

# Together and Apart:

## Israeli Jews' Views on their Relationship to American Jews and Religious Pluralism

Findings from UJA-Federation's Survey of Israeli Jews 2017

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A healthy relationship between American and Israeli Jewry — the world's two largest Jewish communities — is crucial to the well-being of the Jewish people. Anyone who has lived or traveled extensively in both countries is aware of profound cultural, political, religious, social, and economic differences between these two Jewries. To cite just a few obvious examples, Jews in Israel are a majority in a sovereign Jewish state; American Jews are a minority in a state that is not Jewish. In the U.S., separation of church and state is a cherished value; in Israel, religion plays a major role in public life. Most young Jews in Israel serve in the army; most American Jews do not. Many American Jews are engaged with non-Jewish family and friends; Israeli Jews are surrounded by non-Jews, many of whom they perceive as unfriendly, if not hostile.

With huge stakes in the relationship between Israel and American Jewry and huge differences between the two, understanding the other is urgent. The leadership of each community operates with a series of often unfounded assumptions about what "they" think, believe, and value.

This report aims to help American Jewish leadership better understand the perspectives of

Israeli Jews that are important to both Jewries. We present findings from a survey of 2,050 Israeli Jews representing the full spectrum of religious and political identities, focusing on three areas:

1. Israeli Jews' valuation of the **overall relationship** with American Jews (or Jews outside of Israel more generally) — To what extent do Israelis see the relationship with American Jews as valued and valuable, and do they welcome the input of American Jewish leaders in policy areas vital to American Jews? Are they interested in the two communities learning about one another, and are they open to American Jews' views?
2. How do Israeli Jews relate to matters of **religious pluralism** in Israel? To what extent are Israelis supportive of religious activity on the part of American Conservative and Reform rabbis and communities, or their counterparts in Israel? Where do they stand on the recent Kotel controversy and conversion?
3. The ongoing **conflict with the Palestinians**. Augmenting the considerable research in this area, here we ask a few questions on relevant matters that pertain directly to the thinking of many, if not most, American Jews.

## The Survey

To address these and related questions, we conducted a survey of 2,050 Jewish citizens of Israel, ages 18 and above. Israeli Jews represent just under four-fifths of the Israeli public. Owing to the focus on Jewish peoplehood and related issues, the survey sample did not extend to Israeli Arabs/Palestinians. The survey was fielded online, in Hebrew, in November 2017 by Panels Politics Polling Institute (Dr. Menachem Lazar, principal).

The Panels Politics Internet Panel consists of 40,000 Israelis who agree to participate in surveys of all kinds, in return for a credit that can be converted into monetary reward after a period of roughly six months.

We sent invitations to 9,787 Jewish panelists that were randomly chosen by our sampling generator system (eNquera) as matching the required sample outlines according to gender, age, and

religious level. In total, 20.9% percent of them responded, yielding 2,050 eligible respondents. For an Israeli survey, the sample of 2,050 respondents is unusually large, allowing for in-depth analysis of several population sub-groups. The data set consisted of 77 survey questions plus 14 previously administered socio-demographic questions.

Due to the total size of our Panel and the efficiency of the eNquera system, no weighting was done after completing the final quota. That said, although the internet usage is spreading among the Haredim, it is reasonable to presume that among the most sectarian Haredim we will have some degree of under-representation, although getting smaller from year to year, as internet use grows in the Haredi sector. The tables below portray the distribution of the survey respondents' key socio-demographic characteristics: age, education, area of residence, and religious identity.

#### Age

	Percent
<b>60+</b>	16%
<b>45-59</b>	24%
<b>30-44</b>	31%
<b>18-29</b>	29%
<b>Total</b>	100%

#### Educational Attainment

	Percent
<b>Elementary school</b>	1%
<b>High school not graduated</b>	4%
<b>High school graduated</b>	23%
<b>High non academic</b>	25%
<b>BA</b>	32%
<b>MA and above</b>	15%
<b>Total</b>	100%

#### Area of Residence

	Percent
<b>North</b>	9%
<b>Haifa</b>	13%
<b>Center</b>	27%
<b>Tel Aviv</b>	24%

<b>Jerusalem</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>West bank</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>South</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Religious Identification\*

	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Haredi</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Dati</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Masorti-dati</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Masorti, not so dati</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Hiloni</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Just Jewish, other</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Note at points in this paper we refer to Orthodox Jews, and the term — taken from American rather than Israeli discourse — includes the Haredi (fervently Orthodox) and Dati (Modern Orthodox). Masorti (Traditional) refers to Jews who maintain some aspects of the religious tradition, but do not aspire to live by the strict standards of Jewish law. Hiloni (Secular) Jews, do not aspire to live by the Jewish tradition, although many observe some aspects of religious ritual, like attending a Passover seder or having a bar mitzvah. To be clear, we did not assign these labels, commonly used by Israeli Jews and frequently appearing on Israeli surveys; rather, they emerge from respondents' own self-classification.

## The Findings

### Near Consensus on Belonging to the Jewish People & on Israel as the State of the Jewish People

About 9 in 10 Israeli Jews affirm that they “have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people” and that “Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people.” And 63% strongly agree with the former while 74% strongly agree with the latter.

Responses to the two questions are empirically linked. Those who strongly agree that Israel is the Jewish people’s nation-state are more likely to have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people than do those who merely “agree” or fail to agree.

The two highly related attitudes testify to the widespread sense of collective Jewish identity among Israeli Jews. It is one expressed by way of a strong association between connection to the Jewish people and seeing the Jewish people connected to the Israeli nation-state, as well as widespread endorsement of both views independently.

<b>I have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	63%
<b>Agree</b>	26%
<b>Don't Know</b>	1%
<b>Disagree</b>	8%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	74%
<b>Agree</b>	19%
<b>DK</b>	1%
<b>Disagree</b>	5%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Wide Support for a Strong Relationship Between Israeli & U.S. Jews

About three-quarters of Israeli Jews value American Jewry, in part because of American Jews' contribution to Israel's security. While a small number of Israeli Jews dissent from this view, the vast majority certainly concurs with the notion that a secure Israel needs a strong and supportive American Jewry.

<b>A strong and thriving American Jewry is important for the future of Israel.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	32%
<b>Agree</b>	42%
<b>DK</b>	3%
<b>Disagree</b>	18%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>American Jewish support of Israel is essential for the security of the State of Israel.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	41%
<b>Agree</b>	40%
<b>DK</b>	3%
<b>Disagree</b>	13%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Most Israeli Jews Affirm Mutual Responsibility & Destiny With U.S. Jews

To a somewhat lesser extent, Israeli Jews see the two communities – Israeli and American Jewries – as mutually bound, with a common destiny. We see that 30% feel that Jews in Israel and Jews in the United States share a common destiny to a great extent, and another 45% express the same sentiments, albeit only to “some extent.”

Fully 93% of Israeli Jews believe that American and Israeli Jews share a mutual responsibility –

and most of them feel this to a “great extent.”

To what extent do you feel that Jews in Israel and Jews in the United States share a common destiny?	Percent
To a great extent	30%
To some extent	45%
DK	2%
Not much	20%
Hardly at all	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

To what extent does it seem to you that Jews in Israel and American Jews should be responsible for one another's welfare?	Percent
To a great extent	59%
To some extent	34%
DK	2%
Not much	4%
Hardly at all	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

In sum, large majorities of Israeli Jews see an important connection between the Israeli and American Jewish communities. This finding of a national near-consensus among Israeli Jews is especially impressive in a society known for conflicts and contentiousness over a variety of issues. Israel’s Jewish populace today resoundingly rejects the positions of the Canaanites, an Israeli movement in the 1940s and 1950s who believed that “life in Israel bears no relationship to Jewish life in the Diaspora” (Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel*, University of California Press, 1983: 18).

**Very Wide Support for Birthright & for Israelis Learning About U.S. Jews**

Given the feelings of mutuality, it follows that Israeli Jews lend very widespread support to educational programs that promise to teach U.S. and Israeli Jews about one another. Birthright garners a very hefty margin of support – 90% in favor, and just 6% opposed. The hypothetical idea of such a

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program in reverse – where Israelis would visit American Jews with government support – receives not quite as much support, but a majority nonetheless, with 63% in favor and 29% opposed. The existence of such a majority indicates a sense of commitment to actively nurturing the relationship between young Israeli and American Jews.

All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose Taglit, that brings young Jews to Israel?	Percent
Strongly favor	60%
Favor	30%
No opinion	4%
Oppose	5%
Strongly oppose	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

All in all, do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose government funding of young Israeli Jews to experience Jewish life in America.	Percent
Strongly favor	24%
Favor	39%
No opinion	8%
Oppose	20%
Strongly oppose	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Almost Half Have Visited the U.S. and More Than ¾ Have Family or Friends in the U.S.**

Further testimony to the extent of ties with America and American Jews can be found in the amount of travel to the U.S. and in the number of people who have personal relationships with U.S. Jews. Almost half of Israeli Jews have visited the U.S. In addition, as many as 78% report that they have friends or family members in the U.S., most of whom originated in Israel.

As a rule, contact, let alone relationships, with the “other” is thought to bring about more understanding and caring for the other.

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However, visits to the United States and personal relationships with American Jews do not have an impact on the attitudes of interest (outlined below). For example, support for religious pluralism in Israel, or for paying attention to the views of American Jewish leaders (both of which are elaborated upon below) is unrelated to whether or not one has visited the U.S. or has family or friends in the U.S. – once we statistically control for religiosity (especially) as well as political identification and education.

<b>Have you ever visited the United States?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Yes, more than twice</b>	21%
<b>Yes, twice</b>	8%
<b>Yes, once</b>	17%
<b>No</b>	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Of the following people you may know, who (if any) are living in the U.S.?</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Friends who were raised in Israel</b>	53%
<b>Other friends</b>	45%
<b>Family members who were raised in Israel</b>	46%
<b>Other family members</b>	48%

### **Valuing Jewish Life in Israel Over Jewish Life Elsewhere**

Notwithstanding their feelings of mutuality and interdependence with American Jews, by a two-to-one ratio, Israeli Jews believe that a Jewish life is much more meaningful in Israel than in the U.S. And a plurality of 46% vs. 41% see most non-Orthodox American Jews assimilating in the next 10 – 20 years. Moreover, the two views are correlated: those who agree that Jewish life in Israel is much more meaningful are also more likely to see non-Orthodox Jews assimilating.

On a certain level, these views are an expression of pride in being a Jew in Israel. At the same time, they bear a resemblance, if not a shared pedigree, with the views of early Zionist thinkers who posited two related views. They saw Jewish life outside of Israel as untenable of survival (owing to a combination of anti-semitism and assimilation). They also saw Jewish revival and sovereignty in Israel as a powerful alternative to Jewish life outside of Israel. Hence, early Zionist thinking remains in so far

as a majority of Israeli Jews' continue to share an ethos in which Israel has superior standing to the Jewry elsewhere.

However, the difference between early Zionist thinking and the opinion of the current majority of Israeli Jews is noteworthy. While the early Zionist thinkers did not see Jewish life as tenable at all, a large majority of the current Israel public does see value in a strong and thriving American Jewry (see previous section). There is also a significant counter-current, as can be seen in the sizable number of "dissenters." A total of 32% *disagree* that a Jew can live a more meaningful life in Israel, and 40% *do not* think non-Orthodox American Jews are on a path to assimilation.

Significantly, the majority/minority views are informed by religiosity. Most Haredim and Dati'im think non-Orthodox Jews will assimilate, the Masorti Jews are split, and most Hilonim lean in the opposite direction, rejecting the forecast of massive assimilation. Similarly, three times as many Dati'im as Hilonim strongly agree that Jewish life is more meaningful in Israel than in the U.S.

<b>A Jew can lead a much more meaningful Jewish life in Israel than in the United States.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	36%
<b>Agree</b>	29%
<b>DK</b>	3%
<b>Disagree</b>	22%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>In the next ten to twenty years, most American Jews who are not Orthodox will assimilate.</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	13%
<b>Agree</b>	33%
<b>DK</b>	14%
<b>Disagree</b>	31%
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

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## Majorities Feel the Israeli Government Should NOT Take Into Account the Views of U.S. Jewish Leaders in Matters of Religious Pluralism

A majority of the Israeli Jewish public rejects the notion that their government should take into account the views of American Jewish leaders with respect to various issues of what we label in this report, “religious pluralism.” We see nearly identical results for alternatively worded questions in this domain, be they the status of Reform and Conservative movements in Israel, the matter of the Kotel, or regulating conversion. In each of these instances, about 55% of Israeli Jews reject giving much heed to the views of U.S. Jewish leaders, and about 40% favor taking into account their view “to some extent” or more. (Notably, among this latter group, who favor considering American Jews’ views, about 25% answer “to some extent,” while just about 15% say “to a great extent.” Among the opponents, 30% or so opted for the most hardline rejection, “hardly at all.”)

All this said, we do find degrees of ambivalence. The staunchest opponents to American Jewish leaders’ input (the “hardly at all” group) amounts to approximately 1/3 on the relevant questions; while about 40% are open to significant input.

Acceptance or rejection of considering American Jewish leaders’ views on such matters is highly related to Israelis’ religious identity. Haredim particularly, and Dati’im mostly, reject taking into account the view of American Jewish leaders. In contrast, most Hilonim hold the opposite stance, answering the relevant questions, “to some extent” or more.

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To what extent should the Israeli government take into account the views of Jewish leaders in the U.S. with respect to status of the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel?	Percent
To a great extent	13%
To some extent	26%
DK	6%
Not much	23%
Hardly at all	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

To what extent should the Israeli government take into account the views of Jewish leaders in the U.S. with respect to regulation of how people pray at the Kotel?	Percent
To a great extent	15%
To some extent	25%
DK	4%
Not much	22%
Hardly at all	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

To what extent should the Israeli government take into account the views of Jewish leaders in the U.S. with respect to regulation of conversion in Israel?	Percent
To a great extent	15%
To some extent	27%
DK	4%
Not much	23%
Hardly at all	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### By Majorities of Almost 3:1, Israeli Jews Reject Taking into Account U.S. Jewish Leaders in Matters Pertaining to the Conflict With the Palestinians

Going beyond matters of religious pluralism, even larger majorities of Israeli Jews reject the idea that the government should take into account the views of American Jewish leaders on matters pertaining to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. We found roughly similar ratios (almost 70% vs. about 25%) in questions on building settlements, peace negotiations, and treatment of Israeli Arabs. In short, with regard to hearing the views of U.S. Jewish leaders, the Israeli Jewish public differentiates between matters relating to religious life and those relating to the conflict with the Palestinians. But even with respect to such matters as the status of Conservative and Reform Judaism or conversion, pluralities if not majorities oppose taking such leaders' views into account.

To what extent should the Israeli government take into account the views of Jewish leaders in the U.S. with respect to building settlements in the Territories?	Percent
To a great extent	8%
To some extent	21%

DK	4%
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DK	1%
Not much	27%
Hardly at all	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

To what extent should the Israeli government take into account the views of Jewish leaders in the U.S. with respect to peace negotiations with the Palestinians?	Percent
To a great extent	7%
To some extent	25%
DK	4%
Not much	27%
Hardly at all	37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

To what extent should the Israeli government take into account the views of Jewish leaders in the U.S. with respect to treatment of Israeli Arabs?	Percent
To a great extent	6%
To some extent	21%
DK	4%
Not much	28%
Hardly at all	41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Majorities in all sectors of the population answer “hardly at all” or “not much,” strong opposition (“hardly at all”). But such answers are about twice as frequent among voters for parties in the governing coalition as for voters for opposition parties. Similarly, strong opposition is three times as frequent among Haredim and Dati'im as it is among Hilonim.

### **Overwhelming Support for the Orthodox Providing Religious Services, Slight Majorities Feel Likewise About the Hilonim, Conservative, and Reform**

Almost a 5:1 majority favors that, “Orthodox groups will be able to provide religious services in

Israel (like wedding, funeral, etc.)” Orthodox religiosity is seen as legitimate (particularly for state

functions) not only by the Orthodox of Israel, but also by the vast majority of Masorti Jews, and even some Hiloni Jews. The position is certainly in line with historic arrangements dating back to the founding of the State, if not before. It also implicitly grants religious authority to the large Orthodox (Haredi and Dati) population, comprising about a quarter of Israeli Jewry.

We do find smaller, slim majorities favoring Hilonim, Conservative, and Reform groups (separately) providing religious services. About half of Israeli Jews favor provision of such services and about half oppose. Notably, support for all three was in the same general range, meaning that neither Conservative nor Reform (or Hilonim, for that matter) are exceptionally more popular than the other.

Notably, perhaps no other issue divides Haredi and Dati respondents as sharply from the Hiloni sector. Among the former, overwhelming majorities opposed providing non-Orthodox religious services. Among Hiloni Jews, clear majorities hold the opposite view.

**Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, have no opinion on, or strongly oppose that [X] will be able to provide religious services in Israel (like wedding, funeral, etc.)?**

provide religious services in Israel (like wedding, funeral, etc.).

<b>Orthodox groups</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly oppose	7%
Oppose	9%
No opinion	6%
Favor	25%
Strongly favor	53%
Total	100%
<b>Hiloni groups</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly oppose	27%
Oppose	15%
No opinion	5%
Favor	19%
Strongly favor	34%
Total	100%
<b>Conservative groups</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly oppose	27%
Oppose	13%
No opinion	7%
Favor	23%
Strongly favor	29%
Total	100%
<b>Reform groups</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly oppose	33%
Oppose	11%
No opinion	5%
Favor	21%
Strongly favor	31%
Total	100%

### The Illustrative Case of Reversing the Kotel Agreement: More Against Than in Favor

In 2017, the Israeli government pulled out of an agreement with American Jewish leaders and others regarding religious practices at the Kotel (Western Wall). The agreement would have allowed for

others regarding religious practices at the Kotel (Western Wall). The agreement would have allowed for the prayer services of Conservative and Reform worshippers, under the control of these religious movements. The reversal by the Israeli government of the Kotel agreement provoked strong protests in the summer and fall of 2017 from American and other Jewish leaders. The views of the Israeli Jewish public towards this highly publicized issue can give us additional insight into how that public divides on issues of religious pluralism. As we learn, a slim majority of the Israeli Jewish public opposes the decision to, in effect, renege on the “Kotel Agreement.” By 50% to 41%, the public opposes the government’s 2017 decision to freeze implementation of the understanding. Yet, at the same time, supporters of parties in the government strongly favor the freeze, while voters for the Opposition strongly oppose the freeze. (To be clear, opposing the freeze means supporting the Kotel agreement. Supporting the freeze means opposing the Kotel agreement.) Bottom line: The Jewish public marginally supports the Kotel agreement, but the majority of Jewish voters for the Government Coalition parties oppose the Kotel agreement.

		Identify with Government parties?			Total
		Yes	Not sure	No	
<b>Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose Israel’s government decision to cancel the Kotel regulation?</b>	Strongly favor	38%	20%	6%	25%
	<b>Favor</b>	21%	13%	12%	16 %
	<b>No opinion</b>	7%	15%	5%	9 %
	<b>Oppose</b>	19%	18%	15%	18 %
	<b>Strongly oppose</b>	15%	33%	62%	32%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 %</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Among voters for the Government Coalition parties, support for vacating the deal reaches 57% – 34%. In contrast, among Opposition party voters, the balance is even more lopsided in reverse direction: 18% – 77%, a strong majority for keeping the original agreement.

One big reason for the split is that almost all Haredi and Dati voters opt for parties in the coalition, with hardly any voting for Opposition parties such as the Zionist Union or Yesh Atid. As might be expected, the Haredim heavily support the Israeli government’s reversal of the original deal (83% to 12%). The Hiloni population's views are the opposite: 17% to 82%, signifying a large majority in favor of

the original agreement.

Political identity also works as expected. Among the self-defined “right wing” we find a 42%



Political identity also works as expected. Among the self-defined right-wing, we find a 62% - 30% majority supporting the government's freeze of the Kotel deal. Among those in the "left-wing," we see 7% - 88% align in the other direction. Basically, Government Coalition voters, the more religious, and the political right supported freezing implementation of the Kotel deal. In contrast, the Opposition voters, the more secular, and the political left opposed the freeze and support the original deal to provide for prayer by non-Orthodox groups at the Kotel.

### **The Worldviews of Proponents and Opponents of Religious Pluralism**

The survey contained other questions that give some insight into the worldview of opponents and proponents of religious pluralism. While a strong feeling of belonging to the Jewish people is widespread among all groups in Israel, among the biggest opponents of religious pluralism are those with the strongest feeling of belonging to the Jewish people(!). Those with such beliefs are heavily Haredi/Dati, and/or politically on the right - social identities associated with rejecting the Kotel deal and religious pluralism policies in general.

The only significant attitude to dent support for reversal (the anti-religious pluralism position) is that pertaining to American Jewish support for Israel is essential for Israel's security. Those who dismiss the need for such support also oppose both religious pluralism in general and the original Kotel deal specifically. In contrast, those who value U.S. Jews' support also value religious pluralism and support sticking with the Kotel deal. (Tables available upon request.)

The survey also documented that the positions on the Kotel are tightly bound with a variety of other issues bearing on religious pluralism noted above, including the recognition of Conservative and Reform rabbis' marriages and conversions and the provision of religious services. All these issues constitute a package of beliefs along with such matters as support for civil marriage in Israel.

And just as religious identity, political positions, and electoral behavior strongly relate to Kotel policies, so to do they relate to these other matters as well. Quite simply, "friends" of religious pluralism in Israel are secular, politically on the Left, vote for Opposition parties and live in Haifa and Tel Aviv. Their opponents (the majority) are heavily religious, predominantly on the Right, support the Coalition parties, and live in the West Bank (or what most of them would call, "Judea and Samaria") and

## Appreciating Diversity Means Support for Religious Pluralism

While few Israelis would disagree that their society is deeply divided along religious lines, they do differ on whether they find that diversity to their liking or not. In fact, about half claim to like the varying approach to what it means to be Jewish and almost as many take the opposite view.

I very much like the fact that Jews in Israel have different points of view about what it means to be Jewish.	Percent
Strongly agree	17%
Agree	32%
DK	4%
Disagree	31%
Strongly disagree	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

This fundamental attitude towards religious differences is closely related to one's views of religious pluralism. Drawing upon seven questions relating to marriage, prayer at the Kotel, and the recognition of Conservative and Reform rabbis, we constructed a composite measure of Religious Pluralism. The strong relationship of this Index with generalized views of Israeli religious diversity is quite striking:

Religious Pluralism Index by "I very much like the fact that Jews in Israel have different points of view about what it means to be Jewish."							
Religious Pluralism Index		I very much like the fact that Jews in Israel have different points of view about what it means to be Jewish.					Total
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	DK	Agree	Strongly agree	
	High	15%	24%	25%	36%	56%	32%
	Moderate	21%	41%	48%	49%	31%	39%
	Low	64%	35%	27%	15%	13%	29%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

These findings suggest that a key to building support in the Israeli public for religious pluralism specifically - and tolerance of political and cultural difference more generally - lies in considering the

diversity of opinion. A slight majority of the public, including a minority of the supporters of parties in the current government support appreciation for difference and diversity. These groups are allies in any attempt to promote pluralism. In contrast, dominated by the Haredi and Dati populations is an opposition to all issues of pluralism and diversity. These groups are targets for educational intervention and political lobbying.

### **How the Israeli Public Divides: The Supporters of Religious Pluralism & the Proponents of Taking Into Account the Views of U.S. Jews Tend to Be Religiously Secular, Politically Leftist & Well-Educated**

To examine overall tendencies in the public, we constructed indices encompassing many of the major themes examined in this report:

- mutual responsibility (Israel / American Jewry)
- Israel’s need for U.S. Jewry (for security and other ways)
- religious pluralism (non-Orthodox movements in Israel, the Kotel)
- views on pluralism (should the government take into account American Jews’ leaders views on Religion and State)
- treatment of the Conservative and Reform movements, marriage, etc.)
- Peoplehood (extent of a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people).

The indices are scored on a 0 to 100 metric, such that 0 is the lowest possible score and 100 is the highest.

<b>Indices by Religious Identification</b>					
	Mutual Responsibility	Need US Jewry	Religious Pluralism Index	Views Pluralism	Peoplehood
<b>Haredi</b>	86	61	7	16	94
<b>Dati</b>	82	60	21	23	96
<b>Masorti-dati</b>	79	73	36	41	93
<b>Masorti, not so dati</b>	79	79	57	43	91
<b>Hiloni</b>	73	76	82	50	78
<b>Just Jewish, other</b>	80	75	68	47	89

<b>Indices by “How do you define yourself politically?”</b>					
	Mutual Responsibility	Need US Jewry	Religious Pluralism Index	Views Pluralism	Peoplehood
<b>Right wing</b>	81	67	32	30	94

<b>Mod right wing</b>	81	72	43	35	92
<b>Center</b>	80	77	69	47	84
<b>Mod left wing</b>	72	73	86	55	76
<b>Left wing</b>	66	72	93	54	64

<b>Indices by identification with government parties</b>					
	Mutual Responsibility	Need US Jewry	Religious Pluralism Index	Views Pluralism	Peoplehood
<b>Coalition</b>	81	70	36	34	92
<b>Not sure</b>	76	71	57	37	86
<b>Opposition</b>	75	79	83	55	79

<b>Indices by education</b>					
	Mutual Responsibility	Need US Jewry	Religious Pluralism Index	Views Pluralism	Peoplehood
<b>Elementary school</b>	83	63	17	20	87
<b>HS not graduated</b>	76	76	45	39	89
<b>HS graduated</b>	78	74	52	41	88
<b>HS non academic</b>	78	72	48	38	88
<b>BA</b>	77	70	57	39	85
<b>MA and above</b>	78	73	66	43	87

From these and related tables we learn who the supporters of religious pluralism are as well as who those are who favor taking into account U.S. Jewish leaders on such matters. Summarizing the findings above, these proponents are:

- More **Hilonim** and Masorti-not so Dati, than Dati or Haredi
- More on the **political left** and centrist than the right
- More **well-educated** (high school graduate, B.A., or more)
- More likely to live in **Tel Aviv & Haifa** than Jerusalem & the West Bank, with other areas of the country showing more varied tendencies

Accordingly ...

- Most voters for parties in the Government Coalition reject religious pluralism policies and

- Most voters for parties in the Government coalition reject religious pluralism policies and paying attention to U.S. Jews' leaders

While ...

- Most **voters for the Opposition parties** favor religious pluralism policies and paying attention to US Jews' leaders
- However, there is a minority, primarily the non-Orthodox right, who hold more diverse opinions on issues of religious pluralism. These Jewish Israelis are perhaps a crucial swing vote and source of support for pluralism. This is particularly the case for the Masorti-less Dati amongst whom a majority support religious pluralism.

As a general observation, among supporters of parties in the current Israeli government, the religious right tends to privilege Israeli over American Jewry, as well as Orthodoxy over secular and non-Orthodox movements. There is again a minority among government supporters who lean towards pluralism, and who tend to be non-Orthodox, but they are outnumbered in a 2:1 ratio. In contrast, supporters of the Opposition in general, and the secular left in particular, hold the opposite views. They favor more egalitarianism with respect to the relation between Israel and world Jewry, and among the religious streams.

### **The Jewish People Paradox: Those With the *Strongest* Sense of Belonging to the Jewish People Are *Less* Sympathetic to Religious Pluralism and Related Positions**

On the complex of issues examined above, the distinctions between those answering the Jewish people question (table provided near the outset of this paper) are quite impressive. Those among the biggest opponents of Religious Pluralism in Israel (on several questions) are also those who strongly agree that they have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish People. It is important to point out that many proponents of religious pluralism also support belonging to the Jewish people.

Among those with a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish People, more believe non-Orthodox U.S. Jews will assimilate and that a Jew can lead a more meaningful life in Israel than the U.S.

		Belonging to the Jewish People Question		
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree or DK
In the next ten to	Strongly agree	17%	5%	7%

twenty years, most American Jews who are not Orthodox will assimilate.	Agree	36%	31%	23%
	DK	11%	15%	22%
	Disagree	28%	38%	35%
	Strongly disagree	8%	11%	13%

Among those with strong sense of belonging to the Jewish People, more support reversing the Kotel deal.

		Belonging to the Jewish People Question		
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree or DK
<b>Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose Israel's government decision to cancel the Kotel regulation?</b>	Strongly favor	35%	9%	6%
	Favor	17%	18%	11%
	No opinion	9%	9%	13%
	Oppose	18%	19%	14%
	Strongly oppose	21%	45%	56%

Among those with strong sense of belonging to the Jewish People, fewer support recognizing marriages by Israeli Conservative & Reform rabbis.

		Belonging to the Jewish People Question		
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree or DK
<b>Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose recognizing marriages conducted by Conservative and Reform rabbis in Israel?</b>	Strongly favor	23%	50%	64%
	Favor	17%	28%	17%
	No opinion	4%	3%	5%
	Oppose	14%	11%	8%

<b>Strongly oppose</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>
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Among those with strong sense of belonging to the Jewish People, more believe that Jewish citizens should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens.

citizens should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens.

		Belonging to the Jewish People Question		
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree or DK
<b>Jewish citizens in Israel should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens.</b>	Strongly agree	37%	9%	8%
	Agree	20%	28%	16%
	DK	3%	3%	7%
	Disagree	24%	29%	23%
	Strongly disagree	17%	32%	46%

These findings need to be seen in a broader context. As we delve deeper, we learn that the impact of belonging to the Jewish people differs for the Dati and Hiloni sectors (with the Masorti more like the religious). Among the Haredim and Dati'im, almost everybody says that they "strongly agree" with the idea that they have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people. But among the Hilonim, we find diversity.

#### Belonging to the Jewish People Question by Religious Identification

		Belonging to the Jewish People			Total
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree or DK if you have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people	
<b>Religious Identification</b>	Haredi	91%	7%	2%	100%
	Dati	91%	7%	3%	100%
	Masorti-dati	82%	13%	5%	100%
	Masorti, not so dati	68%	26%	6%	100%

<b>Hiloni</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>100%</b>
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Among the Hilonim, a stronger sense of belonging to the Jewish people bears little relationship to most of the issues under consideration. However, in one area – appreciating American Jewry's

relationship with Israel – it does seem that stronger feelings of Jewish solidarity have the salutary effect that Jewish peoplehood proponents and educators often seek.

**American Jewish Support of Israel Is Essential for the Security of the State of Israel by Jewish Belonging to the Jewish People**

		Belonging to the Jewish People		
		Disagree or DK if have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people	Agree	Strongly agree
<b>American Jewish support of Israel is essential for the security of the State of Israel.</b>	Strongly agree	31%	41%	60%
	Agree	45%	45%	29%
	DK	6%	2%	.4%
	Disagree	15%	9%	10%
	Strongly disagree	3%	2%	1%
<b>Total</b>		100%	100%	100%

**A Strong and Thriving American Jewry Is Important for the Future of Israel by Belonging to the Jewish People**

		Belonging to the Jewish People		
		Disagree or DK: Have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people	Agree	Strongly agree
<b>A strong and thriving American Jewry is important for the future of Israel.</b>	Strongly agree	24%	31%	50%
	Agree	41%	51%	35%
	DK	6%	3%	1%
	Disagree	22%	13%	11%
	Strongly disagree	8%	3%	4%
<b>Total</b>		100%	100%	100%



## **Summary & Conclusions**

This analysis identified a number of assets and challenges for those who seek to strengthen the relationship between American and Israeli Jews.

## Assets

First, virtually all Israeli Jews affirm that they have a strong sense of belonging to the Jewish people. Second, three-quarters of Israeli Jews say that a strong and thriving American Jewry is important for the future of Israel. Third, three-quarters feel that Jews in Israel and Jews in the United States share a common destiny. And 6 out of 10 say that Jews in Israel and American Jews should be responsible for one another's welfare **to a great extent**. They are also supportive of mutual education – bringing American Jews to Israel (90%), and government funding of young Israeli Jews to experience Jewish life in America (60%).

## Challenges

First, 3 out of 5 Israeli Jews reject the idea of taking into account the views of American Jewish leaders with respect to religious pluralism. Even larger majorities reject considering the views of American Jewish leaders on matters pertaining to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, building settlements, peace negotiations, and treatment of Israeli Arabs.

Second, significant portions – even if only minorities – take positions that large segments of American Jewry would oppose. Substantial minorities of Israelis:

- Lack confidence in the sustainability, if not the value, of Jewish life in America
- Would rather not see moves toward religious pluralism
- See Israeli Jews as having more rights than non-Jewish citizens of Israel.

The most serious challenge to the Israel-American Jewry relationship is at the practical level. The relationship is deeply affected by basic schisms of religion and politics within Israeli society, which themselves are intimately bound with governmental decision-making.

Most supporters of the government parties hold a worldview based, for the most part, on Jewish particularism — giving preference to Orthodox over non-Orthodox and Israeli Jews over Jews elsewhere. Exacerbating the challenge is that what we might call the “Jewish particularism camp” more frequently voted for the parties in the Government Coalition, which actually makes policy, than for those in the Opposition, who have little control over legislation, or policy, or the most widely noted

pronouncements by Israeli officialdom.

While most of those aligned with power hold particularistic Jewish views, at the same time, significant minorities among supporters of the non-Orthodox parties in the governing coalition hold views that align more with the aspirations and agenda of many American Jews. These people tend to be found among secular and left-leaning Israelis and live along the Mediterranean coastline. They also include just over half of the Masorti-less Dati on several issues relating to pluralism.

This pattern of assets and challenges creates a dilemma for those seeking to strengthen the relationship between these two mega-communities. On one hand, there is broad appreciation for solidarity and a sense of common destiny, and on the other hand, there is an uneasiness with American Jews participating actively in Israeli life, which is typically political.

## **Reflections**

Given that the large majority of Israeli Jews see themselves as part of the Jewish people and believe they share a common destiny with American Jews, how can American Jewish leadership capitalize on this solid basis for building and sustaining mutually respectful and enriching relationships between American and Israeli Jews? One approach has been cultivating familiarity and exposing Israeli Jews to American Jewry. But, as the literature on the contact hypothesis has long argued, not all contact or interaction works to promote understanding and appreciation. Notwithstanding the literature on the positive impact of educational contact between American and Israeli Jewry, there is little to no evidence in this survey that relationships with American Jews, unto themselves, lead to greater openness to American Jewish involvement in Israeli policies or movement toward policies of pluralism often advocated by American Jewish leaders. Israeli Jews who have been to America or who maintain family or friendship relations with Jews in the U.S. are no different than their opposite numbers. Thus, insofar as programs seek to promote better Israeli-American Jewish relations through

contact and interaction, such efforts will need to intentionally foster recognition, curiosity, acceptance, and even appreciation for the deep differences between and within American and Israeli Jewries.

Whether what we have learned can produce more fruitful relationships between Israel Jewry and American Jewry, if not Jewry outside of Israel in general, remains to be seen. But, these

relationships are too important to ignore and too complex to be approached without subtle and nuanced policies and programs.

As the UJA-Federation Jewish Connectivity Research Project proceeds, we will, in short order, more fully develop policy implications. This report of the 2017 UJA-Federation Survey of Israeli Jews serves to present the more salient findings that need to inform new thinking and new questioning around this compelling subject area.