

Como citar este trabajo:

**Bokser Misses-Liwerant, Judit.** Klal Ysrael Today. Unity and Diversity: Reflections on Europe and Latin America in a Globalized World (en colaboración con Eliezer Ben Rafael), en Julius Schoeps, *et al.*, *A road to nowhere: Jewish experiences unifying Europe*, Leiden y Londres, Brill, 2010, pp. 299-333.

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#### **RESUMEN / ABSTRACT:**

El capítulo ofrece un análisis comparativo de las principales características y tendencias de la vida y las identidades judías en Europa y América Latina. En él se estudian los procesos de diversificación cultural e institucional de las comunidades judías, en el marco de un mundo globalizado y de interacciones transnacionales, sus convergencias y divergencias. De este modo, se estudian las dimensiones estructurales de conformación de las comunidades y sus instituciones; las características socio-culturales y los patrones de inserción e interacción en las sociedades nacionales, e importantes aspectos de los universos identitarios son vistos desde un ángulo igualmente comparativo.

The chapter offers a comparative analysis of the main characteristics and trends of Jewish life and identities in Europe and Latin America. It examines the processes of cultural and institutional diversification of Jewish communities in the context of a globalized world and transnational interactions, with their convergences and divergences. The structural dimensions of communities and their institutions are thus considered, while the socio-cultural traits and patterns of insertion and interaction in national societies, and some key aspects of the identity universes are also approached from a comparative perspective.

# A Road to Nowhere?

Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe

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BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2011

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KLAL YISRAEL TODAY: UNITY AND DIVERSITY.  
REFLECTIONS ON EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA IN A  
GLOBALIZED WORLD

Judit Bokser Liwerant and Eliezer Ben-Rafael

Judaism and Jewish identity have never been homogeneous, a statement all the more true today. Internal differentiations, divergent symbols of identification and differences in the meanings ascribed to them, as well as enduring dialogues and debates, have unfolded within the changing perimeters of the Jewish world in various spatial, geopolitical, and socio-cultural contexts. The present recovers and reshapes old and new historical conditions: religion coexists with secularization processes; peoplehood develops hand in hand with national existence; ethnicity and civic commonalities reaffirm one another, and collective belongingness interacts with assimilation trends, while new forms of cohesiveness find their way into the private and public realms of a diversified Jewish existence.

Contents and structures, interactions and borders, all define collective Jewish life and identities. Primordial and symbolic referents derive from a wide cultural spectrum that must never be seen as unitary, indivisible, or organic, but always as an assemblage of disparate ideas, elements, patterns, and behaviors (Berlin, 1991). Jewish life and identity(ies), then, are built, internalized, created, and transformed within a context of diversity. Rather than homogeneous totalities expressing essentialist a-historical contents, identities stretch and reshape themselves beyond their original definitions. Their complexity and their historical character relate to social and communal realms wherein structural and cultural dimensions interact (Ben-Rafael, 2002; Bokser Liwerant, 2008b).

Jewish identities and Jewish life presently split along two major dimensions: the transnational dimension, referring to clusters of approaches bearing on the contents of Judaism, and the spatial dimension, drawing spaces within the Jewish world conditioned by place and territory. In today's globalized world, both singularities and shared features reflect how national, regional, and global dimensions interact, and also the various modalities in which they intermingle with the new

and specific transnational circumstances of the Jewish people. Though these dimensions are analytically distinct, Jewish life in the United States, Israel, Europe, and Latin America shows that they result in both divergences and convergences.

The interaction of collective identities, changing external conditions, inner dilemmas, and diverse settings has resulted in a pluralization of approaches to Jewishness within the wide ethno-cultural-religious-national frameworks. A gamut of Jewish identities has emerged, dynamically inhabiting an increasingly differentiated space, though still resting on shared basic elements that allow us, even today, to refer to all of them as Jewish identities (Ben-Rafael and Peres, 2005). Elaborating on Wittgenstein's concept of 'family resemblance', we may assume a shared Jewish condition despite identity differences: "Even if they do not furnish similar answers to the basic questions of identity, they must at least address the same questions" (Schatzki, 1996: 100). Provided they do so, they cannot be considered entirely alien to one another. Thus, following Appadurai's (1996) concept of flows or streams, the main flows of Jewish identity may be discerned according to their answers to distinct aspects of the identity structure. In the same vein, Sergio DellaPergola (1999b) emphasizes that differences in the identification patterns that develop and prevail in the Jewish world are more a matter of intensity and composition than the product of an intrinsically different typology.

In today's changing world, however, Jews may not only formulate different answers to the same questions but may also ask different questions. The place and the role of Judaism's different dimensions as well as their various meanings may shape discontinuities and disunity. Symbols, regardless of the differences in their referents, do indeed provide a solid substratum for unity and integration, but they can also have the opposite result (Liebman and Cohen, 1990). Identities must thus be seen as fluent junctures wherein the past, the present, and the future coalesce. They are built around contents and identification referents that imply both an individual sense of belongingness and collective-relational behaviors.

#### *Transnationalism: A Historical Dimension*

The transnational dimension essentially refers to shared historical clusters of approaches concerning the contents of Judaism, both in their past and present configuration and dynamics. The concept of transna-

tionalism has acquired multiple meanings, according to diverse theoretical approaches and to their specific focus on the variables of space and time. The transcendence of borders and the temporal dimension have elicited a debate that seeks to clarify if its current expressions are related to new contemporary dynamics and/or if historical precedents or analogues can be traced. Aware of the concept's multidimensional nature, we aim to underscore its centrality for the understanding of both past trends and ongoing changes in Jewish life. The relevance of the concept to the past is enhanced by the transnational constituted ethnic, cultural, and socio-religious spaces interacting with one another as the main characteristic of Judaism and Jewish life. Indeed, transnationalism is one of the main defining characteristics of the Jewish ethno-national Diaspora, shedding light on the flows of interactions and relationships that have developed despite international borders and all the laws, regulations, and national narratives they represent (Kahgram and Levitt, 2008; Vertovec, 1999: 1–20).

The concept points to complex patterns of shared values and norms, of social belongingness and collective identities, highlighting the dynamics of encounters and articulations that transcend national frontiers. Transnationalism has proved itself as a fruitful concept for describing conditions and experiences associated with migratory flows of Diaspora communities, which have shaped the historical Jewish condition worldwide. Thus, it allows tracing both the common and the singular, the shared and the specific of the different processes of Judaism, built through continuity and ruptures.

Jewish identities elaborate on the codes of traditional Judaism, which has implied a triple commitment—to the Jewish People, to the singularity perceived as embodied in the Torah, and to the Land of Israel. Historical or traditional Judaism always maintained borders and markers that mustered this three-dimensional core, which Jewish thought has emphasized. The shared foundations of all formulations included a solid connection to God and to the Torah, a belief in the existence of a Jewish people, and a reference to the Land of Israel, viewing any other place of residence as “exile” (Ben-Rafael, 2008: 35–47; Bokser Liwerant, 2008a: 81–108).

This model became outdated with modernity and clusters of new versions appeared, each one focusing on one of these three facets and disentangling their essential nexus.

Post-traditional outlooks regard these deep structures of Jewish identity as questions that not only could but should receive new answers. These transformations would ultimately construct the space of modern



Jewish culture, identities, religious streams, and ideologies. All three elements were open to queries and quandaries regarding the role and place of religion amid secularization processes; the criteria and modes of belonging to the Jewish people, hence its borders, and the place of the Land.

The religious/ethnic/spiritual/national dimensions of the Land, together with the complexity of the changing symbolic and material nature of its centrality would later define most of the diverse answers to be offered. At the center of the process wherein Zionism built its hegemony vis-à-vis other modern national ideologies, its proclaimed *aggiornamento*, renaissance, and renewal goals were intertwined with the concept of return—not only to history but also to the Land, recovering its symbolic spiritual-religious meaning (Vital, 1980).

In sum, modernity resulted in the diversification of the contents and referents of the singular foundational *Brith* in all its dimensions—theological and sociological, religious and national, ethnic and cultural—as well as of the markers of Jewish ways of being (Elazar, 1989). Normative-traditional flows, religious streams and orthodoxies, as well as trends defined by ethno-national and ethno-communal parameters, coexist with distinct cultural and/or spiritual options marked by an absence of identity consciousness and also with new ways of awareness. Individual, inner-oriented, and non-communal orientations have gained prominence, especially for younger generations (Cohen and Eisen, 2000).

Thus, radical modernity and current globalization processes have definitely challenged prevailing shared values and, paradoxically, have deconstructed certainties and reconstructed belongingness. The legitimacy granted to heterogeneity and diversity validates a myriad of approaches as expressions of new ways of being. Contents, symbols, and markers have pluralized. However, the diverse flows allow to be clustered according to the specific deep structure to which each one first refers and around which orders its formulation: the ultra-Orthodox flow stands out by the paramount importance its constituent formulations grant to faith; all formulations grouped in the ethno-cultural flow emphasize above all the notion of 'Jewish People' as a culture-producer collective; the national flow addresses primarily the notion of 'Land of Israel' and the building, on this territory, of a new Jewish nation.

Overall, ultra-Orthodox formulations may be said to seek the continuity of the communal past. Viewing the Torah as the heart of

Jewishness, they evince *Halakhah's* normative value and the collective mission of Jewry. Beyond the differences between schools of thought—from the traditional Lithuanian *Mitnagdim* ('opponents' of Hasidism) to the various Hasidic sects—all subscribe to the idea that Judaism and religion are synonymous. As part of a generalized revival of "strong religions" (Sivan, Almond and Appleby, 2003), some of these groups have spread globally, as epitomized by Chabad. In recent decades, Sephardic ultra-Orthodoxy, Shas, has also joined this cluster. A close examination, however, shows a subdivision into two camps: one aspires to be the direct continuation of East European tradition whereas the other, though closely associated with the first, experiences new—and essential—emphases in the context of its being a part of Israeli society.

Ethno-cultural formulations share a universalism associated with "Jewish peoplehood", its history, and the culture it bears. This flow consists of versions that stress the 'People of Israel' dimension, and view it as the carrier of singular symbols and a peculiar history, but also of universal cultural values. Supporters of these versions seek integration with modernity and aspire to crystallize the contribution of Judaism to contemporary civilization. The best criterion for classifying the many versions of the ethno-cultural flow is their stance vis-à-vis the religious dimension. The ethno-cultural cluster is characterized primarily by a flexible approach to social boundaries. Jewishness is thus secondary to local national identities, in contrast not only to the ultra-Orthodox but also to the national cluster.

National formulations emphasize collective preoccupations, viewing Israel as the Jewish motherland and Hebrew as the cradle of a new Jewish culture. The national flow includes versions of Jewish identity whose common denominator is the importance they grant to the third facet of the original basic structure, the Land of Israel, and that draw from this assessment the aspiration to a non-Diaspora Jewish reality. This flow too includes several formulations. Some of them stem directly from Zionist ideology, and others are generated by the Israeli reality that, in some cases, may question fundamental statements of the original national program.

Interacting with the previous ones, the ethno-national cluster is associated with Diaspora consciousness. Its main markers are identification with the Jewish national state as a focus of identity and institutional communal building. Historically, it unfolded through the dialogue among secular ideologies and developed as a strong Diaspora nationalism under Zionist hegemony, but has increasingly sought to

incorporate contents of cultural local renaissance and guarantees connectedness to the Jewish world.

Individual, inner spiritual options have developed as part of general and particular overlapping trends of decline in the religious organized world, accompanied by new and thriving expressive forms of religiosity (Eisenstadt, 2009: 29–46).

Each identity cluster is signaled by *contrasting markers*. Needless to say, the profuse ultra-Orthodox markers are strikingly different from those of any other style. The ethno-cultural cluster emphasizes the learning of surrounding languages and adapting Jewish symbols to actual societal contexts. Strong markers of the national cluster are the nationalization of biblical symbols, and the cultural impacts of specific life conditions. The ethno-national has combined the previous clusters while trying to bridge national and Diaspora existences.

The differentiation of options or of domains of identity building derived from identification processes and from structural frameworks that channel collective belongingness has been further specified according to identification foci and realms of expression. From a complementary perspective, then, the diverse flows also converge and diverge accordingly: the normative/traditional option centers on religious rituals and norms; diverse sorts of ethnicity are oriented towards the family/friend circles as organized around the lifecycle, while the realm of education focuses on socialization and learning. The community/organization referent is based on and fosters voluntarism and philanthropy, the culture/history formulation includes politics and the memory of the Shoah, while the option of mutual responsibility refers to local needs and Israel (DellaPergola, 2009b).

This textured, multifaceted world suggests that the normative core on which consensus and family resemblance have been constructed seems to have narrowed, posing the question about the nature(s), scope, and frontiers of the collective. Contradictions as well as opportunities are to be sought in the diversification of the Jewish experience, expressed through different ways of understanding and embodying the 'Jewish self', both individually and collectively as well as along several axes—religious-secular, Orthodox-liberal, national-Diasporic, inclusive-exclusive—and extending from support to critical distance, and from solidarity with to abandonment of the real or imagined Jewish community.

Family resemblance is not exclusively a natural given and, as stated, elective dimensions also reshape primordial definitions. Norms and

rules are thus to be built as well. Accordingly, Jewish identity is not to be seen mainly or exclusively in terms of plural agencies but in terms of multiple social constructions and structures, which may weaken or enrich Jewish diversity. Thus, the communal, institutional sphere is also significant for identity building. Diversity, therefore, can be approached in terms of the mechanisms that may provide institutional options appropriate to a world of exponential diversity. Institutions can shape and provide neighborliness norms even to families that need to remember/redefine resemblances, and can allow adjudication of conflicts in particular contexts and situations (Katznelson, 1996).

Jewish life is defined today by unprecedented challenges and opportunities bearing on the inner axes and the changing profile of different Jewish centers. The cohesion and solidarity derived from the historical continuum of shared memory, ideas, tradition, loyalty, religion, and nationalism—be it spiritual, cultural, territorial, or political—are embodied in the notion of *Klal Yisrael*, the worldwide ‘commonwealth’ of the Jewish people that involves different arrangements, positions, and certainly diverse levels of awareness of it (Ben-Rafael, 2008: 35–47; Gorny, 2008: 35–46).

In an intricate interplay of continuities and ruptures, unity and diversity, Jewish life opens up to new local, regional, and global arrangements. The Jewish world has been affected by processes that have promoted new identities, assigning renewed importance to primordial components in the shaping of global, national, and local spaces and in the re-ordering of territorial and even communal spaces. At present, this dual dimension of identity building processes, both elective and primordial, is highly determined by globalization processes. Old and new identities thus oscillate in a tense fluctuation between the moment of the unique and the universal, the moment of the common and the particular. Globalization processes are not uniform, since they vary according to time and place, and they are multifaceted because they bring together economic, socio-political, cultural, and religious aspects as well as their mutual influences and interdependences; they can be simultaneously reflexive and unintentional. Globalization processes involve the de-territorialization of economic, social, cultural, and political arrangements, meaning they do not depend on distance or borders, nor do they have the same influence on the final shaping of institutions and social relations (Giddens, 1994). Social and communal interactions may thus be organized and structured with a global dimension as their horizon. The location of countries and the borders

between states become more diffuse and porous, with possibilities of fast travel serving to intensify global connections. Consequently, the domains where collective identities develop are radically transformed by a series of factors: the uncertainty following from the speed and intensity of global flows; the transformations that states are undergoing, particularly the loss of their monopoly in the building of national shared values, social images, and representations, and the presence and strength of transnational, supranational, or global actors and institutions as well as old and new Diasporas.

Transnationalism emerges as a new extended phenomenon: communities and identities that go beyond national borders are reconsidering and reconnecting the links between the national and the global. It then, refers not only to the historical condition of flows that has defined Judaism, but also to the new conditions, deriving from changes in the geographical mapping of migration and to the changing geographical dynamics. Thus, transnationalism relates to interests and allegiances as well as to identities connecting diverse spatial milieus. It includes relationships running across states and societies established through new flows of migration, both collective and individual, that may be related to political upheavals or economic crises, known as migration crises, or to the search for better opportunities for mobility. Emigration from the FSU after the fall of the Wall or from Latin America during recent decades, for instance, have thus placed new models of identity-building and of interactions at the forefront.

The indisputable historical complexity of Jewish life has reached unprecedented scale today due to external and internal transformations and their close interrelations. The historical global people and its new transnational profile confront new realities, both in its voluntary communal settings and in its sovereign existence.

#### *The Spatial Dimension: National and Regional Contexts*

Jewish collective identities are built in different institutional arenas—territorial, communal or religious, national or cultural—and in different political-ecological settings—local, regional, national—in a global world wherein they interact, intersect, and overlap, and their components re-link (Eisenstadt, 1998: 245–265). In turn, the differential impact of the manifold scenarios explains the increasing diversity and

complexity. The clusters of Jewish identities appear in varying forms in the different loci of world Jewry. Along this spatial dimension, one distinguishes today mainly the Jewries of Israel, the U.S., Europe, and Latin America, with different weight, roles, and changing profiles.

*Israel: Return, History and Space*

All transnational clusters are present in Israel, though most versions belong to the national cluster and are pervaded by allegiance to Israel as the primary element of Jewish identity. A secular Israeli culture has developed that diminishes the centrality of Jewish law “even if it affirms a collective Jewish civic consciousness”, and a civil religion has emerged that has “programmatically and creatively” borrowed from traditional Judaism (Dash Moore and Troen, 2001: 4; Liebman, 1990: 187–190).

Historically, the broad and diverse range of problems Zionism sought to address deeply marked its inner diversity. It defined itself as a movement of national liberation seeking to achieve territorial concentration and political sovereignty, and as a movement of national reconstruction and cultural renewal expressed in a secular and modern normative call to shape Jewish life wherever it was and would continue to be (Avineri, 1981; Katz, 1986). Therefore, its global goal of generating an overall *aggiornamento* in Judaism resulted in the coexistence between the denial of the Diasporic condition and the aspiration to renew Jewish life as a whole (Vital, 1980; Almog, 1982).

The secular mainstream in Israel stands for forms of updated Zionism. This trend confronts the local ultra-Orthodox, who refer primarily to their own cluster but still raise *halakhic* demands on the state to assert its “Jewish character”, and thus also somehow situate themselves within the state. The national-Orthodox are fervent nationalists who rely on their reading of Scripture as justification for settling the occupied territories of Judea and Samaria.

Israeli Jewishness branches out into ethnic formulations as well. Communities populated by Mizrahi Jews retain a traditionalism that would launch the ultra-Orthodox Shas movement donning the garb of the Sephardic legacy. Antipodal to Shas, Russian immigrants are mostly secular and view Russian culture and language as the marks of their cultural sophistication. They do learn Hebrew and have become

increasingly familiar with Jewish-Israeli culture but, after three generations under a hostile regime, they set out from a relatively weak starting point in this respect.

Historically, sub-ethnicities and social class had acted as axes of social stratification, but religion and political stands have acquired growing relevance. The escalation of the regional conflict leaves an imprint on various dimensions of individual and collective life in Israeli society. One of the most prominent relates to the breaking of the consensus on national security, which is central to collective self perception and reflexive consciousness and became an issue of public debate. Although the Arab-Israeli conflict has several aspects, it is the inter-communitarian one between Palestinians and Israelis that became the most relevant and visible, directly affecting the perception of Israeli society. The use of military force against a civilian population became increasingly controversial. Since the end of the 1980s, the weakened conviction in the necessity of war as a means for survival paved the way for its definition as optional and avoidable.

The presence of a significant Arab population in the occupied territories confronts Israel with a basic dilemma of political and cultural identity, which has been formulated in terms of the challenge to maintain the dual character of the state as both Jewish and democratic. If the Arab population in the occupied territories were granted equal rights in the name of democracy, Israel's Jewish character would be lost. But if the rights of this Arab population were denied in the name of maintaining a Jewish state, Israel's democratic character would be lost (Walker, 2004: 28–35).

As part of the deconstructionist approach of postmodernity, groups of intellectuals call today for the “de-Zionization” of Israel. They claim that Israeli Jews, like Jews everywhere, make up an ethnic entity that should not prevail in the definition of the state. This Israeli version of Jewish ethno-culturalism constitutes, in this context and unlike in other loci, a radical protest against Israel's definition as a Jewish state.

These caveats notwithstanding, the national cluster definitely prevails in Israel and seeks to marginalize post-Zionism and accommodate ultra-Orthodoxy.

Israel claims to be center in terms of objective population concentration, of sovereignty status, and of *Klal Yisrael* responsibility. And yet, its expectations are currently facing new challenges in light of changes in the one-center/Diaspora model.

More Jews now live in Israel than in any other single place in the world. Over 40% of all Jews, and over 55% of all Jewish children under the age of fifteen, live in the State of Israel (DellaPergola, 2009b). Although this demographic configuration points to the multi-dimensional and non-linear historical movement of “return”, the reality of more than seven million Jews living in Diaspora communities, over five and a half million in the U.S. alone, has led to a redefinition of the negation-affirmation antinomy.

Together with migration flows shaped by transnationalism, Israel is now experiencing new forms of *Aliyah*, such as the “commuting” of the French Jewish community and its translocalism, in terms of both space and allegiances. Another phenomenon is emigration from Israel among professionals and well-educated members of the middle class looking for better economic opportunities (Rebhun and Lev Ari, 2010). How, then, will Israel fulfill its role as the “center” of the Jewish world while defining new shared goals, agendas, rules, and mechanisms required by Diaspora communities concerning identity and continuity? This question needs to be approached in terms of the complex scenarios arising from the overlap of the transnational-content and transnational-spatial axes. Both these axes interact beyond territorial constraints, as expressed by convergences and divergences that reflect transnationalism and differential existential conditions.

#### *North American Jewry: The Other Center?*

The singularity of North American Jewry rests on its numbers and its visibility in the public sphere, closely related to the process of nation-building in the United States. Since its inception, this process has implied the incorporation of the different groups into a collective higher order, while the right to self-fulfillment viewed normative support as part of the national ethos. American society promoted individual gratification, which in fact led to the toleration of communal diversity (Sarna, 1997; Sarna, 2004). Jewish life too encompasses a profusion of formulations. While ethno-cultural flows are the majority, religion has played a pervasive and meaningful role in ascription and self-ascription; religious organizations found wide space in the civil society and have influenced different trends of Judaism. Even though Conservative and Reform movements have a central place, ultra-Orthodoxy has strengthened its position.



At the other end, the Zionist idea and movements had to deal with the claim that challenged the Zionist diagnosis of exile. North American Jewry and its intellectuals rejected the equation of the United States with Galut and Israel with Zion. A diversity of perceptions developed within different currents, but a consensus has prevailed regarding the concepts of home and centrality, insisting on the exceptionality of American Jewish reality (Eisen, 1986).

While Zionist segments encouraged *Aliyah* and saw themselves as actors in the national project, *Aliyah* in the last few years has brought to Israel mainly religious individuals and groups. Although the majority cluster is ethno-cultural, Modern Orthodox may be seen as partially belonging to this cluster since they consider themselves part of the modern world and aspire to reconcile it with *halakhic* exigencies and community life. They are not too far from but still unfriendly to non-*halakhic* Judaism, which is not committed to rigorous religious observance. The Reform movement was the most radical in this stance, but secular humanistic Judaism has gone still further by rejecting the relevance of the theistic principle in world affairs altogether. Despite their differences, all share the reference to Judaism as a culture and a historical experience conveyed by Jewish “peoplehood”. This reference grounds their solidarity with the Jewish world and their socio-cultural dynamism, as expressed in the multiplicity of Jewish institutions in the United States and the structuring of community life along congregational lines. Additional factors such as mobility and internal migrations had a serious impact on communal institutionalization, evident both in steady congregational spaces and in changing communal organization (Waxman, 1983).

North American Jewry has also known new ways of defining identity through a search of collective though disaffiliated spaces as well as individual and inner domains (Cohen and Eisen, 2000). Recalling Jack Wertheimer’s (1993) memorable expression, “a people divided”, the question emerged of whether Judaism in the years ahead will be characterized by religious polarization or by a return to the “vital center” in Jewish life. Jewish life is going through significant organizational and communal changes, including in its relationship with Israel and the Jewish world. Oscillating between identity redefinitions, collective endeavors, reinterpretation of *mitsvoth* and common solidarity, new trends redefine the profile of American Jewry.

A recent work addressing American Jewish identification (DellaPer-gola, Levy, Rebhun and Sagi, 2009: 305–318) found that Jews who

define themselves as Orthodox have the strongest attachment to Israel. Ranking second in their degree of attachment were Jews who prefer a religious denomination other than Orthodoxy and belong to a Jewish organization of any sort. Non-Orthodox Jews by religion who are not members of a Jewish organization display a much weaker attachment to Israel. In this study, the innermost identification core includes the primary indicators of Jewish peoplehood: feeling Jewish, importance of being Jewish in life, feeling part of the Jewish people, importance of being part of and supporting Jewish organizations, having a rich spiritual life, and giving children a Jewish education.

Identification maps for the entire American Jewish population were compared with similar maps for Jews in Israel (Levy, Levinsohn and Katz, 2002; Levy, Levinsohn and Katz, 2004: 265–284; Levy and Rebhun, 2006: 391–414). The two maps do not address possible differences in behavioral or attitudinal frequencies, but portray the relative positions of the various domains within the overall identificational space. The authors affirm that, perhaps contrary to expectations, perceptions in the two countries are very similar. Notably, a feeling of belongingness to the Jewish people occupies the same central position as the organizing synthesis of other domains of Jewish identification that, in turn, occupy very similar radial positions in both countries. The only two plausible differences are that concerns for Jewish culture and politics among American Jews parallel participation in the civil society for Israeli Jews; and, respectively, responsibility for Israel's needs parallel personal fulfillment of life in Israel (DellaPergola, 2010). The relationship between these two Jewries, however, has been the object of an ongoing debate, formulated in terms of the “distancing” hypothesis. It has stressed non-Orthodox and younger sectors as the main groups whose attachment to Israel has diminished (Sasson, Kadushin and Saxe, 2007; Cohen and Kelman, 2009).

“Oneness” may also be considered at the regional/national level. Thus, although expressed differentially, both in Israel and in the U.S. religiosity is a matter of degree rather than a polarized dichotomy and belonging to the Jewish religion also means belonging to the Jewish people (Ben-Rafael and Peres, 2005). Therefore, whereas ultra-Orthodoxy and secularism may be seen as polarized extremes, there is a buffer zone inhabited by intermediate categories such as traditionalist and religious groups. This pattern tends to recur throughout the Jewish world, thereby also raising a question of ongoing trends and future trans-generational changes.

*Europe: “Another Diaspora” or a “Third Pillar”?*

Underlying the radical changes that European Jewry is experiencing are both external processes and inner trends. Liberalization, democratization, and multiculturalism have impacted Jewish communities in different and even contradictory ways, modifying the relationship between the public and private spheres as domains for building and expressing Jewish life. The turning point was the end of the Soviet bloc, the democratization of most of its previous components, and, at a later stage, several countries joining the European Union.

1989 was a crucial turning point in modern European history. This was the year that marked the end of the Cold War and was followed by the breakup of the Eastern Bloc. Several countries regained their independence to become autonomous actors, and democracy replaced a series of authoritarian regimes. In most places, moreover, this spectacular transformation took place more or less peacefully, and Western, Eastern, and Central Europeans could now communicate on a new basis. A few years later, after several post-Soviet countries joined the European Union, this revolution would be completed through the emergence of this unifying—if not unified—democratic Europe as a brand new international actor of importance.

Quite paradoxically, it is precisely as a European Union is in the making and as borders between this Europe and the one not included in the Union draw closer that segmentation tendencies in national states become discernible (Wagstaff, 1999: 4–18). Threats of splits resonate from Spain to Belgium, as particularisms seem to profit from the protection provided by all-European institutions to weaken their ties with national frameworks. In a way, it is the very evolution of Europe as a new type of supra-national entity that encourages separatist aspirations, which gain strength and assert themselves on the European scene. These tendencies to expand the multicultural dimension of national and all-European realities are still fueled by globalization processes that target this old-new continent. People from all over the world aspire to settle in it to form new segments of the population (Ben-Rafael, Sternberg, Bokser Liwerant and Gorny, 2009).

Democracy offers these new groups opportunities to express themselves in politics, to form constituencies attached to cultural and linguistic symbols of their own, and to raise claims regarding the organization of the social order. The conjunction of globalization and democracy offers these groups possibilities of retaining strong ties with

their homelands and mobilizing resources to build communities, as well as of becoming political actors that may hope to see their special claims addressed by the political elites. These groups of immigrants join forces with the particularistic regional movements that aspire to institutionalize their distinctiveness and to the consequent reorganization of center-periphery relations.

However dramatic these changes may have been, they have been much more so for Jews. Two million Jews were suddenly re-linked to the Jewish world after eighty years of silence. The large majority of this new tribe left *en masse* and reconfigured world Jewry including, and especially, Europe's (Ben-Rafael, 2006). As a result, and more than ever, European Jewry can today be described as highly heterogeneous and divided, not only by the internal diversity of each community but also by its dispersion in numerous national societies, languages, and cultures. When most of Europe is becoming increasingly integrated in the EU, the warranted question concerns the relationships that might develop among the various components of this newly reshaped and numerically significant Jewry and between them and the rest of the Jewish world, mainly Israel and American Jewry.

The impact of these developments has proved radical for at least two Jewish communities. The Jewish-Israeli population grew by one-fifth over ten years with the arrival of more than one million immigrants from the former Soviet bloc. At the same time, more than 200,000 immigrants joined the 20,000–25,000 Jews in Germany and created an opportunity to set up a new viable German Jewry. In a development somewhat less drastic in its significance but still important, nearly half a million Russian-speaking Jews strengthened the American Jewish community. Overall, Russian Jews are now about twenty percent of the world's Jews. Moreover, in the new circumstances now prevailing in some of the post-Soviet countries, many communities that had been well-known participants in the Jewish world but had remained invisible for decades resurfaced in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, and even Poland. Last but not least, with the split of the Soviet Union, Jewish communities reorganized in Ukraine, Russia, the Baltic countries, and other previously Soviet new states.

In the context of the dynamics unfolding in Europe and in the European Union, these newly organized Jewish communities naturally join French and British Jewries as well as the smaller Jewish communities in Italy, Belgium, or the Scandinavian countries. A new Jewish Europe is springing up in a continent that had been the cradle of Diaspora

Judaism, where Jews had been present for nearly twenty centuries. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, between two and two and a half million Jews represent the continuation of a 2,000 years-old historical Jewry that had traditionally been the backbone of Jewry as a whole. This Jewry too includes all the three main clusters of Judaism and, as in the U.S., the ultra-Orthodox and the national clusters represent only minorities. The major trends of European Jewry set them in the ethno-cultural cluster, displayed in the intense activism of numberless community publications, websites, clubs, museums, university programs of Jewish studies, and Orthodox and liberal synagogues. All these resemble the U.S., although without involving a formal affiliation requirement.

Worth noting are also the complex dynamics of secularism, paralleled by a revival of religiosity mixed with, and redefining, sub-ethnic belongingness. Thus, the historical French model of individualized citizenship as the significant relationship between Jews and the state has been modified and reshaped by a steady process of communitarization, first brought about by the massive arrival of North African Jews (Birnbaum, 2003a). More than an exclusively national or regional trend, this process became part of the tendency reflecting the growing role and visibility of religion and of global ultra-Orthodox movements such as Chabad and Shas. This development involves local communities joining a transnational community of believers under a superior authority usually located outside the region—the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef.

European Jewry shares common trends and also expresses national diversity. Unlike the changing French model, the Belgian Jewish community has developed a duality of perspectives, searching both a commitment to integration and the maintenance of social particularism, mainly allowed by the characteristics of the political and legal order of Belgian society. A strong attachment to Israel and the memory of the Shoah, as well as the coexistence of religious and secularization processes, mark its inner life (Schreiber, 2006: 27–31).

The reshaping of German Jewry, as stated, has been essentially determined by Russian Jewish emigration. The presence of the Russian Jews points to a significant revival of Jewish life while posing serious problems of integration, in a dilemma that pits the government's immigration policy against the group's own expectations (Schoeps, Jasper and Glöckner, 2006: 36–42).

Europe's Jews are mostly secular and shy away from the congregational model. They see Jewishness, above all, as a matter of individual choice. Prominent scholars dominate the cultural scene, ranging from Leo Strauss to Levinas, but individualism and voluntarism dominate Jewish self-identification. Frequently, Jews are reluctant to systematically assert their Jewishness in front of non-Jews. Even among the more assertive, Jewishness is often associated with a type of knowledge that is far removed from the traditional sources. European Jewry has indeed excelled in many areas of activity—arts, literature, cinema, popular music, academia, the liberal professions, the media, business, or politics. This pattern is but another expression of the high social mobility of this group, generating jokes like the Parisian one: “What is the difference between a tailor and a psychoanalyst? One generation, of course!” This paradox invites reflection on Thorstein Veblen's (1919) discussion of Zionism when he first heard about the Jews' national project. He wrote a special piece where he confronted the question of the Jews' outstanding contribution to modern science and knowledge. His contention was that Jews in the modern era had left Jewish tradition without assurance of full integration in the general society and in non-Jewish culture. As such, they were free from any commitment to sterile conventions and able to see reality without a priori biases, a position allowing them to offer intellectual leadership and leading to genuine achievements.<sup>1</sup> In the context of Europe's norms of “political-correctness”, expressions of anti-Semitism short of political violence are not necessarily condemned too strongly. Tensions around Jews also draw on Israel's bad press in major media and political circles. One outcome, certainly not unprecedented, is that some Jews adopt the “good Jew” syndrome—admitting to Jewish origins but being highly critical of Israel. In this vein, scholars of Jewish origin assert that Judaism is essentially Diasporic and that Jewish statehood is detrimental to Judaism.

In all these respects, European Jews do indeed represent a unique Jewish experience that sets them apart in the Jewish world. Nevertheless, and despite their particularism, they still find themselves targeted,

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<sup>1</sup> Veblen concluded that Zionism would create for Jews the same societal and cultural conditions of commitment to conventions prevailing in other countries, bringing an end to their special creativity. In brief, Zionism might undoubtedly benefit the Jews but will also mean a loss for humanity.

like other Jewries, by versions of Judaism seeking to find a recognized and/or dominant place and legitimacy for their convictions. Hence, in Berlin, London, Moscow, and Paris, as in Jerusalem or New York, one finds B'nai B'rith lodges, Zionist movements, Agudat Israel, Chabad, liberal, Orthodox, and ultra-Orthodox synagogues. One also finds here, as everywhere else, sustained interest in the Middle East drama where forty percent of the world's Jews confront, insofar as most of them can see, the continuation of Jewish history. As in all other Jewish spaces, in Europe too, the diversity of these phenomena expresses both the solidarity of the Jewish world and its deep divisions. The diversity indicates how uncompromising the endemic conflicts of Jews are and what still holds them together. It conveys that many Jews throughout the world share different ideals and ideas about Jewishness, but attach importance to having their views shared by Jews worldwide. Hence, we may speak of many ways of being Jewish, yet we cannot speak of different 'Jewish Peoples'. The *Klal Yisrael* code is still a potent drive among Jews, including in Europe.

European Jewry also has two significant characteristics entirely of its own. The first is that, except for French Jews of North African origin, and unlike Israeli, North-American, and Latin-American Jews, the Jews living in Europe today belong to their continent's longstanding history. In many cities, old Jewish quarters and many other remnants signal their longstanding presence in this space, a history rich in events that fuels feelings of belongingness but also a martyrology that culminated in the Shoah. Survivors of the Shoah and their offspring on European soil have been forced to accommodate their memory and their non-Jewish environment.

What remains as factors of identification with Judaism when considering the superficiality of most Jews' acknowledgement of their legacy and their openness to the non-Jewish environment, are two foci of overwhelming importance wherein European Jews rejoin Jews everywhere. These foci are the memory of the Shoah and the preoccupation with the ongoing conflict in Israel. When looking today at Jewish public life in Brussels, Paris, London, New York, Berlin, or Jerusalem, the memory and commemoration of the Shoah will be found at the heart of Jewish concerns, a statement particularly true of European Jews, for very good reasons (Trigano 2005). Here, the Shoah is always present and close to any discussion of Jewish matters. This preoccupation is concretized throughout Europe in many memorials, commemoration days of specific related events, publications, and communal activities.

Seemingly, Europe's Jews can continue to live in this continent only on the condition that they prove to themselves they "have not forgotten". The centrality of the Shoah in defining Jewish existence may therefore be viewed in terms of a "culture of memory" (Gergely, 2006: ix–xiii). Although this dimension is one they certainly share with all other Jewries, it assumes particular acuity in the European context. This concern has evoked some impatience among non-Jews, who have often expressed—on the pages of the most respected newspapers—their irritation with the "Jews' obsession with the Shoah", some even calling it "obsolete", "redundant", and "excessive".

The second major concern for Jews in Europe, as in other places in the Jewish world, is the preoccupation with the Israeli-Arab conflict. Whether from a sympathetic or a critical standing, whether from a pro-Zionist or a decidedly Diasporic perspective, Israel is at the focus of attention for most Jews living outside its borders. Rarely are European Jews completely indifferent to what happens in the Middle-East. Though these issues do stir up the Jewishness of Europe's Jews, to say they bring them closer to other Jewries does not tell the whole story (Cliff 1998: 20–22; Pipes 1988: 21–75). European Jews also see in their immediate environment the rapid growth of a Moslem population. At the same time that Europe builds new institutions and adopts a new flag, creating a brand new configuration in international relations, it is also experiencing a profound and drastic change in its demography (Reinharz and Shavit, 2010). Muslims are now nearly ten percent of the population in some parts of Europe and growing, a figure that, in a democracy, is not far from granting them a veto in a variety of issues touching on their interests. In London, Paris, and Berlin, mosques are being built and new communities are emerging, with organizational networks serving the youth, women, or the elderly, which constitute the backbone of political constituencies and participate in institutions aspiring to represent the Muslim population as a whole (for France see: Hajji and Marteau 2003).

One consequence of these developments is that Europe's nation-states become, *de facto* if not *de jure*, more multicultural than in the past, that socio-cultural differences gain saliency and recognition, and that new groups become legitimate political actors. Many European Jews partially support his pattern. True, this development does allow Jews greater freedom to express themselves as a group and to openly voice claims significant to them, such as national commemorations of the Shoah or policies sympathetic to Israel. The problematic aspect of this



development for Jews is that the growing Muslim minority in Europe also becomes entitled to express freely, and sometimes vehemently, its indiscriminate identification with the Palestinian cause and its alignment with the Arab world's animosity toward Israel. This identification translates into a reaction to every single event taking place in the Middle East and incites what Taguieff (2004) describes as neo-anti-Semitism, which begins with hostility toward Israel and is generalized to all Jews.

*Latin America: From Central to Peripheral Alterities*

Latin America represents another case of the contemporary character of Jewish life, wherein unity and continuity are extraordinarily interwoven with the pluralization and fragmentation of identities, institutional forms, values, ascriptions, and self-ascriptions. Jewish communities are characterized by common grounds while also encompassing much diversity in their experiences. Overall, transnational conditions and a sense of belonging to Jewish peoplehood marked the experience of Latin American Jewish life from its very beginning, both in its flows of identification and in its organizational patterns.

Initial relations with external centers were colored by a dynamics simultaneously evincing strong transnational solidarity and the dependent or peripheral character of communities in the making (Senkman, 2008: 125–150; Bokser Liwerant, 2007: 355–386; Bokser Liwerant, 2008a: 81–108). This dual characteristic was sustained through successive re-definitions and changing formulations attempting to cope with objective conditions and behavioral consequences, in a pattern of solidarity and cohesion built on unequal terms of exchange (Schenkolewski-Kroll, 1993: 191–201; Bokser Liwerant, 2005: 168–183; Senkman, 2008: 125–150).

The founding immigration waves as well as the future development of Jewish life in the region were marked by a constant attachment to various external Jewish centers, both real and imaginary, concrete and symbolic: institutions and communities in the Jewish world; countries of origin; the Zionist idea and the State of Israel, and other centers of contemporary Jewish life. Latin American Jews shaped their communal life, built their associational and institutional profile and their collective consciousness as part of a broader feeling of peoplehood and

a sense of belongingness, which expressed itself in inner differentiation and global political interactions.

Historical conditions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries compelled the organized Jewish world to look for new places of residence. Colonization and immigration led collective efforts to channel Jewish life to Latin America.<sup>2</sup>

Host societies offered different frameworks of normative search for homogeneity and tolerance towards ethnic minorities, which influenced integration processes. In Euro-America, multiethnic societies *de facto* tolerant towards minorities counterbalanced the primordial, territorial, and religiously homogeneous profile that the state aspired to achieve. By contrast, in Indo-America, the conception of national identity was based on an ethnic-religious cultural model—*mestizaje*—defined by fusion, assimilation, and the complete merging of Spanish-Catholic and indigenous populations. As a resource for identity-building and national integration, this model became a central criterion for evaluating the full incorporation of minorities.<sup>3</sup> Both Argentina's liberalism and Mexico's *mestizaje* involved differing and common scenarios of national homogeneity. Generally speaking, Latin America's search for national identities rejected diversity as a menace to its recurrent aspiration for national unity, which was understood as synonymous with national integration, and thus interpreted as part of the essential and repeated Latin American quest to enter modernity. Its distinctively modern character was built through a permanent if contested and ambivalent link to Western centers. The cultural program of

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<sup>2</sup> The Argentine and Mexican cases represent initiatives that resulted in a strong local communal life, while remaining connected and interacting with the transnational space, understood as territory and as social domain. The Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) of the Baron Maurice Hirsch in Argentina and international Jewish organizations in combination with the North American Jewish community of Texas, in the Mexican case, acted as external centers that fostered and supported Jewish life in these two Latin American countries (Avni, 1991; Bokser Liwerant, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Significant differences exist between Indo-America, with countries such as Mexico, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, among others, where limited immigration emphasized the indigenous highly hierarchical composition of their populations, and Euro-America, with countries such as Argentina and Uruguay, which attracted mass immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In both categories, we may draw further distinctions between, for example, the homogeneous mestizo population of Chile and Colombia, as opposed to Brazil, Cuba, and some Caribbean areas, which are complex multiracial societies with a pronounced Afro-American element (Eisenstadt, 1998: 245–265; Avni, 1999).

modernity, which entailed ‘promissory notes’ that sought to define in new terms the meaning of human agency and its role in building social and political orders, acted permanently as a critical orientation vis-à-vis the center(s) (Eisenstadt, 2000: 1–30; Wittrock, 2000: 31–60). Its principles of freedom, equality, and individual autonomy as the substratum of association and community belongingness, reflexivity as the basis of tolerance and pluralism, and the centrality of public spaces for citizenship building, confronted Latin Americans with common and distinctive ways of becoming modern. Western modernity acted as a project to follow and to challenge. Approaching it through the lens of multiple modernities may allow a better understanding of ambivalences and conflicts (Eisenstadt, 2000: 1–30).

The way Jews perceived and internalized the modernity program became part of the interplay between narratives and reality, between self-ascription and social representation. Within diverse national paradigms, Jewish life confronted the challenges of integration and continuity through equally diverse patterns of collective organization and identification. A rich array of communal spaces, associations, and institutions developed in almost all the central fields of Jewish life. The challenge of building a Jewish community was the driving force behind the collective energy that sought to satisfy material, spiritual, and cultural needs, leading to self organization and the creation of institutions that became a source of identity. Continuity seemed to be the overall choice, and integration mediated by communal life was the strategy. The ideal of immigrant absorption and institution-building resonated widely with Latin American Jews.

Regions and countries of origins were defining organizational criteria, and Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews developed their own spaces and institutions. Sephardim developed communities around their countries of origin, reflecting the fragmented character of this complex ethnic group, which was textured by different sub-groups: Sephardim from Turkey and the Balkan countries; Middle Eastern Jews from Aleppo, Damascus, Lebanon, and Palestine; North-Africans from Morocco and Egypt, and small groups of Sephardim from Italy and other countries in Europe (Bejarano, 2005: 9–26).

Eastern European Jews established ‘replicas’ of the European *kehilot*. Founded by secularists but seeking to answer communal and religious needs, these communities were cast in the mold of modern Diaspora nationalism and emphasized the secular collective dimension of Jewish life, its inner ideological struggles, organized political parties, and

social and cultural movements (Bokser Liwerant, 1991). The dominant pattern was a continuous drift toward secularization and politicization. Many ideological, cultural, and political movements were a vigorous presence: Communists and Zionists; Yiddishists and Bundists; liberals and assimilationists; secularists and traditionalists.

The communal domain, while prompting continuity, functioned also as the substitute for limited participation in the national life and as the basic framework for identity shaping. Thus, Latin America has been able to contribute one of the most powerful models of Jewish corporate experience: the ethno-cultural, ethno-national, secularized, cohesive Jewish *kehillah*. The model offers clarity in defining boundaries, a richness of institutions, and unmistakable Jewish contents, coupled with significant acceptance of the surrounding society's social norms and priorities. These were the shared patterns, though the host societies differed in their perceptions of the general role of ethnicity and social stratification.

A singular common trait of Jewish life developed in the region: close interaction between ethno-cultural identity and the national dimension, in the mold of Diasporic Jewish nationalism under progressive Zionist hegemony. The links between an ideological, political, and public center and a Jewish community conceived as Diaspora entailed profound ambiguities. The reliance of this relationship on the wider idea of a national project for the renewal of Jewish life sparked recurrent ambivalences. On the ideological and organizational planes, Zionism worked toward the enhancement of a one-center-model while, simultaneously, tacitly affirming Diaspora existence. Awareness of the centrality of the State of Israel did not cause the Zionist dream 'to come true' but, in fact, perpetuated activities and obligations in the life of the community. Per Gideon Shimoni's conceptual differentiation, a 'substantive centrality' of Zionism and Israel developed in Latin America, and in time became circumstantial (Shimoni, 1995: 11–36).

Latin America's communities are undergoing radical changes. Today's changing profile reflect both national/regional transformations as well as Jewish transnational trends. Economic liberalization and democratization have brought pluralism and multiculturalism to the forefront of societies while a perverse dynamics has developed, resulting in the persistent pairing of democracy building and economic crisis. The dynamics of globalization, while fostering political change, brought about an overall decline in the standard of living: low incomes, recession, unemployment, under-employment, and the

growth of an unofficial informal economy. Close to half the population of Latin America now lives below the poverty level. The top five percent enjoy 25% of the total national income, while the bottom 30% receives less than 8% (Kliksberg, 2002).

The Jewish communities of the continent have certainly felt the impact of this crisis. Its scope and intensity varies according to the size of the middle class, the place of the community in the social and national arenas, and the ability of groups and leaders, both national and communal, to maneuver in each country.<sup>4</sup> The impact of the crises has led to changes in the role and the performance of their organized frameworks, which have increasingly adopted the profile of NGOs oriented to the provision of welfare and social policies.

Globalization and democratization processes have brought Jews a new visibility in the national and public spheres. The prevailing concepts of national identity have been redefined to expand receptivity to multiple identities. Simultaneously, identity politics and multiculturalism have reinforced the revival of collective identities, expressed mainly in an essentialist indigenous code that has potential exclusion effects on other minorities, certainly on Jews. Recognition and redistribution claims enhance these effects even further.

Amid the ambivalences of transitional processes, however, cultural diversity has opened up a discussion on the nexus of culture, society and politics through which minorities gained legitimacy. Thus, in Argentina, pluralistic identity politics have accepted the notion of an ethno-national and cultural collectivity together with full assimilation into the civic nation in construction. While the Jews' transnational connections with Israel and with the Jewish world have gained new visibility and legitimacy, a new discourse fits the oxymoronic logic of 'assimilated ethnicity' (Anagnostou, 2003: 279–328). Jews take an interest in democratic political culture and in becoming full citizens in order to participate in the public sphere, but maintain their ethnic difference. This interest does not imply belief in the global desirability of individual assimilation, but concern with the civic commonality; its

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<sup>4</sup> In Argentina, Jews who had typically belonged to the middle class in a society where the middle class was dominant experienced severe downward mobility, resulting in an unprecedented "new poverty" (Kliksberg, 2002) that had far-reaching impact on communal life, weakening its institutional order. In Mexico, the majority of Jews belong to the upper and middle classes, which together constitute less than 10% of the general population, but the previous relative consequences of the region's economic trajectory have recently been reverted.

limits are related to the persistence of a homogeneous model of the “Argentine Nation” in important sectors of the society.

In Mexico, the transition to democracy brought legitimacy to communal collective identity, seen and understood mainly in religious and socio-economic terms. Simultaneously, Jewish communities, related in the national imaginary mainly to Israel, have been growingly perceived as part of a Jewish transnational world whose networks and potential support have been clearly recognized. These external nexus gained recognition during the process of rapprochement with the Northern neighbor, and were clearly set in motion during negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement in the late 1980s, and have since intensified. In Argentina, these became evident in inner social support during the economic crises, and in external political support for demands for justice associated with the two terrorist attacks at the Israeli embassy in 1992 and at the AMIA communal building in 1994.

Profound changes in external conditions and inner associational variations are reflected in the changing identity patterns of Latin American Jews. A complex dynamics of individualization and affirmation of collective belongingness portrays a diversified world of identities, partly fragmented and fluid, partly hard-cored and with well defined borders.

Among the changes that have taken place, we may point to the rise of religion as part of identity-formation processes and of organized community life. The emerging pattern may be seen in different ways: as part of changing trends in the Jewish world and also of the general relevance that religion has gained as a result of the so-called ‘de-privatization’ (Casanova, 1994). It may also be described as disappointment with the secular and political alternatives available, but also as questioning the basic paradigm of peaceful integration into the local national-civic mainstream of being equal while preserving considerable latitude for communal Jewish autonomy. Thus, again, the question: is the religious revival a process whereby the local community joins a transnational community of believers led by a superior authority usually located in the U.S. or in Israel, as noted, or is it rather directed from within the local community?

Historically, religion played a minor role in what were basically secular communities. This trend was reinforced by the scarcity of religious functionaries, dating back to the earliest days of Latin American Jewry (Elazar, 1989). In the 1960s, the Conservative movement began to spread to South America and provided the first model of a

religious institution not brought over from Europe but 'imported' from the United States. As the Conservative movement adjusted to local conditions, the synagogue began to play a more prominent role, both in community life and in the society in general. The Conservative movement has mobilized thousands of otherwise non-affiliated Jews, bringing them to active participation in Jewish institutions and religious life.<sup>5</sup>

In recent years, in tandem with changing trends in world Jewish life, ultra-Orthodox groups have formed new religious congregations. Today, the spread of the Chabad movement and the establishment of Chabad centers in both small and large well-established communities is striking. Close to one hundred rabbis are currently working in more than fifty institutions. The growing presence of Mizrahi communities, which outnumber the Ashkenazi sectors in Mexico, Venezuela, and Panama, also explains the expanding influence of Shas. Extreme religious factions and strategies of self-segregation are still marginal to Jewish life as a whole in the continent and, as in other regions of the Jewish world, intermediate categories that neutralize polarization prevail.

The interplay between the historical ethnic components of identity and the new religious flows has different behavioral manifestations throughout the region. Thus, South American communities epitomize the paradigm of Chabad's growth due to changing socio-economic and cultural conditions. Religious developments answered the need for reconstituting the social fabric and also the noted need for cultural and spiritual transformation.

The changes analyzed so far have affected the centrality of Israel. While their precise direction is still unclear, they may be reformulated in terms of the changing meanings of Israel's centrality as well as in terms of the pluralization of centers. Indeed, Israel's actual place is not necessarily mediated by the classic Zionist paradigm(s). It bears emphasis, though, that a search for new types of interactions is under way, altogether replacing the mediation that organized Zionism used

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<sup>5</sup> Proof of the lack of religious leadership to which Elazar refers, and of the importance of such leadership to religious development, is the success of Rabbi Marshall Meyer. Rabbi Meyer assumed the task of training a new rabbinical leadership, and he established the Seminario Rabínico Lationamericano in Argentina. Today its graduates serve throughout Latin America and beyond. Their presence in communities in the United States is not only due to the lack of opportunities in local communities, but also reflects the new phenomenon of regional migration.

to offer through institutions and individual leaders. The changing role and meaning of Israel is also evident in its importance to different age groups. Thus, while among members of the Mexican Jewish community aged 70 and over, 97% declared that Israel is of utmost importance, in the 18–29 age group the proportion reporting such feelings declines to 77%. These figures are still much higher than those in other communities in the region, such as Argentina, where this percentage stands at 57% (Jmelnizky and Erdei, 2005).

The impact of Israel's image in public opinion, which has been influenced by ideologies dominant in the region represented mainly by anti-imperialist and anti-neo-liberal trends, must also be taken into account. Negative images intertwined with old and new stereotypes and prejudices are recovered and constructed in the media discourse, steadily nourishing a process of symbolic violence. Notwithstanding, Latin America still shows, relative to the population, the highest rate of youth participation in regular learning trips to Israel, recently expanded through the government-JAFI initiatives of Taglit and Masa.

Besides serving as a sovereign and creative cultural center, Israel has functioned for Latin American Jews as a vital space for those in need. Necessity and ideology interact at present as they have since the dawn of the Jewish state. Migration waves and their chosen destination point to this dynamics.<sup>6</sup>

Simultaneously, the central role of Zionism and Israel in the education system has gone through radical changes. The historical, political, and ideological currents that led to the original differentiation of schools have been replaced by more defining criteria, mainly communitarian and religious. These criteria now dominate the dynamics of educational development, as measured by the constant and impressive growth of the student population in religious and ultra Orthodox schools.

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<sup>6</sup> For Argentine Jews, Israel became a central destination. Today, however, when asked about their country of preference in case of emigration, 27% chose Spain and only 24% opted for Israel, followed by 14% that pointed to the U.S. The emigration trend among Mexican Jews in terms of preferences shows a reduction of Israel's importance, even though 84% have visited it at least once (CCIM, 2006). Among Jews in Caracas asked in 1998–1999 (before the recent dramatic change of regime) about their moves facing a crisis, 14% stated they would go to Israel, the same percentage would prefer the U.S., 9% would choose another country, and yet 63% would remain in Venezuela (DellaPergola, 2003). Overall, 29% felt very close to Israel, 53% close, 11% indifferent, and 5% distant or very distant. These data did not necessarily predict what actually happened under the stringency of the more recent political mutations.



From the perspective of identity diversification, new referents have gained a meaningful role. As identity focus, the Shoah has become increasingly relevant. Holocaust memory is not only the ghost that inhabits fortresses, in the terms of Zygmunt Bauman's postmodern discourse, but also a resource for the search after common values that will foster integration. It is a singular and specific memory that aspires to establish itself in those who bear it as a code of inclusion and not of exclusion, of membership and not of foreignness, as the sign of binding historical experiences of repression and impunity (Bokser Liwerant, 2005: 168–183; Goldstein, 2006: 41–64). Thus, in the course of democratization processes in Argentina, the Jews' public political action aiming to bring about serious investigation of the 1992 and 1994 terrorist attacks became intertwined with the fight against the impunity enjoyed by the former military regime. Particularistic Jewish values essentially connected with the Shoah experience, such as mourning and memory, became a battle cry in Argentine society. For Jews in Argentina, memory became an identity paradigm. Differing from the Israeli-centered identification pattern, one may wonder if current narratives, in which the present is subdued by the moment of destruction, express an 'unexplainable uneasiness' with state power and are also more consonant with postmodernist trends (Bokser Liwerant, 2006: 79–102; Bokser Liwerant, 2007: 355–386).

The strength of the memory axis for Jewish identity may also be seen in its dynamics of contest with Israel as identification focus. The memory axis as a transnational dimension, however, has also gained unprecedented centrality within Israel, thus cautioning against hasty conclusions about differentiated or alternative poles.

This widening of identification options among Latin American Jews requires an expanded focus, able to encompass the social and geopolitical spectrum of individual and collective life that has extended beyond the region. Although Latin American Jewry has its origins in large scale immigration, during recent decades migration has tended to flow outwards, from Latin America mostly to the United States, Israel, and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe (mainly Spain), and Canada.

Migratory trends reveal a demographic profile characteristic of ongoing global as well as regional and local patterns. In the past thirty years, the number of Jews in Latin America has dropped from 514,000 in the 1970s to the current 394,000. Whereas violence and authoritarianism were determinants of regional and international emigration and political exile in the Southern Cone in the 1970s, a decade later,

re-democratization was a pull factor for Jewish exiles to return to their homeland. But during the late 1980s and early 1990s, economic crises and/or security problems moved Jews into a global international migration trend. Since the 1990s, this tendency has grown. The latest phases of accelerated globalization processes have shown a significant increase in the number of Latin American migrants, and new centers of relocated communal life (Bokser Liwerant, DellaPergola and Senkman, 2009).

Sharing trends of the changing map of dispersion with other Jewries while also exhibiting their specificity, Latin American Jews have been exposed to the impact of worldwide migration crises driven by macro-level political and economical forces. Migration crises provoked the outward relocation of people pushed by structural transformations as well as inward movements shaped by choices of destination grounded on individual/familial options for better economic and life chances considerations (Bokser Liwerant, DellaPergola and Senkman, 2009; Van Hear, 1998). From an overall historical perspective, then, the transnational dimension of Latin American Jewry may be seen as a key condition for approaching its past as an ethno-national Diaspora and its present as a community marked by migration patterns and by relocation in new settings.

Transnational trends influence the restructuring of life both within the region and in the new centers (Ben-Rafael, Sternberg, Bokser Liwerant and Gorny, 2009). Narratives and parameters of Jewish identities unfold in a context of identity revival. Novel spatial interactions have affected the shaping of institutions, social relationships, and identities, and cultural/geographical identity moments of the transnational world can be traced in Latin American Jews in four continents (Bokser Liwerant, DellaPergola and Senkman, 2009). Processes of reconstitution of identities under the impact of relocation, migration, dual residency, the decline of nation-state imaginaries and the emergence of new ones take place. Reconstitution of institutional communal life is also at stake.

Jewish migration involving Latin American countries has not been exclusively uni-directional. Return migration, repeated and circular migration, and bi-local migrants contribute to the diffusion of transnational networks and identities, reflecting essential links with globalization processes. The changing modes and strategies of collective organization among the Jewish migrants who aim to retain cultural traits related to the community of origins and tend to integrate into the

communal fabric of the new countries of residence both express and shape the redefinition of flows of identities. Consider the paradigm that obtains in Florida or California. On one level, the newcomers seek to strengthen their relationship with the Jewish world, both the known and the new one. On another level, an old-new dynamics unfolds in the affirmation of their national-Latin American-Jewish belongingness to the Latino world, which also opens doors to the U.S. Latino world. The complex awareness of convergences and divergences between Latin American Jews and the Jewish world on the one hand, and the Latino non-Jewish world on the other, has recurrently been referred to as a new transnational consciousness.

Homeland and the elected new places of residence, then, widen the scope of Jewish life and of reciprocal influence. The current changes may shed light on the suggested reading of current Jewish history as the experience of the frontier, understood as a space of accommodation and confrontation; the frontier not as a periphery but as a conceptual and physical space where groups in motion meet, confront, alter, destroy and build (Gilman, 1999: 1–25; Gilman, 2003). In other terms, the expansion and renewal of the frontier experience.

New interactions have evolved between ethnicity, religion, and national belongingness. While, for instance, sub-ethnicity belongingness as a criterion of organization has not played a determinant role among Mexican or Venezuelan Jewish immigrants at their arrival, it has recovered a meaningful place as a subsidiary-interactive attribute of religiosity. Orthodoxy has thus been the defining element in the establishment of a Halebi community in San Diego (Bokser Liwerant, DellaPergola and Senkman, 2009). In the course of transnational migrations, religion constitutes a key field for the development of new discourses, practices, and spatial scales, when “trans-migrants” redefine old subjectivities and identities and build new ones (Vertovec, 1999: 1–20; Vazquez, 2008: 151–184).

The reconfiguration of old and new transnational communities of Latin American Jews in the region and abroad thus simultaneously reflects and shapes global Jewish existence. The Sephardization of Latin American Jewish communities and their growing religiosity are part of these trends, endowing the role and place of Israel with new meanings.

Changing relations between these referents are also to be seen in the communities of origin, on which migration has certainly had a substantive quantitative and qualitative impact. It is not only a matter

of declining numbers or dwindling communities but also of the selective socio-economic, demographic, and ethnic impact of those who have left. Note that globalization has had an impact not only on the deterioration of the region's Jews economic standing but also on segments of the higher middle classes that have entered the most developed and transnational sectors of finance, services, high tech, finance, etc. Multilocalism is ubiquitous in these sectors. The changing profile of the transnational moment points to a further diversification and pluralization of life, to a "world of identities".

*Epilogue: Towards Unity and Diversity?*

Our analysis focused on European and Latin American Jewries from the perspective of the transnational and spatial dimensions that condition their existence. A multifarious picture of specificity and diversity emerged. These two dimensions enabled us to trace the contours of a Jewish world marked by convergences and divergences, shared features, and singularities.

Globalization processes, past patterns of Diaspora transnational conditions, and new migratory trends, have enhanced the apparent contradictory processes of assimilation of Diasporas and ethnicitization (Appadurai, 1990: 1–24). Global spaces give a new density to the closed and the specific, the characteristic and the particular, and encourage the building of collective identities on institutional bases, spaces, and frameworks radically different from those known in social theory.

In today's Jewish world, the abandonment of historical criteria of belongingness coexist with the revitalization of Jewish life. On the one hand are declining rates of ethno-religious marriages and of predominantly Jewish social networks, and declining percentages of Jews in the total population. On the other hand is a sustained ongoing effort to promote what the organized Jewish community calls 'continuity' and 'renaissance'. It is indeed undeniable that, at least so far, *Klal Yisrael* has held together. Many Jews throughout the world do attach importance to their Jewishness and, despite the many variations, inhabit a wide shared space of identity.

In actual fact, all formulations still widely draw their symbols and myths from the same trove of customs and narratives, and distinguish themselves from one another mainly by the degree of their interest

in the ancestral legacies and by their specific interpretations of them. This means that every (or nearly every) formulation continues to be recognizable to all.

Israel has developed a national Judaism conditioned and shaped by its own sociological reality, defined by Jewish majority and state sovereignty. A new Hebrew culture and Jewish multiculturalism developed hand in hand, and are reflected in the autonomous Jewish public sphere. Secularism and religious revival take place in the national and transnational dimensions. Countervailing the tensions derived from inner diversification are identification processes nourished by the external conflict. North American Jewry finds its main parameters in the Americanness from which Jewishness is defined and reshaped as a primordial identity. Its main paradigm of ethnic-religious community is shaped through a recognized inner diversity of flows, with a permanent tension prevailing between growing levels of assimilation and collective affirmation. The legitimacy and place of the Jewish community as a vital component of the national scene enhance the collective presence in the public sphere, where its solidarity/attachment to Israel is manifested. Its congregational and religious structural profile points to a well-organized Jewish life coexisting with a loose communal system.

Europe represents a plurality of national, cultural, and linguistic identities that define a reality of different settings and common grounds. The multicultural continental horizon implies new and serious risks to the pluralism resulting from migration movements and from a growing Islamic presence. Jewish collective identity finds its limits when facing the public sphere. European Jewry experiences inner diversity, but its main characteristic is a pattern combining secularism, individualism, and cultural ethnicity. The affirmation of collective ethno-religious identity has acquired new forms of private/public expression. Anti-Semitism and hostility towards Israel have posed new challenges to organized Jewish life and to intellectual voices.

Latin American Jews also represent a reality of unity and continuity interwoven with a pluralization of identities and institutional forms. Historically built as ethno-national communities with a secular, institutionalized Judaism, they are today experiencing a religious revival and new cultural flows. Community organizations provide the realm wherein identity flows find expression and continuity is guaranteed. Democracy has brought new public visibility though its presence in

the public sphere is still limited. Further identity diversification and relocation in Jewish life resulted from migration waves.

Thus, this global and transnational world has developed and maintained a consciousness of belonging to one Jewish world despite its inner diversity. Awareness of *Klal Yisrael* and a sense of peoplehood are expressed in strong solidarity with the Jewish world as a whole. Shared religious and historical symbols and historical awareness cross the different spatial realities, their changing meanings notwithstanding. Every or nearly every formulation still accepts that, in various ways and under different congregational umbrellas, membership in the Jewish people implies accepting some basic requirements, including religious aspects that cannot be completely ignored or replaced by the social dimension, be it community, peoplehood, or nationhood. These common denominators, we contend, somehow counterbalance the tensions that prevail between the three core elements, notwithstanding the transformations that Jewry has undergone during the last centuries.

Equally representative of convergences in the Jewish world is the memory of the Shoah, which has become a polyvalent component of Jewish life. The Shoah embraces historical consciousness and acts as a meaningful nexus between past and present, stating a claim for universal integration and identification as well as for the singularity and uniqueness of the Jewish path. The significance of the identification/symbiosis with Israel, and less so with other Jewish communities, is also worth noting. National, regional and global dimensions interact in different patterns, raising the question of the role and place of a/the center. In this regard, as in other questions, the Jewish collective faces new challenges that could jeopardize its unity.

The issue of one or several centers is vital. The one-center model emerged with the Zionist project. The State of Israel did indeed become the center and succeeded in becoming home to the largest Jewish community, partly as a result of its reliance on this normative claim. The current existential collective reality of a sovereign state vis-à-vis voluntary societies has led to a search for new ways and terms for defining interdependency in the Jewish world. Globalization processes and their multidimensional nature, together with increasing degrees of complexity, lead to a pluralization of centers. Obviously, objective factors mix with aspirations and self-ascriptions, though transnational trends push to redefine the classical binary model of center-periphery.

Decentralization and the emergence of social spaces that supersede particularistic national places have impacted the Jewish world too.

In light of the differentiated objective and subjective perceptions of centrality, it bears emphasis that European Jewry has viewed itself and has been studied as a ‘different Jewry’ (Ben-Rafael, 2002). Such perceptions imply the existence of another reality that operates as a frame of reference, a role usually played by North American Jewry in the Diaspora context and by Israel in the *Klal Ysrael* context. Today, the question of whether becoming a third pillar is indeed a feasible option.

Latin American Jewry’s ascription has also been labeled as “different,” again relating to Israel and to the U.S. as centers of reference. Europe had been foundational for Latin America in the past, both generally and specifically for Jewish life. The Latin American awareness of difference, however, is expressed in terms of singularity rather than in terms of a center consciousness, whether past or present, contrary to the European aspiration-vision of becoming a center, not to say a third pillar. We may therefore distinguish degrees of otherness, central or peripheral alterities that may change according to the specific position in space and time.

Disputes about predominance intertwine with questions as to what best represents Jewishness today—religious, ethnic, or intellectual element/s, or rather the sovereignty dimension. Religion, as noted, became a central axis, both in the definition of borders and in shaping the foundations of cohesion. Thus, the place of religion and its interaction with the ethno-national and ethno-cultural profiles of Diaspora existence becomes a contested focus. Related to territories and borders—physical, social and cultural—religion is one of the main actors in the unbinding of culture from its traditional referents and boundaries and its re-attachment in new space-time configurations. The dialectic of de-territorialization (and re-territorialization) entails the loss of the natural relation of culture to geographical and social territories, but also leaves room for the territorial relocation of old and new symbolic productions.

Generally, local cultures—and in our case spatial configurations—become relativized in the encounter between cultural units that had previously been relatively segregated. In turn, locality is reaffirmed in the form of radical responses that often use the tools of globalization. Religion plays a major role in the “particularistic revitalization of a tradition in the face of relativization” because, along with ethnic-

ity (and nationalism), it is central in the creation/maintenance of the inter-subjective world where meaning, identity, a sense of place, and belongingness emerge (Beyer, 1998: 79–94).

One may therefore ask how, in these new scenarios, ultra-Orthodox Jewish movements such as Chabad and Shas, which aim to enhance a transnational religious consciousness of Diaspora, challenge/coexist with a Zionist ethno-national attachment centered in Israel. Both these options, moreover, share the space with a growingly diversified range of identity options. Other dilemmas are at stake when considering the density and intricacy of the Jewish world and its quest for unity in diversity. Among them are dilemmas related to openness and to the influence of the external milieu and the potential weakening of Jewish cohesion, all closely tied to the dynamics of exclusion vis-à-vis belongingness to the non-Jewish world.

Thus, pluralism leads to a need for mechanisms that will regulate differences and enable dissent. In a differentiated culture, we will probably need to develop ways of approaching multicultural environments while developing familial and/or neighborly relations wherein institutional rules, sites, and arrangements strengthen convergences and provide venues for the fostering of life patterns involving both identity and difference.