

Israel's Expanding Borders:
The Transformative Impact of the Six Day War on the American Jewish Community

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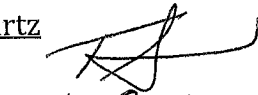
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On the basis of this thesis defended by the candidate on April 24, 2014
we, the undersigned, recommend that the candidate be awarded highest honors
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For my grandfathers Rabbi Bernard Bloomstone and Dov Zimmer,

*Whose commitment to Jewish life and to the Jewish people has inspired my own;
Whose lives have shaped my Jewish identity more than they will ever know.*

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Introduction: Jewish Community and Identity in America

In 1957, 94% of American Jews held a favorable attitude toward Israel, and 90% felt that were Israel to be destroyed they would perceive it as a personal tragedy or loss.¹ Throughout the 1950's and 1960's the American Jewish community maintained a steadfast support for Israel while delicately balancing the pressure to assimilate into the American mainstream with a desire to hold onto their Jewish identity. Jews in the post-war era were quick to flee from the urban centers where their immigrant parents had settled, to the newly flourishing suburbs.² As American Jews established new lives in the suburbs, they built and populated synagogues to "buttress their wobbly identities" and secure a foundation for a continuing Jewish life.³ Yet as they developed new religious institutions, and expanded opportunities to remain involved in the American Jewish community, their conscientious focus on Israel began to fade.⁴

In the years before the Six Day war, the American Jewish community was straying from the State of Israel. American Jews advocated for the "right of the Jew as individual to define his own national identity and the right of the Jewish community to regard itself as an autonomous Jewish center equal in value and standing to Israel."⁵ They did not feel that their notions of community and identity were predicated on the existence of a sovereign Jewish State, nor did they see Israel as the exclusive authority over their religious (and national) identity.⁶ American Jews through their synagogues, political affiliations,

¹ Statistics drawn from Eytan Gilboa, *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Lexington Books, 1986 in Elazar's *Community and Polity*.

² Peter Golden, *O Powerful Western Star!* Green Publishing House, 2012, P. 146

³ Ibid. P. 146

⁴ Yosef Gorny, *The State of Israel in Public Thought*, MacMillan Press, 1994, P.109

⁵ Ibid. P.109

⁶ Ibid. P.109

philanthropic contributions and participation in national Jewish organizations had crafted a unique Jewish identity that unified their community.

Daniel Elazar describes the American Jewish community as “a mosaic, a multidimensional matrix of institutions and organizations that interact with each other in their attempts to cover the range of communal concerns while preserving their respective integrities.”⁷ This definition allows for a broad interpretation of American Jewish life that does not discriminate between a group’s religious denomination, political ideology, social values, or its goals for the community. Elazar’s study of the American Jewish community is expansive looking at sociological, demographic, religious, political, organizational and institutional trends within American Jewry. His definition establishes a baseline understanding of the Jewish community in America, from which to analyze changes within that community throughout the thesis. Another critical idea that Elazar highlights about participation in American Jewish life, is the increasingly voluntary nature of one’s commitment to the Jewish community.⁸ The diversity of institutions within the American Jewish community that emerged in this period reflected the effort of self-selected leaders to provide avenues and organizations that would “embrace everyone who wishe[d] to be Jewish.”⁹ This voluntarism was particularly prevalent within religious practice, where different denominations emerged within American Judaism to reflect the changing beliefs and expectations for individual religious observance. Religious affiliation often times reflected an individual’s effort to accommodate certain realities of assimilation like a

⁷ Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1995, P.8. Elazar’s text is incredibly thorough in its examination of the historical, geographic, ideological, sociological and organizational dimensions of American Jewry. He provides a clear and comprehensive narrative of the development of American Jewish life.

⁸ Ibid. P.8

⁹ Ibid. P.8

suburban lifestyle, or shifts in dominant views about issues like gender equality and civil rights. Ultimately this created a dynamic and evolving American Jewish community that was responsive to the ideological, religious, political, cultural, ethnic and economic influences and concerns that impacted the daily lives of American Jews. When shocks and crises challenged the foundations of the American Jewish community, its establishment leaders, its rabbis and its constituents at large reacted and responded by shifting the focus to new issues, new values and new core tenets that would guide the community forward.

The Six Day War was such a cataclysmic event. The conflict fundamentally altered the power dynamics of the Middle East and redefined the roles that Israel and the United States would continue to play in the region.¹⁰ The tremors caused by the conflict extended far beyond the Middle East and shook the American Jewish community at its core. The crisis that Israel faced in May and June of 1967 catalyzed¹¹ and elicited unprecedented levels of political and philanthropic support for the Jewish State, and prompted mass public demonstrations of solidarity with Israel from a newly galvanized American Jewish community. The Six-Day War forced upon the American Jewish community a reevaluation of the boundaries of Jewish nationhood and peoplehood, bringing Israel from the periphery of American Jewish consciousness to its center. It challenged American Jews to redefine their religious and political identity in order to accommodate Israel's centrality within their community. Charles Silberman described the war as a "watershed between two eras-one in which American Jews had tried to persuade themselves, as well as Gentiles, that they were

¹⁰ Michael Oren. *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

¹¹ Benjamin H. Kahn specifically argues that the "Israel crisis was a catalyst, not a cause, of the emergence of significant Jewish identification, which has lain dormant all these years." In Saul Goldberg's "The Campus Response to the Israel Crisis," B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation, 1967.

just like everybody else, only more so, and a period in which they acknowledged, even celebrated their distinctiveness.”¹² The Jewish community was forced to reconcile their newfound pride in and commitment to the safety and security of the Jewish state with their domestic political interests, values and relationships.

This thesis seeks to move beyond the historical narrative of the war to analyze the tensions and changes that emerged within the American Jewish community following the war and the impact that those changes had on the relationship between the American Jewish community, Israel, and the American government. The central argument developed throughout the thesis is that the existential threat that the war posed toward Israel triggered a newfound realization about Israel’s role in shaping the American Jewish community and stimulating Jewish identity. Thus the American Jewish response to the crisis was not exclusively about preserving Israel’s existence, it was also about preserving the American Jewish community, reinforcing and redefining American Jewish identity and redrawing the borders of Jewish peoplehood. Further, the mobilization and transformation that the war prompted, generated a new understanding that the fate of the American Jewish community was not controlled exclusively by American Jews, but that the leaders, the policies, and the existence of the State of Israel influenced, shaped and inspired the Jewish community in America.

Chapter 1 examines the development of the American Jewish community and explains the religious, ethnic, social, and political influences that shaped American Jewish identity prior to the war. The American Jewish community grappled with core issues on the American political agenda, like the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, alongside

¹² Charles Silberman, *A Certain People*, Summit Books, 1985. P.201

their pro-Israel sentiments. The relationship between President Johnson and the American Jewish community was complicated by the seeming discrepancy between support for Israel and support for the anti-war movement, as well as the general leftward political bent of American Jews. The tension between Cold War politics and pro-Israel politics would persist throughout the Johnson and Nixon presidencies. As the threat posed by Nasser's United Arab Republic grew and loomed over Israel, Johnson's Cold War strategy was increasingly challenged by the pro-Israel lobbying of American Jewish leaders, as well as Israeli officials. The diplomatic crisis that emerged in May of 1967 would ignite the fear and concern for the survival of the Jewish state amongst American Jews that would lead to the massive mobilization witnessed during the war.

Chapter 2 focuses on the immediate response to the war within the American Jewish community and seeks to extend the implications of that response to the conclusion of the time period covered in this work. Although the actual military conflict lasted only six days¹³, the response that it catalyzed was witnessed at every level of the American Jewish community ranging from its foremost political leaders and activists, to its youngest and most innocent children.¹⁴ From Rabbis speaking on behalf of entire religious movements, to secular college students who had largely disengaged from organized Jewish life; Israel's crisis set off a wave of national religious fervor and emotion that was unseen before in the American Jewish community. There was a holistic response from the American Jewish community that comprehensively sought to support the state of Israel, but also to translate

¹³ The military history of the conflict is not relevant to the goals of the thesis, but a brief synopsis of the war and its outcome is included in the beginning of Chapter 2.

¹⁴ Solomon Schechter Day School. *Solomon Schechter Day School letters, 6 June 1967*. American Jewish Archives. These are archived letters written in Hebrew to Israeli soldiers who were served in the War.

Israel's actions and successes into their own communities. In examining as many responses as possible it became clear, the extent to which the war impacted the American Jewish community, its organizations, leaders and institutions during the conflict. It redrew the boundaries of the Jewish nation, not just within the Middle East, but around the American Jewish community, instilling in American Jews a renewed pride in, and sense of, Jewish peoplehood.

The conclusions of Daniel Elazar, Marshall Sklare and other scholars suggest that American Jewish identification and participation soared amidst the existential crisis generated by the war, but the response had a limited effect on longer-term trends of participation and identification within the American Jewish community.¹⁵ Yet organizations like the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Conference of Presidents (COP) and the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) continued to focus their political activism and community engagement on Israel and successfully mobilized support from American Jews. There was a new conscientiousness and sensitivity towards Israel in their organizational agendas and amongst the leadership of these groups. They created mass educational programs, and developed specific agendas to accomplish targeted outreach, with Israel and Jewish peoplehood as the primary focus of those efforts. Religious institutions sought to write Israel into their theology, further entangling Israel's political standing with the religious practices, beliefs and identity of American Jews. Ultimately American Jews embraced the outcome of the conflict, and sought to provide as many outlets as possible to connect to the

¹⁵ Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1995, P.98. And Marshall Sklare. *Lakeville and Israel: The Six-Day War and its Aftermath*. American Jewish Committee (AJC). 1968: 1--20. <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=14005>. And Charles S. Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973

pride and sense of peoplehood that the war caused. The second chapter establishes both the immediate and the lasting effects of the war within the American Jewish community.

The emphasis placed on supporting Israel strained relationships between the American Jewish community and the African American community, who traditionally had been partners in the struggle for civil rights. As events unfolded throughout the year of 1968, Jews and African Americans struggled to reconcile their political interests, and the chaos and conflict that ensued led to continued strife and animosity between them. It was in the midst of the Brooklyn Teachers riots of 1968 that Meir Kahane's JDL began its rise to prominence and infamy. With a renewed sense of Jewish peoplehood, Meir Kahane and the JDL captivated and motivated American Jewry to ensure that "never again" would Jews face persecution and discrimination because of their Jewish identity. The linkages between the Cold War, American Jewish interests and pro-Israel diplomacy would ultimately present Nixon with a series of challenges that would further strengthen the diplomatic relationship between the US and Israel, but would lead to new tensions and new sources of conflict between American Jews and Israeli policymakers.

Chapter 3 analyzes how the ideas of Jewish peoplehood impacted the political voice, relationships and actions of American Jewry during the Nixon administration. During this period, Israeli and American political leaders actively sought to cut out American Jewish influence from the policy making process. Several issues emerged on the diplomatic agenda, including arms sales, loan guarantees, and the War of Attrition, yet the issue that caused the greatest tension between the administration and American Jews and ultimately Israel, was the beginning of a US brokered peace process between Israel and her neighbors. Although Israel's victory was lauded and celebrated within the American Jewish

community, Israel's success left it in the precarious position of occupier. American Jewish leaders struggled to reconcile their own views of Israeli policy, with their seeming obligation to maintain public stances that did not waver in their support for Israel in any way. Israel's policy decisions, including its support for the Vietnam War and its near public backing of Nixon in the 1972 election only furthered the tension between American Jews and Israel. The development of this triangular diplomacy reflected the unique relationship between American Jewry and Israel, where each acted, and was acted upon in their desire to achieve and protect their interests. The sensitivities that each held about the other's involvement in their political processes created a tension between Israel and the American Jewish community, that raised new questions about the dynamics of their relationship and Israel's centrality to American Jewry.

This thesis is not prescriptive; it looks at a specific historical moment, and thoroughly examines it from a variety of perspectives related to the American Jewish community. It uniquely brings together the historical narrative of the politics of the war and its aftermath with a multidimensional approach to looking at the Jewish community. By examining individual and organizational responses from different segments of the Jewish community in America, it is possible to grasp the extent to which the war influenced the American Jewish community in its entirety. The Yom Kippur War in 1973 presented a whole new set of challenges for the American Jewish community and represented the solidification of the official military alliance between the Israeli and American governments. This thesis is bounded by that next historical crisis.

The Six Day War forged a new foundation for the American Jewish community. Israel's survival and her unifying power became the beacon and guiding authority of Jewish

peoplehood and thus of the American Jewish community. This thesis explains the narrative of the war as it was interpreted, internalized and responded to within the American Jewish community. American Jewry came to hold a diversity of opinions about Israel's subsequent policy decisions and their role in shaping those policies following the war but it still remains true that the war situated Israel at the forefront of Jewish religious, political and communal identification in America.

Chapter 1: Jewish Identity Through The Straits of Tiran

Assimilation, Zionism and Liberalism

The American Jewish community throughout the 1950's and 1960's grappled with new challenges to the core tenets that held together American Jewish identity. The pressures of assimilation weighed heavily on Jews in the suburbs, while contemporary political issues like the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement challenged the dimensions of American Jewish liberalism. American Jews still sought channels and outlets to support Israel, although the fervor that was felt in 1948, with the declaration of the Jewish State's independence was slowly waning. As Jews debated and responded to these challenges, new voices emerged that challenged and reinterpreted the long-held liberal values and policies of the Jewish community.¹⁶ American Jews experienced unprecedented levels of social acceptance and feelings of security within the broader American society, while they also secured new levels of socio-economic prosperity.¹⁷ These developing trends only further fueled questions of how to sustain and maintain American Jewish identity amidst this period of instability for the Jewish community. Until May and June of 1967, the American Jewish community continued to weave together a complex ideological outlook that reflected these debates and sought to reconcile their traditional liberalism and Zionism with the political realities of the times.

American Zionism in the pre-Six Day War period reflected a wider range of ideological considerations that expanded beyond the strict support of Israel that largely defined Zionism following the conflict. Staub describes how American Zionism transcended the secular-religious divide within the Jewish community, and was largely predicated on

¹⁶ Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, Columbia University Press, 2002. P.5

¹⁷ Ibid. P.10

Jewish pride, which also extended to other domestic social issues.¹⁸ The linkage of American Zionism with the civil rights movement became a critical source of debate between American Jewish organizations and institutions. The reform movement and the American Jewish Congress, led by then President Dr. Joachim Prinz, formed the main front in support of linking antiracism with Zionism. Organizations like the Anti-Defamation League (of B’Nai Brith), and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) sought to minimize their public support for the Civil Rights, yet continued to tacitly endorse its goals.¹⁹ What drove the divide between the different American Jewish organizations on these issues was not ideological support for the Civil Rights Movement; rather it was their respective outlooks on the American Jewish community and the Jewish identity each sought to foster.

The AJC understood Judaism “strictly as a religious grouping’ and not ‘the ethnic and national channels of Jewish expression.’ To be Jewish meant to be an adherent of the Jewish faith and [that] had little or nothing to do with politics.”²⁰ American Jewish identity was thus neither predicated on Zionism, nor liberalism, but was bounded by belief in and practice of the Jewish religion. The leaders of the AJC only begrudgingly accepted that pro-Israel support needed to be incorporated into the organization’s agenda.²¹ Their singular focus on protecting and strengthening American Jewish life led to an organizational ambivalence towards Israel, and rejected the notion that American Jewish identity ought to be transformed because of the existence of the state and the ethno-national claims it made

¹⁸ Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, Columbia University Press, 2002. P.48

¹⁹ Ibid. P.54

²⁰ Ibid. P.54

²¹ Lawrence K. Grossman "Transformation through crisis: the American Jewish committee and the Six-Day War." *American Jewish History* 86:1, 1998.

over the Jewish people.²² Yet the kind of political activity in support of Israel that was disdained by the leaders of the American Jewish Committee, “had been legitimized, in part because most Americans saw no conflict or contradiction in their Jewish neighbors working to help a small democratic state surrounded by hostile Arabs.”²³ The confluence of American and Jewish interests in support of Israel alleviated the trumped up claims and concerns raised about American Jewish dual loyalties to Israel and the US. Especially as American Cold War interests and policies in the Middle East increasingly came to view Israel as a strategic ally against Soviet involvement in the region, Zionist support for Israel came to be viewed more positively. This was true for both the Johnson and Nixon administrations, but especially for Nixon, for whom Israel would hold a key significance to his Cold War strategy in the Middle East.

The merger of American Jewish political interests with broader American policy goals mirrored the changes that American Jews were undergoing as they assimilated into American society. Urofsky explained how Zionism, as an ideology, never dealt with a diaspora community that both continued to support an established Jewish homeland that was open to them, while also remaining firmly rooted in a society that had embraced and accepted them.²⁴ American Jews played an integral role in the great migration to the suburbs that followed World War II and continued into the mid 1950's and 1960's, with Jewish couples moving to suburbia at nearly four times the rate of non-Jewish couples.²⁵ Furthermore they built towering new synagogues that illustrated their pride and

²² Lawrence K. Grossman "Transformation through crisis: the American Jewish committee and the Six-Day War." *American Jewish History* 86:1, 1998.

²³ Melvin I. Urofsky, *We Are One!*, Anchor Press, 1978. P.330

²⁴ *Ibid.* P.338-9

²⁵ Peter Golden, *O Powerful Western Star!* Green Publishing House, 2012, P. 146

proclaimed their existence and presence amongst the American mainstream.²⁶ Affiliation with these synagogues for many families established their first formal ties to a Jewish institution or organization, and helped them to reconcile their longing to maintain their Jewish identity amidst mainstream secular suburban America.²⁷ Yet this desire to remain connected with the Jewish community was grounded in notions of ethno-nationalism, as opposed to religious practice and belief. Yet what began as a quest to connect to a new Jewish community, eventually led to increased levels of Jewish observance and education.²⁸

Despite the effort made to preserve and strengthen the Jewish community as its members assimilated and settled into the suburbs, many critics doubted the sustainability of American Jewish life. They argued that American Judaism was a hollow shell of external expression, that lacked the true substance, religious education, understanding and belief, to truly survive. One critic described how “despite all the exterior trappings of living ‘Jewishly’, despite all the activities and buildings, despite all the emphasis on Jewish ethnicism, the real sense of being Jewish, the ‘visceral ethnic consciousness,’ seemed to be rapidly diminishing.”²⁹ American Jews because of their relative prosperity in the suburbs seemingly could pay their dues to their respective synagogue or Jewish organization and could stake a claim to their Jewish identity. Nahum Goldmann, who served in numerous leadership roles within American Jewish establishment organizations, feared that American Jewish communities were too dynamic and developed tendencies toward independence that left them isolated from other Jewish communities and that ultimately

²⁶ Charles Silberman, *A Certain People*, Summit Books, 1985. P.178

²⁷ Ibid. P.179

²⁸ Ibid. P. 180

²⁹ Jacob Neusner, in Urofsky's *We Are One!*, Anchor Press, 1978. P.337

they would lose their consciousness and connection to the larger Jewish people.³⁰ Yet others sought to define a positive role for American Jews in building a contiguous Jewish people through their support for the Jewish State, and through their own religious practice. David Polish, a reform rabbi who would later write a religious interpretation of the Six Day War, sought to fill the void of Jewish faith and practice that others ascribed to American Jewry. He argued that given the establishment of the Jewish State and the acceptance of American Jews into the American mainstream, they could now “live fully Jewish lives.”³¹ But Polish also emphasized the importance of Zionism as an ideological linkage between secular and religious American Jews that would preserve the relationship between the American Jewish diaspora and Israel through the basis of Jewish peoplehood.³²

Polish and others helped to establish the notion that Zionism and support for Israel could fill the void in the American Jewish community alongside religious practice. This notion of shifting the American Jewish community toward a closer, more focused relationship with Israel triggered a backlash from those who wanted American Jewry to focus on Judaism as opposed to Zionism. In particular, critics like Jakob Petuchowski, who in *Zion Reconsidered* disputed the notion that Zionism was as beneficial for Israel and American Jewry as others like Polish supposed, and further challenged American Jews to draw distinctions between the State of Israel and the Jewish people, and to recognize that support for one, did not guarantee the survival of the other.³³ The divide reflected in these two outlooks on American Jewish identification through Zionism and support for Israel

³⁰ Nahum Goldman in Urofsky's *We Are One!*, Anchor Press, 1978. P.337

³¹ David Polish in Urofsky's *We Are One!*, Anchor Press, 1978. P.339

³² Ibid. P.339-40

³³ Jakob Petuchowski in Urofsky's *We Are One!*, Anchor Press, 1978. P.340

would form the basis of the debates about the central role that Israel played in American Jewish life in the wake of the Six Day War.

As the American Jewish community migrated to the suburbs, they faced the difficult task of continuing to craft and preserve an American Jewish identity while being surrounded by the influences and forces of assimilation. Additionally American Jewish organizations were forced to take stances on domestic political issues that enabled new interpretations and created new challenges for American Jewish liberalism. The convergence of Zionism, liberalism and assimilationist pressures forced a dynamic response from American Jewish leaders and the community at large to maintain their political and religious identity, and to build and expand their political relationships to protect their political and religious interests.

Johnson, The Jews and Israel

President Lyndon Baines Johnson's positive relationship with American Jews predated his time in the White House. During the Eisenhower administration, he won the favor of American Jewish leaders when in 1957 he stood up for Israel's cause even as the White House continued to pressure the Israelis to make concessions following their Sinai Campaign in 1956.³⁴ Johnson throughout his political career was surrounded by American Jewish leaders and figures who not only solidified Johnson's unique Zionist outlook, but also shared his commitment to domestic social liberalism. Robert Johnson goes so far as to argue that President Johnson owed his political career to Abe Fortas, a Jewish and Zionist attorney who would remain a counselor to Johnson until ultimately being appointed to the

³⁴ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, University of Chicago Press, 1985. P. 120

Supreme Court in 1965.³⁵ Many within Johnson's administration, especially his closest advisors on both domestic and foreign policy maintained pro-Israel sentiments, yet their personal attachments to Israel rarely shaped or altered the policy decisions that LBJ ultimately made regarding the Middle East and Israel.³⁶ Johnson also utilized his Jewish and Zionist advisors, as well as other political figures, to facilitate his diplomatic proceedings with the Israeli government, both in Washington and in Jerusalem.³⁷ Johnson's tendency towards indirect diplomacy afforded American Jewish leaders greater access to the decision-making process on issues related to Israel both through contacts with Johnson but also through these various Jewish figures carrying out the policies of the White House. Later during the Nixon years, American Jewish leaders would at times feel shut out, as Nixon implemented a much more direct diplomacy with the Israeli government, utilizing players he viewed as impartial to Jewish issues.

Johnson personally held a romanticized image of Israel, often times drawing parallels between the Zionist spirit and the frontier spirit, once describing the "Israelis as Texans, and Nasser as Santa Ana."³⁸ Despite his personal support for Israel there was one issue that distracted and disturbed Johnson's relationship with American Jewry, and that issue was Vietnam. The president privately felt that South Vietnam and Israel were in similar situations, yet American Jewish support for the antiwar movement was juxtaposed with a continuing pressure on the administration to continue arming Israel. Johnson at various points grew incredibly frustrated with American Jewish leaders, exclaiming "Dammit, they want me to protect Israel, but they don't want me to do anything in

³⁵ Robert David Johnson, *Lyndon Johnson and Israel*, Tel Aviv University, 2008. P. 16.

³⁶ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, University of Chicago Press, 1985. P. 129

³⁷ Robert David Johnson, *Lyndon Johnson and Israel*, Tel Aviv University, 2008.

³⁸ *Ibid.* P. 17

Vietnam.”³⁹ American Jewish support for the antiwar movement was not uniform or consistent, despite the complaints and frustrations exhibited by Johnson. Staub brings light to the internal debates that occurred within the Jewish community between hawks and doves in the years before the Six Day War, and the various religious and political justifications that became interwoven in defense or in opposition to the war effort.⁴⁰ Unlike Nixon, despite Johnson’s incredulity that American Jews could not realize the analogous situations of South Vietnam and Israel, Johnson resisted linking the two policy arenas into a cohesive foreign policy.⁴¹

The Diplomatic Crisis

Following a scaled down celebration of Israeli Independence Day on May 14, 1967 Prime Minister of Israel, Levi Eshkol, remarked to his wife “Don’t you realize that there’s going to be a war?”⁴² Throughout the celebration he had been discussing contingency plans and military strategy with Yitzhak Rabin, who was then the Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces. Reports trickled in that Nasser was slowly beginning to mount his forces along Egypt’s border with Israel in the Sinai Peninsula. Eshkol and Rabin deliberated what next steps Israel should take, recognizing that they needed to convey a keen geopolitical sensitivity. Israel could not afford to take an overly aggressive posture in response to Nasser’s actions and provoke an unwanted war, yet Israel also could not appear complacent and disregard Egypt’s own military posturing. Eshkol understood that war was coming, and that it was his responsibility to ensure that the breakout of armed conflict was

³⁹ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, University of Chicago Press, 1985. P. 130

⁴⁰ Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, Columbia University Press, 2002. P. 123-28

⁴¹ Ibid. P.130

⁴² Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2002. P. 62.

along Israel's strategic timeframe, and not dictated by a surprise attack from any member of the United Arab Republic.

As tension mounted along the border between Israel and Egypt, Nasser took to the UN to remove the United Nations Emergency Force that had been situated in Sinai since 1956. Michael Oren notes that "Egypt had an unassailable right to evict UNEF, though by doing so it risked igniting regional, if not global, war" and additionally it incited extreme concern within Israel about Egypt's intentions. American Jewish Leaders were aware as early as April 1967 that the UN would prove to be a critical body in preserving Israel's security amidst rising tensions with her Arab neighbors.⁴³ On May 19th, the chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (COP), sent a telegram to the Johnson Administration that illustrated the concern of the American Jewish Community that "the mounting tensions on the Israel Arab borders may conceivably lead to a miscalculation which could embroil the area in a major conflagration."⁴⁴ American Jewish leaders had reason to be concerned for Israel's security and that a regional conflict was on the horizon. Voices throughout the Arab world were applauding Egypt's military aggression, with various Arab leaders calling for the destruction of the Jewish state and "a holy war to liberate Palestine."⁴⁵ Oren comments that beyond the rhetoric and pronouncements of the Arab leadership, "Nasser's deeds had whipped the Arab 'Street' into

⁴³ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, "Days of Crisis; A President's Conference Interim Report", September 1967, P. 1-2.

⁴⁴ Ibid P. 2

⁴⁵ Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2002. P. 78-79

a fervor” thus fomenting popular solidarity throughout the Arab world in support of Israel’s destruction.⁴⁶

As Nasser’s actions precipitated a galvanized response throughout the Arab world, the Conference of Presidents sought to unify American Jewry under the banner of defending Israel’s security. The Conference of Presidents remained acutely aware of developments in the Middle East and established an ad hoc committee that would handle developments in the region and serve as a command center for the American Jewish community’s political activity throughout the crisis.⁴⁷ May 23rd served as a decisive day both in the narrative of Nasser’s strategic military showdown with Israel, and within the American Jewish community’s organized response to Nasser’s aggression. On that day, Nasser declared that:

The Aqaba Gulf constitutes our Egyptian territorial waters. Under no circumstances will we allow the Israeli flag to pass through the Aqaba Gulf. The Jews threatened war. We tell them: *Ahlan Wa-sahlan* (You are welcome), we are ready for war. Our armed forces and all our people are ready for war, but under no circumstances will we abandon any of our rights. This water is ours.⁴⁸

For many, including the Israeli leadership, the closing of the Straits of Tiran was the point of no return, conflict with Egypt was inevitable without the intervention of the international community, be it the UN or a great power. Nasser’s proclamation was further hailed throughout the Middle East, where mass demonstrations formed in the streets of

⁴⁶ Ibid P. 78-79

⁴⁷ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, “Days of Crisis; A President’s Conference Interim Report”, September 1967, P. 2-3.

⁴⁸ Nasser as quoted in Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2002. P. 84.

Baghdad, Beirut, Jerusalem and Cairo, and these popular demonstrations were mirrored by the mobilization of armies in Lebanon, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁹

In America, the COP began organizing a massive “Solidarity with Israel” rally in New York City that would serve as a focalizing event for the Jewish community’s attempts to garner government support for an increasingly beleaguered Israel.⁵⁰ Just as Arabs would take to the streets in support of Israel’s destruction, so too would America’s Jews in support of her preservation. In response to Nasser’s statement, the leaders of the COP sought a reaffirmation of President Johnson’s commitment to preserve the free and open status of Aqaba as an international waterway, and to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity that such a blockade threatened and jeopardized.⁵¹ The COP further called for the US to take any and all actions that might “avert Arab aggression in the Middle East” and preserve the quickly disintegrating peace and relative stability within the region.⁵² Despite the seeming mounting public pressure, Spiegel argues that the President retained strategic flexibility throughout the crisis because American Jewish groups were forced to remain vague in their demands for action to be taken by the administration.⁵³ This allowed the administration to focus on diplomatic measures to prevent a conflict, as opposed to being forced to mobilize military assets, which Johnson sought to avoid at all costs.

The Israeli leadership both political and military, despite having operational military strategies and tactics at the ready was not willing to preempt Nasser’s aggression

⁴⁹ Ibid. P. 84.

⁵⁰ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, “Days of Crisis; A President’s Conference Interim Report”, September 1967, P. 3

⁵¹ Ibid P. 3

⁵² Ibid P. 3

⁵³ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, University of Chicago Press, 1985. P. 138

(at least not yet). Rabin in his final conversations with Abba Eban, Israel's Foreign Minister, before sending him on a final diplomatic push to the United States is quoted as saying "I want it to be recorded for history that, before acting, we did everything we could to find a diplomatic solution."⁵⁴ There was a growing fear spreading through the ranks of the Israeli military, and civil society that Israel was about to enter the gauntlet of war.⁵⁵ Despite the resolve of Israeli leadership, others were witnessing the mass and expanse of Egypt's military build up on the southern border and could not begin but think that Israel was facing national annihilation.

America's standing in the Middle East was also threatened by the potential conflict and it was this precarious diplomatic situation that Eban set out to exploit while visiting with leading figures within the administration. Johnson throughout the crisis was listening to American Jewish calls for intervention, and sought to balance his personal pro-Israel sentiments, with the demands of a complex Middle East foreign policy that demanded commitments not just to the Jewish state but also to her Arab neighbors.⁵⁶ It was this delicate balance that ultimately led to Johnson's famous words to Eban in their meeting that "Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go it alone." Despite the pleas of American Jewry and the diplomatic press put on by Eban and the Israeli government, war seemed inevitable without US intervention and Johnson seemed far removed from taking contentious action.

The rally sponsored by the Conference of Presidents, that was planned on May 23rd took place in New York City on May 28th 1967, and over 125,000 individuals participated in

⁵⁴ Rabin as quoted in Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2002. P. 99

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* P. 99

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* P. 111-12.

the demonstration of solidarity with Israel. Members from throughout the Jewish community spoke at the rally reflecting the diverse and varied groups that claimed a stake in their support for Israel, but also a stake in shaping American Jewish life. The Chairman of the COP, Rabbi Dr. Joachim Prinz announced to the crowd and to the people of Israel that the COP would utilize every resource available within the American Jewish Community to directly and through the government of the US demonstrate its solidarity with the Jewish state. He further declared that “the tremendous outpouring of Jewish solidarity with Israel is a heartening demonstration that in this hour of crisis the American Jewish community speaks as one, united in its commitment to the security of Israel.”⁵⁷ Others spoke on behalf of religious, Zionist, and community relations organizations about the imperative of demonstrating support for Israel and pressuring the administration to take action to protect Israel’s security. The last speaker at the rally was Barbara Tuchman, a Pulitzer-prize winning author who commented that this issue was more than just an American issue, it was a Jewish issue that was wrapped up in the “old and permanent and unending” narrative of survival.⁵⁸ She further explained how the existence of the State of Israel enables Jewry outside of Israel to exist and to thrive, and that “it became increasingly clear to us in the American Jewish community that dangers of annihilation faced Israel and her people.”⁵⁹ These sentiments formed the basis of and motivation for the Jewish response during the Six Day War that the destruction of Israel would extend beyond her borders to

⁵⁷ Prinz as quoted in Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, “Days of Crisis; A President’s Conference Interim Report”, September 1967, P. 4

⁵⁸ Ibid P. 6

⁵⁹ Ibid. P. 6

the American Jewish community as well. Thus supporting and protecting Israel was an act that fortified one's own Jewish community and one's own identity.

The rally did not sway President Johnson and the path to war became increasingly evident to Israelis, Arabs, Americans and the international community. Spiegel explains how as the crisis intensified, American Jewish leaders increasingly were left on the sidelines of Johnson's decision-making apparatus.⁶⁰ Johnson would later reflect in his memoirs that he held great sympathy for the Israelis, who "gallantly" built and defended a nation against the "tragic background of Jewish experience," and that he could understand their decision to act alone given the aggressive posture and antagonistic rhetoric of its neighbors.⁶¹ In the face of certain conflict the COP announced that it would convene a National Emergency Leadership Conference on June 7-8 and that they would extend their invitations beyond the member organizations of the COP, but to all stakeholders in the American Jewish Community. By the time the conference convened Israel would already be embattled in the throes of conflict and emerging victorious.

⁶⁰ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, University of Chicago Press, 1985. P. 149.

⁶¹ Johnson in Spiegel. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, University of Chicago Press, 1985. P. 149.

Chapter 2: Crisis Mobilization, Transformation, and Reorientation

What Prime Minister Eshkol had foreseen following Israel's Independence Day celebration, and Johnson had concluded following his meetings with Foreign Minister Eban, was realized during the first week of June; a war finally erupted between Israel and her neighbors. Early in the morning of June 5th, 1967, the Israeli Air Force jetted across the borders of Egypt and Syria, quickly bombing and dismantling the entirety of the Egyptian and Syrian Air Forces, ensuring air superiority for the duration of the conflict.⁶² Yet, before the Israeli Defense Forces remained the enormous task of withstanding the aggressive response from the armies of Egypt in the south, Jordan in the east, and Syria in the north, with full understanding that all three would receive a steady stream of reinforcements from their Arab neighbors. The American Jewish community had already been roused to action in "*Ha-Hamtana*", the days of waiting, that preceded the actual outbreak of armed conflict, but their mass-mobilization took place throughout the duration of the conflict and long after it had concluded.⁶³

In the early days of the conflict, there remained legitimate and real fears that Israel's borders would be erased from the map, and the rhetoric espoused by the Arab leaders in the preceding weeks would ultimately ring true. Reports continuously streamed through American television sets, and across the radio waves of the action taking place in the Middle East. American Jewish consternation was transformed into a fierce determination to support Israel in whatever way possible. Yet just six days after the war had begun, against all odds, Israel miraculously had emerged victorious, not only effectively defending its

⁶² Michael Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2002

borders, but occupying the Gaza Strip and Sinai, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and the Old City of Jerusalem. The American Jewish mobilization throughout the conflict reflected a multi-dimensional and totally consuming concern amongst American Jews for Israel's safety and security. The response was both organized and spontaneous. Its participants were both religious and secular, students and professors, wealthy and poor. The response to the crisis and the conflict had an immediate impact on Jewish identification within America's Jewish community, and also had a longer-range impact on its institutions, organizations, and ultimately its relationship with Israel. This chapter looks at the immediate transformations that the conflict catalyzed within the American Jewish community, and traces their longer term historical outcomes.

The Organized Jewish Response: Mobilizing and Transforming

The Conference of Presidents, on June 5th in a press release declared to the Israeli people that they would "pledge everything that [was] within their power to give, to the end that peace and justice may be restored to the Promised Land...We stand in solidarity with them, proud of their courage and determined that they shall live in their own land in peace."⁶⁴ The COP in convening the National Emergency Leadership Conference on June 7th and 8th sought to mobilize as many national Jewish leaders as possible to contact, pressure, and lobby the federal government to stand by its commitment to Israel and to ensure her security. The first day of the conference focused on briefing the delegates about the situation on the ground in the Middle East and to galvanize a unified message amongst the American Jewish community to be communicated to government officials. Additionally the

⁶⁴ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, "Days of Crisis; A President's Conference Interim Report", September 1967, P 8.

delegates were broken up into geographical regions where they met with coordinators and resource managers where they strategized how best to continue to mobilize American Jewry throughout the conflict.⁶⁵ The following day, attendees descended upon Capitol Hill, where they met with their representatives and senators, while the national leadership of the COP met with key members of the Senate. Following their meetings on the hill, the conference reconvened at Lafayette Square in front of the White House for another demonstration in solidarity with Israel. The decision to host the rally at this particular location is not mentioned anywhere in the documents available, but given its proximity to the White House and Johnson's intransigence regarding Israel's security prior to the outbreak of war, the rally was likely aimed specifically at the President and the speeches at the rally certainly targeted Johnson for not backing up his commitments to Israel. The crowd at this rally was about one third the size as the earlier rally in New York, but this rally reflected a very different tone and had a greater significance than the COP rally in New York.

The first address was given by Charlotte Jacobson, the national president of Hadassah, who emphasized the shared experience that the war engendered between Israel and the American Jewish community, beginning her speech, "We are a people, one people."⁶⁶ Her speech reflected a newfound sense of linkage between the fate of Israel and the American Jewish community, describing how American Jews were "conscious of what the re-establishment of a Jewish state in our own time means to us and to the history of our

⁶⁵ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, "Days of Crisis; A President's Conference Interim Report", September 1967, P. 11-12

⁶⁶ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, "Days of Crisis; A President's Conference Interim Report", September 1967, P. 13

people” and concluded that “We embrace their hopes. We share their dreams as we say together with them, Am Yisrael Chai – the people of Israel lives, and shall live.”⁶⁷ The sentiments expressed by Jacobson illustrated a redrawing of the borders of the nation of Israel around the American Jewish community, emphasizing their shared peoplehood and nationhood as opposed to their distinct citizenships and nationalities. The speakers who followed her reflected both Jewish and broader American perspectives toward the conflict and included labor leaders, Christian religious leaders, African American leaders and two Senators.

One of the featured speakers at the rally was Morris Abram, the president of the American Jewish Committee (AJC). His participation and representation of his organization reflected a radical transformation of the position of the AJC towards Israel. The crisis of the Six Day War and the near instantaneous response of the American Jewish community had forced the AJC to reexamine and reorient its position about support for Israel. AJC leaders, Morris Abram and former AJC president Jacob Blaustein arranged meetings with officials in the administration and in congress to push for increased material support to Israel amidst the crisis prior to the outbreak and intensification of the war.⁶⁸ The AJC had traditionally shunned simple public demonstrations of pro-Israel and Zionist support like that at the National Emergency Leadership Conference, but President Abram reversed the traditional stance of the organization and endorsed the event. His speech although primarily focused on the narrative of Israel’s victory, expressed a renewed sense of Jewish peoplehood

⁶⁷ Ibid. P. 13

⁶⁸ Lawrence Grossman, “Transformation through crisis: the American Jewish committee and the Six-Day War”, *American Jewish History*. 86:1 (Mar. 1998) P.24-25

predicated on the survival and existence of Israel.⁶⁹ Abram recognized the emphasis placed on Israel as an essential facet of the American Jewish identity and the American Jewish community and thus steered the AJC towards a more mainstream approach towards Israel that recognized Jewish people and the “inextricable linkage” between Israel’s survival and the survival of Jewish life in the Diaspora.⁷⁰ American Jewish organizations like the American Jewish Committee and those represented in the Conference of Presidents played a critical role in organizing American Jewry through public political demonstrations. Although these mass rallies likely had a limited political impact in terms of actually influencing policy outcomes, the decision to act participate in one of these rallies reflected an individual or an organization’s desire to demonstrate solidarity with Israel and to identify openly with an American Jewish community that was seeking any and all ways to illustrate its support for the state of Israel.

Organizations like the AJC, COP, and others all sought in the wake of the war to open new avenues for their members to remain connected to the Jewish community through continuing support of Israel. In May 1967, at the Executive board meeting of the American Jewish Committee, there was not a single mention of Israel in the minutes from the gathering.⁷¹ Later that year, at the Executive Board’s meeting in December of 1967, the closing plenary was titled “Israel and the US: New Perspectives on Jewish Identity and Continuity.”⁷² That this conversation was occurring amongst AJC leaders illustrated the profound shift in the organizational focus and goals of the AJC as a result of the Six Day

⁶⁹ Ibid. P.26

⁷⁰ Lawrence Grossman, “Transformation through crisis: the American Jewish committee and the Six-Day War”, *American Jewish History*. 86:1 (Mar. 1998) P. 29

⁷¹ Executive Committee Minutes, May 1967, AJC Archives

⁷² Executive Committee Minutes, December 1967, AJC Archives

War. Further it highlighted how American Jewish support for Israel came to define Jewish identity, and how organizations sought to strengthen American Jewish participation by establishing and enforcing American Jewish ties to Israel.

The discussion during the session reflected the many potential tensions that could emerge between Israel and a more engaged and active Jewish community. One of the speakers, Judge Tannenbaum highlighted that if the Jewish community became more focused on Israel, its support would evolve to take on a more active role in assessing Israeli policy decisions. He described how in the minds of American Jews, Israel's safety and security would always take precedence in peace negotiations with her Arab neighbors, but that once those were delivered, American Jews would come to expect Israel's policies to exhibit flexibility and compassion for the Palestinians and the Arabs.⁷³ Following Tannenbaum's speech, the Executive Director of the Council of Jewish Federations, Philip Bernstein, spoke about the response of American Jewry to the crisis presented by the war in terms of their willingness to volunteer their time and efforts, as well as contribute their personal funds. The minutes reflect that Bernstein's conclusion was a call to action for all Jews and Jewish organizations:

To accept the challenge of the events of June and July, to channel in every way we can the identification and commitments that have been engendered into activities that will provide greater personal fulfillment and help strengthen and enrich Jewish life in all of its manifestations.⁷⁴

Bernstein's comments were not an outright affirmation that Jewish identification should be limited to the rationale of pro-Israelism⁷⁵, but rather it should form a foundation from

⁷³ Executive Committee Minutes, December 1967, AJC Archives P.12

⁷⁴ Ibid. P.13

⁷⁵ Michael A. Meyer defines pro-Israelism as a basic concern for the well-being of the State of Israel and its citizens and that such support could form the basis of Jewish identification in America. Found in the foreword to Yosef Gorny's *The State of Israel in Jewish Public Thought*, MacMillan Press, 1994. P. x.

which American Jews and organizations should expand and develop. The idea that Israel was now linked to Jewish continuity, identity and political action reflected a major change in the focus and goals of the American Jewish Committee.

The Executive Committee of the AJC later in that meeting voted to approve a statement that elucidated and standardized the policy positions that the AJC held toward Israel, the Middle East and America's role in the region. The key issues discussed were the unification of Jerusalem, the safety and security of Israel predicated on mutually agreed upon borders, a US supported policy of economic development for the Arab states, and an endorsement of the US and the UN as potential mediators to reach an Arab-Israeli understanding.⁷⁶ The AJC, along with the COP, and the American government all adopted positions regarding a two-state solution based on U.N. Resolution 242's model of exchanging and returning land for peace. This newfound comfort in elaborating positions about Israeli policy decisions reflected the concern expressed by Tannenbaum about the changing relationship between American Jews and the Israeli government.

Beginning in 1968, the AJC began to implement a series of programs and initiatives that reflected a new commitment to grassroots engagement and education about Israel and the Middle East. The board approved a "broad-scale public education program to build understanding of and support for Israel within the United States."⁷⁷ Similarly the AJC partnered with the office of the Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek to work together in partnership with the Association of American Professors for Peace in the Middle East.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Executive Committee Minutes, December 1967, AJC Archives, Appendix A. These are ostensibly the same expectations for America's current role in the Middle East, which reflects the stagnation of diplomacy in the region, and also how impactful the Six Day War was and continues to be on the situation.

⁷⁷ Report to the Executive Board, May 1968, AJC Archives, P.2

⁷⁸ Ibid P.3

These programs illustrated a concerted effort to mobilize and engage American Jews to better educate their American neighbors and within the Jewish community, about the political ramifications of Israel's ascension in the Middle East. In August of 1969, the AJC completed its "program to defend Israel's position and counteract Arab propaganda," which was a mass education plan that focused on five key groups; African Americans, organized labor, Church communities, youth groups (especially Jewish ones), and white ethnic groups.⁷⁹ The plan extended beyond community relations and education, but also to direct lobbying of government officials to ensure certain expectations regarding Israel's safety and security were guaranteed. Central to the program was the emphasis placed on explaining "the nature of Jewish peoplehood as a basis for the identification of American Jews with the Jews of Israel."⁸⁰ The 'nature of Jewish peoplehood' is directly linked to the sense of connection felt by American Jews during the Six Day War to Israel, and to the larger Jewish people, both of which they feared would collapse in the event that Israel lost the war.

The American Jewish Committee was not the only organization interested in implementing a large-scale education and engagement curriculum. The Conference of Presidents in 1970 declared in its annual executive report that "The President's Conference shall assume the responsibility of coordinating activities in the United States whose purpose is to inform and educate American opinion on the issues affecting the cause of peace in the Middle East."⁸¹ A list of target groups was provided which was virtually the

⁷⁹ Memo detailing the education plan, from Bertram Gold to the Division Heads of the AJC, August 4, 1969. From the Judge Tannenwald Papers at the American Jewish Archives

⁸⁰ Ibid. P.2

⁸¹ Annual Report of the Conference of Presidents, For the Year ending March 31, 1970, American Jewish Archives.

same as the AJC's, it included, African Americans, Labor groups, church communities, the mass media and the college campus. The programs and focus on outreach into the broader American society, and specifically politically active groups reflected the need for a broader coalition of interest groups to stand with the Jewish community in support of Israel.

The Response on Campus

The college campus proved to be particularly sensitive to the crisis in the Middle East and for many Jewish students and academics the conflict challenged their ideological beliefs and in many cases catalyzed new connections with American Jewish identity and the American Jewish community. Saul Goldberg, writing for B'Nai Brith International, summarized that "the spirited concerns, emotional shock waves and eagerness for positive action that swept across the adult Jewish community during the Israel crisis was mirrored in the most striking expression of Jewish identification and responsibility that ever welled up on college and university campuses."⁸² Students and Jewish professionals on campuses across the country helped organize smaller rallies, educational programs with professors, fundraising drives, and Hillels across the country aided students in their efforts to sign up to volunteer in Israel. Almost 7500 students would ultimately register as volunteers in Israel, but only a very small percentage of them would make it to the Jewish state before the fighting broke out.

The upwelling of Jewish identification witnessed on campuses during the crisis was better documented than other segments of the Jewish community, as students documented their personal reactions to the war, or were interviewed by Jewish organizations on campus. One student, Nancy Weber, writing in the Village Voice explained how "something

⁸² Saul Goldberg, "The Campus Response to the Israel Crisis," B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation, 1967.

happened. I will never be able to talk about how Judaism is only a religion, and it isn't too bad that there has to be such a thing as a Jewish State."⁸³ Judaism for Weber bound people together under a common banner that was not strictly defined as a religion, but something more. She goes on to explain how when she heard the soldiers in the IDF were praying at the Western Wall, she inexplicably wept. Many college students shared similar sentiments and reactions to Weber, as they found newfound meaning in their Jewish identity that expanded beyond the limits of traditional religion. Jewish religious officials on campus sought to explain the outpouring they witnessed amongst students, one rabbi from the City College of New York described how "the crisis demonstrated an amazing feeling of involvement in the destiny of Israel on the part of our students, some of whom had rejected American Jewish institutional affiliation. They showed that the ties which bind Jews to one another are deep and remarkably strong."⁸⁴ Students and the professionals and religious officials who sought to garner Jewish involvement and participation on college campuses recognized the profound changes that they were witnessing. Overwhelmingly they explained the transformation as one that emphasized renewed connections to the broader Jewish community and an understanding that Israel's triumph played a central role in catalyzing such a response.

The response amongst academics focused on a different message, one centered around new policies that would restore peace to the region, and security to Israel's borders. Approximately 3700 professors were signatories on an advertisement in the New York Times on June 8, 1967, that read "As responsible members of the academic

⁸³ Nancy Weber, "The Truth of Tears", Village Voice, June 15, 1967. In Lucy Dawidowicz "American Public Opinion," from the section on the Arab-Israeli War of the 1967 from the American Jewish Yearbook 1968, AJC. P. 211.

⁸⁴ Saul Goldberg, "The Campus Response to the Israel Crisis," B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation, 1967. P. 14

community, we must not stand by in silence in the face of Arab threats, illegal blockades and massive mobilization at the destruction of the people and State of Israel.”⁸⁵ Based on the success of the group of professors who organized the signature campaign, they began an organization called American Professors for Peace in the Middle East. They hosted their first of a series of annual conferences beginning in December of 1967. Academics also assisted with campus mobilizations in various ways, offering their knowledge of the situation and history of the Arab-Israeli conflict as resources for students and other faculty members. Additionally on some campuses, professors led fundraising drives and hosted faculty gatherings to raise money in support of Israel. Academics had largely alienated themselves from organized Jewish life, but during the crisis, many sought renewed connections with the Jewish community on campus and in their local communities, challenging the established and dominant narrative of their perception as outsiders from the American Jewish community.⁸⁶ The response of the academic and intellectual community demonstrated the unifying power that the war had in generating support of Israel, but also in bringing together American Jews who might have rejected organized Jewish life back into the fold of Jewish institutions and organizations.

Religious Practice, Participation, and Identification

The synagogue was the other major institutional environment that facilitated renewed connections to the American Jewish community throughout the crisis and the war. The synagogue served both its traditional role as a religious institution but also as a central meeting location for organizations within the Jewish community. There is incredibly

⁸⁵ Text from New York Times Advertisement, June 8, 1967. In Lucy Dawidowicz “American Public Opinion,” from the section on the Arab-Israeli War of the 1967 from the American Jewish Yearbook 1968, AJC. P. 211.

⁸⁶ Ibid. P. 216

limited quantitative data about increased religious participation during the crisis, but anecdotally there appeared to be a significant resurgence in religious participation during the crisis and the war. Dawidowicz described how Jews congregated in the synagogue and attended more meetings and religious observances than ever before and that the geopolitical gains that Israel made in Jerusalem were translated into the religiosity and spiritualism of American Jews at their places of worship.⁸⁷ Similar to the experience of Nancy Weber, the idea that Jews and Israelis could freely pray at and visit their holiest sites in Jerusalem “exposed latent religious feelings amongst American Jews who considered themselves secularists.”⁸⁸ The Synagogue Council of America declared that June 8th, 1967 would be a national day of prayer, and that all major religious denominations should attend special services to help pray for the well-being and security of the State of Israel.⁸⁹ The religious fervor that was demonstrated, as people prayed for Israel’s security, was only further exacerbated once Israel’s triumph became imminent. Yet once the war was completed religious officials and leaders sought to transcribe the war’s impact on Jewish identity into the spiritual beliefs and practices of American Jews.

Several months later on September 8, 1967 at Temple Emanu-El, in Lynbrook, New York, Rabbi Harold Saperstein delivered in his Yom Kippur sermon the message that a great miracle happened there. He concluded his much anticipated talk by suggesting to his congregants “we who serve that faith have a role to play as important as that of the soldiers who fought on the battlefields. May the memory of these miracles inspire us all to dedicate

⁸⁷ Lucy Dawidowicz “American Public Opinion,” from the section on the Arab-Israeli War of the 1967 from the American Jewish Yearbook 1968, AJC. P. 205

⁸⁸ Ibid. P. 205

⁸⁹ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically, “Days of Crisis; A President’s Conference Interim Report”, September 1967, P. 7

ourselves anew to *our people* and to our heritage.”⁹⁰ In reflecting on Israel’s victory months earlier, Saperstein brought Israel’s victory into the religious consciousness of his listeners, linking their faith and their history to the contemporary successes and actions of Israel. Charles Liebman suggested that “Israel has not replaced religion as the focus of Jewish identity; rather it has increasingly become the content or the expression of Jewish religious identity.”⁹¹ Liebman’s argument reflects the premise of Saperstein’s sermon that faith and religious observance were equivalent to the sacrifice of Israel’s military in unifying the Jewish people. Secular sacrifice and commitment to the safety and security of Israel were on an equal footing with religious practice.

David Polish in 1968, writing for the Synagogue Council of America, sought to further explain how the Six Day War ought to be understood within a Jewish religious context. He described the triumph of Jewish and Israeli military might as a redemptive experience second only to the exodus from Egypt. Other voices in the Jewish community expressed concern about drawing connections between Israel’s tactical victory and religious participation. Staub focuses on the reaction of Steven Schwarzschild, who he describes as being “deeply disturbed to find American Jews suddenly, in the wake of the Israeli victory, embracing their religious faith as never before.”⁹² The religious dimensions of the American Jewish response are incredibly difficult to measure and to grasp because individual religious beliefs and practices are deeply personal. Yet there seems to be strong evidence that American Jews who considered themselves secular as well as those who held stronger religious beliefs understood certain elements and impacts of the war through a

⁹⁰ Marc Saperstein, *Witness from the Pulpit; Harold I. Saperstein*, Lexington Books, 2000. P. 266

⁹¹ Charles S. Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973. P. 88

⁹² Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America*, Columbia University Press, 2002. P. 143.

spiritual or religious framework. Polish concluded his religious interpretation of the war by explaining how spirituality and participation could also be used to substantiate American Jewry's relationship to Israel, and described how a deeper spiritual connection was desperately needed in order to justify American Jewish philanthropic support to Israel as more than just *tzedakah*.⁹³

Philanthropy Through Crisis and Triumph

One of the simplest ways that American Jews could contribute to Israel's security was through philanthropic donations, and during the Six Day War money flowed into the coffers of the United Jewish Appeal and Israel Emergency Fund at unprecedented rates. Jewish community members did not just mail in their checks, they flooded local campaign offices, hand-delivering their donations. Lucy Dawidowicz suggests that these individuals "felt compelled to do this physical act, as if by bringing the money they, too, were participating in a real physical way in the crisis. Perhaps they felt that writing a check and mailing it was too easy, too uninvolved."⁹⁴ The UJA raised over \$100 Million in the three weeks between the beginning of the crisis in May and the resolution of the war in June, yet funding continued to trickle in. Individuals did not wait to be solicited, rather they took the initiative to donate money without being asked.⁹⁵ Those who contributed came from a variety of different socio-economic statuses, with wealthier donors pledging hundreds of thousands of dollars at a time, while kids and students would panhandle spare change from

⁹³ David Polish, *The Religious Dimensions of Israel; The Challenge of the Six-Day War*, Synagogue Council of America, 1968. Tzedakah means "justice" in Hebrew, although it is commonly understood and used to mean "charity."

⁹⁴ Lucy Dawidowicz "American Public Opinion," from the section on the Arab-Israeli War of the 1967 from the American Jewish Yearbook 1968, AJC. P. 206

⁹⁵ Ibid P. 206

passers-by, often times not amounting to more than a few dollars.⁹⁶ Everyone felt compelled to give what they could to support Israel, even those who did not affiliate with any Jewish organizations or institutions were willing to contribute. Urofsky detailed how in Chicago, after the rush of donations had been sorted and counted, over 12000 families had contributed funds to either the UJA or the Emergency Fund who had no prior ties to a Jewish organization.⁹⁷

Philanthropic contributions provide a clear quantitative measurement of the scope and scale of the response of American Jewry to the challenge that the Six Day War presented to their people and their communities. The actual act of giving for many American Jews took on a symbolic nature, that reconnected them with Israel, the Jewish people, and the American Jewish community. This symbolism overrides the concerns expressed by Dawidowicz about the intent, direction, and ultimate destination of the money they were giving. She concludes that given the speed with which the conflict ended American Jews must have understood that their money was not going to be spent on tanks or planes, or the resettlement of Jewish refugees in Israel.⁹⁸ But American Jews recognized that Israel's survival was critical to the survival of the Jewish people, and the Jewish community, and thus they were willing to go to great lengths, and contribute exorbitant sums of money to ensure and protect their Jewish identity, which for many was rekindled during the war.

American Jews continued to make contributions to the United Jewish Appeal long after the conflict had been resolved, and Israel's regional supremacy established. Based on

⁹⁶ Melvin I. Urofsky, *We Are One!*, Anchor Press, 1978. P.356

⁹⁷ Ibid. P. 356-7

⁹⁸ Ibid P. 206

data from the American Jewish Yearbook, the UJA received \$240,100,000 in 1967 and in 1970, despite a slight dip in between received \$202,000,000.⁹⁹ American Jews continued to give not out of a direct threat to Israel's security as they had during the conflict, but because it became a minimalist expression of their desire to remain connected with their Jewish identity, and this was achieved through support for Israel. The symbolism and the ardor of cutting the UJA a check and delivering by hand to a collection office faded but the commitment to Israel and to the Jewish people was sustained through the act of giving. Yet Kaufman argues that the sustained revenue being funneled to Israel, would lead to tensions between American philanthropists and community leaders and Israeli politicians, who demanded more say in the direction and location of where the money was headed.¹⁰⁰ The UJA and Federations wanted a clearer say in the policy decisions that Israel was making because of the financial commitment that they maintained to support her. The continuing success of the UJA enabled it far greater political access than some other organizations to Israeli policymakers, but a constant tension emerged as American Jews encroached on the policy-making apparatuses of Israel. Regardless of whether or not anyone was listening, these wealthy donors and organizational leaders began to voice their dissent.¹⁰¹

Ethno-Nationalism: A Break in Black-Jewish Relations

A full examination of Black-Jewish relations during the Civil Rights era is far beyond the scope of this thesis, but the notion of ethno-nationalism linked the two communities, and the break between Jews and African Americans highlights the extent to which ethno-

⁹⁹ UJA Data from the American Jewish Yearbook, published in Charles S. Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973. P. 91

¹⁰⁰ Menahem Kaufman. "From philanthropy to commitment: The Six day war and the United Jewish appeal," *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture*, 15:2 (1994), P. 184

¹⁰¹ Ibid P. 189 – This process of dissent will be further developed in Chapter 3.

nationalism had entered each community¹⁰². In this particular instance, the Six Day War prompted a realignment of American Jewish interests and identity that emphasized a renewed connection with the state and the people of Israel. Arthur Hertzberg, reflected that the change he witnessed amongst American Jews was abrupt and radical. The emotional outpouring and newfound commitment to the American Jewish community through solidarity with Israel contradicted all trends toward an evaporating Jewishness in America. And most of all he commented how American Jews were surprised that a grave danger that threatened Israel would rise to the forefront of their own consciousness and dominate their thoughts and emotions.¹⁰³ This serves as one of the clearest statements describing American Jewry's rediscovered commitment to Jewish peoplehood as a result of their support for Israel during the war.

Historically African Americans had supported the state of Israel, and identified with the story of liberation that it represented for their own community and people.¹⁰⁴ Yet as the civil rights movement evolved, new voices advocated for a different approach to the effort to liberate the African American community, in particular the Nation of Islam. McAlister describes how the Nation of Islam sought to revise "history and geography in order to construct a moral and spiritual basis for contemporary affiliations and identities," a process that very much mirrored what occurred in the Jewish community during and after the Six Day War.¹⁰⁵ As Jews galvanized around the Six Day War and in many ways realized a new ethno-national consciousness, the Black community responded with

¹⁰² Melani McAlister. *Epic Encounters; Culture, Media and US Interests in the Middle East 1945-2000*. University of California Press. P.86-7

¹⁰³ Arthur M. Hertzberg "Israel and American Jewry." *Commentary* August, 1967. P. 69

¹⁰⁴ Melani McAlister. *Epic Encounters; Culture, Media and US Interests in the Middle East 1945-2000*. University of California Press. P. 89

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* P.109

aggression towards the Jewish community, specifically over their support of Israel. SNCC in particular published a slew of anti-semitic cartoons that focused on American Jewish ties to Israel.¹⁰⁶ Martin Luther King Jr. sought to preserve the relationship between American Jews and the African American community in the summer of 1967, but he no longer held the kind of power over the Civil Rights movement that he once had, and the relationship between American Jews and African Americans who identified with the Palestinians and the Arabs quickly disintegrated.¹⁰⁷ McAlister suggests that the break between African Americans and Jews was inevitable as the African American community sought to distance itself from all white American counterparts.¹⁰⁸ Their pursuit of a new ethno-nationalism that could invigorate new ties within the Black community could not be reconciled with a Jewish community that although sympathetic to the civil rights movement was now focused on its own ethno-national identity. This example serves to highlight how another American constituency group recognized and reacted to a fundamental change within the American Jewish community, and the principles and identity around which it was organized.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1968, the relationship between the Black community and the American Jewish community further deteriorated. What began as philosophical and ideological differences about ethno-nationalism and support for an Israeli nation that was now an occupier over the Palestinian people, transformed into a violent conflict. In New York City, teachers' strikes ignited racist and anti-Semitic responses

¹⁰⁶ Peter Golden, *O Powerful Western Star!* Green Publishing House, 2012, P. 206

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 206-7

¹⁰⁸ Melani McAlister. *Epic Encounters; Culture, Media and US Interests in the Middle East 1945-2000*. University of California Press. P. 115

from both Jewish and Black communities.¹⁰⁹ Amidst the turmoil in Brooklyn, Meir Kahane emerged as a militant organizer, who felt that the security of the Jewish community in America could only be protected by American Jews themselves, and that they could not rely on the illusions of assimilation and the narrative of the “melting pot.”¹¹⁰ Kahane bluntly argued that “the reality that is the American Jewish present and the specter that is the American Jewish future must be looked at, with the proper amount of honesty.”¹¹¹ American Jews needed to embrace the perception of strength and militarism that Israel’s victory in the Six Day War afforded them in order to effectively secure their future. Kahane’s rhetoric and the evolution of the Jewish Defense League over the course of the next four years into an organization that fervently fought for the rights of Soviet Jewry through terrorist attacks and overt violence quickly lost the favor of much of the American Jewish community.¹¹² Although the majority of American Jews scorned the disdainful tactics and the strategies that Kahane’s JDL utilized, the message of “Never Again!” was embraced by American Jewry as symbol for the continued push for Jewish continuity.

Milton Himmelfarb in his oft-quoted article in *Commentary*, “In Light of Israel’s Victory,” explained why the transformation to a central focus on Israel in American Jewish identity occurred. He describes how in the wake of the war, Jewish American disillusionment was fading and that a shift occurred that sought to move “from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete.”¹¹³ Israel provided a concrete and resolute foundation from which to ground a new Jewish consciousness, especially given its

¹⁰⁹ Peter Golden, *O Powerful Western Star*, Gefen Publishing House, 2012. P. 208

¹¹⁰ Melvin Urofsky, *We Are One!* Anchor Press, 1978, P.384

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* P.384

¹¹² *Ibid.* P. 385

¹¹³ Milton Himmelfarb, “In light of Israel’s Victory,” *Commentary Magazine*, October 1967.

new standing in light of its victory. The American Jewish community could rally around Israel in a new way. Israel's triumph may not have spurred continuous and engaged participation in organized American Jewish life¹¹⁴, but it reflected a new conception of Jewish identity as being tied to that of a larger Jewish peoplehood, whose moorings and anchors were in Israel. The idea that "We are One!" that the fate of American Jewry was tied to the actions Israel took and the decisions it made would persist. And American Jews sought to act not only to protect Israel going forward, but to protect themselves and the Jewish people.

¹¹⁴ That American Jewish participation surged during the war, but would eventually fade is the overwhelming conclusion of several sociological studies of American Jewish life following the war. Seen in Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1995, P.98. And Marshall Sklare. *Lakeville and Israel: The Six-Day War and its Aftermath*. American Jewish Committee (AJC). 1968: 1--20. <http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=14005>. And Charles S. Liebman, *The Ambivalent American Jew*, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973

Chapter 3: The Politics of Peoplehood

The Jewish community rapidly evolved in the wake of the Six Day War. The notion that “We are one!” was combined with Meir Kahane and the JDL’s central message of “Never forget” to engender a vigilant and committed community to the Jewish people’s security and safety, in the land of Israel and around the world. Yet the agenda related to Israel in Washington was changing, as the Cold War permeated all aspects of the Nixon administration’s policy arenas.¹¹⁵ This chapter will describe and explain how the American Jewish community’s relationship and attachments to Israel further evolved as a result of the dynamic and at times tense relationships that formed between the Nixon administration, Israeli political leaders and the American Jewish community during this period.

Israel had become the central mobilizing factor for Jewish political action and defined for many their participation in the Jewish community. The Conference of Presidents and its member organizations like the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the AJC together coordinated and unified the political message being conveyed to American political leaders by Jewish community members. These organizations together became the address for Israeli policy-makers to express their interests to the American Jewish community, who would then craft the American Jewish lobbying agenda to realize those expectations. A clear triangular relationship developed in this period that linked the American Jewish community, the Israeli government, and the American government

¹¹⁵ An in depth analysis of these changes to the policy agenda would lead to a complex historical narrative of the development and strengthening of the official diplomatic and political relationship between the United States and Israel, and such a discussion is beyond the scope and focus of this thesis. Kochavi’s work *Nixon and Israel*, provides a rigorous primary source analysis of the Nixon administrations approach to Israel and “Jewish issues,” but only provides several instances of discussion about the American Jewish community

through reciprocal interest relationships. By the summer before the Yom Kippur War, American Jewish establishment leaders had begun to question what Israel's centrality meant for American Jewish life going forward. American Jewry continued to mobilize and advocate for support of Israeli interests, yet they also wanted some agency in shaping their relationship with the Jewish State, and in shaping the policy decisions that Israel undertook. The sense of collectivity and unity associated with Jewish peoplehood presented new objectives and new ideas about the political actions and statements that should be taken by the Jewish community in America.

Nixon, Kissinger and Rabin

While on the campaign trail in 1968, Republican Presidential candidate Richard Nixon spoke with the Conference of Presidents and conveyed "his belief that it is in the vital interest of the U.S. and the cause of world peace that Israel possess the superiority in military strength necessary to deter Arab aggression...[and] his clear and unequivocal opposition to any kind of imposed peace settlement in the Middle East that would be generated by the major powers."¹¹⁶ Israel's safety and security fit snugly within Nixon's strategic outlook for the Cold War Middle East, and maintained their place on the Cold War policy agenda for much of Nixon's presidency. As discussed earlier, Jewish political identity overwhelmingly reflected liberal policy positions, and the Jewish voting bloc consistently supported liberal Democratic candidates, thus it was no surprise when Nixon received just 17 percent of the American Jewish vote in the 1968 election.¹¹⁷ Nixon prided himself on being uninfluenced and unflinching in the face of Jewish pressure and in his memoirs Nixon described how he felt "politically un beholden" to major pressure groups, thus maintaining

¹¹⁶ Conference of Presidents Year End Report 1969 (AJC Archives for full citation)

¹¹⁷ Noam Kochavi, *Nixon and Israel; Forging a Conservative Partnership*, SUNY Press, 2009. P. 8.

the “flexibility and freedom to do solely what [he] thought was the right thing.”¹¹⁸ President Nixon together with then National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger forged a calculated, coherent and comprehensive foreign policy strategy that linked the various fronts and strategic interests of the Cold War.¹¹⁹ Yet in linking these issues and arenas, Israeli (and American Jewish) interests, like the delivery of Phantom Jets to Israel, promised in the final months of Johnson’s presidency, were subject to review based on the strategic balance that Nixon and Kissinger were establishing in their Cold War policies. Between 1969 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the Nixon administration would grapple with a series of issues that concerned the American Jewish community as well as the Israeli political leadership.¹²⁰

Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin established himself as a pivotal figure in protecting Israeli interests and strengthening the diplomatic relationship between Washington DC and Jerusalem throughout the Nixon administration. Rabin had a pre-existing relationship with Kissinger prior to either’s ascension to political power in Washington DC, and shared an appreciation for Kissinger’s analysis and outlook on the global political and strategic environment during the Cold War.¹²¹ Rabin’s views on Israel’s security interests aligned with Nixon’s approach to negotiations with the Soviets, and Rabin understood and supported Nixon’s view of Israel as a strategic ally against Soviet expansionism in the Middle East.¹²² Rabin in many ways revolutionized the role that the Israeli ambassador

¹¹⁸ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict; Making America’s Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*, University of Chicago Press. P. 168

¹¹⁹ Peter Golden, *O Powerful Western Star*, Gefen Publishing House, 2012. P. 233

¹²⁰ These issues included continued arms sales through the War of Attrition in 1970, Nixon’s approach to Black September in 1970, Nixon’s changing relationship with Israeli diplomats and political leaders, the Soviet Jewry Movement, The Rogers Plan and ultimately Nixon’s handling of the Yom Kippur War.

¹²¹ Efraim Inbar, *Rabin and Israel’s National Security*, The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1999, P. 38.

¹²² *Ibid.* P. 38.

could play in Washington, applying military-esque terminology to his position and seeking clear goals and directives for his time in Washington.¹²³ Rabin would ultimately utilize his amicable relations with Nixon and Kissinger to secure clear, tangible and longer-term commitments to Israel's future safety and security from the administration in the form of increased economic, military and diplomatic support.¹²⁴ The ease with which Rabin established and managed his relationship with the administration was not as easily replicated in his dealings with the American Jewish community.

Rabin sought to maintain a clear distance from the American Jewish community, but also sought to leverage the domestic political power that American Jews held in support of Israel security interests.¹²⁵ The ambassador was widely respected within the Jewish community, yet he did not hold American Jews in the same regard. Dan Kurzman, in his biography of Rabin, describes that he did not want to be idolized, nor did he feel that he should be possessed by American Jews and used as a centerpiece at fundraising events, nor should American Jewish leaders insert themselves as intermediaries in his diplomatic relationship with the administration.¹²⁶ Furthermore he rejected the American Jewish role in handling Israel's affairs at any political level, referring to American Jewish leaders as *shtadtlan* or "court Jews," and felt that American Jews lacked the legitimacy to intimate what policies Israel should implement and follow because they had not made *aliyah*.¹²⁷ Rabin was at odds with American Jewish political organizations that increasingly were the face of American Jewish life, but paradoxically rediscovered his "Jewishness" within the

¹²³ Dan Kurzman, *Soldier of Peace*, Harper Collins, 1998. P. 235.

¹²⁴ Efraim Inbar, *Rabin and Israel's National Security*, The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1999, P. 40. And Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict; Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*, University of Chicago Press. P. 178

¹²⁵ Ibid. P. 41

¹²⁶ Dan Kurzman, *Soldier of Peace*, Harper Collins, 1998. P. 255.

¹²⁷ Ibid. P. 255

religious institutions of the American Jewish community, chiefly the Adas Israel Congregation in Washington DC.¹²⁸ Rabin's relationship with the American Jewish community ultimately was both spiritual and sincere, but also utilitarian and strategic.

American Jews increasingly were left out of the policy discussions between Israeli government officials and the American administration. Spiegel argues that the desire to bypass American Jewish intermediaries was bi-directional, with the Israeli government seeking to deal directly with Nixon, for whom they held a genuine admiration, while Nixon lacked any meaningful relationship with the American Jewish community, and thus naturally resisted incorporating them into his diplomatic relationship with the Israelis.¹²⁹ Under the Johnson administration, as illustrated in Chapter 1, American Jewish leaders and politicians served a crucial role in both American diplomacy with Israel, but also in communicating the administration's positions on Middle East affairs to the American Jewish community. This was no longer the case, and although Nixon maintained several close advisors who were Jewish, most notably Kissinger, he often sought to minimize their role in dealing with Middle East affairs for fear of them being viewed as partial towards the Jewish state. This was especially true of Kissinger, who despite being one of the masterminds of Nixon's Cold War foreign policy, was initially passed over when Middle East issues were at hand.

Solidarity with Israel and the Jewish People

Although American Jews were temporarily sidelined from direct participation in the Middle East policy process, the community still rallied around notions of pro-Israelism and

¹²⁸ Ibid . P. 256

¹²⁹ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, P. 179

organized their activities around that tenet.¹³⁰ Rabin in late 1969 arranged for Prime Minister Golda Meir to visit the US in order to take meetings with President Nixon. At the time of Golda's arrival, Peter Golden described the American Jewish community as being "entwined in a rapturous embrace with Israel," which manifested itself in an idolization of the visiting Prime Minister as a celebrity.¹³¹ At every stop along her journey to Washington to meet with the President she was met by mobs of people. In New York and Philadelphia she spoke before crowds of thousands of individuals who had gathered hours before her arrival.¹³² Additionally PM Meir briefed the Conference of Presidents in an off-the-record private meeting, re-igniting the relationship between American Jewish leadership and the Israeli government. Golda's visit took place in September of 1969, just two months later the Rogers Plan would be unveiled much to the consternation of the Israeli government and the American Jewish community. Following Meir's departure, Rabbi David Schacter speaking on behalf of the Conference of Presidents reflected on the impact of the Prime Minister's trip. He declared that "her presence among us deepened our solidarity with Israel. Her courage has become our strength; her determination our resolution; her devotion our dedication."¹³³ Schacter's reflection illustrated how the Prime Minister's political visit could be repurposed and narrated in order to reinvigorate the American Jewish community's attachments to Israel. Furthermore, the Presidents Conference in its annual report summarized its role in making Meir's visit a success and underscored the

¹³⁰ See Chapter 2

¹³¹ Golden, *O Powerful Western Star*, P. 231.

¹³² Ibid. P.231 and COPMAJO Executive Report 1970. P.6

¹³³ COPMAJO Executive Report 1970. P. 8

role and reputation of the Presidents Conference as “the central address of American Jewry in matters affecting Israel.”¹³⁴

Earlier in 1969, the “barbaric” public hanging of 14 Iraqis, of which 9 were Jewish, for acting as Israeli spies, sparked a widespread public response in the United States.¹³⁵ The Conference of Presidents called a memorial service for the victims and a protest to express the horror and outrage which they felt upon hearing about the action. The spontaneous outpouring of support from the New York Jewish community was immense with thousands of individuals gathered around the synagogue where the memorial service was being held. The report described the scene and the procession as “tens of thousands chanting ‘Let my people go!’ Rabbi Schacter deposit[ed] a letter on the steps of the Iraqi mission declaring in part: “we want nothing else from your government but our fellow-Jews. If you do not want them, then there are other nations in the world that do.”¹³⁶ The report of the protest concluded by suggesting that the demonstration was the greatest act of Jewish solidarity since the Six-Day War. That such a mass protest could be staged in memorial for those executed Iraqi Jews, and in demonstration of solidarity with the survivors in Iraq reflected an expanded awareness and concern amongst American Jews for the safety and well-being of Jews throughout the world. This event and the response to Meir’s visit together reflect how the Jewish leaders sought to utilize events within the Jewish world to mobilize and invigorate Jewish identification and political action.

America, American Jewry and the Peace Process

¹³⁴ Ibid. 8

¹³⁵ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations Annual Report 1969, Photographs taken from the American Jewish Archives.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

In March of 1969, Nasser nullified the UN-brokered ceasefire that had remained intact for nearly two years following the Six Day War, initiating the 17-month long War of Attrition with Israel.¹³⁷ Although the exchange of violence was restricted to Israeli and Egyptian forces, the conflict between the two nations drew in the Cold War powers with the Soviet Union backing Egypt with military equipment and significant troop deployments, and America continuing to provide Israel with a steady flow of advanced aircraft and diplomatic support.¹³⁸ Amidst this increasingly tense diplomatic and military environment, the Nixon administration, through Secretary of State William P. Rogers announced the Rogers Plan in December of 1969.¹³⁹ The plan, based on UN Resolution 242, outlined a process whereby Israel would withdraw its forces from territories occupied following the conflict in exchange for a “binding agreement” with its Arab neighbors that would preserve Israel’s “territorial integrity.”¹⁴⁰ Rogers’ announcement reflected one of the clearest and strongest statements of American expectations of the peace process, describing how any agreed upon political boundaries should not reflect the “weight of conquest and should be confined to insubstantial alterations required for mutual security.”¹⁴¹ Although Nixon and Kissinger normally controlled the entire foreign policy apparatus from within the White House, Nixon distanced himself from Rogers’ public statements regarding the plan and his attempts to bring the Israelis and Arabs to the negotiating. Nixon was not willing to overrule his Secretary of State, but was also not willing to publically or politically back the

¹³⁷ Craig Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, The Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973*, Yale University Press, 2012. P.39

¹³⁸ Ibid. P. 39-84

¹³⁹ Ibid. P. 48

¹⁴⁰ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, P. 186 and Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, P. 48-9

¹⁴¹ Rogers in Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*, P. 48-9

plan.¹⁴² Following the public announcement of the plan, all parties that had an interest in a negotiated peace, the Israelis, Arabs, and Soviets, rejected the plan outright. Prior to the announcement of the plan and the inevitable backlash it would instigate, Nixon reassured his Israeli allies, Meir and Rabin that he would not press the plan, and sought to mitigate any blowback from the American Jewish community by sending out letters to Jewish leaders a month before its release, stating that he would not push the plan.¹⁴³ Nixon effectively undercut the diplomatic efforts of his own Secretary of State, while also approving at least in theory the proposal Rogers was seeking to implement.

Despite earlier approaches to the Jewish community by administration officials, Jewish leaders were incensed by the Rogers plan. Nixon appeased nearly 1000 Jewish leaders at a meeting in January 1970, where he reinforced his earlier statements that neither he, nor Rogers would impose a peace on Israel and hinted at further arms sales. Additionally the tone of the content of his talk seemed to suggest that despite the disruption that the introduction of the plan caused, the relationship between Israel and the US would not be affected by Rogers' actions.¹⁴⁴ Nixon would repeatedly go back and forth on whether or not he would enforce the expectations and principles outlined in the Rogers Plan, and continued to maintain that he would link future arms sales and deliveries to Israel with more appropriate action in terms of resolving their conflict with the Palestinians and their neighbors.¹⁴⁵ Nixon in his memoirs describes how he "knew that the Rogers Plan could never be implemented, but [he] believed that it was important to let the Arab world know that the United States did not automatically dismiss its case regarding the

¹⁴² Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, P. 187

¹⁴³ Kochavi, *Nixon and Israel*, P. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, P. 189-90.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* P. 12.

occupied territories.”¹⁴⁶ Nixon and Rogers’ decision to bring forth the plan refocused American policy around the aspirations reflected in UN Resolution 242, and prompted Nixon and others, including establishment leaders of American Jewry to begin questioning and speaking out against an Israel that was not taking positive steps toward peace.

At a 1970 convention of conservative rabbis, former chairman of the Conference of Presidents, Joachim Prinz, who spoke so adamantly in support of Israel during the days of crisis in 1967, expressed concern about the limitations American Jews were placing on themselves regarding their disagreement with and dissent towards Israeli policies, especially those related to the stagnating peace process¹⁴⁷. Although Prinz ultimately came down on the side that American Jews should not criticize Israel publicly, he suggested that American Jews should feel comforted by the fact that there are many thoughtful Jews who do not agree with the public statements of Israel’s leaders.¹⁴⁸ Lastly Prinz goes on to say that “the time has come for Israel to embark upon a new and dramatic peace offensive...I am not talking about empty gestures and homiletics. I am talking about concrete proposals and concrete assurance....to assure the world that shalom really means peace.”¹⁴⁹ Prinz had been at the helm of the leading representative organization of American Jewry just three years prior to these statements, and three years prior he would have never dared to whisper such a suggestion. Israel’s lack of progress towards peace incited entirely new dimensions of Jewish attachment to Israel, and new ideas and reflections on the American Jewish role in realizing peace through dissent of Israeli policy and through support for American peace efforts.

¹⁴⁶ Quote from Nixon Memoirs, in Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, P. 188.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, Columbia University Press. P. 287

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. P. 287.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. P. 287.

In June of 1971, Judge Theodore Tannenwald, speaking to the Detroit chapter of the American Jewish Committee, explained to his audience a hard truth that he viewed as remaining before the American Jewish community. That truth was that “there is, at the moment, the potentiality, if not actuality, of a divergence between the United States Government and the Government of Israel...This divergence makes the American Jewish community uncomfortable because it implies that choices may have to be made.”¹⁵⁰ Such choices reflected the old concerns and threats associated with dual loyalty that many early Zionist Americans were accused of. That Jewish leaders even contemplated the possibility of having to decide between aligning with their own country or aligning with Israel, illustrates just how deeply Israel had become engrained in American Jewish identity. American Jews had worked and lobbied multiple administrations to ensure that American foreign policy aligned with Israeli interests, securing Israel’s safety and well-being. The American Jewish Committee underwent an organizational revolution in support of Israel, yet such a divergence of American Jewish, American and Israeli interests presented a poignant challenge to the American Jewish community, whose foundation was so wound up with Israel and the idea of Jewish peoplehood that Israel engendered.

Tannenwald continued his speech highlighting that American Jewry “must recognize that as much as we’d like to have it, instant peace is not possible...and that peace, if it comes, will be fragile. We must recognize that, just as our government cannot and should not draw maps or impose a settlement, so American Jewry cannot and should not try to do so.”¹⁵¹ American Jewry would need to be patient and demonstrate restraint, it could not

¹⁵⁰ Speech of Theodore Tannenwald Jr. June 15, 1971, Detroit, Michigan. From the Theo Tannenwald papers at the American Jewish Archive

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

push the peace process forward, or begin to assist in the process of drawing up preliminary lines or agreements. But Tannenwald argued that American Jewry had an obligation to “constantly intrude into the thinking processes of our government, and of Israel by asking the difficult questions. We should neither blindly oppose or blindly accept the position of any party.”¹⁵² Tannenwald and the AJC argued that American Jews should play an active role in the process towards realizing peace, just not a driving or imposing one.

Tannenwald’s AJC had a decade earlier described itself as a non-zionist organization, that begrudgingly recognized Israel’s existence, but now was advocating for an active role for American Jewry to question and challenge the government of Israel. Such a transformation highlighted the extent to which Israel had emerged at the center of organized Jewish life following the Six Day War and impelled new political action by the American Jewish community.

A Newsweek cover story from March of 1971 provided a complete profile of American Jewish life, detailing the challenges that it currently faced, highlighting Jewish public opinion polls, and summarizing recent sociological data and trends about the American Jewish community. One of the central arguments throughout the article was that American Jewry was not monolithic, and that the entire community was undergoing a process of redefining what the Jewish community’s role in America should be.¹⁵³ Despite this process of redefinition, Jewish pride was at an all time high, still riding on Israel’s accomplishment nearly four years earlier, a military victory that ascribed strength to the Jewish community that was traditionally perceived as frail.¹⁵⁴ American Jews not only

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ "The American Jew Today." *Newsweek* 1 Mar. 1971:Print Microfilm.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

supported Israel at a rate of 95%, 49% of American Jews were supportive of the US entering into a war in defense of Israel's security, which in light of traditional Jewish views of violence and their affinity towards the anti-Vietnam War movement was quite telling of their depth of commitment to Israel.¹⁵⁵ The balance between support for Israel and liberal politics was further highlighted by a sociological study by Nathan Glazer summarized in the article, that described how support for Israel ranked higher than faith and observance to Jewish law in one's conception of being a "good Jew." Yet support for Israel was still second to political liberalism and the social justice intrinsic to such a political identity, which leads Glazer to conclude that American Jews in many ways were forced to choose between liberal interests and ethnic Jewish interests.¹⁵⁶ The article also highlighted the rise of the JDL, and the widespread disapproval of their use of violence, with nearly 71% of Jews disapproving of the JDL's tactics. Yet the sense of Jewish solidarity and pride that the JDL claimed to symbolize was more positively and widely received by the Jewish community, who had come to embrace their ties to the Jewish people and the Jewish nation.

The 1972 Election

In the run up to the 1972 presidential election, Nixon's actions towards Israel, and Israel's reciprocal praises and policy decisions left the American Jewish community torn between their allegiances to the Democratic party's liberalism, and Nixon's increasingly strong support for Israel and her security needs. Following Golda Meir's visit in 1970, several American Jewish liberals objected to the Prime Minister's praise for Nixon, who had delivered on a wide range of requests for arms from Israel.¹⁵⁷ Meir responded to these

¹⁵⁵ "The American Jew Today," *Newsweek* 1 Mar. 1971:Print Microfilm.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Melvin Urofsky, *We Are One!* Anchor Press, 1978 P. 388

critics by asking “have you any liberals who can supply us with Phantoms?”¹⁵⁸ My business as Prime Minister is to ensure that we have Phantoms and that we have the answers to missiles...”¹⁵⁹ Yet the Israeli leadership’s support for Nixon extended beyond gratitude for arms sales, they also were increasingly aligning their positions on the Vietnam war with those of the Nixon administration which further alienated American Jewish liberals who largely supported the anti-war movement. The Israelis viewed American Jewish participation in the anti-war movement as a “selfish exercise in moral purity oblivious to the injurious consequences of the movement to Israel’s security.”¹⁶⁰ The Israeli government’s overwhelming approach to American Jewish political participation was that American Jews’ primary concern ought to be Israel’s security and safety. It was this expectation that drove the Israeli political leadership, mainly through Ambassador Rabin, to insert themselves in the 1972 election.

Israeli government officials throughout the campaign sought to promote Nixon as a friend of Israel because of the material support that he continued to readily supply to the Israeli military.¹⁶¹ These officials expected American Jews to subordinate their other political considerations to ensure that their vote went to a pro-Israel candidate who would guarantee the continued flow of military aid to Israel, and that candidate was Nixon.¹⁶² Ambassador Rabin actively endorsed and campaigned for Nixon, arguing that “Israel ‘should reward men who support it in deeds, rather than in words.’”¹⁶³ And American Jews should forego their Democratic allegiances in order to support the Republican President

¹⁵⁸ A particular type of fighter jet

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. P. 389

¹⁶⁰ Noam Kochavi, *Nixon and Israel; Forging a Conservative Partnership*, SUNY Press, 2009 P. 74

¹⁶¹ Melvin Urofsky, *We Are One!* Anchor Press, 1978 P. 389

¹⁶² Ibid. P. 389

¹⁶³ Rabin in Urofsky, *We Are One!* Anchor Press, 1978 P. 389

and support Israel's desired political outcome. It is important to note that McGovern was not perceived as an anti-Israel candidate, but rather that Nixon had delivered and presumably would continue to deliver on Israeli arms requests, and thus was a more secure candidate for Israeli interests. That Israelis were interfering in American politics and elections, and seeking to mobilize American Jewry in support of Nixon was overwhelmingly met with shock, embarrassment, and anger.¹⁶⁴ American Jewish leaders and institutions expressed a sense of violation and of degradation that Israel could use them as pawns to realize their political goals, at the expense of their longstanding political beliefs. The idea that Israel would try to mobilize American Jews to vote for their historical political adversaries reflected the extent to which Israel and its leadership felt engrained in the Jewish community and also reflected their bold assessment that they could leverage the Jewish community to secure favorable political outcomes. Nixon did ultimately garner between two and three times as many Jewish votes in the election as he had in 1968, yet most analysts seem to credit the faults of the Democratic candidate, George McGovern, in alienating the Jewish vote on domestic issues, allowing Nixon to garner their votes on election day.¹⁶⁵

Israel's Centrality to American Jewish Life

By 1973 much had changed in the political relationships between American Jewry, Israeli political leadership, and American political leadership; there were breakdowns between the communication and the interests of all three. This led to new policy decisions taken by each government, as well as new political actions taken by the American Jewish community. Yitzhak Rabin as ambassador facilitated a fundamental change in the political

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. P. 389

¹⁶⁵ Kochavi, *Nixon and Israel; Forging a Conservative Partnership*, P. 74 and Urofsky, *We Are One!* P. 390

relationship between Israel and the United States, one that would be only further strengthened by the Yom Kippur War in October of 1973. Nixon's relationship with American Jewish leaders remained tense, especially as the War in Vietnam lingered, and demands for American support for Israel persisted. American Jewish leaders began to push the limits of their relationship and their discourse with their Israeli counterparts over the policies and decisions that Israel was making.

On March 28, 1973, prior to the Yom Kippur War, the Conference of Presidents hosted a seminar that brought together the leading thinkers and the leaders of several of the body's constituent organizations. The goal of the seminar was to inspire debate amongst community leaders about the relationship between the American Jewish community and Israel, and also to examine how the organizations within the COP should relate to one another and to the COP as a governing body. At the heart of the debate was the core truth described by Rabbi David Polish that "we can no longer pretend that there is a monolithic view on the question of Israel prevalent in the United States."¹⁶⁶ Some like Rabbi Judah Nadich suggested that Israel would continue to serve as a means of "strengthening Jewish commitment and Jewish identity" especially "the commitment of the American Jews to Jewish peoplehood and Judaism."¹⁶⁷ Several of the speakers sought to explain how they felt the relationship between the two hubs of Jewish life (one in Israel, the other in the US) had never been on equal footing. Other speakers sought to explore the full dimensions of Jewish peoplehood, and the changing nature of what seemed to be a permanent bond between the Jews of America and those in Israel, as well as the need for

¹⁶⁶ Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual Reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically the memo about a full-day seminar on March 28, 1973,

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* P. 4

creative solutions to ensure the survival of the Jewish people. Arthur Hertzberg challenged the notion that the centrality of Israel should be taken for granted, rather he argued that “we are one people divided by the doctrine of the centrality of Israel.”¹⁶⁸ Suggesting that how we understand Israel’s role in the American Jewish community divides as opposed to unites the community itself. Hertzberg’s comments describe how Israel could serve as the foundation for Jewish peoplehood, but that the Jewish community constructed in America with Israel at its core would still have institutional off-shoots that would at times be at odds with one another about how the community should understand Israel’s centrality.

Dr. Judah J. Shapiro, a leading American Zionist, highlighted the role that Jewish institutions must play in instilling the values and responsibilities essential to maintaining support for Israel and a relationship between American Jews and Israel.¹⁶⁹ Yet at the same time a functional relationship between Israel and American Jewry, he argued, could never last when one side believes itself to always be in the right, while the other is expected to remain obedient.¹⁷⁰ Rabbi Joseph Glaser, a leader within the reform movement, extended that line of argument, but focused on the role that the COP should actually play in making demands of and challenging Israel.¹⁷¹ He spoke to the idea that the COP was a representative body of American Jewry and thus should be willing to speak in clear and unified voice about the community’s interests in Israeli policy decisions.

In examining the role that Israel plays in American Jewish life, and the relationship between the Jewish community and its representative organizations, another speaker

¹⁶⁸Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual Reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically the memo about a full-day seminar on March 28, 1973. P.24

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. P.29

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. P.28

¹⁷¹ Ibid. P.36

declared that “Israel is the central fact of American Jewish life...and this is not because we [establishment leaders] decided it at this table, but because the ordinary Jew in America decided it...the Jewish community has, by consensus, decided that Israel is the centrality.”¹⁷² That establishment Jewish leaders perceived themselves as responsive to the larger pro-Israel sentiments of the larger community suggests that the mobilization in support of Israel during the Six Day War and in its aftermath was a grassroots response and not initiated by the Jewish establishment. Jewish leaders simply provided the resources, institutions and opportunities for Jewish identification with and support for Israel and the Jewish people. In the concluding remarks of the discussion, the moderator described how he was “heartened by a statement made by the incoming Israeli ambassador to the United States, who said he would ‘maintain close touch with the [COPMAJO] as the authoritative root organization of American Jewry.’”¹⁷³ The Conference of Presidents and its constituent organizations enabled the extensive and transformative response that took place following the Six Day War, and in so doing established themselves as the authoritative and representative body of the American Jewish community. Six years later in the months preceding the Yom Kippur War, this debate illustrated the central role that Israel continued to play in the thinking of American Jewry’s foremost leaders. And despite their differences of opinion about the design and directionality of Israel’s relationship to the American Jewish community, they all embraced Israel’s centrality to the identity of the Jewish people, especially American Jewry.

¹⁷² Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. *Annual Reports, 1965-1970, 1973, and 1975*. American Jewish Archives. Specifically the memo about a full-day seminar on March 28, 1973, P.56

¹⁷³ Ibid P. 74

Conclusion: Fortifying American Jewry, Israel, and the Jewish Nation

The American Jewish community in the 1950's and 1960's faced a period of transition that challenged its members to reestablish what it meant to identify as an American Jew. As new Jewish communities sprouted and blossomed in the suburbs of the urban centers where Jews had traditionally lived, synagogues were erected, and organizations were established that sought to shield against the forces of assimilation. Yet even as these structures sought to strengthen and buttress Jewish identification, the substance that inspired Jewish participation, be it religious education, spiritual belief, political ideology or communal identity was fading. At the same time, American Jewry's political voice reflected a near consensus on the importance of continued support by the American government for Israel.¹⁷⁴ However, there was a clear lack of consensus about the extent of the role that Israel should play in shaping American Jewish political priorities and Jewish identity, as evidence by the limited degree to which Zionism and pro-Israelism were accepted and promoted by American Jewish leaders and its established organizations.

The diplomatic crisis that preceded the Six Day War tied together American Jewish political interests, Israeli diplomacy, and Johnson's cold war policies. American Jewish leaders and Israeli diplomats lobbied the administration to provide direct military support to Israel, yet despite Johnson's statements of support, no action was ever initiated. The American Jewish community recognized the existential threat posed by Nasser, his amassed Arab armies, and his willingness to defy international law and agreements that secured the Straits of Tiran and the Sinai. Although Nasser's forces could only strike Israel, the annihilation of Israel would have crippled the foundation of the American Jewish

¹⁷⁴ See Footnote 1

community, which as was discovered by American Jews, to be Israel and the Jewish peoplehood it engendered. The mobilization of American Jewry that was witnessed must thus be understood through this survivalist lens. American Jewish leaders, organizations and individuals were compelled to support Israel as much out of their own desire to preserve their claims to a Jewish identity and a Jewish community, as they were to see Israel's own survival assured. The Conference of Presidents, the American Jewish Committee, the United Jewish Appeal/Israel Emergency Fund, and Hillels across the country as well as several other leading American Jewish organizations served to mobilize American Jewry throughout the conflict in support of Israel, but also to animate the community they claimed to represent

Israel emerged from the conflict as the central organizing and mobilizing factor within the American Jewish community. American Jews, of all ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and levels of religious observance stood in solidarity with Israel and expressed newly discovered revelations about their connection to the Jewish people through their support of the Jewish state. Hundreds of millions of dollars were raised in May and June of 1967, synagogue attendance skyrocketed, thousands of new families reconnected to Jewish institutions and communities, whilst prior to the war they were content living outside and unconnected to the Jewish community. It became clear as the dust settled in the Middle East, that not only did Israel stand resilient in the face of destruction, but the American Jewish community stood proudly by her side, linked through the newly discovered yet resolutely interminable ties of Jewish peoplehood. Israel's borders expanded far beyond the territories it now occupied, unifying the American Jewish community with the greater nation of Israel. According to Michael A. Meyer, it was during

this period that support for Israel became the minimal litmus test for identification with the American Jewish community.¹⁷⁵ Yet as American Jewish identity became increasingly linked with Israel's successes and triumphs, American Jews also sought to rectify her challenges and faults.

As early as June 6th 1967, prior to the conclusion of the war, politicians, Jewish leaders and Jewish community members alike recognized a peace with the Palestinians and the Arabs was going to be difficult to achieve, especially considering Israel's conquest of hallowed religious sites, and strategic and tactical positions necessary to maintain Israel's security. Scrawled on lined paper, most of the second grade students at the Solomon Schechter School of Westchester New York, wrote to Israeli soldiers "*ani rotzeh shalom*" or "I want peace."¹⁷⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed on a much grander scale by American academics who published a full page advertisement in the New York Times, by the American Jewish Committee at their annual winter meeting, and by the UN with the issuance of Resolution 242. Yet the pride felt by most American Jews following the war trumped the concern felt by others, and American Jewish organizations and institutions sought to reorient their agendas and their approaches to Zionism and to pro-Israelism in order to tap into the newfound wells of identification with the American Jewish community. Rabbis sought to ascribe religious significance and meaning to the war through their sermons and through official publications of their respective religious movements.¹⁷⁷ Individuals, organizers and leaders within the Jewish community continued to grapple with the emotions they felt and the responses they witnessed and tried to make sense of them.

¹⁷⁵ See Footnote 75

¹⁷⁶ See Footnote 13

¹⁷⁷ See Footnote 93

The central theme that emerged in the wake of the war that was expressed by establishment leaders and community members alike, was that Jewish peoplehood informed Jewish identity in America, and that Israel was the authoritative leader of the Jewish people.

The realization that Israel was now the driving force and the central inspiration for American Jewry presented the community with new challenges related to its autonomy and also to its longstanding political identity and agenda. As President Nixon adopted a much more direct diplomacy with the Israeli leadership, the American Jewish polity was largely left out of the policy-making process, and lacked the access to the administration to effectively lobby for American Jewish interests related to Israel. As Israel's intransigence towards the peace process continued through the end of the 60's and into the early 70's, American Jews increasingly were willing to express their own vision for the Jewish State. American Jews were not willing to fully relinquish their autonomy in constructing their relationship with Israel, especially given the continued philanthropic support they were directly providing through the UJA, the political support provided by the COP, and the belief that recognition of Jewish peoplehood entitled American Jews a say in Israel's future, because it ultimately was a say in their own future. Thus American Jewish leaders, specifically Joachim Prinz, a former chairman of the COP, and Theodore Tannenwald of the AJC, began to suggest that American Jews had an obligation to gently and respectfully begin calling for a just peace between Israel and her neighbors. Much to the dismay of Israeli leadership and the American Jewish community, Nixon, too, initiated his own process of negotiations through the Rodgers Plan, modeled on the stipulations of UN Resolution 242.

The American Jewish community underwent a dramatic transformation following the Six Day War in 1967, one that left Israel at the heart of American Jewish identity. Israel's victory influenced religious belief and participation, it inspired a new found pride and security of Jewish distinctiveness in a time of assimilation, and it redefined American Jewry's political agenda. Israel's grasp and influence on American Jewish life was all consuming during the war, yet as time passed, the Jewish community began to question the extent to which Israel's leaders and policies should define American Jewish identity. Organizational leaders sought to maintain the integrity of the American Jewish community and sought to redraw the extent to which Israel could shape American Jewish priorities. They recognized the power of the notion of Jewish peoplehood, and its resonance with the community they represented. At the same time they also understood that just as Israel's survival unified and strengthened the American Jewish community in 1967, its decisions and actions afterwards could further jeopardize that community. Thus Israel's centrality within the American Jewish community was not inherently positive or negative. It was not the same as the pro-Israelism that some espoused, or the anti-Zionism of others, nor did it imply that all American Jews held Zionist beliefs. Ultimately, the emergence of Israel's centrality to the American Jewish community reflected the need for a unifying force that could engender religious education, spiritual belief, political activism and communal identity. Israel and the enduring notion of Jewish peoplehood that it represented became that mobilizing factor, around which American Jewish leaders could engender and sustain a distinctive American Jewish identity and community.

Epilogue: An Ongoing Debate

The relationship between the American Jewish community and Israel has not remained static in the years that followed the conclusion of this thesis. Several historical moments and policy decisions¹⁷⁸ have challenged and altered American Jewry's connection to Israel, forcing the Jewish community to adapt to new political realities in the Middle East. Israel continues to play a central role in how scholars, policymakers, and the general public perceive of and understand the American Jewish community. There is an ongoing debate within contemporary scholarship on the American Jewish community about the effects that modern political realities have had on Jewish participation and identification. In recent years numerous books, many scholarly studies and many more journalistic articles have been written about the changing relationship between Israel and American Jews. Many, like sociologist Steven M. Cohen, have sought to describe and explain the diminishing connections between younger American Jewish generations and Israel, as well as to the Jewish community as a whole.¹⁷⁹ While others like Peter Beinart have framed their critiques of the Jewish community in America through a Zionist lens that describes how American Jewry must change its conception of and approach to Israeli policies in order to foster a stronger and more inclusive Jewish community. Others have challenged these ideas, but regardless of which side of the debate one sides with, American Jewry and its communal organizations have increasingly been understood by their changing relationship

¹⁷⁸ These include The Yom Kippur War, the rise of the Likud Party, The first Lebanon War, Israel's attempt to alter the Law of Return, the First Intifadah, the Oslo Peace Process, the Camp David negotiations, the Second Intifadah, the disengagement from Gaza, and many others. Entire books have been written about the history of American Jewish reactions and responses to these moments, specifically see Steven T. Rosenthal's *Irreconcilable Differences: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*, Brandeis University Press, 2001.

¹⁷⁹ Steven M. Cohen, Ari Y. Kelman, and Lauren Blitzer *Beyond distancing: Young adult American Jews and their alienation from Israel*. Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, 2007.

to Israel. This epilogue looks at several recent works and articles (although there are many more) to provide a brief sense of the continuing debate that is occurring within American Jewish community scholarship, and how contemporary debate reflects themes developed throughout the thesis.

Ted Sasson, in his recently published book, *The New American Zionism*, argues against the narrative held by many social scientists and journalists that American Jews are “distancing” themselves from Israel.¹⁸⁰ He argues that American Jews are not shedding their connections to Israel, rather they are tailoring them and personalizing them based on their own personal interests, experiences and understandings related to Israel. The foundation of his argument is the idea that American Jewish engagement with Israel is no longer predicated on a “mobilization model,” but has shifted to a “direct engagement model.” Under the mobilization model, large entities like the Conference of Presidents, the American Jewish Committee, and AIPAC have unified the American Jewish community under a clear and singular political banner and emphasized a monolithic pro-Israelism or as Sasson describes “Israelolotry.”¹⁸¹ The influence and authority that these organizations held was largely derived from their role during and immediately following the Six Day War as American Jewry sought to strengthen its domestic voice in support of Israel.¹⁸² The direct engagement paradigm that Sasson concludes has displaced the mobilization model is reflected in the diversifying organizations that American Jews affiliate with, their increasingly polarized political views toward Israeli policies, and ultimately the personalized experiences and understandings that American Jews have through travel to

¹⁸⁰ Theodore Sasson, *The New American Zionism*, New York University Press, 2014. P.2

¹⁸¹ Ibid. P.146

¹⁸² Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity*, The Jewish Publication Society, 1995, P.306

Israel and access to Israeli news and Israelis themselves.¹⁸³ Additionally as American Jews individualize their involvement and engagement with Israel the notion of a singular relationship between the entire American Jewish community and Israel fractures, and organizations struggle to, or can no longer claim authority for the broader Jewish community.¹⁸⁴ Sasson's argument highlights a clear rebuttal to the notion of distancing, rather suggesting that Israel's place in Jewish identity is evolving, not dissolving, and that engagement with Israel is deepening as opposed to dispersing.

Although Peter Beinart's work *The Crisis of Zionism* perpetuates the distancing hypothesis that Sasson seeks to counter, his work reflects on a central idea within the thesis, that Israel informed secular Judaism following the war. He argues that "young secular American Jews may genuinely feel that there is something Jewish about these values, but since the values [have become] universal, they do not produce any solidarity with the Jewish state."¹⁸⁵ The pro-Israelism that others recognized as a secular religious expression in the American Jewish community following the Six Day War has been disregarded by younger non-religious American Jews according to Beinart. Further he suggests that because these values are no longer coupled with a natural proclivity to support Israel, Israel is subjected to the same ideological lens as any other country. This limits Jewish attachment to as well as increases criticism of the State of Israel.¹⁸⁶ Despite his analysis of these trends of distancing within American Jewry his conclusion reaffirms the centrality that Israel plays in evaluating and identifying with American Judaism. He describes how "Liberal American Jews must feel a special commitment to Israel's ethical

¹⁸³ Sasson, *The New American Zionism*, P.145

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. P.146

¹⁸⁵ Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, Times Books, 2012. P.170

¹⁸⁶ Ibid P. 171.

character because they feel a special commitment to being Jewish. They must see their own honor as bound up with the honor of the Jewish State.”¹⁸⁷ Despite Beinart’s and Sasson’s disagreement over the issue of distancing, they both recognize Israel’s central role in informing Jewish identification and binding the American Jewish community together.

One of the core arguments made in this thesis about the motivation behind the scale of mobilization witnessed during the Six Day War was that American Jewry realized that Israel’s survival was intrinsically linked to the survival of their Jewish community and identity. In an article published in Tablet Magazine, Adam Garfinkle argues that:

If indeed the majority of Jews in America need Israel for purposes of their own communal coherence and individual self-esteem far more than Israel needs them, and if their corporate sense of place within American society depends to some degree on that connection, then the decay of the two sides of the triangle to which American Jewry is connected presages a tragedy of that community’s own making.¹⁸⁸

The article highlights the politicization of Jewish identity in America, especially following the Six Day War, when Israel’s political reality shaped American Jewry’s religious identity. This enabled and enforced the triangular relationship³ between Israel, the American Jewish community and the American government, which he describes as crumbling in the present. He argues that the distancing effect described by Beinart and indicted by Sasson is rapidly threatening the relationship between American Jews and Israel, but that ultimately such a break would not threaten the continuity or integrity of either.

Rabbi Daniel Gordis, in his work *Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End*, describes how “the purpose of the Jewish State is to transform the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. P. 183

¹⁸⁸ Adam Garfinkle, “The Triangle Connecting the U.S., Israel, and American Jewry May Be Coming Apart.” *Tablet.com*, 5 Nov. 2013.

Jews.”¹⁸⁹ Israel’s victory in the Six Day War, and the American Jewish mobilization in support of Israel helped to reorient the Jewish community in America. As Gordis describes, Israel’s triumph “breathed life into the Jewish people at precisely the moment when Jews might have given up...For what is at stake is not just the Jewish state, but the Jewish people as well.”¹⁹⁰ Although these ideas are rooted in contemporary concern for Jewish continuity, the Six Day War and the transformation it caused in American Jewry has continued to provide the basis for scholarly, journalistic, and communal thought about Israel’s centrality to American Jewish vitality.

¹⁸⁹ Daniel Gordis, *Saving Israel: How the Jewish People Can Win a War That May Never End*, John Wiley and Sons Inc. 2009. P. 216.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* P.217

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