Two creative centers of Jewish life emerged in the twentieth century. These divergent centers in Israel and in the United States claimed self-sufficiency, authority, and competence. Jews living in the United States established an alternative mode of cultural expression to that of Jewish citizens in the sovereign state of Israel, instead of yet another classic Jewish diaspora linked to other peripheries by trade in commerce, religion, and culture. Despite their common claims to centrality, Israeli and American Jews recognize shared Jewish concerns and connections. Ironically, these two diverse communities developed out of similar European roots. Eastern European Jews pursued very different visions as they settled in American cities and the land of Israel. Yet common crises confronting both centers as well as ties of kinship and history until recently have obscured their divergent paths. Complicating perceptions of their distinct trajectories, Jews in the United States often projected their own image upon Israeli society while
Israelis fashioned versions of America that spoke to the needs of a new nation struggling to define its values and secure its existence.

Jewish population statistics drawn from both ends of the century register its dramatic changes. In 1900, more than 80 percent of world Jewry lived in Europe. Yet immigration and upheaval relentlessly redistributed European Jews. At the outbreak of World War II, only about 60 percent remained. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the decimated communities of European Jewry contracted even further as a result of mass emigration and rapid assimilation, so that at the end of the twentieth century fewer than 20 percent of the world Jewish population lived in Europe. European Jews progressed in the course of the century from the dominant center to a diasporic periphery. In a radical reversal, former peripheries, notably American Jewry and Israel, became the centers. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century America and Israel will likely share more or less equally close to 80 percent of world Jewry.¹

The impact of European Jews on both societies extends beyond their demography to social solidarity. European Jews and their descendants form the majority of both the American and Israeli Jewish populations. Family ties endure between relatives whose kin made alternate choices, though their extent has never been calculated. Both centers share memories and heritage. These common vestiges help account for intense connections between the two communities. A sense of mutual responsibility and fate deeply rooted in Jewish historical experience and religious culture animates American and Israeli Jews. Indeed, a keen sense of Jewish solidarity probably remains the salient characteristic binding Jews who reside in distant places, speak different languages, and live in diverse political and social contexts.²

Nevertheless, awareness grows of the attenuation of bonds that connect both communities. Manifest and active kinship has been diminished if not forgotten. Yiddish is no longer a common language, and with its loss as a lingua franca, a moral vocabulary disappears from currency among Jews. English is the mother tongue (and often the only language) of American Jewry, and Hebrew is the language of Israeli Jews. While knowledge of English is surely greater in Israel than Hebrew is in America, most American and Israeli Jews do not share a language that expresses common experi-

ences and concerns or a cultural and group identity that transcends both time and place. Although American Jews resort often to translation, turning the works of Israeli writers into English, Israeli and American Jews lack intimate knowledge of one another. They tend to hold stereotypes rather than real people in mind when they think of each other, despite their similar origins.³ The pervasiveness of American popular culture enthusiastically embraced by Israelis often substitutes for knowledge and makes many indifferent to American Jews as a distinctive social group. Impressed by the power of the United States on the world scene, most Israelis ignore the individuality of the American Jewish community. Different social realities, historical experience, and political needs have generated distinctive cultures.

In the United States, Jews have accommodated to a Christian culture and a society that prizes individualism and self-reliance; in Israel, they have created, in the midst of the Moslem Middle East, an ethnic Jewish sovereignty in which personal status is defined in terms of communal membership. In the United States, Jews have entered and contributed to building the world's wealthiest society where they enjoy great physical security. In Israel, they have reclaimed a semi-arid and resource-poor land and struggled to maintain a state in which widespread prosperity is recent and security not yet fully assured. Such distinctions have necessitated fundamental ecological adaptations and have produced differential patterns of cultural development.

Yet this divergence between American and Israeli Jewry actually predates emigration from Europe, finding its roots in Jewish responses to the Enlightenment and modernization. The Enlightenment repelled traditional sectors of Jewish society, which responded by creating traditional versions of Judaism, ranging from Hasidim and haredim, or pietist movements, to modern orthodoxy. Each sector claimed to be the authentic guardian of Judaism. The pietists often denied opportunities for significant cultural interaction with the non-Jewish world. Other Jews discovered in Enlightenment ideals new ways of thinking and sought to integrate into emerging democratic, national states in Western Europe. These liberal Jews articulated alternative forms of Judaism that contributed to the shaping of Reform and Conservative Judaism.

European Jews also posited collective responses to modernity. Defined in
their host societies, the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, as a nation with distinctive linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic characteristics, Jews from these regions sought a national solution to the Jewish problem. Ranging from the socialist Jewish Workers Bund, which sought to retain distinctive collective characteristics as a discrete nation within Europe, to Zionism, which promoted a national homeland in Palestine, the solutions championed by Eastern European Jews aimed for a goal of national autonomy. In contrast, most Western European Jews desired integration as a religious community or acculturation on an individual basis. Thus, in responding to conditions that obtained in the United States and possibilities created by Jewish sovereignty in Israel, European Jews were implementing choices that antedated the emergence of these two centers. Both locales afforded the prospect of constructing new identities that had already been posited by different sectors of European Jewry. Immigration patterns reinforced these opportunities, drawing ideologically committed Eastern European Jews to Palestine in two waves constituting the second and third aliyah before and after World War I. Family ties, chain migration, and dreams of economic opportunity motivated most other Eastern European Jews to look across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States. The former migration dynamic stimulated an elite eager to build a new Jewish society; the latter encouraged masses of working-class Jews to seek a better future for themselves and their children.

An evolving secular Israeli culture expresses conceptions of national autonomy championed by Eastern European Jews. This model diminishes the authority and centrality of Jewish law even as it affirms a collective Jewish civic consciousness. The large majority of Israeli Jews, perhaps 80 percent, are avowedly secular—halachic—a identity that may include spirituality and does not require affirmation of atheism or agnosticism. Such secularism encourages cultural innovation that speaks directly to Israelis in Hebrew. Although many secular Israeli Jews retain vestiges of religious culture, most have embraced a civil religion that has programmatically and creatively borrowed from traditional Judaism. As a result, native-born Israelis differ significantly from their immigrant parents or grandparents.

Descendants of those who emigrated to America similarly negotiate with their past. In the United States, only a minority of fewer than 10 percent choose forms of orthodoxy. Most prefer Reform and Conservative religious orientations, which have only a slight representation in Israel. With roots in Western Europe, both movements reflect Jewish willingness to enter modern, democratic societies. The Reform and Conservative Jewish communities have flourished in the fertile soil of an open American society where the absence of an established church encourages voluntarist religious activity. Although both Jewish patterns reflect an understanding that religion is but one of the elements that command the attention and constitute the identity of American Jews, Jewish cultural creativity in the United States as often occurs outside of religious frameworks as within them. American Jews share an American civil religion that emphasizes ideals of tolerance, pluralism, consensus, and individualism, and enshrines democracy as an ultimate ideal.

These American and Israeli descendants of European Jewry have developed divergent solutions to living in their distinctive societies. Israelis have accommodated themselves and are apparently at ease in the ancient homeland. Their American counterparts are “at home” in America. Despite differences, real commonalities precipitate expressions of unity and shared destiny.

“As we approach the 21st century, we pause to celebrate and rededicate ourselves to the enduring ties that bind us together as one people.” So begins “A Covenant Between The Jewish People of North America and Israel,” a document circulated when the 1998 General Assembly of North American Jews convened in Jerusalem. Signed by members of the Knesset and leaders of American Jewry, this statement elaborately reiterates a popular slogan articulated at similar meetings for more than a generation: “We are one.” The intensity and frequency with which such declarations are made indicate a growing need to counter a contrary reality.

These affirmations differ substantially from rhetoric characterizing Jews living outside of Israel shortly after the state was established in 1948. Both David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, and Jacob Blaustein, president of the American Jewish Committee, had agreed that Israel and American Jews were not one. In 1952 they signed a document designed to articulate that position and define the relations between the new Jewish state and the largest Jewish society in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Yet neither leader questioned the vitality of the bonds between these branches of the
Jewish people. With the exception of fringe groups in both countries, the
majority shared a commitment to the concept of a world Jewish community
comprising Jews in Israel and throughout the diaspora. The sense of a
common fate, made so painfully real by the Holocaust, permeated their
generation’s consciousness as did a host of shared memories. Both Ben-
Gurion (born in 1886) and Blaustein (born in 1892) had risen to lead
communities located on the periphery of a Jewish world that had been
overwhelmingly European at the time of their birth.

This book seeks to understand how divergent cultures have emerged
from shared origins. In locating the nature of and reasons for continuities
with Europe, it examines as well the source of distinctive characteristics.
This is not and could not be a comprehensive study. Rather, it explores
phenomena that have parallel expression in both societies. Similar studies
have focused on the distinctiveness of Judaism as experienced in America
and Israel.9 The emphasis here on political and social cultures grounds
discussion in examples of literature, art, history, and politics.

ESTABLISHING NEW IDENTITIES

We begin by addressing the question of identity. The first six chapters
analyze cultural and social phenomena to trace how European Jews and
their descendants assumed new identities as American and Israeli Jews.

S. Ian Troen introduces the construction of new identities by examining
how European Jews understood the purposes and meanings of Zionism in
Zion. Pioneers built Zionism on a rejection of Europe and an anticipation
of creating an alternative modern Jewish personality. His analysis rests on a
study of the largest social institution established by Zionist society: a secu-
lar, public school system. Through it, Zionist ideologues, public officials,
and educators attempted to transform European Jewry. Willing to preserve
what they admired in the culture of the shtetl, they rejected its passivity in
the face of physical threats and actual violence. These educators insisted on
a new national educational cultural ideal. In turning away from the tradi-
tional orthodox schooling of the shtetl, Zionists developed a new curricu-

Zionist educators provided secularized Hebrew instruction that revolu-
tionized the Jewish relationship to sacred literature to approximately
80 percent of Jewish youth from the 1920s to the present. They supplanted
such traditional texts as the Talmud and prayer book (Siddur) with the
Bible, particularly its historical sections. This revolutionary emphasis is ex-
pressed in the opening paragraph of Israel’s Declaration of Independence,
which begins: “The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people,”
and concludes with the radical claim: “Here they wrote and gave the Bible
to the world.” Zionism excised Divine authorship of the Bible and made
Jews the prime actors in shaping their own destiny as a people. Zionists
urged that Jews should no longer rely on salvation or redemption by the
Almighty. The radical intent is captured in the words of a classic Zionist
song: “We have come to the land to build it and to be rebuilt by it.” This
contrasts vividly with the traditional prayer for Redemption recited daily:
“When the Lord brought back those who returned to Zion we were like
dreamers . . . The Lord will do great things for us; We shall rejoice” (Psalms
cxxvi).

The new secular curriculum had unwanted consequences. It devalued
Jewish life abroad and, by focusing on the national renaissance in the home-

land, threatened to sever connections with the diaspora and Jewish past.
Moreover, such continuities have been reinforced over the past generation
by the penetration of American values that emphasize individualism at the
expense of community, that is, an ethnic nationality. The pursuit of personal
growth and self-satisfaction may be eroding a collective commitment to
shared objects.

One could argue that in this sense, Jewish identities as constructed in
Israel and the United States now confront similar forces that threaten to
undermine their otherness. Nevertheless, American culture challenges
American Jews with a more immediate and acute alternative. Living in a
Jewish state affords a buffer to outside influences and enables Israeli Jews to
exploit possibilities not available to Jews who live as a minority.

Watching the process of settling the land from afar, American Jews saw an
utterly different reality, one made in their own image. As Jeffrey Shandler
vividly describes, European Jews who immigrated to the United States
Americanized their images of Israel. Adopting the posture of impresarios,
they celebrated pioneers and the settlement of the land in terms that gave meaning to their own choice of America. In this way, American Zionism invited Jews to partake of a performance that affirmed Americanism as much as Jewishness. Far from obliging Jews to leave their new Promised Land for the ancestral homeland, American Zionism became one of the building blocks in the identity of American Jews.

Shandler shows how Zionism was domesticated for American Jews who were invited to consume the agricultural products of Zionist pioneers, especially wines and olives and even cigarettes. The impresarios Shandler investigates incorporated Zionist songs and dances into pageants based on Zionist pioneering. The producers of these representations of Zionist society expected their shows to anchor European-born Jews in America rather than induce them to emigrate to Palestine. They clearly assumed that support for Zionism was an American value. From Louis Brandeis around World War I to Abba Hillel Silver after World War II, Zionism has been defined as a form of American liberalism. Loyalty to Zionist goals has been viewed as consistent with devotion to American ideals. If Europe was the increasingly distant past that led to a tragic end, Israel represented a future in which American Jews had a stake and which reflected a blend of American and Jewish virtues.

The Israeli reality differed significantly from American imaginings of it. Settled in their homeland, Israelis, particularly recent immigrants from North Africa, reversed the process described by Shandler. Immigrants in poor settlement towns far from the centers of Israeli politics turned to explore and reclaim their connections with their communities of origin in the diaspora. Scholars, including Alex Weingrod and André Levi, have found that Jewish immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East invented rituals to assert their prior identity and rebel against the Ashkenazi (i.e., European) version of the New Israel. Like American Zionists, they staged their own rituals and projected identities.

Yoram Bili points out that by the 1970s immigrants from North Africa had inaugurated pilgrimages to sites on the Israeli periphery where they venerated religious figures, many of whom hailed from outside Israel. This phenomenon has grown to become a recognized and accepted feature of Israeli life. Scholars interpret such pilgrimages as a firm rejection of the culture and manners of the new Israeli as defined by European-born intellectuals, politicians, and educators. Not only do the ornate shrines and elaborate ceremonies create religious meaning but they also become instruments of cultural and political self-assertion and defiance. Simultaneously this form of hagiolatry, disinterring the remains of spiritual leaders who died abroad and reinterring them in Israeli soil, indicates a commitment to bonding with the new country.

Although Bili focuses on North African Jews, similar practices exist among formerly European Jews, particularly among the ultra-Orthodox. Numerous Hasidic courts, whose origins are Eastern European, have reconstituted themselves in Israel. The Lubavitcher Hasidim who actively proselytize other Jews, for example, have built an exact replica in Israel of the residence and headquarters of their spiritual leader (rebbe) on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. Much of the Yeshiva world of Lithuanian Jewry has been reconstituted in sections of B'naï Brak, near Tel Aviv, and in numerous neighborhoods in Jerusalem. A distinctly European ambience animates these areas, readily observable in their residents' dress and in the pervasive use of Yiddish. Thus, while Israeli society has insisted on the transformation of the large mass of diaspora Jewry who became citizens, it has at the same time preserved unyielding minorities.

European Jews who came to Palestine did not think of themselves as entering a society where they had to adapt to externally imposed social patterns. Ottoman authorities possessed political power and Palestinian Arabs established the rhythms of daily life, but most Jews had no intention of becoming like the Arab majority or assimilating into their culture. Jews also denied that they were settling in a place that belonged to others. Rather, they understood themselves as returning home to the "homeland"—their midele, or birthplace.

Their ideological intentions notwithstanding, Jews still found themselves in a totally unfamiliar environment, where they had to cultivate knowledge of a strange land and nurture a sense of their new home. European Jewish immigrants were familiar with the country as an imagined land rooted in religious texts and collective memory, not as a place they had personally experienced. To provide first-hand experience, Jews invented a process of discovery termed yediat ha'aretz, or "knowing the land." The ways of doing
this included youth movement field trips, learning songs, and reading modern Hebrew literature. Jews in Israel turned to Hebrew as part of the process of returning to the land. Aware that naming asserts authority and control, they identified sections of the country with biblical nomenclature, and designated settlements and streets with the names of events and personalities derived from ancient Hebrew and modern Jewish history.

Archaeology acquired a significant place in the process of taking possession of the country and in reshaping European Jews into authentic natives in a land they had known only in their imagination prior to emigration. Michael Feige demonstrates how archaeology achieved such influence and explains why this academic discipline enjoyed a large following among citizens of the new Jewish state. He observes that archaeology was explicitly geared to enable a preponderantly immigrant society to discover its ancient roots in the land and to use these in the shaping of a national identity. Jews took symbolic possession of the land and its history. The annual meetings of the Israeli Exploration Society became a form of secular pilgrimage, with mass, public meetings taking place not only at such major centers as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv during the time of the traditional autumnal holiday of Succoth (Tabernacles) but also in peripheral communities from the Galilee in the north to the Negev and Eilat in the south. Scholars and government officials including the prime minister, the president, and leading military officers addressed the thousands who attended the three-day meetings. Indeed, Yigael Yadin and Moshe Dayan were both archaeologists and chiefs of staff.

Not surprisingly the Ministry of Education funded archaeology because it was not only a scientific discipline but also a means of inculcating a sense of belonging, yet another form of yediot ha'aretz. Immigrants encountered the history of their ancestors through these pilgrimages and public assemblies and were invited to see themselves as legitimate successors. Immigrants living in peripheral sites, particularly newly established development towns where they constituted the overwhelming proportion of the population, were publicly and officially endowed with the status of pioneers reclaiming the ancestral homeland. In this fashion, even the newest immigrant in the most isolated and unpromising location received membership in both an ancient and contemporary narrative. Perhaps the most popular site—Masada—remained uninhabited. Nevertheless, as the site of the rebellion of the last defenders of Jewish autonomy in the face of the mighty Roman Empire, Masada came to represent a spirit of bravery and self-sacrifice that had shriveled in the diaspora. As a heroic site, it attracted legions of volunteers who assisted in excavations and visitors who made the early morning climb to see the sun rising over the desert and the Dead Sea. These rituals invested immigrants with the grandeur of the past and ushered them into their new Israeli identities.

The popularity of archaeology began to subside by the end of the second decade of independence. Perhaps the meetings became too scientific and thereby lost their mass appeal. Alternatively, archaeology itself may have assumed less relevance in constructing a national identity.

As newcomers to the land of Israel labeled sites throughout the countryside as Jewish, so did American Jews identify certain clothes as “Jewish.” However, for European Jews in Palestine, such naming affirmed a positive collective identity while for Jewish immigrants in the United States, labeling clothing involved rejecting an undesirable, gendered identity. Jenna Weissman Joselit tackles the problem of building identity through American Jews’ obsession with their sartorial appearance in gentile eyes. Joselit focuses on controversies over clothing, jewelry, and fashion to uncover the gendered dimensions of Jewish concerns with integration. Her analysis demonstrates that ostensibly superficial details of dress reflect deep concerns about identity in a society in which Jews were still newcomers and unsure of their acceptance. This topic often appears in literature written by American Jews. From Abraham Cahan’s *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917) through Norman Podhoretz’s *Making It* (1967), the clothes and behavior of Jews in public places have concerned American Jewish authors. Cahan describes at length the garments Levinsky dons as a new American in a scene that symbolizes his shedding of European appearance and identity. Podhoretz recounts in detail lessons in dining and fashion he received from his gentle high school teacher. These incidents metaphorically appreciate the difficult and sometimes painful transit from poor immigrant to commercial success. They reveal the social costs of acceptance in the case of Cahan’s hero, or in Podhoretz’s account of himself, the price of moving from working-class status to an Ivy League university and the center of American intellectual
society. As DeRocqueville observed about Americans, so Jewish immigrants and their children have realized about themselves: in a democratic society, correct manners and fashions are needed to find one’s place in America.

The setting for Joselit’s analysis is the synagogue, and the actors are rabbis and their congregants, particularly women. In Mel Brooks’s film The Producers (1968), Zero Mostel views from his office window a flashy woman entering an obviously expensive car and calls out: “If you got it, flaunt it!” Rabbis preaching from the pulpit demurred. They worried about the “de-orientalization” of Jewish women. Weaning them from gaudy taste was a step in their westernization or Americanization. Indeed, Joselit traces rabbinic sermons into the 1960s and 1970s, when rabbis still commented on dress as indicators of the difference between European-Jewish and American culture. This analysis of the discussion of fashion in the synagogue illustrates a pervasive anxiety with what should be retained from the old world and what should be adopted in the new. That European Jews and their children engaged in such calculations reveals that they were aware of the price of entering a society not of their own making and sensitive to demands that they conform to American gendered social norms.

Beth Wenger enlists the history of Haym Salomon, the Jewish financier of the American Revolution, as a barometer of tensions within the American Jewish community. Wenger uncovers Salomon as he emerged from fragments of historical evidence as a hero and patriot worthy of the honored place Jews sought as integrated and authentic members of American society. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the Daughters of the American Revolution were staking out their role in American history, some Jews saw in the glorification of Haym Salomon an opportunity to participate in the founding moment of their adopted country. They proposed his commemoration in monuments and medals. Others opposed this. They worried lest Jews appear too visible in their wealth, thereby giving rise to anti-Semitism as experienced in Europe. It would have been better had Salomon been a general in the Revolutionary War. A Jewish banker was not, in their view, a cause for public celebration.

In the 1920s Polish-Jewish immigrants adopted the cause of Haym Salomon as an immigrant hero, a Polish Jew, with as much success as their predecessors. Not until the growing Nazi threat during the Depression heightened concern for a monument to democracy and tolerance did Salomon receive public veneration, albeit initially as part of a triumvirate with George Washington and the patriot Robert Morris. After World War II, when American Jews were sufficiently secure in themselves and in their place in American society, popular books transformed Haym Salomon, the banker, into an unalloyed patriot. The act of sculpting an icon reveals as much about Jewish cultural struggles over memory and place within American society as it does about the figure himself.

CONTESTED IDENTITIES

Both centers saw acute struggles over the meaning of Jewish identity in a post-Holocaust world. Only during the 1960s were Israeli schoolchildren introduced in a sympathetic manner to the world of Sholom Aleichem—that is, the shtetl. It required the Eichmann trial to introduce a new sensibility to European Jewry and their way of life. At least a generation earlier, a sympathetic, if not parentally nostalgic, perception of this shared past flourished among American Jews. For both American and Israeli Jews, however, the crucial event that prompted a reconsideration of that lost world was the Holocaust.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett reminds us of a tradition of popular ethnography that would be mobilized to interpret the lost world of Eastern European Jewry after the Holocaust. These included literary studies, memoirs, and religious eulogies as well as festivals, exhibits, and performances. In choosing to focus on texts remote from standard anthropological accounts, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett retrieves a hidden intellectual history informing what became the standard American Jewish text describing Eastern Europe, Life Is With People.

Behind this history lies a moral vision not only to salvage what had been lost through violence by invoking memory but also to reclaim the cultural authority of the shtetl and thus to enhance Jewish and American life. The moral world of Eastern European Jews gains its most authoritative articulation in Abraham Joshua Heschel’s extended eulogy, “The Earth is the Lord’s.” Heschel translates Eastern European Jewish life into a timeless religious language, utterly contemporary for American Jews. He endows
the very landscape of the shtetl with democratic aspiration and its denizens with a daily routine of divine encounter. Bella Chagall, wife of artist Marc Chagall, writes a memoir of her childhood in a timeless present that resembles the ethnographic present.\textsuperscript{13} Structured not according to Western chronology but following the cycle of the Jewish year, Chagall dissolves her own story into an account of Jewish girlhood. Finally, the Zionist writer Maurice Samuel introduces through his biography of Sholom Aleichem the concept of a Jewish world, providing the trope to synthesize the popular ethnographic arts.\textsuperscript{13} These inscribe a particular Jewish sensibility into American culture at a moment of Jewish loss and devastation.

As Israelis looked toward their own future they not only distanced themselves from Europe, they disassociated themselves from it in diverse ways. Israelis viewed Europe as a negative experience from which Jews should escape. As Anita Shapira has demonstrated in *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948*,\textsuperscript{14} Zionism’s embrace of the ethos of power and its search for heroes has related directly to the growing tide of violence against Europe’s Jews since the end of the nineteenth century. Forced to recognize that Europe was not a possible home for Jews, Zionist thinkers concluded that only in a land of their own could Jews be freed from persecution and transformed into a normal people. The experience of impotence in the face of persecutors shaped Zionism’s concept of the “new Jew” and of a reformed national character.

However severe the crisis of powerlessness at Zionism’s inception more than a century ago, the Shoah escalated the problem to unprecedented dimensions. The proximity of this enormous tragedy to the establishment of Israel verified Zionist claims about the meaning of the European past and the necessity for a Jewish state. As a consequence, Zionism glorified Jews who actively resisted the Nazis. It exalted the heroic as the ultimate response while at the same time castigating European Jews for their failure to prevent the tragedy.

Gulic Arad examines how changes in Israeli society resulted in an evolving attitude toward the Shoah. She observes that the continuing conflict between Jews and Arabs has given cause for maintaining heroism as an essential national quality. During the first decade of independence, the state inaugurated a national holiday in enacting the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law (1953), established Yad Vashem as the museum and memorial of the Holocaust, and introduced materials into the school curriculum in praise of ghetto fighters and partisans. However, after the 1967 Six-Day War convincingly demonstrated Israeli military supremacy and provided Israelis with a heightened sense of security, cracks began to appear in the national consensus about how to interpret the Shoah. As criticism mounted over national policy in the territories and relations with Palestinian Arabs from the 1970s through the present, it became impossible to maintain a unitary canonical view of what the Holocaust meant. At the same time, other peoples appropriated the Holocaust as metaphor, deliberately eroding the Jewish/Zionist monopoly. With the ascension of Menachem Begin and the Likud party to power in 1977, the invocation of the Holocaust to justify political policies engendered confusion and debate. Some Israelis came to regard the Palestinians as victims of Israeli policy. These critics publicly and vigorously questioned the notion of the unerring, heroic virtue of Jews and criticized the martial affinity of Zionism’s new Jew. This debate highlights the centrality of the Holocaust to the construction of national identity.

Nurith Gertz introduces a woman’s perspective in order to unravel the gendered dimensions of the process of creating a national identity. She uncovers a profound ambivalence animating Yehudit Hendel’s writing on Holocaust survivors. Hendel managed to shatter the hegemonic Zionist mold that depicted partisans and participants in ghetto uprisings as having a faster and easier transition than those who survived the camps. Nevertheless, all European Jews inexorably had to be reconstructed into Israelis in the fictional texts of postwar decades. Hendel disrupts such a view by inserting the voice of a survivor into her narrative and letting us hear it speak with authority. Thus competing accounts vie with each other, reflecting Hendel’s own ambivalence and anticipating trends in Israeli culture that ultimately gave primacy to survivors in the 1970s and 1980s. As Gertz argues, Hendel challenges the articulation of Zionist as male and Jew as female that dominated the early decades of statehood. She breaks up the elision of nationality and gender effected by Zionist writers and filmmakers. But she also discourages the elimination of nationality championed by recent writers as a blanket response to earlier trends.
Zionist responses to the powerlessness of European Jewry also entered the consciousness and art of American Jews, who shared the idea that building a Jewish state reflected courage and symbolized a will to live. Expressions of this conviction can be found in the writings of Meyer Levin and Leon Uris. Both wrote from a perspective of the Jewish people’s need for security, a deep sense of the injustice visited on Jews, and an appreciation for the virtue and courage of those who established Israel as an appropriate and necessary response to the Holocaust. Even as Arad and Gertz illustrate how this view waned in Israel, Tresa Grauer traces and analyzes its decline in the American Jewish experience.

Grauer concentrates on the work of Philip Roth, particularly The Counterlife (1986) and Operation Shylock (1993). The distance from earlier days of a simple Israeli-centered idealism is apparent in these novels, though Roth never championed a Zionist interpretation as Levin and Uris did. The corruption Roth finds in the use of power by Israelis, particularly in their relationship to Palestinians, tarnishes the moral superiority that had been Zionism’s claim. The demystification of Israel may be observed as early as Saul Bellow’s Mr. Sammler’s Planet (1970), which deals with the psychological and moral costs of Israeli militarism, but Roth extends this observation further in his novels written after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Intifada of the 1980s. He characterizes Israelis as conquerors and Palestinians as refugees. In a reversal of roles that invites a change of sympathies, Jews no longer are refugees as in Uris’s Exodus, but rather Palestinian Arabs occupy the position of underdog worthy of universal support. Moreover, Israel is no longer the promised, safe haven for world Jewry rooted in virtue and justice.

Roth’s work echoes criticism rife in contemporary Israel where filmmakers, novelists, artists, and intellectuals have debunked myths of the past. In the American context his writing challenges the popular postwar construction of American Jewish identity. Roth would have his American Jewish heroes live out their lives in the American diaspora free of any sense of inferiority or insecurity. In his writings, Israel cannot challenge America as the legitimate and preferred home for the descendants of Europe’s Jews.

Roth observes Israel from a distance, yet the Israeli writer Haim Hazaz knows from first-hand experience the triumphs and tragedies of the new state. The creation of a Jewish state obviously looms large for those like Hazaz who write in Hebrew and live in Israel. Arnold Band explores how Hebrew writers coped with Israel’s establishment through an analysis of Haim Hazaz, one of the most celebrated writers of modern Hebrew. Born in Eastern Europe in 1898, Hazaz experienced pogroms and the Russian Revolution and spent eight years in Paris before moving to Palestine in 1931. Like many of his generation, he viewed art as an instrument for furthering national ends. His characters are often framed against the historic events which he himself experienced, including the Russian Revolution, the struggle for the state, the ingathering of exiles, and settlement of the land.

With Israel’s creation, a new generation of writers, many of whom served as fighters in elite units during the War of Independence, took the place of immigrant Europeans like Hazaz. Yet Band finds precisely Hazaz’s relative maturity captivating. Long a dreamer of the state, Hazaz was well positioned to comment on its realization. Above all, the possibility of a return to “normalcy” fascinated him, and he investigated its many meanings. With the anomaly of Jewish life in Europe apparently terminated by a return to the land in an independent state, Hazaz maintained, the Hebrew writer would have to engage universal human questions. Band points out that by the end of the first decade of independence, Hazaz was in transition between the traditional rhetoric of his generation, which tended to the messianic, and the mundane realities of life in a Jewish state. The main characters of his stories struggle between the heroic missions of Zionist ideology and the actuality, paradoxes, and ironies of building their lives in a society overburdened with utopian expectations. In this way, Hazaz prefigured the work of contemporary scholars, intellectuals, and artists who question what Israel actually is and what it has accomplished.

**POLITICAL CULTURES**

Literary texts provide one window into the tensions surrounding statehood. Political theory offers another mode of analysis. The entry into statehood and history dramatically changed Jewish political culture in Israel. With the exercise of sovereign power came efforts to reconfigure Jewish interpretations of political possibilities and the relation between means and
ends. These unprecedented opportunities reverberated across the ocean to the United States, where Jews, energized by their participation as fighters in the military during World War II, sought to secure their status as equal citizens. Yet the politics of statehood and civil rights had roots in prewar Jewish cultures, shaped by the interaction of Jews as a minority with a majority Gentile society.

Ewa Morawska deftly defines the relationship of historical experience with ethnic norms in her wide-ranging comparison of alternative modes of assimilation adopted by Eastern European Jews in the United States. She develops several models of American Jewish political culture. Each integrates a collective ethnic identity with incorporation into mainstream economic, political, and social institutions set within specific historical circumstances. By rescuing the assimilationist interpretation from its ahistorical context, Morawska shows how ethnic identity emerged out of circumstances rather than following a linear progression from strong to weak. Perhaps more significantly, Jewish ethnicity assumed various characteristics depending upon characteristics of the surrounding environment and local Jewish groups. Among the latter, Morawska identifies internal divisions between German and Eastern European Jews as well as between immigrant and second generations.

Thus at one extreme stands New York, and also Boston and San Francisco, representing situations that enhance ethnic identity and strengthen assertive political postures. In San Francisco, Jews pursued a politics of resentment, sharpened by conflicts between Eastern European immigrants and native-born Jews of German descent. In Boston, Jews created a defensive political culture in an overwhelmingly Catholic city. Zionism, eschewed by many Jews in San Francisco, enhanced Jewish identity in Boston. At the other extreme can be found such southern communities as Greensboro, North Carolina, and Charleston, South Carolina. There assimilation did take hold, caused by an absence of conflict with the liberal Christian majority. Morawska locates a city like Cleveland, Ohio, midway between the two extremes because it sustained an inclusive politics of ethnicity, without resentment or defensiveness. She concludes that the variety of “differently textured’ group ethnic identities” reveals a rich array of political cultures

that implicitly challenge efforts to paint American Jews into a political corner (usually one labeled “liberal”).

Distinctions and tensions existed among American Jews. Morawska observes how older communities of Central European Jews and the more recent Eastern European arrivals usually occupied different places geographically and economically, as well as within American culture. Yet, these distinctions gradually attenuated, especially during World War II. Even as the war experience contributed to a sense of brotherhood among Jews and, indeed, among most American citizens, the general prosperity of the postwar period enabled the children and grandchildren of Eastern European immigrants to close the gap with earlier arrivals from Western and Central Europe. In the postwar decades, a far more homogeneous and cohesive Jewry emerged in the United States than in Israel.

Zionism changed Israel’s demographics by vastly increasing the Jewish community of Palestine—from around 25,000 in 1880, most of whom were native-born, to 650,000 at independence in 1948, most of whom were immigrants—and by making it overwhelmingly European, with Eastern European Jews as the critical element. The political leadership of the Yishuv (the pre-state Jewish settlement in Palestine) came from Russia and Poland. Most arrived prior to the mid-1920s. The mass immigration of the immediate post-Independence period, 1948–52, doubled the country’s population to more than a million. Most immigrants were still European, largely Holocaust survivors. The expectation that Israel would emerge as a cohesive society built on foundations imagined and established by Eastern European Jews appeared likely. The massive immigration of North African Jews, of whom the largest group were Moroccans, shattered this illusion. Their entry into Israeli society provoked friction and conflict. Muted in the early years of the state, antagonism grew in intensity and by 1977 helped Menachem Begin’s Likud coalition overturn Labor’s hegemony. In marked contrast to the American Jewish experience, Jews in Israel had to sort out social, cultural, and political issues among themselves without the mitigating effect of living as a minority that had to confront a shared challenge of adapting to a host culture.

American Jews met this challenge in the postwar years with particular
aplomb, benefiting from the rapid decline of discrimination and anti-Semitism. Ira Katznelson argues that the orientation of Jews to the entry rules of the West shifted in the United States from a strategy of "city niches" of "cautious, edgy vigilance" to a wider array of political cultures. The latter included everything from individual choices to pass, usually through intermarriage and conversion, to frontal assaults on ethnic discrimination, to ethnic mobilization to secure a collective foothold in society. Katznelson explores the social shifts modifying Jewish political culture. Although he credits the mobilization of World War II as a watershed in the process of change, he emphasizes the roots of transformation in the interwar years, specifically in changing residential patterns that disrupted earlier linkages between work and living. As Jews distanced their homes from their workplaces, they redefined their ethnicity along more homogeneous class and religious lines. In such settings, ethnic identity could be cast in symbolic terms. Jews felt free to fly the blue-and-white flag of Zionism and Israel alongside the Stars and Stripes in their synagogues and community centers.

Katznelson concludes that "the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 effectively normalized Jewish ethnicity, making it comparable to Catholic ethnicities." Like other white Americans, Jews possessed a homeland and nation-state. The transformation of Jews into "whites" allowed them political choices previously unavailable. With the establishment of Israel securing their identity as an American ethnic group, American Jews could explore the many possibilities of a democratic political culture and even contribute to its development.

By the end of World War II, being Jewish in the United States became a recognized and accepted identity that opened doors to opportunity and integration. What Western European Jewry had posited for itself, only to be disappointed by the course of twentieth-century European history, became a reality for American Jewry. As Will Herberg noted, American society included Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. This inclusively universalist formula permitted distinctions based on association with a particular religious community which, in any case, was viewed as compatible and similar to the other religions. Thus, as Daniel Elazar observes in the concluding chapter, Jews may have sought cultural pluralism, but they found accep-

tance within the context of religious pluralism. In the ease and tolerance of this environment, association with a recognized religion was consistent with personal mobility. Assimilation or affirmation of collective identity coexisted in a society that encouraged permeable and fluid borders. Such an outcome was unimaginable for Jews emigrating to Palestine.

Elazar places the possibility of forming a distinctive American Jewish identity within a discrete historical framework and contrasts it with the historical possibilities that obtained in the Yishuv and Israel. His analysis illuminates why the choice of destination was critical to the growing divergence between the two centers. European Jews who came to the United States entered a society that had evolved a universalist, inclusive culture resting on individualism. Pluralism, articulated by the American Jewish social philosopher Horace Kallen, became an accepted social and political principle. Jews in Israel came to a society based on varieties of parochialism and collective identities. Rights and recognition in the Ottoman Empire were not possible for Jews or anyone else as individuals. Everyone was categorized by membership into groups classified according to Moslem law. Jews were therefore accorded a place as an inferior but protected people. Such religiously linked classifications extended into the totality of non-religious matters. The collective character of identity was reaffirmed by the terms of reference of the British Mandate, which dealt with Arab and Jewish communities as discrete entities. Individuals belonged to either of these communities or their recognized subdivisions, and their affairs were attended to by communal institutions. The establishment of the State of Israel reaffirmed communal identities. Jews were citizens of a Jewish state even as the place of Arabs was confirmed by tradition, custom, and law. There was no experience or intention or desire to seek an alternative form of social organization. The individualistic civil society that evolved out of the American experience was beyond the ken or need of Israelis, unless one was an American Jew, a committed Zionist, who made aliyah to Israel.

Arthur Aryeh Goren is one such Jew. His epilogue takes a personal look at what it meant to move from the individualistic civil society of the United States to the collective, ethnic society of Israel. His memoir articulates the twin demands that socialism and democracy made upon Zionists of the
generation of World War II. Within the American youth movement Habonim (the builders), Goren championed the values of socialist idealism, tempered by sensitivity to democratic individual aspirations. Arriving in the new state, he found himself speaking out for similar values, albeit with a different emphasis. Throughout his narrative, Goren weaves specific stories that illuminate the tensions of the era and how a representative American Jewish Zionist negotiated the complex reality of transforming oneself and one's society. Living in two different Jewish cultures involved flexibility and courage, imagination and resourcefulness, idealism and pragmatism.

A pattern of cultural divergence emerges from weaving back and forth across the Israeli and American Jewish experience that highlights how immigrant European Jews and their descendants constructed new identities. The outlines of these variants of accommodation, posited prior to emigration from Europe, became actualized in the distinctive political, historical, and social ecologies European immigrants encountered in America and Israel and found expression in an array of cultural, political, and social forms.

We have not addressed how far divergence might evolve. The processes examined do not necessarily indicate separation although, particularly in Israel, some view such a result as inevitable and even claim it already exists. Rather, we find that the intensity and depth of the ties that bind American and Israeli Jews suggest the Jewish people may now conform to what has long been a normal condition among other nations. After nearly two millennia solely as a diaspora nation, Jews have finally become a people with a diaspora and a homeland. The fact that Israel is a Western-oriented society and that a large proportion of its Jewish citizens have shared roots with American Jews bodes well for maintaining vital connections despite unmistakable differences required by adaptations to different environments. A new stage of "normalcy" is evolving out of Europe's demise as the paramount center of Jewish history under conditions more benign than could have been imagined a mere century ago. The Jewish people will continue their journey through history as a world community enjoying the diversity afforded by having successfully rooted itself in two new centers.

**NOTES**


18. For negative perspectives on future relations see Avraham Avi-Hai, *Danger! Three Jewish People* (New York, 1993) and Boas Evron, *Jewish State or Israeli Nation*? (Bloomington, IN, 1995).