David, the depressed economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza strip provided the groundwork for the road back to uprising and violence.

Early Events of the Second Intifada

By the end of December 2000, 327 Palestinians had been killed and over 1,000 injured, while 42 Israelis had been killed and 85 were injured.[59] During the first months of the second intifada the uprising consisted mostly of spontaneous and organized demonstrations that were met with military force by Israel. Israelis used snipers, liquidation teams, tanks, and helicopters to squelch the violence. Palestinians shot at Israeli cars on West Bank roads and at soldiers. In November 2000, bombs went off in markets in Jerusalem and Hadera.

In January of 2001, representatives from both sides met again in Taba, the Egyptian resort town on the Gulf of Aqaba, to make one final attempt to negotiate some type of settlement. The Taba talks represent the last serious peace negotiation and the closest both the Israelis and Palestinians had come to an agreement. The negotiations

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[58] Shamir and Shikaki, 66.
[59] Bar-Tal

were based on proposals made by President Clinton during his last days in office in December of 2000. Clinton's proposals included: that the June 1967 borders would be the "basis" for the borders for a two-state solution, Israel should annex 6 percent of the West Bank where most of the Jewish settlements existed and give the Palestinians the equivalent of 3 percent of the West Bank in territory elsewhere, and all of the Gaza Strip would become Palestine with the Jewish settlements evacuated. In addition, Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods would be part of Palestine and the Jewish neighborhoods a part of Israel. There was no settled agreement regarding the Temple Mount.[60] On security issues, the consensus was that Palestine would be subject to arms limitations. No real resolution could be made regarding the Palestinian refugees. Israel continued to be firm on how many refugees could be allowed back into Israel proper and suggested several other possible options to solve the Palestinian refugee dilemma. In sum, the Taba negotiations closed the gap on some serious issues, but the resolutions never came to fruition. With the change in political power in Israel and the US, as well as the increased violence, the Taba talks did not bring the two sides closer to peace.

In February of 2001, Ariel Sharon was elected prime minister of Israel. His election signified another political shift in Israeli society. Israelis had become disillusioned with the idea of negotiating with the Palestinians. They began to believe that Arafat had no power over his people and was instigating his people to act violently. Therefore, Israelis felt there was no real partner for peace on the other side. While Barak and his labor government had continued to negotiate despite the Palestinian uprising, Sharon had a different attitude. Sharon's government rejected any negotiations with the

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[60] Dowty, 156.

Palestinians on final settlement issues unless there was first a complete cessation of violence.

The violence took a more deadly turn as Palestinians used themselves as human bombs as a strategic retaliation against Israel's massive military force. This paralyzed Israeli society. The terror stopped Israelis from going about their daily routines, economic, and social lives. The underground military arms of Fatah and other Islamic organizations such as Hamas began sponsoring the suicide bombings as a way of competing for popular support.

In the spring and summer of 2001, the violence raged on. Suicide bombings took place in Netanya, the Dolphinarium Discotheque in Tel Aviv, and at a Sbarro Pizza restaurant in downtown Jerusalem. Jewish settlers were constantly under attack in the West Bank. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) retaliated with precise and sometimes not so precise fire from helicopters, planes, and tanks.[61] Jewish settlers also fought back by ambushing Palestinian cars. The IDF began assassinations of grassroots leaders and PA officials who they believed encourage and facilitated violence.[62]

In August of 2001, Israel reoccupied sites in what is known as Area B, areas of the West Bank under joint control of both Israelis and Palestinians. In Area B the PA controlled civil and administration issues. The IDF therefore took over certain homes and offices like mayor's residence that Israel claimed to be PA security command centers.[63] This invasion marked the beginning of a process of reoccupation that had been undone during the implementation of some of the Oslo peace accords. On September 9, 2001

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[61] Kimmerling and Migdal, 394.
[62] Kimmerling and Migdal, 394.
[63] http://www.mideastweb.org/second_intifada_timeline.htm

three different bombs went off in Israel: a suicide bomber at a train station in Nahariya, a minibus was ambushed by Palestinian Jihad in the Jordan Valley, and another Palestinian suicide bomber detonated himself next to a bus in Beit Lid. This violence resulted in Israel's incursion into the Jenin refugee camp, which had become according to Israel a staging ground for planning bombings.

The events of September 11th allowed Sharon to push the concept of Palestinian terror as a part of global terror against the western world. By doing this he negated all that Olso had done to legitimate the Palestinians as a national movement.[64] In a speech made to the Anti-Defamation League in May 2002 Sharon said,

> "There is a moral equivalency and direct connection between America's continuous operations against al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Operation Defensive Shield and any other Israel Defense Forces operation to defeat terrorism...They are acts of self-defense against the same forces of evil and darkness bent on destroying civilized society."[65]

The Sharon government largely believed that Arafat and the PA were complicit even if not directly responsible for the violence of the intifada. Israel attempted to weaken Arafat and the PA by holding Arafat under house arrest in his compound in Ramallah starting in December of 2001. This confinement lasted for most of the next three years.

The Passover Massacre on March 27, 2002 changed the rules of engagement for Israel. A Hamas suicide bomber killed 29 and wounded at least 140 people who were celebrating Passover at the Park Hotel in Netanya. In response, Sharon gathered government and military leaders the next day and eventually authorized the largest IDF

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[64] Kimmerling and Migdal, 394.

[65] http://articles.cnn.com/2002-05-06/world/mideast_1_ariel-sharon-operation-defensive-shield-arafat?_s=PM:WORLD

operation in the West Banks since the 1967 war.[66] Armored units moved into major Palestinian cities with the purpose of capturing terrorists and destroying facilities used to produce weapons. Strict and extended curfews were placed on Palestinian communities. Israel faced harsh criticism from human rights organizations on this tactic. They argued that Israel was "practicing collective punishment, which is prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention."[67] This military campaign called Operation Defensive Shield attempted to demonstrate the power of the Israeli military to defeat the Palestinian uprising. Unfortunately, Israel's military actions led to harsh criticism by the rest of the world as the casualties on the Palestinian side often super-ceded that of the Israelis.

The fiercest fighting associated with this military operation took place in Jenin and its refugee camp. During a two-week assault in April, the IDF used tanks and helicopters to support its troops and suppress local resistance. Some Palestinians and others described the attack as a "massacre." An investigation of Human Rights Watch and others disputed this charge, concluding that a massacre did not take place. They did however, document 22 civilian deaths and concluded that the IDF had used "excessive and indiscriminate force"[68] during its operation in Jenin.

As a part of Operation Defensive Shield the IDF engaged in battles in largely Christian Beit Jala where Palestinian fighters had taken over buildings in that small town. Right next door on April 2, 2002 Israeli troops occupied Bethlehem and dozens of Palestinian gunmen many of whom Israel considered terrorists, occupied the Church of

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[66] Tessler, 824.
[67] Tessler, 824.
[68] Tessler, 824.

the Nativity holding its clergy hostage and using the church essentially as a bunker. The standoff between Israeli troops and the terrorists lasted 40 days.

Defensive Shield ended on April 21st with Israel occupying once again much of the areas controlled by the PA. Israel captured and killed key activists, but it was not able to suppress the intifada. Terror continued in Israel both during the defensive and after. Suicide bombers blew themselves up in a Tel Aviv café and a restaurant in Haifa in April. In June a suicide bomber exploded himself on an Egged bus in Jerusalem killing 19 people and wounding 70.

In June 2002, the Sharon government began the construction of what it termed a security barrier and what critics call a "separation wall."[69] The building of the barrier was designed to prevent terrorists from entering Israel from the West Bank. It consisted of an electrified fence, barbed –wire, trenches, cameras, and sensors running alongside. In some areas, it involves high concrete walls with fortified guard towers. The idea of "separation," was not a new part of Israeli thinking. In the mid-1990s as a result of several Hamas bombings the concept of "separation" first entered the Israeli lexicon.[70] Reducing contact between Israelis and Palestinians literally would maintain security for Israelis, however for many Palestinians it divided communities, separated farmers from their fields, and made it difficult for some to market produce outside the limits of their towns. Many described and continue to describe the barrier as an "apartheid wall."[71]

The wall was controversial within Israeli society as well. Although there was a serious drop in the number of terror attacks after its constructions. For the religious

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[69] Tessler, 825.
[70] Kimmerling and Migdal, 372.
[71] Tessler, 825.

nationalist the wall divided the "greater" Land of Israel and separated settlers as well as Palestinians from the state. Some of those on the right believed it sent the message that the intifada succeeded in forcing Israel to make unilateral concessions. Critics on the left were sympathetic to many of the Palestinian criticisms of the barrier. They argued that total separation was impossible and only increased Palestinian suffering and anger reducing trust in the future for a successful peace process.[72]

The US on behalf of the EU, UN, and Russia proposed a "performance-based roadmap" in 2003 that envisioned three phases: (1) an end to all violence, Israeli withdrawal from areas occupied during the intifada, and a freeze on all settlement activity; (2) creation of a provisional Palestinian state by 2003; and (3) negotiation, by the end of 2005, of a final agreement based on the two-state model.[73] Unfortunately, the violence did not end. In August of 2003 another bus bombing in Jerusalem lead to the killing of 23 Israelis and the wounding of 130.

Palestinian politics changed during this "road map" period. The road map purported that a Palestinian state would be democratic, independent, and sovereign. The Bush administration pushed the Palestinians to create a constitution that "institutionalized checks and balances and the diffusion of authority and that, not coincidentally reduced Arafat's power."[74] Arafat named Mahmoud Abbas Prime Minister in March 2003.

Palestinian politics changed dramatically when Yasser Arafat died on November 2, 2004. Abbas officially took over as head of the PLO and head of the PA. He was seen as a political moderate and a critic of the intifada. In Sepetember of 2004 he stated, "the

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[72] Tessler, 825-827
[73] Dowty, 164.
[74] Tessler, 830.

continuation of the intifada was the worst thing. I think now that the intifada in its entirety was a mistake and it should not have continued."[75] In early February 2005, Abbas met with Sharon and a cease-fire was declared. Hamas and Jihad announced that, while they would not sign up to the cease-fire, they would not abrogate it, and in March all Palestinian factions pledged a period of calm until the end of the year.[76]

Conclusions

During the years before the second intifada, Palestinian society went through serious transformations. From 1993-2000, the Palestinian public perceived all negotiated attempts at peace as failures and believed that the Palestinian leadership was incapable of good and effective governance. As a result, the Palestinians turned to other sources of leadership such as *Hamas* and believed that violence and protest could lead to an end of occupation and a displacement of the PA. Young militants within the Palestinian community hoped to undermine both the Palestinian political system as well as Israeli security.[77] Shamir and Shikaki purport that the Palestinians emulated "Hezbollah's methods, the young militants wanted to force Israel to withdraw unilaterally from the occupied territories is had from southern Lebanon in May 2000."[78] Their hope was to bypass the negotiating table by delegitimizing the "old guards" power and forcing Israel to withdraw. The militants effectively put Arafat in a precarious situation and weakened his leadership, but were unable to end the occupation.

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[75] Dowty, 165-166.
[76] Dowty, 167.
[77] Shamir and Shikaki, 86-87.
[78] Shamir and Shikaki, 87.

The second intifada transformed the Arab-Israeli conflict once again into an interethnic war in which not just armies fought, but many civilians became perpetrators and victims. The violence lacked clear objectives for either side. It seemed that each violent act attempted to wear down the other side in hopes of defeat. However, what is unclear is what "defeat" really meant to either side. During the worst moments of violence on the Israeli side there was talk of transferring Palestinians out of the country. This instilled fear amongst some Palestinians as it raised the bar from occupation to what some would call "ethnic cleansing."[79] This never occurred, but it certainly speaks to some attitudes of Israelis towards the Palestinian people and their right to the land.

In many ways, the second intifada did not just damage Palestinian land, infrastructure, housing, and government institutions it also damaged Palestinian culture. The closures of schools and universities increased illiteracy and produced a generation of many without basic skills needed for rebuilding. In addition, according to Kimmerling and Migdal, it produced a generation of "youngsters whose greatest aspirations were inflicting death on themselves and others, whose hopes were not for this world but the world to come." The intifada stymied the development of a functional Palestinian state and in many ways disempowered the people even more.

In December 2003, Sharon outlined a plan for "unilateral disengagement " from the Palestinians in the event that there continued to be no progress on the Roadmap.[80] In early 2004, Sharon announced pullout from the Gaza strip as the key element to this plan. The disengagement plan divided the political right in Israel and brought harsh criticism of Sharon from his own political party. The left also criticized the plan for being ineffectual

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[79] Kimmerling and Migdal, 394.
[80] Tessler, 834.

because of its unilateral nature. However, by early December 2005 the Israeli government approved the plan. Those within Israeli society who protested the Gaza disengagement had hoped to create a "national trauma"[81] so as to discourage any future dismantling of settlements, but the evacuation for the most part went smoothly.

Despite Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and a small area in the West Bank in the summer of 2005, Palestinians continue to have little mobility and their economy is still quite depressed. Quality of life is low in many areas of the West Bank and Palestinians still deal with violence from Israeli settlers on a somewhat regular basis. Residents face a lack of water, poor garbage pick-up, and travel difficulties. The Gaza Strip now under Hamas control often faces humanitarian crises. Hamas also continues to instigate conflict with Israel through the launching of rockets into the state. Gaza and the West Bank now have separate and competing administrations adding a new dimension to the possibility of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. If peace talks were to resume it is curious whether agreements made in Oslo and in Taba will be revisited or whether the landscape of the conflict has radically changed so much that parties involved will need to start from scratch. In any event, hopefully those who come to the negotiating table will learn from some of the mistakes made by previous leaders. Specifically, that in order for peace to be achieved and sustained leaders must engage their people in the process towards living in peace.

[81] Tessler, 834.

Chapter 2
The American Jewish Response to the Second Intifada

Ever since 1948, when war breaks out in Israel, the American Jewish community responds through emergency fund raising campaigns, political lobbying and other forms of advocacy. The second Intifada was no exception. However, the violent nature of the Palestinian uprising and Israel's controversial responses had a unique impact on the American Jewish community. The complexity caused some American Jews to question Israel's policies towards the Palestinians. While the "establishment" leadership of the American Jewish community still endorsed a position that Israel must do whatever it takes to defend itself, certain sectors of American Jewry began to question whether the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip could ever lead to peace between Israelis and Palestinians. At the same time, American Jews watched Israelis (and some Americans) being blown up in a horrifying string of terrorist attacks. The accumulative effect of the years of occupation and resulting violence plagued American Jews during this time period.

Three trends developed amongst American Jews during this time period. First, Israel advocacy became the main way to support Israel. Israel advocacy took on several different forms including rallies, political lobbying, Israel engagement programs on college campuses, and Birthright tourism to Israel. Second, some sectors of the American Jewish population wrestled with what it means to be able to be both critical and supportive of Israel. This tension manifested itself in more liberal circles seen in the Reform movement's public statements issued about the conflict and debates within the Jewish press. Third, American Jews, particularly those ages 18-30 who had less of a

connection to Jewish life in general demonstrate a much more ambivalent relationship with Israel than the generation previous because today's young adult Jews draw upon images of Israel that are much more morally and politically complex than the generation previous.[82] While exacerbated by the second intifada these trends had been brewing since the 1980s. The Sabra and Chatilla massacres during the first Lebanon war and Israel's military response to events of the first Intifada led to many moral and ethical questions. Some would argue that by 2000 criticism of Israel was so commonplace that mainstream Jewish organizations sought to legitimize it. How did we get from the unabashed pride for Israel in 1948 and 1967 to a diversity of attitudes at the end of the second intifada?

American Jewish Attitudes 1948-1967

In the first decades of the modern Zionist movement, American Jews, particularly Reform Jews were divided over Zionist ideology. Some believed Zionism created an identity crisis. Could a Zionist also be a loyal American? Others considered Judaism a religious identity, not a national identity. Beginning in the 1930s and accelerating after the Holocaust and 1948, these perspectives changed. American Reform Jewish opposition to Zionism diminished and the creation of the state of Israel was perceived as a "form of compensation for the Holocaust and many years of Jewish persecution."[83] Support for Israel became a fundamental component of Jewish identity for American Jews. Support

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[82] Steven Cohen and Ari Kelman purport this in page 3 of their report "Beyond Distancing," but its important to note that Leonard Saxe disagrees in his report "Connecting Diaspora Young Adults to Israel: Lessons from Taglit Birthright." Saxe contends that younger Jews have always been less likely than older generations to see themselves as connected to Israel.

[83] Mendes, 105.

only increased after 1967, when Israel triumphed over its Arab enemies in just 6 days. Rosenthal summarized American Jewish support of Israel after 1967:

> The Six-Day War of 1967 transformed Israel into an object of secular veneration. More than any other single event, it forged the American Jewish unanimity on Israel...Immeasurable relief and pride in the magnitude of Israel's unexpected victory led to an outpouring of emotion that stunned even Israel's most fervent supports.[84]

Throughout most of the 1970s, organized American Jewry continued to support Israel's policies unanimously. The Yom Kippur war and the 1975 United Nations resolution characterizing Zionism as racism demonstrated to American Jews that hostility towards Israel and Jews persisted in the world. The logic followed that American Jews needed to do everything they can to support and lobby for Israel's right to exist. Mainstream organizations such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Council of Presidents, Jewish Federations, and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) galvanized support for Israel through fundraising efforts and communal relation initiatives. These organizations played an instrumental role in starting fundraising events such as "the Walk for Israel" and encouraging missions to Israel in order to ensure Israel's survival and well being. These unambiguously supportive attitudes of the mainstream Jewish community mostly continued throughout the end of the decade.

1970s and 1980s

A shift in attitudes began to be noticed beginning with American Jews on the periphery as well as some Reform and unaffiliated Jews. With the election of the Likud party leader Menachem Begin as Prime Minister in 1977 American Jews faced a much more right wing Israeli government. Feelings also altered when Israel invaded Lebanon

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[84] Rosenthal, xiii

in 1982. For the first time American Jews saw Israel elect to be in an "optional" war.[85] Israel as "aggressor" shattered images of Israel as victim.

American Jewish public opinion continued to transform when the first Palestinian intifada reinforced many American Jews' misgivings about Israeli policy. During this time period, the media played an important role in the turning of the American Jewish vantage point. After television viewers saw images of Israeli soldiers clubbing young Palestinian rioters they no longer felt so quick to defend Israel, particularly with the entire world criticizing Israel's methods of suppressing the rebellion.[86] Alexander Schindler, head of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) at the time, denounced Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin's threat to put down the intifada by "breaking the bones, beatings, and force."[87] As the U.S. condemned Israel's actions in dealing with the riots, American Jews felt caught between the increasing criticism of Israel's use of force and Israel's need to suppress the rebellion. Many American Jews began to wonder: Can we remain loyal to Israel while still opposing its actions? Albert Vorspan, then a lay leader of the UAHC, articulated the notion of "loyal opposition."[88] American Jews began to see Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a roadblock to peace. Increasing numbers of American Jews felt strongly about putting pressure on the Israeli government to trade land for peace and that Palestinians had a right to a homeland. More and more American Jews began to view Israeli occupation as immoral and unethical. Jewish leaders founded an organization called the Jewish Peace Lobby in order to be another voice, in Washington D.C. besides AIPAC which represents the mainstream.

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[85] Rosenthal, xvi.
[86] Rosenthal, xvii.
[87] http://www.reformjudaismmag.net/396av.html
[88] Rosenthal, 105.

This organization represented the growing dissatisfaction with Israel's response to the intifada.

1990s

In 1990, two events swayed American Jewish attitudes from a place of questioning to unambiguous support. The UN resolution on the Temple Mount killings in October 1990, only mentioned the killing of 19 Palestinians and the wounding of 140 by IDF soldiers. The resolution did not mention the Muslim attacks on Jewish worshipers at the Western Wall prior to the event. In the eyes of American Jews, the UN resolution presented a bias towards the Palestinians. To make matters worse, the US government supported the resolution, resulting in tension between American Jews and the US government. Seymour Reich, the chairman of the Conference of Presidents at the time announced in a statement, "We are deeply disappointed in the vote and in the role of the United States in supporting the censure of Israel."[89] The second event, which persuaded American Jewish public opinion, took place in the spring of 1990. The world began to turn its attention to Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The public learned that Saddam was developing nuclear-biological-chemical capabilities.[90] He also threatened to "burn half of Israel."[91] At this time American Jews' solidarity with Israel reasserted itself. The world focused on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent American response of Operation Desert Storm. The American government asked Israel not to fight back when Iraqi scud missiles reigned down on Tel Aviv. Rosenthal asserted, "To many American Jews, the Bush administration was sacrificing Israel's interests on the altar of the anti-Saddam

[89] Rosenthal, 114.
[90] Rosenthal, 114.
[91] Rosenthal, 113.

coalition."[92] Once again Israel's image as "victim" was restored in the eyes of American Jews. In addition, the Palestinians supported Saddam Hussein's actions and as a result, lost a lot of credibility in the international world. After the scud missile attack just like in the past American Jews unified in support of Israel and demonstrated their support through the giving of financial aid and through lobbying the American government to provide for the hardship that Israel undertook.

While the first intifada paved the way for the possibility of American Jewish dissent with Israel, the Gulf War once again changed the tide of opposition. Soon after the war ended, President Bush offered Israel $10 billion in loan guarantees for the absorption of 350,000 soviet immigrants, but contingent upon the Israeli government freezing settlement building. AIPAC quickly pledged to fight for the loan guarantees, but were conflicted over the settlement stipulation. The settlement issue was not one that all American Jews saw eye to eye on. On the one hand, Israel had placated the US by allowing it to be attacked without retaliation so how could the Bush administration expect something in return for its loans? Hadn't Israel compromised enough? However, at the same time many American Jews felt that the settlements were a roadblock to peace. Even though there had been an increase of pro-Israel sentiment amongst American Jews after the Gulf War a spectrum of opinion still existed. According to an American Jewish Committee (AJC) poll many American Jews opposed a reduction in American aid to Israel, but about half of those respondents also believed that Israel needed to stop settlement building.[93] American Jews made their opinions known through political

[92] Rosenthal, 114.
[93] Rosenthal, 119.

lobbying, letter writing to the Shamir government, and statements to both the American Jewish public and to the Israeli government by American Jewish communal leaders.

The degree to which American Jews should be involved in Israeli political affairs has been an issue since the inception of the state. This tension has often effected American Jewish relations with Israel. The tension manifested itself significantly with the election of Yitzak Rabin in June of 1992. Both American Jews and the Israeli public had mixed opinions about his election. For those on the left, Rabin represented a "gentler Zionism" that emphasized secularism and pragmatism.[94] For those on the right, Rabin did not take the religious nature of Israel serious enough and they opposed his willingness to trade land for peace. For American Jews a third factor led to a mixed reaction. At the beginning of Rabin's term he and his government told American Jews on several occasions that they should stay out of Israeli affairs. Seymour Reich of the AJC angrily said in July 1993, "The Israeli government is taking the American Jewish community for granted. There's a perspective that the American Jewish community is not needed."[95] The tension between Israel's political leaders and the American Jewish community is apparent in Reich's public declaration. Begging the questions: Do American Jews need to feel needed by Israel? What is the right of American Jews in Israeli politics? Should American Jewish public opinion factor into the determining of the policies of the Israeli government?

News of the Oslo Peace Agreements in August 1993 took most American Jews by surprise. The negotiations had been so secret that even the Israeli ambassador to the United States did not know about them. Political orientation determined American Jewish

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94 Williams, "A Kinder, Gentler Zionism for Israel?"
95 Rosenthal, 124.

response to Oslo. Liberal American Jews who are mostly unaffiliated or Reform Jews supported the Oslo agreements, but agonized over its advisability and its implications.[96] The Orthodox and Lubavitch groups who are much more right winged opposed the peace accords. The Jewish press became the space for debate over the Oslo Peace treaty. Opposition to the treaty seemed to have a much larger voice than those who supported it. Orthodox and Lubavitcher groups took out ads in the NY Times and the Jewish press condemning Oslo. They advertised that the peace treaty created a "horrendous deterioration of Israel's security."[97] One ad even suggested Rabin should be tried for treason. A number of Orthodox congregations piloted the project of adopting a "settlement." Contributions to right wing organizations promoting the idea of a "Greater Israel," increased significantly.[98] Supporters of the treaty remained quieter than the harsh critics. The Reform movement did take action by mailing a memo to 860 congregations, urging rabbis to use their High Holiday sermons to galvanize support of the treaty. Along with the memo the movement included a letter from Rabin, sample sermons, and a resource guide. While this step helped to increase the presence of Oslo advocates in the public arena it was too insular to make an impact. Those criticizing Rabin, his government, and the peace treaty were loud and overpowered those who favored the treaty.

The reactions to Oslo brought to light an increasing divide between progressive and Orthodox Jews in America. Rabin's assassination by an Orthodox Jewish fundamentalist could have deepened this divide even further, but the American Jewish

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[96] Rosenthal, 126.
[97] Rosenthal, 129.
[98] Rosenthal, 126.

establishment worked towards minimizing the crisis. The Conference of Presidents and National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council held a memorial for Rabin at Madison Square Garden in New York. In fear of loosing right wing support during a video of Rabin's life they omitted the famous handshake between Rabin and Arafat to make it a non-controversial affair.

Criticism of Israel became commonplace in the American Jewish discourse by the late 1990s. Mainstream Jewish organizations longed for a sense of unity, but were forced to legitimize debate around Israel as "healthy" for the American Jewish community. Most noticeable was a disparate of opinions within the political lobbying scene. Separate lobbying organizations such as America for Peace Now and Israel Policy Forum sought to establish their own lobbying networks in Congress. Their efforts were in part a response to Orthodox groups such as Zionists Organization of American, Americans for Safe Israel, and the Jewish Institute for National Security. The proliferation of Jewish voices in Washington indicated the wide range of opinions that existed in the American Jewish community. AIPAC could no longer be the sole voice of American Jews. Jonathon Tobin a writer and editor for Jewish newspapers summed up the scene in 1999 when he wrote that, "most members of Congress worry about being caught between the Jewish peace-process skeptics and the Jewish peace-process cheerleaders."[99] At the turn of the century the Jewish community was divided over the prospects of peace.

This changed slightly in July of 2000 when peace seemed possible at Camp David. After Arafat rejected the offers put on the table by Ehud Barak at Camp David the Jewish community once again came together to support Israel. They believed Israel had

[99]Seliktar, 128.

put more than generous offer to Arafat at the bargaining table. However, even within this new, more cohesive, Jewish community the cracks of diversity still remained and Israel no longer lay at the center of most America Jews Jewish identity. Ofira Seliktor concurred writing, "any hope that this new found cohesion would revitalize the Israeli-centered Jewish identity was dashed by the deep changes in American Jewish identity at the turn of the twenty-first century."[100]

The Second Intifada (2000-2005)

American Jewish Identity

What were these changes that Seliktor refers to in her writing about American Jewish identity in the twenty-first century? Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen claim in *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community America*, that "American Jews have drawn the activity and significance of their group identity into the subjectivity of the individual, the activities of the family, and the few institutions (primarily the synagogue) which are seen as extensions of this intimate sphere."[101] In sum, American Jews at the turn of the twenty-first century "are relatively more individualistic and less collectivist" and as a group "their patterns of belief and practice are more idiosyncratic and diverse, less uniform and consensual."[102] American Jews are less connected to being a part of a "people" and do not follow patterns of uniformity. Connection to Israel is often a result of being rooted in collective identity. Since American Jews had little sense collective identity they subsequently felt less attached to Israel. As the second intifada broke out, American Jews

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[100] Seliktar, 128.
[101] Cohen and Eisen, 184.
[102] Cohen and Eisen, 184.

saw the conflict through the eyes of a much more individualistic Jewish identity. This often led to little or no response from Jews 18-30, particularly if they grew up non-Orthodox. The mainstream Jewish community therefore made up of mostly the older generation engaged in a battle on two fronts: first, trying to figure out how best to respond to the change in American Jewish identity and second, how to engage the unengaged with Israel and encourage pro-Israel attitudes.

The Media and Public Opinion

During the second intifada, the media connected American Jews to the conflict. Most news sources shaped public opinion through depicting the violence as a black and white dichotomy of "aggressor" versus "victim." If one side is seen as the "victim" then the world feels sympathetic towards that side. This leaves little room for nuance and complexity. As a result, during the second intifada, American Jews were caught in the constant pendulum swing between Israel as "aggressor" and Israel as "victim." The back and forth in the media forced American Jews to figure out how to cope with a world that saw a two-faced Israel. American Jews experienced much bewilderment while figuring out how to digest both world criticism and sympathy for Israel.

Israel became the focus of much criticism for its "disproportionate response" to the Palestinian uprising despite the state of siege during the fall of 2000. In mid-May of 2001, Israel responded to a suicide bombing in Netanya by using F-16 fighter jets to attack Palestinian paramilitary installations. Israel maintained that this was a "legitimate counterterrorism operation."[103] The rest of the world viewed Israel's actions as a

[103] Rosenthal, 200.

disproportionate response. As a result of the disparity in force, the International Red Cross called Israeli West Bank settlements "war crimes."[104] Israel's use of the American bought F-16 fighter jets splashed across headlines. American Jews for the most part, "maintained a perplexed silence."[105] A little under a week later, the NY Times reported in their coverage of NY's Israel Day parade, "tens of thousands of Jews gathered along Fifth Avenue yesterday for a somewhat awkward celebration of Israel's 53rd anniversary."[106] While showing support for Israel's 53rd birthday American Jews could not put aside the violence that carried on even on that day.

Increased world criticism of Israel plagued Israeli society. American Jewish "perplexed silence" led some segments of the Israeli population to feel abandoned by American Jews. For Israelis internal criticism was acceptable, but criticism coming from the outside world was not. Opposition publicly criticized Sharon's government for, "perpetuating a cycle of violence."[107] Despite this internal criticism, Israelis were disappointed that American Jews did not unequivocally support the Sharon government. Israel expected unambiguous support, but instead often received silence and confusion. Images of Israel as both aggressor and victim confused American Jews and left them wondering how they could be both compassionate for and critical of Israel.

Israelis and Palestinians battled to be seen as the "victim" in the media just as much as they fought on the frontlines.[108] For Israel, media images of Palestinian dead and wounded became a direct threat to Israel's relations with the US, Europe, and the rest of

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[104] Rosenthal, 200.
[105] Rosenthal, 200.
[106] Lipton, "Violence in the Middle East Clouds a Celebration of Israel"
[107] Sontag, "As Emotions Boil Over, Arab-Israeli Violence Rages On"
[108] Wolfsfeld, "The News Media and the Second Intifada."

the Arab world. The Palestinians used the media as a means to convince the rest of the world that they were the weak side. The media became the space for the two sides to contend for "visual supremacy"[109] in the goal of eliciting sympathy and support for their side. Israel had to convince the world that the Palestinians used terrorism to obtain what they could not achieve at the bargaining table. Israelis believed that the international press was against them, so no news was good news. Therefore Israel sometimes made the decision not to use armed force in order to maintain the image of victim-hood. For example, after the bombing at the Dolphinarium Discotheque and the death of 20 young Israelis in June of 2001 Israel decided to show military restraint in order to capitalize on the sympathy they received.[110]

Like Israel, American Jews understood the power of the media at this time. After the suicide bombing at the disco and the ongoing violence the entire summer of 2001 Federation leaders created media tours of spokespeople to make the Israeli case to the Jewish community and the rest of the world.[111] Israel itself poured millions of dollars into what is known as *hasbara* or Israel advocacy to help maintain its image. This influx of publicity to create an image of Israel as defender rather than offender challenged American Jews to think beyond public opinion and the media. Yet, for many this was an impossible task. The constant violence from both sides provided American Jews little breathing time to create their own opinions. The waning connection to Israel in general weakened American Jew's desire to truly understand the complexity of the conflict. As a

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[109] Wolfsfeld, "The News Media and the Second Intifada."
[110] Wolfsfeld, "The News Media and the Second Intifada."
[111] Rosenthal, 202.

result American Jews were either silenced by the shock of the violence or quick to defend Israel's right to defend herself.

September 11th

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 awakened many American Jews to the deteriorating situation in Israel and the Middle East. Israel and American Jews came together over the common threat of terrorism. According to Rosenthal, "the attack demonstrated what Israel had been trying to tell the world for years, that the terrorism that it had fought for so long was not only a threat to the Jewish state but to the whole civilized world."[112] In addition, the media displayed images of Palestinians celebrating the September 11th attacks. The whole world saw these images as most people were glued to their television sets on September 11th and days after. These images fueled mistrust of Palestinians by Americans. They now wondered, whether the Palestinians were just Israel's enemy or part of a larger Arab conspiracy against the western world?

On the other hand, some American Jews worried that American support for Israel might be blamed for the September 11th attacks. These skeptics wondered if America might focus all their attention on protecting their own borders and diminish their support for Israel. The Bush government seemed to prove these worries wrong as they promulgated the notion that Palestinian terror was part of a larger Islamic extremism that must be fought. For American Jews sympathetic to the Palestinian population this idea presented a major challenge toward peace. If the Bush government grouped Palestinian

[112] Rosenthal, 204.

terrorism with a larger Islamic terror initiative then it would be easy to ignore specific issues and grievances associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel Advocacy

Israel advocacy existed prior to the second intifada. However, once the second intifada began, Israel advocacy became the foremost approach in combating Israel criticism and the diminishing relationship of younger American Jews with Israel. While Israel and the Sharon government worked on enhancing *hasbara*, the mainstream American Jewish community set out to augment Israel's efforts with their own form of public relations. During the first year and a half of the second intifada mainstream American Jewish institutions brainstormed on how to present Israel in a favorable light.[113] In the eyes of these American Jews the Palestinians were winning the public opinion battle and the way American Jews could fight back was to advocate for Israel's right to exist and right to defend herself.

Jewish communal organizations created a range of Israel advocacy organizations and think tanks. In the spring of 2001, American Jewish philanthropists Leonard Abramson, Michael Steinhardt, and Edgar Bronfman created a think tank entitled, "Emet." American donors pumped millions of dollars into this think tank.[114] They created it without consulting Israel's Foreign Ministry demonstrating a desire for American Jews to wage their own battle against the Palestinian uprising. The lack of consultation might have also stemmed from a belief that Israel could not win the public opinion battle on her own. Emet sought to redress biased media coverage. In addition, the organization aimed

[113] Jordan, "New effort raises questions about Israeli P.R."
[114] Jordan, "New effort raises questions about Israeli P.R."

to downplay the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and increase the awareness of the threats of Iraq and Iran to the United States. The creation of Emet demonstrated the great concern of the mainstream American Jewish community about Israel's image and its willingness to spend money to keep Israel's image intact.

The outbreak of the intifada also increased public support for AIPAC and its lobbying efforts. With the failure of the Oslo peace process, the increasing amount of right leaning American Jews, and the election of Ariel Sharon, AIPAC reclaimed its role as the most powerful Jewish lobby leaving liberal lobbying organizations out of the picture.[115]

Many Jewish organizations initiated emergency Israel solidarity campaigns. The United Jewish Community (UJC) started an emergency campaign to raise money for aid for the victims of the Passover seder bombing in Netanya on March 27, 2002. The devastation of the Passover bombing on the entire Jewish world was so severe that the Jewish press compared it to *Kristallnacht*.[116] Federations across North America started emergency fundraising campaigns entitled "Israel Now." They raised over 90 million dollars. This sense of emergency tapped into the old American Jewish value that when Israel is in troubled it is the obligation of American Jews to send financial support.

In addition to financial support, American Jews responded by taking to the streets with a passion that had not been seen since the outbreak of the intifada. Advocacy took the form of activism. On April 7, 2002 Rabbi Avi Weiss coordinated a rally that drew over 10,000 people.[117] A week later the Conference of Presidents and the UJC organized

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[115] Rosenthal, 199.
[116] Rosenthal, 211.
[117] Rosenthal, 212.

a rally in Washington, D.C. The theme of the rally was, "Wherever We Stand, We Stand with Israel." This rally attracted over 100,0000 people and demonstrated American Jewish support for Israel. While "support" or "solidarity" meant different things to different constituencies, the majority of participants wanted to show support for Ariel Sharon and his government's efforts to combat terrorism.

Israel advocacy as a form of protest challenged American Jews who wanted to work towards peace. The goal of the DC rally and of organizations like Emet and AIPAC was solidarity, not "peace now". While a predominant amount of American Jews did not see peace in Israel's future anytime soon, the solidarity movement created a dilemma for liberal Jews who believed that occupation and a clash of ideology had led to this second Palestinian uprising. Yet, just as before, the liberal voice could not be heard in any significant way in comparison to the Israel solidarity movement.[118]

Israel advocacy and solidarity became a central tenet of the mainstream Jewish communities' mission and continues to this day. Other organizations like the Israel Campus Coalition and Israel 21 c. seek to engage in educating American Jews and other communities to go beyond the "headlines" to show that Israel is a multi-faceted nation that is committed to democracy and peace, but without risking its safety and security.

The Second Intifada and the American College Campus

During this time period Israel advocacy organizations focused on the American college campus. The college campus became a forum for anti-Israel sentiment due to the commitment to freedom of speech and an "internationalization of the college campus"

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[118] Rosenthal, 213.

(an increase in the amount of foreign- born students and professors) who are often more critical of Israel than American born citizens.[119] When Oslo failed and two years later Israel reoccupied parts of Palestinian controlled West Bank, Israel faced an increase of scrutiny on college campuses throughout the US. Simultaneously, studies began to show that the "next generation" of American Jews meaning 18-29 year olds had little place for Israel in their Jewish identities and had a decreasing interest in Jewish organizational life.[120] The college campus thus became the place where Jewish philanthropists and mainstream organizations felt they could target this generation of Jews and focus on Israel engagement, advocacy, and Jewish identity building.

In March of 2002, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, in cooperation with a network of national organizations committed to promoting Israel education and advocacy on college campuses by creating the Israel on Campus Coalition (ICC). Formed in response to the rise in anti-Israel activities on college campuses the ICC's aim back then (and until today) is to focus on a "pro-active" and "pro-Israel" agenda.[121]

The ICC facilitates cooperation amongst various organizations with similar Israel advocacy agendas. They focus in arming students with how to combat anti Israel campus activities such as divestment and sanctions (BDS) efforts against Israel, anti-Israel rhetoric and protests on campus, and other anti-Israel initiatives such as boycotts. Student groups and Hillels could apply for grants to fund programming in line with the goals of

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[119] Mearsheimer and Walt, 178.
[120] Luntz, 3.
[121] http://www.israelcc.org/about

the ICC. Conferences sponsored by the ICC, AIPAC, and Hillel helped to bring students together to think about how to promote Israel on campus.

It is questionable how effective the ICC and its advocacy methods were during this time period. A study sponsored by The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies entitled, "Israel in the Age of Eminem" found that Jewish organizations "are not connecting effectively with young Jews."[122] Bronfman philanthropies commissioned the study as a result of the outbreak of anti-Israel activities on college campuses and their belief that there was "little difference in the way young Jews and young non-Jews relate to Israel and the Middle East conflict, in spite of daily coverage of these issues in news headlines."[123] In the opening letter of the report, Jeffrey Solomon mentions the difference between the previous and the current generations. He writes, "Our concern is that if 1967 was a catalyst for many in the previous generation to reconsider their Jewish identities in a positive light, the events of the past year may ultimately be remembered as having the opposite effect." Solomon's words are an excellent summary of the attitudes shared by several Jewish community leaders at the time that the events of the second intifada have humiliated many young American Jews.

The study found that younger Jews want to make their own decisions about support for Israel and did not respond well to expressions of "group think."[124] The researcher Frank Luntz suggested within the report that the methods of advocacy being used by such organizations as the ICC did not provide opportunities for students to think and question Israel on their own terms. However, the report does indicate that Israel

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[122] Luntz, 3.
[123] Luntz, 3.
[124] Luntz, 7.

suffered from poor PR and needed more effective advertising. The report suggested the following guidelines: less is more, talk peace, facts are more important than slogans, relate both Jewish and Israel messaging to America, overtly religious appeals will fail, use visuals more than dense copy, and ask for their participation.[125] Even though the report seems to disagree with some of the ways mainstream Jewish organizations had engaged in Israel advocacy on campus it does not argue against it. Rather, it believes mainstream Jewish organizations need to use current trends in advertising and culture to get the pro-Israel message across.

Luntz's study is still significant to the debate today on how effective the American Jewish establishment is at creating Israel engagement. On June 10, 2010, Peter Beinart wrote an article in *The New York Review of Books* called, "The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment." The first several paragraphs discuss Luntz's study in order to demonstrate the study's irony at the time. In his analysis of Luntz's research Beinart wrote,

> The only kind of Zionism they [the students] found attractive was a Zionism that recognized Palestinians deserving of dignity and capable of peace, and they were quite willing to condemn an Israeli government that did not share those beliefs. Luntz did not grasp the irony. The only kind of Zionism they found attractive was the kind that the American Jewish establishment has been working against for most of their lives.[126]

Beinart points out that Luntz's report failed to fully understand the attitudes and identities of Jewish college students at the time. Perhaps, this was because in essence his report came from part of that establishment. Despite this gap in his analysis, Luntz's report provided an accurate depiction of indifference and disconnection amongst college

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[125] Luntz, 9.
[126] Beinart, 2.

students when it came to Israel. This only confirmed a need to build a stronger connection between the next generation and Israel. Therefore, the college campus became a microcosm for mainstream Jewish organizations to figure out how to connect people to Israel without actually going to Israel.

Hillels and Israel advocacy groups on campus ran events such as Israel fairs, Yom Ha'aztmaut celebrations, panel discussions, and brought Israelis to campuses for students to meet and converse with. The goal was to make Israel relevant to young Jews and lessen the distance without actually having to travel there. Yet, travel to Israel was seen as the most effective way to build attachment to Israel. While giving money, political advocacy, and religious ties remained prominent methods of building connection between Diaspora Jews and Israel,[127] by the 1990s travel to Israel was the primary strategy for building personal connection to the State of Israel, especially among teens and young adults.

Israel Tourism

Organized Diaspora Jewish youth tours to Israel began in the 1950s. Young Judea paved the way in 1951 with its "Summer-in Israel Course." Around the same time other Zionist youth movements established summer in Israel programs. Shortly after, the Conservative and Reform movements established summer trips through their congregational youth movements: United Synagogue Youth (USY) and National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) respectively.[128] These trips mirrored the Israeli conception of *tiyul*, traveling around Israel seeing sights and hiking as an educational

[127] Saxe, 3.
[128] Kelner, 32.

experience. These early Diaspora trips had a broader vision than *tiyul* and included prayer, study, group-building, physical labor, and meetings with Israeli counterparts. Strengthening Jewish identity was the predominant goal of these trips. Some of the more explicit Zionists trips encouraged *aliya*. For many youth, going to Israel was a fundamental part of growing up in a Jewish youth movement. Designers of the Israel trip experience saw traveling to Israel as instrumental to strengthening a sense of belonging to the Jewish people. The participants traveled to Israel not just to learn about Israel. Rather, Israel was the context for creating a deeper connection to peers, Jewish history, and Jewish community.

After the Six-Day War and through the end of the twentieth century, enrollment in summer programs to Israel ranged from 4,000 to 10,000 people annually. After the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000, enrollment in summer programs fell to between 1,000 and 2,000 participants.[129] In general, incoming tourism to Israel dropped by 62 percent during March 2001.[130] Many cancellations were made by Jewish organizations that continuously proclaimed their solidarity with Israel. Israelis found this to be a mixed message of support.

The concept of tourism to Israel as a method of Jewish identity building peaked with the introduction of " Taglit-Birthright Israel" in 1998. The idea came from the increasingly concerned American Jewish leadership about the decline and lethargy of the American Jewish community.[131] The Charles R. Bronfman Foundation tackled this concern through research and found that Jews who traveled to Israel were "more likely to

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[129] Kelner, 35.
[130] Rosenthal, 200.
[131] Kelner, 41.

affirm the salience of Jewish identity."[132] This evidence convinced the foundation and other philanthropists of the value of the Israel experience programs. Recruitment for Taglit-Birthright began in autumn 1999 and the first trips departed later in the year.

The second intifada led to a new framing of the program's purpose. Instead of a means of identity building, Taglit increasingly became a means of fostering political support for Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians.[133] An article in January 2002 about Hillel International's creation of a Department of Campus Israel Affairs grouped Birthright Israel with the creation of the Israel Affairs Department as a combined effort to educate college students about Israel and Zionism. The article clearly expresses the desire of Hillel to teach students about "the Zionist movement and what the Zionist movement -- which led to the establishment of the state of Israel." The Birthright trip was seen as another tool for Israel advocacy. As Nielson, wrote, "This newly developed outreach works in adjunct with Hillel's Birthright Israel...which allows Jewish students to heighten their awareness by visiting Israel for free and meet with Israeli cultural and political figures like Shimon Peres."[134] The Birthright Israel experience no longer was just a Jewish identity builder, it was a way the American Jewish community could show support for Israel and combat anti-Israel rhetoric. Additionally, the trips' economic contributions to the Israeli tourism sector helped to accomplish the goal of financial support. As long as American Jews were coming to Israel and spending money, Israel felt supported by the American Jewish Diaspora.

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[132] Kelner, 41.
[133] Kelner, 43.
[134] Nielsen, "Hillel Introduces Israel Advocacy: Jewish Organization Welcomes New Department of Campus Israel Affairs."

Creating a personal connection to Israel is significant to increasing attachment and what better way to do this then to actually go to the land, travel, tour, and meet its citizens. Steven Cohen's research finds that trips to Israel matter when it comes to increasing Israel attachment.[135] However, he notes the more Jewishly involved a person is the more likely that person will travel to Israel, and as involvement increases the frequency of travel there is most likely to increase. In sum, self-selection plays an important role in determining who is likely to participate in an Israel trip.[136] Therefore, it seems that Cohen and Kelman are skeptical on how far-reaching Israel trips are in making a greater impact on the larger young American Jewish population who might not be Jewishly involved. It's possible that Israel trips can only do so much and reach so many.

There has been much debate over the lasting effects of trips to Israel on young American Jew's Jewish identity. Many wonder how long the trip's euphoria lasts without proper follow-up. However, it is clear that going to Israel at some point, "is almost a requirement for a young person to feel highly attached to Israel."[137] In contrast, an older generation might manage to develop a close relationship with Israel without having to go there.

While Israel trip participation dropped during some of the worst years of the intifada, interest in Birthright remained steady. According to Saxe's research, "Interest in Taglit continued through the darkest days of the Intifada and, in many cases participants did the un-Jewish act of defying their parents who were concerned about the security

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[135] Cohen and Kelman, 17.
[136] Cohen and Kelman, 17.
[137] Cohen and Kelman, 18.

situation."[138] The success of Birthright demonstrates young Jews desire to travel and see Israel, whether it is because the trip is "free" or because it is about "pilgrimage" is another whole story. However, it is clear that the experience can be life changing and has the potential to transform a young person's relation to Israel. Since the creation of Birthright and an increase in investment in short-term trips to Israel, there was a renewed interest in funding longer-term programs as well.[139] For many who go to Israel one time is not enough and travel to Israel becomes an essential part of living a Jewish life in the Diaspora.

Reform Movement Response

The Reform movement responded to the second intifada in various ways. At the beginning of the uprising the movement displayed a tremendous amount of disappointment in the failed peace process and lack of peace partner on the Palestinian side. In June 2001, Rabbi Eric Yoffie president of the UAHC said in a speech to his national board that he had been wrong about Palestinian intentions. He said, "We have believed, along with our allies in the peace camp, that if an Israeli prime minister would be brave enough to say that Israel must choose peace over territories, the Palestinian Authority would also choose peace." Similarly in his presidential sermon to the Central Conference of American Rabbis Rabbi Martin S. Weiner stated his disappointment with the failed peace process and influx of violence. He said, "So many of us are now asking ourselves the ultimate question, a question that seems to negate years of hopes and dreams for us as rabbis: 'Is there a real partner for peace within the

[138] Saxe, 3.
[139] Kelner, 44.

Palestinian leadership or the Palestinian people?'" His sermon expressed a feeling of dismay and agreement with Rabbi Yoffie about Palestinian intentions.

Besides disappointment, the movement faced two tough decisions during this time period. The first was whether to cancel the NFTY in Israel trips during the summer of 2001 and the second was whether to cancel the Year in Israel program at Hebrew Union College. The UAHC decided to cancel the NFTY in Israel trips to the shock of many.[140] Rabbi Yoffie expressed heartbreak over the decision and said it was the single most difficult decision he had to make as president.[141] Rabbi David Ellenson expressed the same sentiment when then Dean of the HUC-JIR campus in Israel told Ellenson he had to let students go home early in the Spring of 2002. Ellenson remarked, " [it was the] worst moment in my presidency."[142] In his article one year later in Contact magazine in 2003, "Solidarity Breeds Responsibility" Ellenson wrote,

> The task of maintaining the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Year-in-Israel Program for all our cantorial, education and rabbinic students during these past months of terror in Israel has provided such a trial to the HUC-JIR community.[143]

The decisions to cancel the NFTY in Israel Program and end the HUC Year-In-Israel Program early tore at the heart-strings of the Reform movement's leadership. It was an example of an older generation's love for Israel and hope for peace being destroyed by an endless cycle of violence.

Politically, the movement expressed frustration and quandary over the second Palestinian uprising. Rabbi David Sapperstein, head of the Religious Action Center the

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[140] Rosenthal, 201.
[141] http://urj.org/about/union/leadership/yoffie/archive/tripsuspension/
[142] Interview with David Ellenson
[143] Ellenson, "Solidarity Breeds Responsibility."

Reform movement's lobbying wing, reflects the dilemma in this quote, "Palestinian suicide bombers and Yasser Arafat's moral and political bankruptcy in terms of leading the path back to the diplomatic table has not left the people who believe in [former Prime Minister] Rabin's vision with a political program to follow."[144] In his biennial address in Minneapolis in 2003, Rabbi Yoffie expressed the dilemma that liberal Jews face, "Arafat has shown himself incapable of making peace. We remember his rejection of the Barak-Clinton peace initiative and his constant encouragement of so-called martyrdom. And we remember too that the words "Jewish people" and "Jewish state" never pass his lips."[145] Significantly, in both Yoffie and Sapperstein's statements is their mention and desire for peace. Unique to the time the Reform movement still expressed a desire to figure out how peace could be possible, whereas many other mainstream Jewish organizations focused on solidarity and promoting Israel's right to self-defense.

Similar to the rest of the Jewish world, the Reform movement also became aware of a need to respond to the changing American Jewish identity. In that same biennial speech Yoffie acknowledged that American Jews have a diminished connection to Jewish peoplehood, which ultimately affected their connection to Israel. This is illustrated in this section of his speech,

> American Jews-and I am intentionally excluding Canadians-have less and less feeling for peoplehood. Every study that we have indicates that our ties to the Jewish state and to Jews throughout the world are weakening. This is particularly true of the young, who do not see any reason why they should care about Jews in Minsk, Paris, or Tel Aviv.[146]

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[144] Rosenthal, 213.
[145] http://urj.org/about/union/leadership/yoffie/biennialsermon03/
[146] http://urj.org/about/union/leadership/yoffie/biennialsermon03/

At that biennial the Reform movement laid out several initiatives with the hopes of connecting young Jews to a larger Jews collective. One initiative entitled "Packing for College" targeted high school students gearing up to apply to college to provide them with tools on how to lead a Jewish life while at college. Like other Jewish organizations the Reform movement was attempting to engage the college age generation with a sense of Jewish connection.

Conclusions

American Jews' relationship with Israel has largely been determined by generational and historical experience. The days leading up to the Six-Day War and the war itself, where it seemed that Israel might be overrun by its outside enemies, shaped the baby boomer's relationship with Israel. The aftermath of the Yom Kippur war where the world heavily criticized Israel and Zionism also had profound effects. With these events in the backdrop as the baby boomers grew-up, Beinart summarized that, "Israel became their Jewish identity, often in conjunction with the Holocaust, which the 1967 and 1973 wars helped make central to American Jewish life."[147] Israel for the baby boomer generation was much more secular, much less divided, and less shaped by the occupation. These characteristics have changed and therefore the children of the baby boomers have grown up with a very different Israel. For this generation, Israel is a powerful state that is often seen as occupier and aggressor and less as victim and defendant. As a result, solidarity with Israel does not necessarily mean unilateral support. This generation idealizes Israel much less and shows signs of hopelessness when it comes to envisioning an end to the conflict. They are more comfortable with criticizing Israel and many

[147] Beinart, 8.

subscribe to liberal Zionist ideology that values human rights, equal citizenship, territorial compromise, and sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians.

Scholars disagree whether or not young adult Jews are alienated and less attached to Israel than generations before them. Saxe believes that younger Jews have always been less likely than older generations to see themselves as connected to Israel. He also argues that young adults today are actually more interested and engaged than previous generations.[148]Cohen and Kelman challenge this view and believe that there is evidence that point to a "growing distancing from Israel...and the distancing seems to be most pronounced among younger Jews."[149] While studying survey data is one important way to better understand where American Jews stand in relationship to Israel, another way to explore this question is to speak in-depth with young American Jews and find out what their relationship with Israel is like; particularly, those who were in college during the second intifada. The events leading up to the second intifada, the intifada itself, and the events in its aftermath are some of the most significant in shaping what and who Israel is to young American Jews today. Taking a closer look at specific group of young Jews' experience in college and after in relationship to the second intifada provides a more personal insight into the psyche of this generation.

[148] Saxe, 3.
[149] Cohen and Kelman, 2.

Chapter 3
Young American Jews and Israel: A Focused Look

On two different evenings young American Jews from New York City gathered in my living room in Brooklyn, NY to discuss their relationship with Israel both during college and in their lives today. Each group met for an hour and a half. All had attended college at some point during the years 2000-20005. The first 7 people who gathered together I define as "unengaged," meaning they are neither affiliated with any Jewish institution or organization nor active in Jewish life. The second group of 6 people met the following week and I define this group as highly "engaged" with Jewish life, meaning they are affiliated with Jewish institutional life in various ways and they all had travel experience to Israel either before or during college.[150] I asked a series of questions[151] in order to have in-depth conversation about the second intifada and the participants' relation to Israel and their Jewish identity. The questions prompted responses that illustrate how the second intifada affected their relationship with Israel and their general connection to Israel both in college and today.

The qualitative data gathered from the focus groups provide this study with personal stories to complement the analysis provided in the previous chapters. Comparisons can be made between the experiences of those who participated and the accepted thinking on American Jew's relationship to Israel over the past 10 years. Comparing a group of engaged young American Jews with unengaged American Jews teases out the differences between the two group's life experiences and can provide

[150] For a list of participants see appendix I.
[151] See appendix II.

insight into the factors that shaped and continue to shape each individual's relationship with Israel.

While the participants came to the focus group with their own individual experiences, common themes or characteristics arose amongst the majority of participants. Two factors seem to determine the nature of the participant's relationship with Israel: the extent to which they were politically active in college and whether they had any personal connection to Israel either in college or today. Experiences related to these two categories seemed to have a great influence on attachment to or interested in Israel. A third commonality manifested from the focus groups around communication about Israel. Most of the participants described some story or directly stated that they changed how they spoke or didn't speak about Israel based on the audience. In other words, who participants surround themselves, either by choice or by coincidence, determined how often they spoke about Israel, the nature of the conversation, and whether Israel came up in conversation at all. These common themes bind these disparate groups together. While it hard to say whether the themes are representative of larger trends (considering this is a small sample of people that met for a small amount of time), many connections can be made from previous chapters to the stories of these participants. The similarities between the two groups suggest that it is possible that there are universal experiences that are representative of young American Jews growing up over the past 10 years.

I. Politics and the College Campus

The American college campus is often a setting where young American adolescents are exposed to new ideas, cultures, and foreign-born students. It is also a time for self-exploration and self-transformation. College students begin a process of disassociation from their family units as so many "go-away" to college. They begin to define themselves separate from their family of origin and as result form their own opinions, perhaps separate from their families, about politics, the world, and their identity. Young American Jews in college during the years 2000-2005 went through this process of growth with the second intifada in the background. Some were aware of the events taking place in Israel and Palestine, while others were not. In addition to the intifada, they also experienced September 11th, the Afghanistan War, and the Second Iraq War, thus, bringing the Middle East to the forefront of the news almost every day.

Negative Criticism of Israel

For many in these two groups, college was the first time they were exposed to criticism of Israel's policies and actions. Rachel, raised in Rockville Center, NY and graduated from Brown University in the class of 2002. When asked to think about what she remembered about her college campus's atmosphere around Israel she quipped, "College was the first time I ever interacted with people from other countries in any real meaningful way. And that was definitely eye opening for me like that there are whole countries…I always thought that every country supports Israel." At college, Rachel experienced criticism of Israel for the first time. Rachel reflected more on this and felt that she had been pretty politically aware in high school, but she felt ill prepared to

respond to criticism of Israel. She said, "We were fed such a one side of views. Wait, Israel is bad? We would go on walks to raise money to get Soviet Jews to come to Israel. I was relatively political in my head in high school." Her question, "Wait, Israel is bad?" expressed her confusion about Israel criticism. Rachel realized that she had not fully understood the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or that Israel could be seen negatively. Therefore, college it seemed became a wake-up call to her that something was lacking in her Israel education growing up at her Reform congregation and in NFTY.

Similar to Rachel, Ilene expressed discontent with her Israel education. She said in response to Rachel, "We were not set-up properly (referring to her religious school and her secular school)...Nobody talked about Middle Eastern history or politics until June 10th when classes end on June 20th. I wasn't really on top of current events." Ilene shares that she thought she would be more politically and Jewishly involved when she got to college like she was in high school, but her interests took her elsewhere. She said she only thought about Israel when she would pass protests about the conflict on campus. Protests it seemed made Ilene aware of a different Israel that she had been taught about.

Israel, America, and the Middle East

Mitch describes his relationship with Israel and Judaism as pretty non-existent. However he says while in college, "I was probably guilty of conflating the Afghanistan and subsequently the Iraqi conflict with the Palestinian conflict. It was just really tempting and easy to say Arabs are clearly bad and they are clearly culpable and if you think otherwise you are just a fool." Like the case for many American Jews at the time America's politics shaped Mitch's opinion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nani

mentioned that American politics caused people on her campus to care more about the Middle East and subsequently the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. She said, "The Iraq war changed things. At first it was just the Israelis and Palestinians and then all of a sudden we were there." As mentioned in the last chapter, September 11th increased attention towards all the conflicts in the Middle East. The media often grouped Palestinian terrorism with other Islamic extremism and Israel was in the crossfire. Even though college can often feel like a bubble, it was hard to escape from the constant media coverage of the Middle East at this time.

Political Activism

Rebecca describes college as a time where she became much more politically active and as a result her relationship with Israel shifted. Rebecca traveled to Israel three times before attending college. She grew up going to Jewish summer camp and belonging to a conservative congregation in Park Slope, Brooklyn. She shared with the group, "When I was in college I started to become politicized and my relationship with Israel started to change and the group and politics I started to align myself were very critical of Israel." During college Rebecca was also exposed to critical rhetoric when it came to Israel, something she had not experience prior. Rebecca began to ask deep questions to explore her relationship with Israel and her politics. She too blamed her Jewish upbringing for not teaching her to think critically about Israel. She explained during the dialogue about outside critique of Israel, "I had this visceral reaction. There was never any critique of Israel and then all of a sudden you are saying bad things about Israel and you have this…How do you criticize something that you potentially could still support in

some ways or have ambivalent feelings about it?" In her dorm room with friends, Rebecca explored these challenging ideas. These types of conversations she said took place all the time in her dorm where her friends tried to figure out who they were and what they believed. Significantly, two other focus group participants attended Binghamton at the same time as Rebecca, but said they never talked about politics with their friends. College is often what the individual seeks out. Rebecca found herself with people who had specific political interests that ultimately led her to reshaping her opinions.

II. Personal Connection Matters

Any type of personal connection to Israel appears to increase engagement with the conflict and the country. The research suggests that one of the reason's Birthright's programming is effective in building Diaspora-Israel connections is because the trip provides participants with person-to-person encounters or in Hebrew, *mifgashim*. Saxe writes, "Mifgashim are, perhaps, Taglit's signature feature....In the five or more days that Diaspora young adults and their Israeli –most --*hayalim* (soldiers)—travel and live together, the overseas participants learn about Israel directly from Israelis."[152] The concept of *mifgashim* can be expanded beyond just contact between young Jewish Americans and Israelis. Often times, any personal connection like knowing a friend who is passionate about Israel or who travels to Israel helps to build some type of attachment.

Relationships Between Jews Builds Attachment

[152] Saxe, 4.

Most participants in the unengaged focus group had little to no connection to Israel in college, but shared an increase in connection based on relationships they had developed since they attended college. Sharon had no connection to Israel during college and said that she had not heard of the second intifida until I mentioned this was what I was writing my thesis on. She said it was not until she had friends who were going to study in Israel did she begin to feel connected to Israel and want to travel there herself. She said, "It became this not so far away not so strange place. It seems I was missing something of who I was and who my friends were by never having gone there." She went on to say, "I checked Haaretz (an Israeli news source) all the time when I knew someone there [in Israel]." Sharon traveled to Israel for the first time last year to visit a friend who was studying there. Although, she said she had felt like she should have traveled there sooner it was not until she had some personal connection that she felt motivated to go.

Rachel, who went to Jewish camp and was active in NFTY, the Reform Jewish Youth movement growing up, assumed Judaism would be a part of her life while in college, but found herself making friends and a life outside of the Jewish community on campus. However, now at the age of 30 she is married to a person whose whole family is Israeli. She remarked, "Israel is just going to be a part of my life from here on in." Now, Rachel travels to Israel about once a year and stays on top of the news if any conflicts arise because Israel is now a part of her family-life.

Billie, grew up less Jewishly engaged, had no involvement with Jewish life on her college campus and ended up marrying a Catholic (as she puts it). Jewish practice is not a part of her life whatsoever. Though seemingly disengaged from Jewish life, she is in an administrative position at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). She shared,

> I work at JTS. I had no involvement in college. I have no recollection of Israel being talked about on campus. I meant to go on Birthright and I never did. Working at JTS it just seemed ridiculous that I've never been and I work with Rabbis all day. They already thought I was the worst Jew ever cause I am. So, I finally went to Israel…

Billie went to Israel when she had a friend there to visit. The friend and perhaps her work situation motivated her to travel there. Her mom even told her, "you're gonna die." Yet, she went anyway because of a personal connection and her Jewish relationships.

Emily felt connected to Judaism in college through teaching Sunday school and being a member of a historically Jewish sorority. She did not go to Hillel or participate in Jewish activities on campus, except when someone she knew encouraged her to come along. She remembered, "My Junior or Senior year there was a walk for Israel that raised money for probably the JNF, but I don't remember and I remember it was fun cause all the sororities [participated] and co-sponsored it and my friend Laura was in charge of it so like there was investment there." Similarly, Emily described not feeling much connection or interest in the events of the second intifada until the Hebrew University bombing in July of 2002. She said, "That was the first time something felt close to me in that way because I knew people who knew somebody." For Emily, relationships connected her to Israel and the intifada. Both moments held a place in her memory as a result of her knowing other Jews who had some type of connection. Therefore, her attachment seemed to increase vicariously.

Israel Advocacy

Some focus groups members participated in Israel advocacy on campus,. The unengaged group had little to no experience with Israel advocacy on campus, but a few

participants mentioned that they saw protests on campus relating to the conflict. Rebecca recalled, "fights in the hallways between Hillel groups and some other folks." Otherwise, most said they were not aware of any other events on campus. The engaged group had a different experience because of either their personal connections to Jewish life on campus or because they had a personal connection to Israel.

Being involved with Jewish life on campus both academically and socially distinguishes the engaged group from the unengaged group. Nicole, who was co-President of her Hillel at the University of Virginia (UVA) said, "I easily did three Jewish things a day." Kim described her Jewish involvement as, "a bunch of us in our class kind of took over (Hillel) and made it ours. A lot of the warmth was around Shabbat dinners." Hannah shared that she went to Shabbat dinners about once a month and was really involved when she first got to college because she had Jewish friends.

Kim described celebrating Yom Ha'atzmaut on her college campus because her friend Ariel would throw the party. Kim attended Carleton College in Minnesota. She described the college's Jewish community as small, active, and very grassroots. Events such as Shabbat dinners happened only if students organized them. Kim had a Jewish community and Jewish friends, which connected her to Jewish life on campus and to what she described as Israel advocacy, a Yom Ha'atzmaut party.

Nicole described a group called, "Hoos for Israel," which was a take-off of UVA's mascot the "Wahoos." The formation of the group happened a year before Nicole came to school in response to an increase in support for Palestinian self-determination on her campus. She described a certain level of tension between Hoos for Israel and Hillel when she said,

> Throughout my entire time there was a question of whether "Hoos for Israel" and Hillel were the same...and that was a really tough questions cause "Hoos for Israel" got a lot of funding from Hillel, but they were on the conservative side. There were a number of more liberal students who felt like they didn't have a place in the Israel advocacy group and wanted there to be more of a separation.

Hoos for Israel seems to demonstrate how Israel advocacy on college campuses could be seen more as PR for a conservative political view, rather than welcoming to all students regardless of political orientation. Nicole shared that the group effectively engaged students with Israel. She recalls when the group organized an Israel fair,

> The head of the Jewish studies department hated the fact that we brought in a camel. She wanted to boycott the Israel fair.... But, it was an amazing Israel outreach to the rest of the community cause it was a really fun fair. Like people got to go on camel rides and they got to smoke hukkah and eat good food.

Josh responded to Nicole's example of Israel advocacy on her campus. He said it was like they "created a Disney world." Nicole said, "And that was exactly the point...It was like Birthright." The group sought to foster connection via fun and engaging activities. Through her role in Hillel Nicole participated in the fair.

Josh and Nicole's dialogue demonstrates the controversial nature of Israel advocacy and perhaps some of its limitations. This type of experience and dialogue was absent from the focus group of the unengaged individuals. It is very possible that Israel advocacy events were going on many college campuses. However, unless the students were Jewishly involved on campus in some way, it was unlikely that they would know such programming was going on. In other words, participants self-selected; therefore its impact could only go so far. Additionally, Nicole's example raises questions over the goals of an event like and Israel fair. Is this really advocacy or just an attempt to promote

a positive image of Israel? Should Israel be presented as a "Disney land" in order to change the images of Israel as aggressor and military power?

Travel to Israel

The more Jewishly involved the more likely a person is to travel to Israel, suggest Steven Cohen and Ari Kelman. Additionally, as involvement increases the frequency of Israel travel is likely to increase. For the unengaged, many traveled to Israel for the first time because of personal connections. For the engaged, many traveled to Israel and as result created personal connection. Those in the unengaged focus group traveled to Israel much less frequently and for much shorter amounts of time. For the engaged group, travel to Israel has been a frequent and central part of their lives.

Nicole has been to Israel several times since she graduated college, but while she was in college her parents would not let her go. She recalled that this really shaped her college experience. She remarked that the sense of her parents forbidding her to go because Israel was a dangerous place was a significant memory for her. Travel to Israel is a central part of Nicole's life now and it is one way in which she maintains a relationship with Israel.

Josh also describes travel to Israel as a central part of his Jewish identity and his experience in college. Josh was abroad during some of the worst violence in the spring of 2002. He said, "I was in Israel in 2002...spring semester... I was told either you come home or you have to withdraw from the University. I stayed in Israel and I had to withdraw from Wisconsin...They didn't want any responsibility for us if we stayed." Josh remembers that this experience shaped his last year at college. When he returned

from Israel for his senior year he remembers feeling isolated and having no outlet to talk about his experiences in Israel during that semester. Hannah too constantly thinks about her time in Israel and wonders how Israel will fit into her life. Hannah has traveled to Israel so many times she asks the deep question: "Is it home? Is it not home? I struggle with that question a lot." For Josh and Hannah it seems that Israel became completely personal. Their experiences are so central to their identity that it is not even just about attachment, rather it completely shapes their life choices. Israel, its meaning and its place in their lives is something they struggle with on a regular basis.

Similarly, Nani has traveled to Israel several times and lived there for long periods of her time. Her relationship with Israel is quite strong and personal. As a result she explained, "I think about it [Israel] every single day. I am constantly aware of what's going on and what the news is. What American diplomats are going there and what's happening in a way that I wasn't in college." During college Israel was on her mind as well as she had traveled there prior to attending college, but now it is literally on her mind every day now and a place she could consider living in permanently.

Summary

The current generation of young American Jews does not automatically feel a connection to Israel just because it is "the Jewish state." For many this is because Israel is not seen as "homeland" or as "safe-haven." Sharon recounted that when she was younger she thought, "that's not my homeland (Israel). I'm from America." While Israel has not become her homeland per se, she does now see it as a "not so far away place." She tries

to follow the conflict and said she understood Israel's uniqueness when she traveled there for the first time. That bond had to be created through a personal connection. Sharon did not learn that connection from being raised a Jew.

Only when focus group participants feel a connection specifically through relationships or travel to Israel did they feel a deeper tie to Israel. In speaking about this generation Rabbi David Ellenson wrote, "so many person involved in these clusters seem to lack what I feel is a needed sense of familial connection to the Jewish people, and that makes them all too often indifferent to Jewish peoplehood or only critical of the State of Israel."[153] As seen in the experiences of many participants in the focus groups, personal connection led to some type of link to Israel, which then ultimately led them to having some type of stake in the conflict. Those who participated who felt little to no connection showed signs of indifference.

III. Communicating About Israel: Defensiveness and Isolation

Both focus groups discussed how they communicated about Israel. Many shared that they talked about Israel differently depending on who was on the other end of the conversation or that they felt defensive when faced with Israel criticism. Many members of the engaged group described having few outlets to talk about their feelings and attitudes about Israel.

Focus group participants from both groups described feeling defensive when responding to peer's negative criticism of Israel. As mentioned earlier Rebecca, shared that at first she had a "visceral reaction" to hearing criticism about Israel. Adrienne said that when the U.S. Department of State listed Israel on the travel watch list, Columbia

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[153] Ellenson, 5.

made an exception for students who wanted to study abroad there. However, many students criticized this decision. Adrienne said she felt defensive, "about Israel because people thought it got special treatment."

Many focus group participants described their college and their friends as very liberal. This meant students on these campuses often took liberal stances when it came to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nani described this, "It was the first time all of my friends were totally liberal. I loved talking with them about everything. And I just remember when it came to Israel feeling like this is where I don't want to sort of hear their side. There wasn't any place for me there, whereas with all the other ideas it was so exciting and interesting."

For many focus group participants who had a significant amount of non-Jews in their friendship circles, they found that they had to either defend Israel or defend themselves when talking about the conflict. Many shared the perception that non-Jews do not have the same emotional ties to Israel as Jews do and therefore look at the conflict with less sentiment. However, even the unengaged focus group members displayed some sense of emotional attachment to Israel despite being less connected Jewishly overall. Sharon provided an example of this,

> In college I developed my whole theory about Israel: you can talk badly about your own family, but no one from the outside could say it. And I felt very much like that, having a lot of non-Jewish friends. And I didn't have a relationship with Israel. And I felt very defensive about that to non-Jewish friends. I had to somehow support Israel as a Jew to these non-Jews who just didn't get it, but I didn't get it either.

Mitch described something similar. He shared,

> As a result of 9-11 I remember tensions being ratcheted up. I remember hearing people say things that were not pro-Israel. I didn't know anything about the politics

> so I didn't have any grounds on which to object. I don't know though I just felt defensive then. Cause Israel felt like an extension of the Jewish community in America. I thought saying something nasty about Israel was analogous to saying something nasty to a Jew on the street. Like it was racist.

For Sharon and Mitch, even though Israel did not have a central place in their lives it was still "theirs" in some way. They felt some type of familial connection that wasn't strong enough to keep them engaged all the time, but in the face of criticism caused them to defend Israel.

Focus group members who were aware of the second intifada felt alone in their dismay. Nani said, "I remember sitting at my computer and reading news…I just remember feeling like why isn't anybody else outraged. This is an outrage nobody cared. That's how I felt." Kim shared a similar feeling. When asked if there were any specific moments of the second intifada that she remembered she responded,

> I remember sitting with the NY Times in the center of campus. It's called the bald spot. It's this green area. And the front cover was Sharon up on the Temple Mount and sitting there with friends. Yeah and um just wondering…I think all of that year was trying to put together what I had experienced in '99, which was relative peace…and then to get back and have that NY Times cover and see everything just kind of crumble and that's a big part why I went back in 2002 cause I didn't find at Carleton a group to process that with fully.

It seems that for Kim there was no place to be express her emotions about Israel. For her, it appears that Israel felt as if it was part of some type of wider Jewish family and that family was under attack. In college at Carleton she mostly felt like her peers only cared on an intellectual level.

Summary

While focus group participants did not always remember specific incidents and conversations that they had about Israel and the second intifada, many could recall emotions that they experienced. Therefore, it seems that this group of Jews, whether

engaged or unengaged with Jewish life does have a sense that Israel is not just another country; rather it is a central part of the Jewish narrative. Unfortunately, many had a limited and narrow background about Israel before they attended college. This moment in time coincided with Israel's most serious conflict in their lifetimes. In fact, one participant, Hannah noted that she was in Israel in the summer of 2000 and she said, "everyone was so excited. I was in Israel. Wow, Palestine is going to be right there. They would look out and be so excited about it." The violence during the second intifada was the first time that young American Jews really experienced the terror of the conflict. Therefore, the mythic tales of Israel they were raised on were shattered at the same time that they were on their own for the first time questioning the world, questioning their identity, and questioning their Judaism.

Conclusions

Many similarities arose amongst the two groups because there is much that they have in common. However, they differ significantly on how much of a role their Jewish identity plays in their lives. The focus group of engaged individuals are now all currently either studying to be Reform Rabbis or are working in Jewish communal settings. Therefore, they are not just Jewishly involved, they have chosen to serve the Jewish people in a leadership capacity. The unengaged group could not be more opposite. They describe themselves at most, as attending services on the high holidays. Their relationship to Judaism is much more minimal. Some said they try and buy challah once and a while and feel grateful that they have Jewish friends and are married to someone who is Jewish. Another participant said she tries to remain aware and celebrate holidays. When it comes

to Israel, if there is a headline on the front page they will click and read the article, but they are not checking Israeli news sources everyday like members of the engaged group who read Israeli news sources, they try to speak Hebrew in their homes, and some even consider moving to Israel.

In college, the engaged group was much more Jewishly involved than the unengaged group. Those in the engaged group also traveled to Israel much more. Most went abroad to Israel while in college and have traveled there frequently since. Overall, the engaged group operates from a different knowledge base and shares nuanced views about the conflict.

The stories shared during the focus groups provide a small in-depth view of the how the second intifada seemed to effected American Jewish identification with Israel. The two focus groups also demonstrate the wide spectrum of American Jews' relationship with Israel and Judaism from little to no connection to very connected. The two are linked; connection to Israel comes out of connection to Judaism.

The focus groups depict a small segment of a generation who feel lost and often disappointed in Israel. Specifically, the unengaged group is an example of Jews who were Jewishly involved in high school, but when they got to college found little reason to continue exploring their Jewish identity. Perhaps, Israel had nothing to do with it or maybe it was one of several factors that made Judaism a complicated thing to engage with while in college. In any case, the unengaged group seemed to express disappointment that the mainstream American Jewish community somehow failed to provide them with a multi-layerd Israel education. They did not feel prepared to talk about Israel when they got to college. Rabbi Sharon Brous sums this theme up,

> We have failed to foster a real relationship with Israel---one in which we kvell over Israel's breathtaking achievements and also call Israel to account of its mistakes; we have failed to capture the hearts of a generation of Jews less interested in gestures of Jewish solidarity than in working alongside partners—Jewish and non-Jewish—to carve paths to a better future.[154]

Brous characterizes this generation's lack of connection to Israel as a result of the mainstream's Jewish community failure to be "real" about Israel. Beinart concurs and claims that the mainstream American Jewish community avoids public criticism of the Israeli government[155] and refuses to foster a Zionism capable of critiquing Israel. At this point, it is unclear whether the unengaged focus group participants would feel any stronger connection to Israel if the mainstream Jewish community could present Israel as less mythic and more fallible. Perhaps, what is done is done. However, what could make a difference is fostering Jewish connection in general. Providing places for young American Jews to feel engaged with Judaism could then ultimately lead to engagement with Israel.

The Future

Towards the end of each focus group I asked about what each person's feelings or attitudes were about the conflict today. The unengaged group had less to say on the topic and continued to emphasize a lack of connection, while the engaged group spoke deeply and with a lot of nuance about the future. Rachel from the unengaged group shared, "I will never understand and feel a connection to a land that I can't relate to." Her attitude demonstrated that Israel is just not central to who she is even though she now has family

[154] Brous, "Authority in Contemporary Times."
[155] Beinart, "The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment."

there and will be traveling there often. Rebecca shared dissatisfaction with the American Jewish community. She said, "there are so many American Jews that aren't critical." This she feels is so disappointing, coupled with the amount of Israelis she believes supports the occupation. She maintains hope, but finds it difficult to believe that the conflict will ever be solved.

The engaged group shared more concern over the American Jewish community's relationship with Israel than over the conflict itself. Nani said she felt concerned, "for a lack of concern for Israel anywhere." Josh shared, "As American Jews we have to understand what it means to support Israel and that is up for grabs right now." How to support Israel and talk about Israel were major discussion points at the end of the engaged focus group. The participants struggle with how to handle Israel criticism, a leit motif in the American Jewish community today. Emily demonstrates this struggle,

> I sometimes take for granted that I can be critical of Israel because I run in circles of people who care deeply about it and that the people I run in circles with all have a relationship with it and I don't have to worry that I am altering someone's view of Israel, but I also recognize that in a public way that people who don't have that relationship with Israel can be very affected. That I do have to realize that there are differences in the way that I communicate.

Kim and Nicole also share experiences of struggling with Israel criticism. Kim says when talking to people, she worries that their only experiences with Israel will be negative. These concerns do not seem to cross the minds of the unengaged. For them, Israel and the conflict is just not something they think about all that much.

Conclusion

The Jewish Federation General Assembly (GA) meets once a year and often has either the prime minister of Israel or another prominent Israeli political figure speak at the assembly. In 2009, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the crowd. He began his speech by describing a paradox: "the Jewish people…few in number, but luminous in achievement."[156] He then continued to describe some of the Jewish people's greatest contributions to the world such as monotheism, the prophetic vision of universal peace, and the power of people to transcend kings. He then continued to say despite our prominence we often could not defend ourselves in history. This past November 2010 the GA met in New Orleans, Louisiana. Prime Minister Nentanyahu began with the following words, "The story of the Jewish people is that of great destruction followed by miraculous redemption."[157] Thus, repeating the narrative of Jewish victimhood and the miracle of the Jewish people's ability to overcome it time and time again.

The myth is powerful and the message is the foundation for so much of our tradition. However, it has lost much of its influence in creating collective identity and ties to the State of Israel. This is most evident in young American Jews. Five young American Jews, members of the organization Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) interrupted Netanyahu at the GA several times to express their discontent with Israel and its policies. One heckler shouted, "the occupation delegitimizes Israel." They held posters with similar messages. Other members of the audience shouted back at them, "*Am Yisrael*

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[156] Text of speech from: http://www.haaretz.com/news/full-text-of-netanyahu-s-speech-at-jewish-federations-of-north-america-ga-1.4478

[157] Netanyahu, November 8, 2010.

Chai" "the Jewish People lives," one member of the audience went as far as to tear one of the protestor's posters as the person was being escorted from the room.

The Forward interviewed one of the JVP protestors, Hanna King, a freshman at Swarthmore College. She told the Forward, "I think I'm very much succeeding in practicing *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) and *derech eretz* (the way of the land) by standing up for the rights for all people. It is such hypocrisy for these Jewish leaders that I grew up admiring to say that, you know, that the Holocaust was a tragedy but what we're doing to [the Palestinians] is fine."[158] Ironically, the JVP's protest is a smaller example of the paradox that Netanyahu outlined at the beginning of his speech in 2009; a small group making a big splash within a larger context.

The incident at the GA is representative of cracks within the American Jewish community that started in the 1980s when American Jews began to take issue with Israeli's actions and policies. Today the rifts are much deeper, as a generation of American Jews, raised solely on overly simplistic and idealistic images of Israel becomes Jewish adults, leaders, and activists who view Israel with much more complexity. But, this is just one challenge facing the American Jewish community today. In addition, there are large segments of the American Jewish community who feel indifferent to Judaism and have no real relationship with Israel.

The years during the second intifada brought these two major trends to light and the American Jewish community has been conflicted about their existence ever since. David Ellenson described his discomfort when he wrote about young American Jews, "I am concerned that even when a committed and joyful Judaism is established, its spiritual

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[158] Nathan-Kazis, "Jewish Voice for Peace Activists Interrupt Bibi at the GA."

focus is removed from what I regard as the nonnegotiable corporeal element of Judaism – the Jewish people and the State of Israel."[159] Ellenson's fear could be because we lack new ways of fostering such a connection. Israel education based on overcoming victimhood and trips to Israel grounded in the belief that a trip to the "homeland" will ensure the survival of communal Jewish life in America might not be as effective as they once were. Young American Jews can no longer relate to the victimhood narrative because most did not grow up feeling victimized, nor did they experience watching Israel being victimized. While they did witness Israelis die in terrorist attacks, terrorism unfortunately has became somewhat normalized beginning with the events of September 11th, thus reducing its impact on the American Jewish psyche. Palestinian terror became grouped in with Arab fundamentalism, which no longer made terrorism just a Jewish or Israeli problem, but something the entire western world needed to fight against. As a result, unifying the American Jewish community over terrorism and Israel's security has seemed to fail. In order to move forward, perhaps we need to continue to change the way we do Israel education in order to create a more cohesive and realistic relationship between young American Jews and Israel. Lisa Grant proposes teaching Israel through a two-pronged approach. First, to "recast the myths, shifting symbols of what could be described as a 'dead past' into a usable past by adding layers of complication and nuance."[160] The second, though being more deliberate about bringing a "multi-layer" Israel into areas of Jewish life where American Jews already connect.[161]

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[159] Ellenson, "Authority in Contemporary Times."
[160] Grant, "Sacred Vision, Complex Reality."
[161] Grant, "Sacred Vision, Complex Reality."

In addition to changing the way we educate about Israel we must also continue to expand our definitions of Zionism. Michael Marmur purports that we must learn to be comfortable with ambiguity. The only way to do this he suggests is to be confident. He argues that we must be confident in facing up to our inadequacies, have the honesty to face up to grim prospects, and "the energy to appreciate the huge achievements."[162] Similarly, Beinart suggests that we must foster an "uncomfortable Zionism, a Zionism angry at what Israel risks becoming, and in love with what it still could be."[163] Living in a place of ambiguity or in discomfort can be quite challenging because it is often difficult to see both sides. Perhaps, this is why the mainstream American Jewish community is so uneasy with internal criticism of Israel. They are uncertain whether the critic begins from a place of love and connection. Ellenson said in his interview with me, "If you are going to be critical about Israel, at least cry about it."[164] But, perhaps love can not be the starting point. Realistically, maybe for today's young American Jews love has to be something one learns through different points of engagement: ranging from Israel education and travel that does not purport to hide harsh realities to integration of Jewish culture from both Israel and the Diaspora.

Programs like Birthright propagate the idea that travel to or fostering a connection with Israel is the way in which to strengthen Jewish identity in the Diaspora. This too feels like an old way of thinking. Noam Pianko believes that "spatial location has far less control on identity formation."[165] He asserts that vital Jewish centers can exist all over the world and that Israel, being the home to one of the largest Jewish communities could

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[162] Marmur, "Happiness inside the State: Toward a Liberal Theology of Israel."
[163] Beinart, "The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment."
[164] Ellenson interview October 6, 2010.
[165] Pianko, 205.

certainly anchor the global Jewish world. This model does not put Israel at the center rather it imagines the world like a computer network with "multiple nodes with a variety of paths connecting those nodes."[166] This could allow for the interchange of Jewish ideas and cultures, which could perhaps allow for a strong inclusive Judaism for the future. In this model, Israel is not the energizer bunny for American Judaism, rather the two communities work towards invigorating each other.

There is a loss in moving towards a model like this, but with every change some loss is incurred. The loss here would be a sense of nationalism. This model focuses on the exchange of Judaism as a religion and as a tradition, but less so on Judaism as a national identity. Perhaps, nationalism is a trend from the past and it is time to move on. Yet, I understand the reticence of doing so. After all, in many ways nationalism transformed notions of what a Jew is and who a Jew could be. The idea of the "New Jew," a strong heroic figure who can "work the land" came out of the nationalist movement. The possibilities associated with this identity perhaps helped our survival despite the Holocaust and perhaps continued to inspire us during the 20th century. But, it is clear that we cannot solely rely on these old narratives to bring us into the future.

An analysis of the American Jewish community during the second intifada demonstrates that narratives of victimhood have become stale. They no longer bind us together as a community. Nostalgia can only go so far, so the question is what does or what could? Perpetuating the rhetoric of a more liberal Zionism, that recognizes Palestinian suffering and right to a state is one important avenue. Perhaps, in addition it is essential for the mainstream American Jewish community including synagogues to have

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[166] Pianko, 205.

space for dialogue that welcomes all viewpoints. While I believe there is merit to protest and activism, it is clear young Jews or Jewish liberals do not often feel like their opinions are welcomed in all Jewish circles. Arguing is better than silence in this case. We cannot be afraid of criticism no matter where it is coming from. Instead, criticism can be used as a mirror to reflect back our insecurities and help us to define for ourselves our own relationship with Israel. I believe this is better than having no relationship at all. Finally, I believe that conversations about Israel should not just be political. While we should not ignore the politics, Israel's contributions to the world of science, medicine, and technology are worth recognizing and *kvelling* over. I think the integration of Israeli culture, Hebrew literature, and Modern Hebrew will only add another level of richness to American Jewish practice and spirituality. Additionally, old stories and myths should continue be told, but they just cannot be the only truths we share.

Reform Jewish rabbis often feel challenged about how to talk about Israel from the pulpit. They are afraid to be critical and they are afraid to only paint a mythic image of Israel. This is true for many other Jewish leaders as well. Like many of the engaged focus group participants, many American Jewish leaders fear Jews and non-Jews will only hear and learn about Israel in negative terms. The most important way to combat these fears and challenges is not to shy away from the debate. It is important for non-orthodox Jews to be knowledgeable, stay informed, formulate opinions, and share them with their constituencies. This will at least ensure that some type of new rhetoric and relationship models will exist, rather than none at all.

As we continue down this road of ambiguity and uncertainty it is important to remember that American Jew's relationship with Israel can be ever changing and

evolving. Particularly, as Israel is still a young state in the scheme of the world and as American Judaism continues to transform. It might be time to work towards a model of Jewish peoplehood that lessens a divide between American Jews and Israeli nationals. We can build Jewish identity through being role models for each other by teaching creative and peaceful conflict resolution, willingness to take risks, and learning how to embrace change.

APPENDIX I

Focus Group Participant List

Unengaged Focus Group

Rachel
Age: 30
Brown University '02

Billie
Age:30
SUNY Binghamton '02

Sharon
Age: 31
SUNY Binghamton '00

Adrienne
Age: 28
Barnard College '03

Mitch
Age: 29
SUNY Purchase '04

Ilene
Age: 30
University of Wisconsin '02

Rebecca
Age: 29
Binghamton '03

Engaged Focus Group

Kim
Age: 31
Carleton College, '01

Josh
Age: 28
University of Wisconsin '04

Nani
Age: 28
Kenyon College '04

Nicole
Age: 26
University of Virginia '06

Emily
Age: 28
University of Indiana '04

Hannah
Age: 24
Wellesley '08

APPENDIX II

Focus Group Questions for Molly Kane's Thesis

I. Biographical Questions

1. What is your name?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. How old are you?
4. Where did you go to college and what year did you graduate?
5. Have you ever been to Israel? Briefly, when was this, how many times, what type of trip?

II. Israel and Your College Campus
Think back to your time in college, your dorm room, your friends, your classes, your activities, etc.

1. How would you describe your Jewish engagement on campus?
2. What do you remember about the campus atmosphere around Israel?
3. How would your campus react when there would be violence or events hitting the news about Israel and Palestine? What do you recall about any specific events related to the second *intifada*?
4. Did you have any personal involvement with Israel related groups or activities while you were at college? If so describe the nature of your involvement.
5. What types of informal conversations did you have with friends about the Israel-Palestinian conflict or the *intifada* during your time in college?
6. Did your college have any Israeli or Palestinian educational programming, demonstrations, marches, or vigils? If so, did you attend why or why not? Can you describe these events whether you attended them or not?

Jewish Involvement Today

1. How would you describe your level of engagement with Israel today? Has it changed at all since you were in college? Give examples of how you engage (if you do.)

2. How would you describe your feelings or attitudes about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
3. How knowledgeable would you say you are about the conflict? Give some specific examples of how you stay knowledgeable if you do.

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