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United Jewish Communities
Report Series on the
National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01



Israel Connections and American Jews

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United Jewish Communities

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INTRODUCTION¹

SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1948 and particularly since the Six Day War in 1967, Israel has attracted the attention of American Jewry in a variety of ways. For example, many U.S. Jews have funneled philanthropic contributions through the American Jewish communal system to address Israel's crucial social and economic needs. As importantly, the organized Jewish community sees Israel as a critical component of American Jewish identity, and it has invested considerable resources to reinforce the connection of American Jews with Israel.

Given this investment, to what extent do American Jews currently exhibit strong connections to Israel? How have Jewish organizations helped to create and strengthen these ties? How broad-based and deep are these attachments, and what are some barriers that may be preventing stronger attachments? What might be changing about the nature of these ties to Israel over time? These are some of the key questions that can help the communal system think about strategies to maintain and strengthen future connections between Israel and American Jews.

This report uses data from the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 to examine key Israel attitudes and behaviors of American Jews. Interviewing for NJPS occurred between August 2000 and August 2001. Two critical events – the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the Second Intifada – took place shortly after interviewing for NJPS was completed. As such, it is possible that some Israel-related attitudinal measures and attachments may currently be at different levels than those reported at the time of interviewing.² Other indicators of Israel engagement – such as family and friendship ties in Israel – are unlikely to be sensitive to the events of the last few years. Importantly, relationships between variables – i.e., background or current

1. This report benefited from the careful reading and comments of Lorraine Blass, Steven M. Cohen, Ed Snitkoff and Barry Swartz.
2. See Steven M. Cohen, "Poll: Attachment of U.S. Jews to Israel Falls in Past 2 Years," *Forward*, March 4, 2005.

factors, either Jewish or demographic, which are associated with strong Israel attachments – are not likely to have changed since the completion of NJPS interviewing.

This report is organized in the following manner. First, overall Israel attachments for the American Jewish population are given in two sections. The first of these sections describes visits to Israel—how many Jews have ever visited, the duration, frequency and auspices of their visits, and factors that have prevented Israel travel. The second section describes findings from seven NJPS questions that convey important information about American Jewish attitudes towards Israel. Next, Israel visits and attitudes are analyzed by selected demographic variables (age, region and level of secular education) and then by selected Jewish variables (denomination, affiliation and in-marriage). The concluding section highlights several analytic issues and policy considerations for the Jewish communal system that stem from the findings.

THE SAMPLE

THE NJPS QUESTIONNAIRE WAS DIVIDED INTO LONG-FORM AND SHORT-FORM VERSIONS. The long-form version was administered to respondents whose responses to selected early questions indicated stronger Jewish connections; these respondents represent 4.3 million Jews, or over 80% of all U.S. Jews. The short-form version, which omitted many questions on Jewish topics, was given to respondents whose answers on the same selected early questions indicated Jewish connections that are not as strong; they represent an additional 800,000 Jews.³

Most, though not all, questions relating to Israel were on the long-form version of the questionnaire. For analytic consistency, then, the entire text and Tables 1-7 of this report are restricted to respondents representing the more Jewishly-engaged population of 4.3 million Jews. Very occasionally, a footnote will report data for questions that were asked of all

3. The total Jewish household population is estimated at 5.1 million people. An additional 100,000 Jews are estimated to live in institutional settings that were not sampled for NJPS.

respondents representing the entire Jewish population. In addition, for interested readers, five short tables in the Appendix (pp.41-43) provide findings for the entire Jewish population for the few Israel-related questions that were asked of all respondents (see the Methodological Note, p. 44, for further details).

AMERICAN JEWS AND ISRAEL VISITS

WE BEGIN BY EXAMINING VARIOUS ASPECTS OF VISITS TO ISRAEL THAT AMERICAN JEWS HAVE UNDERTAKEN, and the reasons other American Jews report for not having traveled to the Jewish state. Table 1 indicates that 41% of American Jews have visited Israel at some point during their lives.⁴ Among those who have been to Israel, a little over half (54%) have visited once, 17% have visited twice, and the remaining 29% have visited three times or more.

Counterintuitively, repeat visitors to Israel appear to be quite younger than those who have visited Israel on only one occasion, as shown in the next figures in the table. Of those who visited Israel once, about one in five were under the age of 17 at the time of their visit while about one in four were age 55 or older. In contrast, over one-third (35%) of repeat visitors responded that they were under the age of 17 at the time of their last visit, while very few indicated that they were age 55 or older at the time of their last visit.

Other important differences also appear to distinguish one-time visitors from repeat visitors, such as the length of time spent in Israel. Of those who visited Israel one time, as indicated in Table 1, 29% spent less than two weeks in the country, about half spent two to four weeks there and the remaining 19% visited for over four weeks. In contrast, the duration of the longest Israel stay among repeat visitors was much longer, on average.

4. As noted above, the 41% figure refers to the more Jewishly-engaged population only. However, the question on visiting Israel was one of the few Israel-related questions asked of all respondents representing the entire Jewish population. When all respondents are analyzed, the data show that 35% have visited Israel at some point in their lives. This appears to be an increase over the 27% of all respondents who reported at least one Israel visit in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey.

TABLE I.

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes.

Behaviors/Social Interactions	%	Behaviors/Social Interactions	%
Ever visited Israel	41	Never visited Israel, reason for not visiting	
Number of visits, ever visited		Cost	36
1	54	Safety	13
2	17	Not enough time	11
3 or more	29	No major reason	11
Total	100	Not interested	10
Age when visited, visited once		Other ²	29
0-17	19	Total	100
18-34	28	Financial cost prevented Israel travel in past 5 years	38
35-54	29	Financial cost prevented sending a child to Israel in past 5 years³	31
55 and older	24	Family or close friends living in Israel	46
Total	100		
Age on last visit, visited more than once		Attitudes	%
0-17	35	Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel	
18-34	30	Very familiar	37
35-54	28	Very or somewhat familiar	88
55 and older	7	Level of emotional attachment to Israel	
Total	100	Very attached	32
Duration of visit, visited once		Very or somewhat attached	69
Less than 2 weeks	29	American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny	
2 to 4 weeks	52	Strongly agree	37
More than 4 weeks	19	Strongly or somewhat agree	74
Total	100	Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people	
Duration of longest visit, visited more than once		Strongly agree	57
Less than 2 weeks	13	Strongly or somewhat agree	84
2 to 4 weeks	46		
More than 4 weeks	41		
Total	100		
Only visit was with an organized Jewish group,¹ visited once	33		
First visit was with an organized Jewish group,¹ visited more than once	31		

TABLE I (continued).

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes.

Attitudes	%
How much being Jewish involves caring about Israel	
A lot	45
A lot or some	81
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews	
Strongly agree	55
Strongly or somewhat agree	87
Reason for charitable giving: supporting the people of Israel⁴	
Very important	46
Very or somewhat important	88

¹ As asked in NJPS, an “organized Jewish group” such as a synagogue, a youth group or a Federation.
² Includes ten additional reasons, none of which are reported by more than 5% of respondents.
³ Asked only in households where a child age 6-17 was present.
⁴ Asked only in households that contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish charity.

In addition to the frequency and duration of their Israel visit(s), respondents were asked if their first trip had been with an organized Jewish group, such as a synagogue, youth group or Federation. Nearly one-third of those who had ever been to Israel indicated that their first trip had been under Jewish organizational auspices, testifying to the important roles that Jewish social and communal networks play in encouraging and enabling American Jews to benefit from an Israel experience.

Cost, however, is viewed by a significant minority of American Jews as a barrier to Israel travel, as seen in the following three questions in Table 1. Those who had never been to Israel were asked to list the major reason why they had not visited Israel. Cost was by far the most prevalent response (36%), followed by four closely-grouped responses: safety, not enough time, no major reason, and not interested. As indicated in the opening section, however, security and safety might be issues that occupy a higher profile today, due to the aftermath of 9/11 and the Second Intifada.

Respondents report that cost is an issue that has impacted their relationship to Israel in a variety of ways. All respondents, irrespective of

whether they had ever visited Israel, were asked if financial cost prevented them from traveling to Israel in the five years prior to the NJPS survey. A significant minority, 38%, indicated that it did. Those living in households with a child age 6-17 were asked if financial cost prevented sending a child to Israel in the five years prior to the survey. Here, nearly one-third of respondents said that cost had been an obstacle. Among those who have never been to Israel, citing cost as an obstacle is directly correlated with the household income of the household, with the poorest Jews being the most likely to cite cost and the wealthiest Jews the least likely. In addition, Jews in households earning over \$150,000 a year are significantly more likely than other Jews to have ever visited Israel.⁵

Finally, in addition to travel to Israel, social networks comprise an important component of connections between U.S. Jews and Israel. The extent of social network ties between American Jews and people in Israel is suggested by the final figure in the Behavior/Social interactions section of Table 1. Close to half (46%) of all American Jews say that they have family or close friends who live in Israel.

AMERICAN JEWS AND ISRAEL ATTITUDES

VISITS TO ISRAEL AND HAVING FAMILY AND FRIENDS there demonstrate that a sizeable minority of American Jews exhibits a tangible attachment to Israel. As can be seen in the remainder of Table 1, a minority (with a slight majority on a selected few measures) also displays strong attachments to Israel as measured by their attitudes and levels of awareness. The seven questions on Israel attitudes are a mix of individual statements – how respondents personally relate to Israel – and broader assessments about Israel’s relationship to the Jewish people. In general, respondents indicate somewhat stronger attachments on the broader measures compared to the personal, more specific questions.

In all tables, two percentages are listed for each attitudinal question. The

5. Data on income are not listed in the tables, but are available from the UJC Research Department.

percent of respondents in the very top response category – indicating the strongest attachments – is listed first, and the sum of the top two responses is listed second. For example, in the first question in the Attitudes section of Table 1, respondents were asked how familiar they are with the social and political situation in Israel. The first figure, 37%, corresponds to the percent who are “very familiar,” the strongest level of attachment. The second figure immediately below it, 88%, represents those who are either “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar,” the top two attachments combined.⁶ The narrative in this report focuses on the top category only (for example, the 37% in this particular question), as it tends to be more useful in revealing differences among American Jews. The data can be viewed in a variety of ways, however, and readers should note that the tables contain additional categories and percentages that are not reflected in the text.

As with the first question, roughly one-third of respondents exhibit high levels of Israel attachment in the next two questions on Table 1. Thirty-two percent of American Jews said that they are “very emotionally attached” to Israel,⁷ while 37% “strongly agreed” with the statement that American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny.⁸ A somewhat higher percentage of respondents answered positively to other attitudinal questions about Israel. Significantly, spirituality received the highest degree of strong support, a theme that will be explored further in subsequent sections. Fifty-seven percent of American Jews “strongly agreed” with the statement that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people,⁹ while a little less than half of U.S. Jews replied that being Jewish involves caring about Israel “a lot.”¹⁰

6. Response choices were very familiar, somewhat familiar, not very familiar, and not at all familiar.

7. Response choices were very emotionally attached, somewhat emotionally attached, not very emotionally attached, and not at all emotionally attached.

8. Response choices were strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree.

9. Response choices were strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree.

10. Response choices were a lot, some, a little, and not at all. Respondents ranked Israel in the middle of the fifteen Jewish identity measures that were read to them.

Lastly, in two separate questions, roughly half of the eligible respondents reported strong philanthropic attitudes, a traditional expression of support for Israel. A little over half (55%) “strongly agreed” with the statement that Israel still needs the financial assistance of American Jews.¹¹ For a smaller group of those who actually made a philanthropic contribution of \$100 or more to any Jewish charity in the year prior to NJPS, a little under half (46%) said that supporting the people of Israel was a “very important” reason in deciding to make a charitable donation.¹²

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

HAVING EXAMINED THE QUESTIONS ON ISRAEL FOR AMERICAN JEWS in the aggregate, the report now turns to analyzing variations in Israel connections by several demographic variables, including age, region and education.

Age

Attachments to Israel vary considerably by age groups. Table 2 analyzes Israel visits and attitudes towards Israel by four adult age groups: 18-34, 35-49, 50-64 and 65 and older. In general, the sharpest differences are between the oldest and youngest groups of Jews, with modest or no differences characterizing the two middle-age groups.

Over half of all Jews age 65 and older have ever been to Israel, a figure far higher than any other age group. There is virtually no difference between the figures of the remaining three age groups. One would expect the highest percentage for older Jews, in that they have had a longer lifespan in which to travel to Israel. Many in this age group also have more leisure time and disposable income, since a much higher percentage are retired and without children living in the home than respondents in any of the other age categories. At the other end of the age spectrum, the 35% of those ages 18-34 who have been to Israel may reflect the increased efforts

by the Jewish community to promote Israel travel for younger Jews. This is particularly the case among young Orthodox Jews, as will be discussed in the denomination section.

Among those who have visited Israel, younger Jews have visited more frequently and have stayed longer than older Jews. Of those who have ever visited Israel, Table 2 reveals that 58% of Jews age 65 and older have visited only once, compared to 49% of those age 18-34, with middle aged Jews falling in between these two extremes. In contrast, one-third of the youngest group has been to Israel at least three times, a substantially higher rate than for among Jews age 65 and older. The frequency of Israel trips by the youngest cohort of Jews, due in large part to an active Orthodox contingent, is especially notable given the fewer number of years it has had in which to make these multiple trips compared to other age groups¹³

Younger Jews are also more likely to remain in Israel for a longer period of time during their visits, as seen in the next two questions in Table 2. The same age variations in visit durations are found when analyzing those who have visited Israel on multiple occasions. Not surprisingly, those who have visited Israel more than once are more likely to have stayed longer on their longest visit than those who have visited only once.

The extent to which Jews make their initial visit to Israel under the auspices of a Jewish organization varies by how many times they have traveled to Israel altogether. Among those who have visited Israel once, younger Jews are much more likely than older Jews to have done so with a Jewish organization. As indicated in the table, about half (49%) of Jews age 18-34 who have visited Israel once did so with an organized Jewish group, compared to 30% of those age 35-49, 23% of those age 50-64 and a third of those age 65 and older. This finding demonstrates that for those who have visited Israel once, younger Jews are less likely than older Jews to undertake the trip to Israel without an organizational impetus.

11. Response choices were strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree.

12. Response choices were very important, somewhat important, not very important, and not at all important.

13. Data on the frequency of Israel visits by age, further subdivided by religious denomination, are not listed in the tables but are available from the UJC Research Department.

TABLE 2.

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by age.

	Age			
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Behaviors/Social Interactions	%	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	35	37	36	55
Number of visits, ever visited				
1	49	53	52	58
2	17	18	16	18
3 or more	33	29	32	24
Total	99 ¹	100	100	100
Duration of visit, visited once				
Less than 2 weeks	13	25	37	35
2 to 4 weeks	42	46	52	62
More than 4 weeks	45	29	11	3
Total	100	100	100	100
Duration of longest visit, visited more than once				
Less than 2 weeks	3	14	11	22
2 to 4 weeks	28	39	55	56
More than 4 weeks	69	48	34	23
Total	100	101	100	101
Only visit was with an organized Jewish group,² visited once	49	30	23	33
First visit was with an organized Jewish group,² visited more than once	22	32	33	35
Family or close friends living in Israel	50	43	46	45
Attitudes	%	%	%	%
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel				
Very familiar	31	37	36	46
Very or somewhat familiar	84	88	90	92
Level of emotional attachment to Israel				
Very attached	29	28	29	40
Very or somewhat attached	61	64	71	79

TABLE 2 (continued).

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by age.

	Age			
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Attitudes (continued)	%	%	%	%
American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny				
Strongly agree	35	35	39	41
Strongly or somewhat agree	74	74	75	74
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people				
Strongly agree	60	54	58	57
Strongly or somewhat agree	87	84	85	82
How much being Jewish involves caring about Israel				
A lot	39	38	43	61
A lot or some	75	78	83	87
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews				
Strongly agree	46	52	60	63
Strongly or somewhat agree	83	85	91	91
Reason for charitable giving: supporting the people of Israel³				
Very important	47	36	44	57
Very or somewhat important	83	84	91	93

¹ Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

² As asked in NJPS, an “organized Jewish group” such as a synagogue, a youth group or a Federation.

³ Asked only in households that contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish charity.

In contrast, multiple Israel visitors age 18-34 are less likely than other Jews in this group to have had their initial visit with a Jewish organization. The figure for the youngest group is 22%, which is lower than those of other age groups. This is because Orthodox Jews are disproportionately represented in the youngest age group of multiple Israel visitors. As will be discussed in the denominations section, strong social networks and existing ties to Israel make it less likely for Orthodox Jews to need a Jewish organization to stimulate an Israel visit.

As with Israel travel, age is strongly associated with many of the attitudinal questions pertaining to Israel. With just a few exceptions, the general pattern finds the oldest Jews displaying the strongest connections and younger Jews – especially the youngest group of Jews – exhibiting weaker connections. There are several factors that might explain why the oldest cohort of American Jews has the strongest attachments to Israel. For at least some of their lives, older Jews grew up before the State of Israel came into being, and therefore are less likely than younger Jews to take it for granted. This group also lived through the period of the Holocaust, whose juxtaposition with Israel's rebirth is particularly meaningful to older Jews for whom such events are much more than a historical record. Older Jews also grew up in an earlier era when anti-Semitism was more prevalent in American society, and the creation of the modern State of Israel was viewed as a bulwark against discrimination and oppression.

Looking specifically at Table 2, the data show that close to half of Jews age 65 and older say that they are “very familiar” with the political and social situation in Israel, a significantly higher figure than for the youngest Jews (31%), with Jews in the two middle-aged categories reporting figures in the middle of this range. Elderly Jews also exhibit the strongest levels of emotional attachment to Israel, with 40% reporting that they are “very attached,” compared to less than three out of every ten Jews in the other age categories.

The next two questions in Table 2 are exceptions to the general pattern of clear age-related attitudinal responses. When looking at those who “strongly

agree” that American and Israeli Jews have a common destiny, the range is narrow between all four age groups. On the question of those who “strongly agree” that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people, there is only a range of six percentage points between the age groups with the highest and lowest scores. Here, however, it is actually the youngest Jews – not the oldest – with the highest score, and Jews age 35-49 with the lowest. Significantly, spirituality is also the only question concerning Israel attitudes where a majority of those in all age groups display a strong connection to Israel.

The final three attitudinal questions in the table present additional evidence that testifies to the strong Israel attachments among elderly Jews relative to other age groups. In addition, they reveal important differences between younger middle-aged and older middle-aged Jews, with the latter indicating stronger attachments. First, a clear majority of elderly Jews assert that being Jewish involves caring about Israel “a lot,” compared to less than four in ten in the youngest and 35-49 year-old age groups, with a slightly higher figure among older middle-aged Jews. Differences by age are readily apparent in the second question, concerning the statement that Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews. In findings that have implications for the Jewish and Federation philanthropic worlds, 63% of elderly Jews and 60% of Jews age 50-64 “strongly agree” with this statement, compared to only 52% of Jews age 35-49 and less than half of the youngest Jewish adults.¹⁴ The final question concerning support for the people of Israel as a reason for giving, among those who contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish cause, also has implications for the organized Jewish community and the philanthropic community in particular. Well over half (57%) of elderly Jews cite support for the people of Israel as “very important” in their decision making, compared to under half of Jews in all other age categories. Here, however, the youngest Jewish givers rank second highest overall, followed by older middle-aged givers, who rank ahead of Jewish contributors age 35-49.

14. Older Jews are also much more likely to contribute to Federation than younger Jews. For more, see Steven M. Cohen, “Philanthropic Giving Among American Jews,” Report 4 in the UJC Report Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, available at www.ujc.org/njpsreports.

In sum, older Jews have significantly stronger attachments to Israel than younger Jews – particularly those in the youngest age group – as they pertain to both Israel visits and attachments. While the overall trend is clear, two important exceptions are duration/multiple visits to Israel among those who have ever visited, and viewing Israel as the spiritual center of the Jewish people. In these two cases, the youngest group of Jews displays attachments that are at least as strong as, if not stronger than, those of other Jews.

Region

To a certain extent, but to a much smaller degree than age, Israel attachments vary by the respondents' region of primary residence. Table 3 analyzes Israel visits and attitudes by the four geographical regions as defined by the U.S. Census: Northeast,¹⁵ Midwest,¹⁶ South¹⁷ and West.¹⁸ In general, except where noted below, Jews in the Northeast and Midwest tend to have somewhat stronger levels of Israel attachment than Jews from other regions, particularly those who live in the West.¹⁹ It should be noted that the relatively high scores in the Northeast are largely due to the high proportion of Orthodox Jews who live in this region. If Orthodox Jews are excluded from this analysis, differences between the Northeast and other regions significantly diminish.

Forty-four percent of Northeastern Jews have ever visited Israel, a rate slightly higher than that of Jews from other regions. Of those who have ever visited Israel, Northeastern and Midwestern Jews are also somewhat more likely than Southern and Western Jews to have made multiple trips to Israel, especially three or more trips.

15. Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

16. Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

17. Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, D.C. and West Virginia.

18. Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

19. For more on demographic and Jewish characteristics by geographical region, see Ira Sheskin, "Geographic Differences Among American Jews," Report 8 in the UJC Report Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, available at www.ujc.org/njpsreports.

Overall, very small regional differences are associated with the duration of Israel experiences for those who have visited just once. Among those who visited Israel two or more times, however, there are somewhat greater regional differences with respect to the duration of the longest visit. Only 9% of Northeasterners stayed less than two weeks on their longest visit, compared to 21% of Western Jews, with Jews from South and Midwest falling in the middle. At the other end of the spectrum, about half of Northeasterners stayed for longer than four weeks, an appreciably higher figure than those of all other Jews, particularly those from the Midwest and South.

While a clear regional pattern associated with the organizational auspices of initial visits cannot be determined, one trend is clear: Jews from the West are consistently less likely to have made their initial visit with an organized Jewish group than Jews from other regions, as the next two questions reveal in Table 3. These results are consistent with other NJPS findings concerning measures of Jewish identity and communal participation, which tend to be lower in the West.²⁰ Lastly, on the final measure concerning Israel visits, more than half (52%) of Northeastern Jews indicate that they have family or close friends living in Israel, a figure somewhat higher than that reported by Jews in other regions.

The remaining portion of Table 3 displays Israel attitudes by region, beginning with those who say they are "very familiar" with the social and political situation in Israel. On most attitudinal questions, Northeastern and Midwestern Jews tend to have slightly higher scores overall, although responses for all regions fall within a relatively narrow range. As with age, region does not distinguish respondents regarding spirituality; the majority of respondents from all regions "strongly agree" that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people. In addition, among those who have contributed \$100 or more to a Jewish cause in the past year, Midwestern Jews are somewhat more likely than Jews in other regions to cite supporting the people of Israel as a "very important" reason in their decision to make a philanthropic contribution.

20. Ibid.

TABLE 3.

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by age.

	Region			
	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Behaviors/Social Interactions	%	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	44	37	41	37
Number of visits, ever visited				
1	50	47	62	56
2	18	17	16	18
3 or more	33	35	22	25
Total	101 ¹	99	100	99 ¹
Duration of visit, visited once				
Less than 2 weeks	27	29	32	31
2 to 4 weeks	56	49	53	46
More than 4 weeks	17	22	15	23
Total	100	100 ²	100	100
Duration of longest visit, visited more than once				
Less than 2 weeks	9	17	14	21
2 to 4 weeks	42	55	56	39
More than 4 weeks	48	27	30	40
Total	99	99 ²	100	100
Only visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited once	35	30 ²	37	25
First visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited more than once	30	40 ²	35	23
Family or close friends living in Israel	52	43	38	43
Attitudes	%	%	%	%
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel				
Very familiar	40	40	33	34
Very or somewhat familiar	89	86	87	90

TABLE 3 (continued).

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by age.

	Region			
	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Attitudes (continued)	%	%	%	%
Level of emotional attachment to Israel				
Very attached	34	36	28	29
Very or somewhat attached	71	67	68	67
American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny				
Strongly agree	40	41	36	32
Strongly or somewhat agree	75	76	75	69
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people				
Strongly agree	58	59	56	57
Strongly or somewhat agree	85	85	84	84
How much being Jewish involves caring about Israel				
A lot	45	48	48	42
A lot or some	81	82	83	79
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews				
Strongly agree	54	57	61	52
Strongly or somewhat agree	87	87	90	86
Reason for charitable giving: supporting the people of Israel⁴				
Very important	45	54	44	45
Very or somewhat important	88	88	92	84

¹ Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.² Findings should be treated with caution due to small sample size.³ As asked in NJPS, an "organized Jewish group" such as a synagogue, a youth group or a Federation.⁴ Asked only in households that contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish charity.

Education

The final demographic variable, level of secular education, is analyzed in Table 4. The table lists respondents by four different educational levels: those with a graduate degree, those with a college degree only, those who attended college but did not graduate, and those who, at most, attained a high school degree. In general, respondents with a graduate degree have somewhat stronger attachments than others on questions pertaining to Israel visits, reflecting higher income levels and more opportunities to travel to Israel. On the other hand, respondents with a high school level education or lower have stronger Israel attachments than others on a majority of the attitudinal questions.²¹

On most Israel travel questions in Table 4, the range between the lowest and highest scoring educational categories is less than ten percentage points. A modest exception to this rule is the very first question on whether or not the respondent has ever been to Israel. Close to half of those with a graduate degree have ever visited Israel. This is somewhat higher than those with a college degree (41%), and even higher than those with lower levels of secular education (37%). Another item with slightly greater differences between the highest scoring and lowest scoring educational categories is the measure of close family or friends residing in Israel. Roughly half of those with graduate or college degrees report that they have close family or friends living in Israel, a higher rate than those with some college (40%) and those with a high school degree or below (43%).

A different picture emerges with respect to Israel attitudes. On the whole, those with a high school degree or less have noticeably stronger Israel attachments than those at higher educational attainment levels. Moreover, on virtually every measure, those with the highest level of education – a graduate degree – exhibit the weakest attitudinal attachments to Israel. For example, 45% percent of those with a high school degree or lower “strongly agree” that American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny, a

higher figure than reported by college attendees (37%), college graduates (36%) and especially those with a graduate degree (33%). An even greater divide exists for the question on those who “strongly agree” that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people. Over two-thirds of those with high school degrees strongly agree, compared to less than half of those with graduate degrees, with respondents from the remaining two categories falling in between these two extremes. Furthermore, a clear majority (55%) of those with a high school degree or below say that being Jewish means caring about Israel “a lot,” as opposed to only 41-45% of the respondents from the remaining three categories. Finally, among those who contributed \$100 or more to a Jewish cause, over six in ten (62%) of the high school group cited this factor as “very important” in making their gift, compared to only half of those who attended some college, 43% of those with a college degree and 40% of those with a graduate degree.

The relationship between low educational level and strong attitudinal attachments to Israel is somewhat more modest for two other measures. Fifty-nine percent of those with a high school degree or below “strongly agree” that Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews, a slightly higher percentage than the three other groups (53-56%). In addition, educational is weakly linked, at best, to emotional attachment to Israel, with those at the lowest educational levels registering marginally higher levels of Israel attachment than other Jews.

The one exception to the general trend linking lower education to stronger Israel attachments concerns familiarity with the current Israeli social and political situation. In fact, more highly educated respondents are more likely to be “very familiar” with current events in Israel. As indicated in the table, 43% of those with a graduate degree and 39% of those with a college degree fall into this category, as opposed to only 31-32% of those in the two other categories. This may reflect the relationship between socioeconomic status and access to relevant information about Israel.

As a final note to the demographic section, in addition to age, region and education, income needs to be briefly mentioned in its relationship to

21. These education related patterns remain even after controlling for age and Orthodox identification.

TABLE 4.

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by education.

	Level of education			
	Graduate degree	College degree	Some college	High school or below
Behaviors/Social Interactions	%	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	48	41	37	37
Number of visits, ever visited				
1	50	58	56	50
2	15	17	16	23
3 or more	36	25	28	27
Total	101 ¹	100	100	100
Duration of visit, visited once				
Less than 2 weeks	27	34	29	26
2 to 4 weeks	50	49	56	58
More than 4 weeks	23	18	15	16
Total	100	101	100	100
Duration of longest visit, visited more than once				
Less than 2 weeks	14	11	11	17
2 to 4 weeks	44	49	46	46
More than 4 weeks	43	41	43	37
Total	101	101	100	100
Only visit was with an organized Jewish group,² visited once	29	33	37	35
First visit was with an organized Jewish group,² visited more than once	32	35	29	25
Family or close friends living in Israel	50	48	40	43
Attitudes	%	%	%	%
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel				
Very familiar	43	39	31	32
Very or somewhat familiar	93	91	86	81

TABLE 4 (continued).

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by education.

	Level of education			
	Graduate degree	College degree	Some college	High school or below
Attitudes (continued)	%	%	%	%
Level of emotional attachment to Israel				
Very attached	32	32	28	35
Very or somewhat attached	70	70	65	69
American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny				
Strongly agree	33	36	37	45
Strongly or somewhat agree	71	72	77	78
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people				
Strongly agree	47	56	62	67
Strongly or somewhat agree	81	84	86	89
How much being Jewish involves caring about Israel				
A lot	41	44	45	55
A lot or some	80	79	84	81
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews				
Strongly agree	53	55	56	59
Strongly or somewhat agree	88	86	89	89
Reason for charitable giving: supporting the people of Israel³				
Very important	40	43	50	62
Very or somewhat important	87	88	89	92

¹ Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.² As asked in NJPS, an "organized Jewish group" such as a synagogue, a youth group or a Federation.³ Asked only in households that contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish charity.

American Jewish connections with Israel.²² This is a particularly relevant postscript to this section on education, as education and income tend to be correlated with each other. Jews living in households with high income levels (\$150,000 or more) are significantly more likely to have traveled to Israel than other Jews. As one example, half of all respondents living in high income households have been to Israel, more than double the rate of those who live in households with yearly incomes under \$25,000.

American Jews with high economic status, besides having more resources available for Israel travel, are also much more likely to be affiliated with Jewish institutions. In turn, affiliations have a strong, positive association with visits to the Jewish state, as we shall see in the upcoming section.

In sum, of the three demographic variables in this section, age is clearly the most important factor that relates to behaviors and attitudes concerning Israel. Of particular note are the stronger attitudinal connections elderly Jews exhibit towards Israel relative to all other Jews. One's level of secular education has a more limited but still notable relationship to Israel connections, as those with high levels of secular education are more likely to have visited Israel and those with lower levels of education tend to have stronger Israel attitudes. Finally, there do not appear to be major differences on Israel connections by region, though Jews in the West exhibit a pattern of being slightly weaker than Jews in other regions in this regard.

JEWISH VARIABLES

THIS REPORT NOW TURNS ITS ATTENTION TO HOW RESPONDENTS' JEWISH CHARACTERISTICS are related to their connections to Israel. Utilizing the same questions to analyze Israel-related travel and attitudinal measures, we examine three Jewish variables: Jewish denominational status, level of Jewish organizational affiliation, and whether the respondent is in-married or intermarried. A fourth

22. Data and trends for income and Israel connections are not included in the report tables, but are available from the UJC Research Department.

subsection briefly highlights the relationship between formal Jewish education and Israel-related behaviors and attitudes.

Religious denomination

The NJPS questionnaire asked respondents to identify their current Jewish religious denomination. Table 5 analyzes Israel connections by the three major denominational categories – Orthodox, Conservative and Reform – as well as by a fourth category of those who identify as “Just Jewish.”²³

Significant differences characterize Israel visits and attitudes by denominational status. In general, Orthodox Jews have much stronger Israel connections than other Jews – stronger, in fact, than any other single demographic or Jewish subgroup. Conservative Jews, while having noticeably weaker connections than the Orthodox, have stronger connections than the other two denominational categories; in general, their connections are also stronger than those for the overall Jewish population that were reviewed in Table 1. Finally, those in the Reform and Just Jewish groups have a similar Israel connections profile, with little to distinguish one group from the other. Denominational trends on Israel connections are indicative, in general, of denominational patterns relating to other Jewish activities and attitudes. The main exceptions are the Reform and Just Jewish groups; while for other Jewish measures Reform ranks more clearly ahead of the Just Jewish group, this is not the pattern for Israel-related questions.

Nearly three-fourths of Orthodox Jewish adults have visited Israel at some point, while over half of Conservative Jews have done the same. Figures for Reform Jews (34%) and those who are Just Jewish (27%) are considerably lower. Orthodox Jews are also far more likely than other Jews

23. These categories represent all Jews who self-identify with them, regardless of whether they are synagogue members or adhere to official denominational guidelines. The “Just Jewish” category represents those who responded to the “Just Jewish” choice that was given to respondents, as well as those who offered a “no religion” or “secular” response on their own. A few respondents (Reconstructionist, Traditional, Renewal, etc.) were excluded due to their small sample size, which does not allow for reliable data analysis. For more information on this methodology, as well as demographic and other Jewish findings, see Jonathon Ament, “American Jewish Religious Denominations,” Report 10 in the UJC Report Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, available at www.ujc.org/njpsreports.

TABLE 5.

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by denomination.

	Denomination			
	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Just Jewish
Behaviors/Social Interactions	%	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	73	53	34	27
Number of visits, ever visited				
1	26	51	70	63
2	16	20	17	15
3 or more	58	30	14	22
Total	100	101 ¹	101	100
Duration of visit, visited once				
Less than 2 weeks	28	27	32	29
2 to 4 weeks	51	53	51	55
More than 4 weeks	22	20	17	17
Total	101 ²	100	100	101
Duration of longest visit, visited more than once				
Less than 2 weeks	4	14	24	11
2 to 4 weeks	30	55	54	49
More than 4 weeks	66	32	23	40
Total	100	101	101	100 ²
Only visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited once	24 ²	41	38	18
First visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited more than once	19	39	35	19 ²
Family or close friends living in Israel	82	49	34	43
Attitudes	%	%	%	%
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel				
Very familiar	63	42	29	34
Very or somewhat familiar	92	92	90	82

TABLE 5 (continued).

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by denomination.

	Denomination			
	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Just Jewish
Attitudes (continued)	%	%	%	%
Level of emotional attachment to Israel				
Very attached	68	39	21	24
Very or somewhat attached	92	80	64	55
American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny				
Strongly agree	70	45	33	24
Strongly or somewhat agree	89	83	74	60
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people				
Strongly agree	80	65	51	50
Strongly or somewhat agree	93	90	85	76
How much being Jewish involves caring about Israel				
A lot	71	60	39	31
A lot or some	88	91	81	69
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews				
Strongly agree	68	65	54	45
Strongly or somewhat agree	92	93	88	81
Reason for charitable giving: supporting the people of Israel⁴				
Very important	58	54	36	36
Very or somewhat important	95	91	85	82

¹ Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

² Findings should be treated with caution due to small sample size.

³ As asked in NJPS, an “organized Jewish group” such as a synagogue, a youth group or a Federation.

⁴ Asked only in households that contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish charity.

to have visited Israel on multiple occasions. Denominational status is also related to the duration of an Israel visit for those who have visited multiple times.²⁴ In the multiple visit group, two-thirds of Orthodox Jews have stayed over four weeks on their longest visit, a significantly higher rate compared to Just Jews (40%), Conservative Jews (32%), and Reform Jews (23%). The tendency in recent decades for Orthodox teens to spend a year in Israel prior to entering college is a principal factor influencing this particular statistic.

Regardless of whether they have been to Israel on one or multiple occasions, Reform and Conservative Jews are roughly twice as likely as other Jews to have made their initial visit with an organized Jewish group. For example, looking at Table 5, we see that for multiple Israel visitors, 39% of Conservative and 35% of Reform Jews went on their first trip with an organized Jewish group, compared to 19% of both Orthodox Jews and those in the Just Jewish group. Compared to other Jews, Reform and Conservative Jews exhibit average or above average overall Jewish organizational affiliation rates,²⁵ while having an average or below average likelihood of having a personal connection to someone living in Israel (see below). These two factors help to explain why Reform and Conservative Jews are more likely to travel to Israel with a Jewish organization, as opposed to other alternatives. While the figures are the same for Orthodox Jews and those who say they are Just Jewish, the reasons are different. Relative to other Jews, those in the Just Jewish group are much less likely to be affiliated with a Jewish organization, which would explain why few of them visit Israel under formal Jewish auspices. Orthodox Jews, on the other hand, have an extensive social network that ties them to Israel; relative to other Jews, they do not require an organizational impetus for Israel travel. In fact, over eight in ten Orthodox Jews report that they have close family or friends living in Israel, a dramatically higher figure than reported by Conservative Jews, which, in turn, is higher than the rates for Reform Jews and those who are Just Jewish.

24. Findings for the Just Jewish group on this particular question should be treated with caution due to small sample size.

25. Ament, *op. cit.*, "American Jewish Religious Denominations."

Denominational status also has a strong association with the attitudinal responses in Table 5. For example, over two-thirds of Orthodox Jews say they are "very" emotionally attached to Israel, compared to 39% of Conservative, 21% of Reform, and 24% of those who identify as Just Jewish. This general pattern, which sometimes has Reform and Just Jewish switch places in rank order, also characterizes the responses on being "very familiar" with current events in Israel and "strongly" agreeing that American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny.

For the next question in the table, at least half of all respondents, irrespective of denominational category, "strongly agree" that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people, though Orthodox Jews show stronger attachments than Conservative Jews, who rank ahead of both Reform and Just Jewish respondents. As was the case with almost all of the categories in the demographic section, this is the only attitudinal question where all respondent categories within a variable demonstrate a clear, strong attachment to Israel.

The final three attitudinal questions in Table 5 show a narrowing of the gap between Orthodox and Conservative respondents that report strong Israel attachments, especially in relation to the other denominational groups. Seventy-one percent of Orthodox Jews and 60% of Conservative Jews indicate that being Jewish means caring about Israel "a lot." These two groups are much closer to each other on this question than they are to Reform (39%) and Just Jewish (31%). Orthodox and Conservative Jews indicate roughly the same attitude about American Jews continuing to financially support Israel: roughly two-thirds of them "strongly agree" with this assertion. The figures for Reform and Just Jewish are 54% and 45%, respectively, which are relatively closer to the Orthodox and Conservative responses than for most other questions, although clearly still not as strong. In the final question for donors who gave \$100 or more to any Jewish charity, a majority of Orthodox and Conservative respondents stated that supporting the people of Israel was a "very important" reason in deciding to make a donation. Here, too, Orthodox and Conservative respondents have noticeably stronger Israel attachments than Reform and Just Jewish respondents, of whom 36% responded in the same fashion.

Affiliation

In the NJPS interview, respondents were asked if they belonged to a synagogue, JCC, or some other Jewish organization. For the purposes of this report, those who indicated that they belonged to two or more Jewish organizations are classified as highly affiliated, those belonging to one Jewish organization as moderately affiliated and those with no memberships as unaffiliated. As indicated in the main NJPS report,²⁶ 28% of American Jews are highly affiliated, 28% are moderately affiliated and the remaining 44% are unaffiliated.

Table 6 demonstrates that there are clear variations in Israel attachments by affiliation status. On most questions, highly affiliated Jews have the strongest connections and unaffiliated Jews have the weakest ones (with some important exceptions, however), while moderately affiliated Jews fall somewhere in between these two groups. In fact, for a majority of the responses, the strength of Israel attachments among moderately affiliated Jews is roughly midway between Jews with multiple affiliations and Jews who are unaffiliated. This is particularly the case for the attitudinal responses.

Looking at Israel visits, we see that a clear majority of highly affiliated Jews have visited Israel at some point, compared to less than half of the moderately affiliated group and roughly one-quarter of unaffiliated Jews. The same rank order – highly affiliated, moderately affiliated and then unaffiliated – also applies to the frequency of Israel visits, as well to those who have visited three or more times.

While the unaffiliated do not visit as often as other Jews, those who do visit stay about as long, if not longer, than other Jews on their longest visit. In addition, as the subsequent question in the table indicates, among those who visited Israel more than once, close to half of the unaffiliated remained for over four weeks, a higher figure than for the other groups. For the duration questions, at least, unaffiliated Jews display relatively strong Israel attachments. One possible reason for this is that unaffiliated

Jews, as analyzed further below, are less likely to visit Israel with an organized Jewish group and have fewer personal family or friendship connections to Israel than the average American Jew. Those unaffiliated Jews who do choose to visit Israel may therefore be a particularly motivated group of individuals who wish to explore on their own. Free to pursue their own itinerary and schedule, they are less bound to sponsoring Jewish organizations or Israeli friends/family which for other Jews may set time limits on the duration of an Israel stay.

As would be expected, affiliated Jews are somewhat more likely than other Jews to have visited Israel with an organized Jewish group on their initial visit, regardless of how many times they have visited. Among those who have visited just once, there is almost no difference in traveling under Jewish organizational auspices between the moderately affiliated (31%) and the unaffiliated (30%), but among multiple visitors, the moderately affiliated (29%) are slightly more likely than the unaffiliated (23%) to have taken their first trip with a Jewish group.

Finally, the last question in this section of the table points to the association between affiliation status and close family or friends who live in Israel. Fifty-seven percent of affiliated Jews and half of the moderately affiliated have such a connection to Israel, as opposed to only 36% of those who do not have a Jewish organizational affiliation.

Findings from the attitudinal questions show a clear and consistent relationship between affiliation status and strong Israel attachments. For example, Table 6 indicates that close to half (48%) of highly affiliated Jews are “very familiar” with the current Israeli political and social climate, compared to 39% of moderately affiliated and only 29% of unaffiliated Jews. Similar rates and differences between these three groups characterize those who say they are “very” emotionally attached to Israel and those who “strongly agree” that U.S. and Israeli Jews share a common destiny.

As with other demographic and Jewish subgroups, a relatively high percentage of those in each of the affiliation categories “strongly agree” with the statement that Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people. At least half of those in each of the three categories expressed this sentiment, and the differences between the groups are relatively modest.

26. See *Strength, Challenge and Diversity in the American Jewish Population*, A United Jewish Communities Report, September 2003 (updated January 2004). The report is available for downloading at www.ujc.org/njps.

TABLE 6.Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by affiliation status.¹

	Affiliation status		
	Highly affiliated (two or more memberships)	Moderately affiliated (one membership)	Unaffiliated (no memberships)
Behaviors/Social Interactions	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	61	45	26
Number of visits, ever visited			
1	44	55	68
2	20	19	12
3 or more	37	27	21
Total	101 ²	101	101
Duration of visit, visited once			
Less than 2 weeks	30	28	31
2 to 4 weeks	60	54	44
More than 4 weeks	11	19	26
Total	101	101	101
Duration of longest visit, visited more than once			
Less than 2 weeks	10	17	14
2 to 4 weeks	51	42	39
More than 4 weeks	39	41	47
Total	100	100	100
Only visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited once	41	31	30
First visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited more than once	35	29	23
Family or close friends living in Israel	57	50	36
Attitudes	%	%	%
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel			
Very familiar	48	39	29
Very or somewhat familiar	94	91	84

TABLE 6 (continued).Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by affiliation status.¹

	Affiliation status		
	Highly affiliated (two or more memberships)	Moderately affiliated (one membership)	Unaffiliated (no memberships)
Attitudes (continued)	%	%	%
Level of emotional attachment to Israel			
Very attached	47	34	20
Very or somewhat attached	85	75	55
American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny			
Strongly agree	51	40	27
Strongly or somewhat agree	84	78	66
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people			
Strongly agree	64	60	51
Strongly or somewhat agree	87	87	81
How much being Jewish involves caring about Israel			
A lot	63	48	32
A lot or some	92	83	73
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews			
Strongly agree	66	58	47
Strongly or somewhat agree	92	90	83
Reason for charitable giving: supporting the people of Israel⁴			
Very important	53	40	35
Very or somewhat important	92	86	79

¹ Memberships in synagogues, JCCs or other Jewish organizations.² Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.³ As asked in NJPS, an "organized Jewish group" such as a synagogue, a youth group or a Federation.⁴ Asked only in households that contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish charity.

The final three questions in the affiliation table continue to show differences between the three affiliation categories, with the percentage of strong attachments among the moderately affiliated group again roughly equidistant from the highly affiliated on one extreme and the unaffiliated on the other. For example, 63% of the highly affiliated report that being Jewish means caring about Israel “a lot,” compared to a little under half (48%) of the moderately affiliated and about a third (32%) of the unaffiliated. Similar patterns also characterize the rates of strong Israel attachment on the final two philanthropy questions: “strongly agreeing” with the statement that Israel still needs the financial assistance of American Jews, and, among donors to Jewish causes, supporting the people of Israel as a “very important” reason for giving.

In-marriage/intermarriage

The final Jewish variable, in-marriage/intermarriage, is the subject of Table 7. A little under a quarter of all currently married Jews (23%) are intermarried – i.e., married to a non-Jew.²⁷ Table 7 compares the Israel-related responses of intermarried Jews to the 77% of married Jews who are in-married, that is, married to another Jew.

In-married Jews are far more likely than intermarried Jews to be older, affiliated with Jewish institutions, and either Orthodox or Conservative – all constituencies that, as seen in previous sections, exhibit relatively high levels of attachments to Israel. A strong indicator is immediately apparent in the first Israel visit question. In-married Jews are two and a half times as likely as intermarried Jews to have ever visited Israel. Among those who have ever visited, in-married Jews are also more likely than intermarried Jews, by close to a two to one margin, to have visited Israel at least twice. While small sample sizes of eligible intermarried Jews prevent comparisons for most of the remaining travel questions, the final question – having close family or friends living in Israel – reveals that in-married Jews are twice as likely as intermarried Jews to affirm such relationships.

27. The 23% overall intermarriage rate is for the more Jewishly-engaged portion of the population analyzed in this report. For the entire Jewish population, the overall rate of intermarriage is 31%.

Consistent contrasts in strong Israel attachments between in-married and intermarried Jews are also found throughout the attitudinal section of Table 7. Forty-three percent of in-married Jews, for example, say they are “very familiar” with the social and political situation in Israel, compared to one-quarter of intermarried Jews. In-married Jews are nearly three times as likely as intermarried Jews to say they are “very” emotionally attached to Israel. For all attitudinal questions, in-married Jews have a demonstrably higher rate of strong attachments than intermarried Jews. In the remaining five questions in the table, the percentages of in-married Jews with strong attachments range from 43 percent to 61 percent, while the comparable percentages for intermarried Jews range from 26 percent to 47 percent.

In sum, denominational identity, affiliation and having a Jewish spouse are Jewish variables that are significantly associated with the strength of American Jewish ties to Israel. Denominational identity in particular stands out, along with age, as an essential explanatory variable when examining Israel-related behaviors and attitudes among American Jews.

Jewish education

In addition to the three Jewish variables (denomination, affiliation, in-marriage) discussed in detail, a fourth Jewish variable – formal Jewish education in childhood – is worthy of mention.²⁸ Both the type and duration of formal Jewish education are strongly correlated with Israel attachments. Seventy percent of Jewish adults who attended day school as children have visited Israel at least once. This is a significantly higher figure than for those who attended Jewish supplementary school twice a week or more (44%), which in turn is higher than those who attended supplementary school once a week (33%) or had no formal Jewish schooling (23%).

28. Data on Jewish education are not displayed in tables. For further details on how formal and informal Jewish education affect emotional attachment to Israel, see Steven M. Cohen and Laurence Kotler-Berkowitz, “The Impact of Childhood Jewish Education on Adults’ Jewish Identity,” Report 3 in the UJC Report Series on the National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01, available at www.ujc.org/njpsreports.

TABLE 7.

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by marital status.

	Marital status	
	In-married	Intermarried
Behaviors/Social Interactions	%	%
Ever visited Israel	52	21
Number of visits, ever visited		
1	51	74
2	17	11
3 or more	32	15
Total	100	100
Duration of visit, visited once		
Less than 2 weeks	31	26
2 to 4 weeks	58	37
More than 4 weeks	11	38
Total	100	101 ^{1,2}
Duration of longest visit, visited more than once		
Less than 2 weeks	13	---
2 to 4 weeks	46	---
More than 4 weeks	41	---
Total	100	---
Only visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited once	31	29 ²
First visit was with an organized Jewish group,³ visited more than once	33	---
Family or close friends living in Israel	54	27
Attitudes	%	%
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel		
Very familiar	44	31
Very or somewhat familiar	92	83

TABLE 7 (continued).

Israel-related behaviors and attitudes by marital status.

	Marital status	
	In-married	Intermarried
Attitudes (continued)	%	%
Level of emotional attachment to Israel		
Very attached	41	15
Very or somewhat attached	78	52
American and Israeli Jews share a common destiny		
Strongly agree	43	26
Strongly or somewhat agree	78	65
Israel is the spiritual center of the Jewish people		
Strongly agree	59	47
Strongly or somewhat agree	86	79
How much being Jewish involves caring about Israel		
A lot	54	29
A lot or some	86	69
Israel still needs the financial support of American Jews		
Strongly agree	61	42
Strongly or somewhat agree	92	81
Reason for charitable giving: supporting the people of Israel⁴		
Very important	47	30
Very or somewhat important	91	79 ⁵

¹ Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.² 85 cases; small sample size³ As asked in NJPS, an "organized Jewish group" such as a synagogue, a youth group or a Federation.⁴ Asked only in households that contributed \$100 or more to any Jewish charity.⁵ 89 cases in total sample for question

--- Indicates too few cases for analysis (under 30 cases).

Formal Jewish schooling is also linked to attitudes about Israel. On average, adults who attended day school are far more likely to say they are “very” emotionally attached to Israel than those who attended Jewish supplementary school at least twice a week. In turn, these two types of schooling – day schools and twice-a-week programs – are both far more likely to produce Jewish adults who are “very” emotionally attached to Israel than once-a-week programs or having receiving no Jewish education. In addition, duration of schooling plays an important role, at least in the case of day schools and more intensive supplemental schooling. Those who had twice-a-week supplemental education for at least seven years are about as likely as those who attended day school for six years or less to report that they are “very” emotionally attached to Israel.

Finally, it is important to note that Israel visits – while significant in their own right – are also a successful model of informal Jewish education in a variety of ways. Adults who traveled to Israel when they were ages 14-26 are not only more likely to report strong emotional attachments to Israel than those who did not, but they also report higher levels of Jewish identity across a broad range of behavioral and attitudinal measures.²⁹

CONCLUSION

THE FINDINGS FROM THIS REPORT RAISE NUMEROUS COMMUNAL ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS FROM A POLICY PERSPECTIVE.

Indeed, there are a variety of issues for Jewish organizations to consider and important roles to play in strengthening the connections between American Jews and Israel.

To begin, travel to Israel is crucial to the Jewish communal system as a relatively accessible, inexpensive and highly effective means of strengthening American Jewish identity. As the data have shown, however, some groups of Jews are substantially less likely than others to have visited

Israel. Examples of these underrepresented groups include those who are younger, unaffiliated, or call themselves “Just Jewish.” Clearly these groups present a challenge to the communal system in terms of stimulating an interest in Israel and then translating that interest into visits to the Jewish state.

One place to begin addressing this challenge is the communal system’s already-developed infrastructure for bringing American Jews to Israel. The data show that about one-third of U.S. Jews who have ever visited Israel did so through Jewish organizational auspices on their initial visit, illustrating the vital role the communal system can play in facilitating Israel visits. For some subgroups, such as Jews age 18-34 or Conservative Jews who have visited once, the figures are even higher. In these cases, there is an even greater dependence upon Jewish organizations to supply an important service that might otherwise go unfulfilled. For other subgroups, such as Western Jews and unaffiliated Jews, the figures are perceptibly lower. These groups, for the most part, also tend to be groups with a relatively low percentage who have ever been to Israel. In these cases, the challenge for Jewish organizations is to stimulate a demand for Israel travel that can serve as a vehicle for further engagement with the organized Jewish community. Missions to Israel, which have been a highly successful strategy for Federations and other Jewish organizations, could expand their mandate to create customized “boutique” trips to Israel that address the needs of these under-served groups.

For the communal system, another important issue is cost as a barrier to Israel travel. It is likely that security concerns may have increased in the aftermath of 9/11 and the Second Intifada, events that occurred after the NJPS interviewing phase. Even so, this report shows that about one-third of U.S. Jews cite cost as a barrier to Israel travel for themselves or their children in the past five years, and among those who have never traveled to Israel, cost is the primary reason given for not going. There is also a direct relationship between residing in a household with low income and citing cost as an obstacle to Israel travel. In addition, Jews living in

29. Cohen and Kotler-Berkowitz, op. cit., “The Impact of Childhood Jewish Education on Adults’ Jewish Identity.”

households earning over \$150,000 a year are significantly more likely than other Jews to have ever been to Israel. As the Jewish communal system considers options to bolster travel to Israel among various Jewish subgroups, it also needs to think about the cost of Jewish living and how, specifically, to provide greater opportunities for middle and lower income Jews to experience Israel.

In addition, the support of the communal system will increasingly be needed to catalyze and bolster strong, positive attitudes towards Israel. This is especially true among younger Jews who, unlike their elderly counterparts, often take Israel’s existence for granted. Educating American Jews about Israel in a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish venues – including day and supplemental schools, camps, youth groups, JCCs, the media, synagogues and universities – is one such means for strengthening their attachments to the Jewish homeland.

Lastly, in considering all of these options, the communal system should consider exploring the link between spirituality and Israel. American Jews of a variety of ages, denominations and levels of Jewish involvement consistently cite Israel as the spiritual center of the Jewish people. Spirituality, if incorporated in a broad, creative and inclusive sense, has the potential to be an important component of the communal effort to engage American Jews in experiencing and supporting Israel.

Through a variety of these approaches, and partnering with the relevant organizations in Israel, the American Jewish community can continue to build and strengthen its connections to the land, people and State of Israel in the twenty-first century.

APPENDIX

THE APPENDIX CONSISTS OF FIVE TABLES that report findings for selected Israel-related questions asked of all respondents representing the entire Jewish population of 5.2 million people.

TABLE A-1.

Selected Israel-related questions (all respondents).

	%
Ever visited Israel	35
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel	
Very familiar	34
Very or somewhat familiar	86
Level of emotional attachment to Israel	
Very attached	28
Very or somewhat attached	63

TABLE A-2.

Selected Israel-related questions by age (all respondents).

	Age			
	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	26	33	33	51
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel				
Very familiar	26	34	35	42
Very or somewhat familiar	78	87	90	91
Level of emotional attachment to Israel				
Very attached	23	26	27	36
Very or somewhat attached	52	60	67	76

TABLE A-3.

Selected Israel-related questions by region (all respondents).

	Region			
	Northeast	Midwest	South	West
	%	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	40	30	35	30
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel				
Very familiar	38	34	31	29
Very or somewhat familiar	87	82	85	87
Level of emotional attachment to Israel				
Very attached	32	30	26	23
Very or somewhat attached	66	61	62	59

TABLE A-5.

Selected Israel-related questions by marital status (all respondents).

	Marital status	
	In-married	Intermarried
	%	%
Ever visited Israel	51	16
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel		
Very familiar	43	25
Very or somewhat familiar	92	82
Level of emotional attachment to Israel		
Very attached	39	14
Very or somewhat attached	77	46

TABLE A-4.

Selected Israel-related questions by education (all respondents).

	Level of education			
	Graduate degree	College degree	Some college	High school or below
	%	%	%	%
Ever visited Israel	45	36	31	29
Familiarity with social and political situation in Israel				
Very familiar	41	36	27	28
Very or somewhat familiar	92	89	83	77
Level of emotional attachment to Israel				
Very attached	31	28	24	29
Very or somewhat attached	67	64	57	61

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