

JERUSALEM LETTER / VIEWPOINTS

Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

No. 314 1 Iyar 5755 / 1 May 1995

THE JEWISH POLITY: OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE — SOME PLANNING GUIDELINES

Daniel J. Elazar

The Peace Process / Territorial Shrinkage / Shifting the Balance "from Jerusalem to Jaffa" / From Jewish Commonwealth to Civil Society / Possibilities and Limits for Regional Integration / Economic Growth and Development / Privatization and Its Limits / Future Prospects for Aliya / The Likely Growth in Yerida / Political and Civic Responses / The Changing Jewish Situation in the 1990s / What will Happen to Organized Jewish Life? / How will the World Jewish Polity Respond? / The Changing World System / Attitudes toward Jews, the Jewish People, and Israel

The Peace Process

What scenarios in the peace process itself need to be considered for the next 5, 10, and 15 years and how are they likely to impact on Israel and world Jewry?

In rough outline we may identify six possible scenarios in three groupings: best case, worst case, and in between. Obviously the best-case scenario would be peace and prosperity for Israel and its neighbors, envisioned along one of two lines: one, maximum separation between Israel, the Palestinian entity, and Jordan, which, if it fully succeeds, will involve the establishment of a Palestinian state with clear boundaries between it and its two neighbors. Two, the existence of these three polities will lead to a system of shared rule between the three in connection with a number of functions that will require common action.

One hesitates to contemplate the worst-case scenarios. One would be a breakdown of the peace process and a return to the previously-existing state of war, not only between the Palestinians and Israel but involving the other former confrontation states as well. Even worse would be reaching an agreement that involved Israel's return to the "green line" or nearly so and then a breakdown of the peace as the Arabs took advantage of Israel's new weakness. Israel then would be an embattled state in a very awkward position to defend itself and could only do so by relying upon doomsday weapons.

The intermediate scenarios are the most likely. It is to be expected that things will not be as good as we hoped, and hopefully will not be as bad as they could be. In such a case, Israel would partially withdraw from the territories it presently con-

Daniel J. Elazar, Editor and Publisher; Zvi R. Marom, Associate Editor; Mark Ami-El, Managing Editor.
13 Tel-Hai St., Jerusalem, 92107, Israel; Tel. 02-619281, Fax 972-2-619112. © Copyright. All rights reserved.
ISSN: 0792-7304.

The opinions expressed by the authors of Viewpoints do not necessarily reflect those of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

trols but keep the areas with Jewish settlements in them through one arrangement or another. In turn it would give the Palestinians some status in Jerusalem although the city would remain fully under Israeli sovereignty. Terrorism would likely continue as the Palestinian Authority would be unable to control the extremist groups because they would operate as guerrillas and because they would have a significant segment of the Palestinian population behind them. The Arab states would continue to relate to Israel ambivalently, but at least a cold peace would be maintained. With a variant of this scenario, Israel and Israelis would be able to freely move and invest in the Palestinian entity and Jordan, thereby bringing a degree of increased prosperity to all. A different variant would lead to restrictions on Israeli tourism and investment and greater separation between the three which would not be without its costs.

Territorial Shrinkage

Assuming that the peace process continues, Israel will see a shrinkage in the territory presently under its exclusive control that until very recently was open to Jewish settlement. What are the different scenarios for territorial shrinkage and which are the most likely?

One scenario would be that the Palestinians fail to suppress terrorism sufficiently to enable Israel to go ahead with the peace process, so that Israel does not evacuate those parts of the West Bank that it was prepared at the beginning of the process to turn over to Palestinian Authority rule. A kind of civil autonomy develops in which the Palestinians have de facto control over their major population concentrations but the Israeli army continues to move freely through the territories and the Jewish settlements remain in place.

A second possibility is that an agreement is reached which enables Israel to annex territories adjacent to the "green line" holding perhaps 70 percent of the Jewish population in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. That plus various enclaves are retained by Israel. The rest of the territories become part of the Palestinian entity but Israel retains a military presence in them, at least for the next fifteen years. A variant of that scenario would be Israel's evacuation of some settlements to make the demarcations between Israeli and Palestinian territory clear-cut.

The last two would increase the pressures on development inside Israel, and certainly change its ecology, probably in threatening ways. Traffic problems would become horrendous and the country would begin to show signs of the effects of overcrowding including the psychological effects.

Shifting the Balance "from Jerusalem to Jaffa"

After the Six-Day War Jerusalem became the center of Israel on an operative basis, in the psyches of Israelis and world Jewry, and, with its larger region, a major center of development in Israel, reversing the city's isolation and neglect at the end of a narrow corridor from the coast. A successful conclusion of the peace process is likely to shift the psychological and development balance back to Tel Aviv and Israel's coastal areas. This is not merely a matter of geography but of psychology and values emphasized and fostered by the society as a whole. This shift could have great consequences for world Jewry as well as for Israel itself, especially as a Jewish state.

From Jewish Commonwealth to Civil Society

There have been signs since the late 1960s of a shift from a Jewish commonwealth to a civil society with a Jewish majority. The peace process has given that shift great momentum and has encouraged those who are seeking the change, many of whom are in leading positions in the country's intellectual life and media, greater opportunities for advocating it. There are various unforeseen consequences of this that will affect Israel's chances for survival and Israel-diaspora relations and the concern for Israel. It may also mean that the Jewish Agency (JAFI) will have to assume new roles within the State of Israel that the government presently serves to preserve Jewishness.

Possibilities and Limits for Regional Integration

Part of the more optimistic visions of the peace process are for greater integration of Israel into the Middle East. This can only happen if changes are made in the internal composition of Israel as a Jewish state. It also involves contradictions between the direction of Israeli society toward individualism and permissiveness, which stand contrary not only to Islamic fundamentalism but even to the expectations of more moderate Arabs who still live at least partly within the framework of a traditional society, not to speak of traditionalists or fundamentalists. Both the possibilities and limitations that this will bring may affect Israel and its relations with the Jewish people.

Economic Growth and Development

Israel is presently in the midst of an economic boom which is not only raising the Israeli standard of living but is providing new incentives for at least part of the Israeli population to turn its attention away from the issues that dominated Israel from 1948 toward others

which will have consequences both positive and negative for Jewish peoplehood and Israel's growth, that need to be explored.

Privatization and Its Limits

Israel is presently committed to privatization as a way to undo its original economy developed in the days of socialism. Still, privatization has been more a matter of talk than of action and what has taken place has not always taken place in the most beneficial manner. In the end, even if privatization is more successful, there will be limits on how far the Israeli economy can afford to be privatized, if the experience of other countries is any example. In addition, economic privatization is accompanied by social and cultural privatization as well, each with its own consequences.

Privatization will undoubtedly increase the pressure on Israel to normalize and become "like all the nations." Most human beings are attracted to being like everyone else in almost any circumstance where it is possible to entertain that aspiration. The Jewish people has been notable in its ability to resist that pressure for normalization as a collectivity, although many individual Jews did follow that route and disappear from Jewish life. It is the ability to maintain the Jews' commitment to a special way of life and its tasks that has enabled the Jewish people to defy "the laws of history" and not disappear as almost all other peoples have done. However, if the majority of Israelis begin to follow the path of normalization, which is entirely possible, those Jews who wish to continue Jewish civilization and its norms will have to work very hard together in both Israel and the diaspora to fight that trend.

Future Prospects for Aliya

As those Jews who desire to leave the former Soviet Union do so, the last apparent large reservoir of those who find it either necessary or particularly attractive to move to Israel is disappearing. What kind of aliya will continue in the future? One of the problems that has come in the wake of the diminution of aliya among identified Jews is the growing aliya involving people who claim to be of Jewish descent but who are practicing another religion. This means that almost certainly the question of Who is a Jew? will be raised again within the Jewish fold and the issue of the Law of Return will undoubtedly become a problem in the peace process, both issues having an impact, as we have seen in the past, throughout the Jewish world.

If Israel continues along its present path whereby essentially those people defined as Jews under Hitler's

Nuremberg laws plus their family members, whether Jewish or not, are entitled to settle in Israel under the Law of Return, and to them are added the various "lost tribes" that surface from time to time, the Israeli Rabbinate will have to find some way to make them proper Jews or else the Jewish state will soon have a very substantial population of non-Jews or pseudo-Jews. If, on the other hand, Israel decides that it wants to stay with its normal ethno-religious definition of who is Jewish, it will have to modify the Law of Return to deal with those marginal groups.

The Likely Growth in Yerida

At the same time, unlike in the years immediately after the Yom Kippur War when there was much excitement about it, little or no attention is being paid to the fact that *yerida* (emigrating from Israel) has reached the largest numbers yet in the history of the state. Over twice as many left Israel for locations overseas this year than did at the height of the 1970s and the final figures are not yet in. Many of these Israelis will want some connection with the Jewish community outside of Israel and the issue undoubtedly will be raised within the world Jewish polity as to how to deal with them. Moreover, the peace process is likely to stimulate more *yerida*, both because of the economic opportunities that are opening up for Israelis throughout the world and because of the lessening of the Jewishness of many Jews which ties them to Israel.

Political and Civic Responses

The combination of the peace process and the assumption of power by a new generation born well after the establishment of the state and raised after the Six-Day War is likely to lead to great changes in Israel's political processes, some of which we have already begun to see. Many of them are likely to affect the Israeli-diaspora relationship as well as the functioning and agenda of the Israeli government. This combination will also affect Israel's civic agenda as more public voluntary non-governmental bodies become active in matters affecting the quality of Israeli life. Many things formerly governmental may also be moved into the civic sector, especially those dealing with Jewishness, increasing the role of the Jewish Agency and other leading institutions of the world Jewish polity.

The Changing Jewish Situation in the 1990s

An assessment of the Jewish situation in various parts of the world is necessary for any serious setting of goals and priorities to take place, especially since

there are both significant differences between different parts of the Jewish world and growing similarities. Both need to be identified.

By and large, Jewish communities throughout the diaspora are moving in the direction of the Jews in the United States or in the former Soviet Union; that is to say, toward assimilation as individuals within the larger society. The difference between the two is the degree of ethnic survival that keeps some Jewish identity alive. Here, too, the American model in which ethnic survival seems to be substantially diminishing is likely to be the most prevalent one because separate ethnic communities are not the norm in the United States while they remain the norm in the FSU, but those are two variations of the same pattern. To some degree, increases in open anti-Semitism may modify this trend, but that is a terrible cure.

What will Happen to Organized Jewish Life?

Because of the changing situation of Jews throughout the world, organized Jewish life has entered a period of change likely to be at least as great. Indeed, it can be said that there is a good chance that in many places older solutions and structures with which Jews had become comfortable during the modern epoch and which themselves are new enough for those involved to be considered modern, will not be able to respond to the changed Jewish situation.

For some, a return to older, more traditional forms will be even compelling. For others, still newer forms that can deal with the postmodern world will have to be found.

How will the World Jewish Polity Respond?

We now have the instrumentalities of a world Jewish polity more or less in position but also threatened by one problem or change or another. Institutionally, these include the State of Israel, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the World Zionist Organization, the World Jewish Congress, and the Joint Distribution Committee. At present, collectively they either directly conduct the business of world Jewry or have within them the other institutions and organizations that conduct their parts of it. However, these institutions are not necessarily valued by the Jewish people according to the work they do but according to the image that they have come to present, which is not always favorable. How can those institutions respond as a polity and how are they likely to?

The Changing World System

The world as a whole is presently in the midst of a paradigm change, from self-sufficient, politically sovereign states to far greater interdependence that is inevitably coupled with limitations on state sovereignty. Israel was established at the very end of the era of the nation-state and will have to reformulate its own stance both as a nation and as a state in light of these changes. They are likely to have consequences for public non-governmental bodies including those of the world Jewish polity that need to be identified and explored.

International economic growth and development have become not only an important but a necessary part of local economic development. Israel is already confronting this and will have to do so even further. It will have the opportunity to do so if the peace process continues with success. Will this have consequences for the Jewish people?

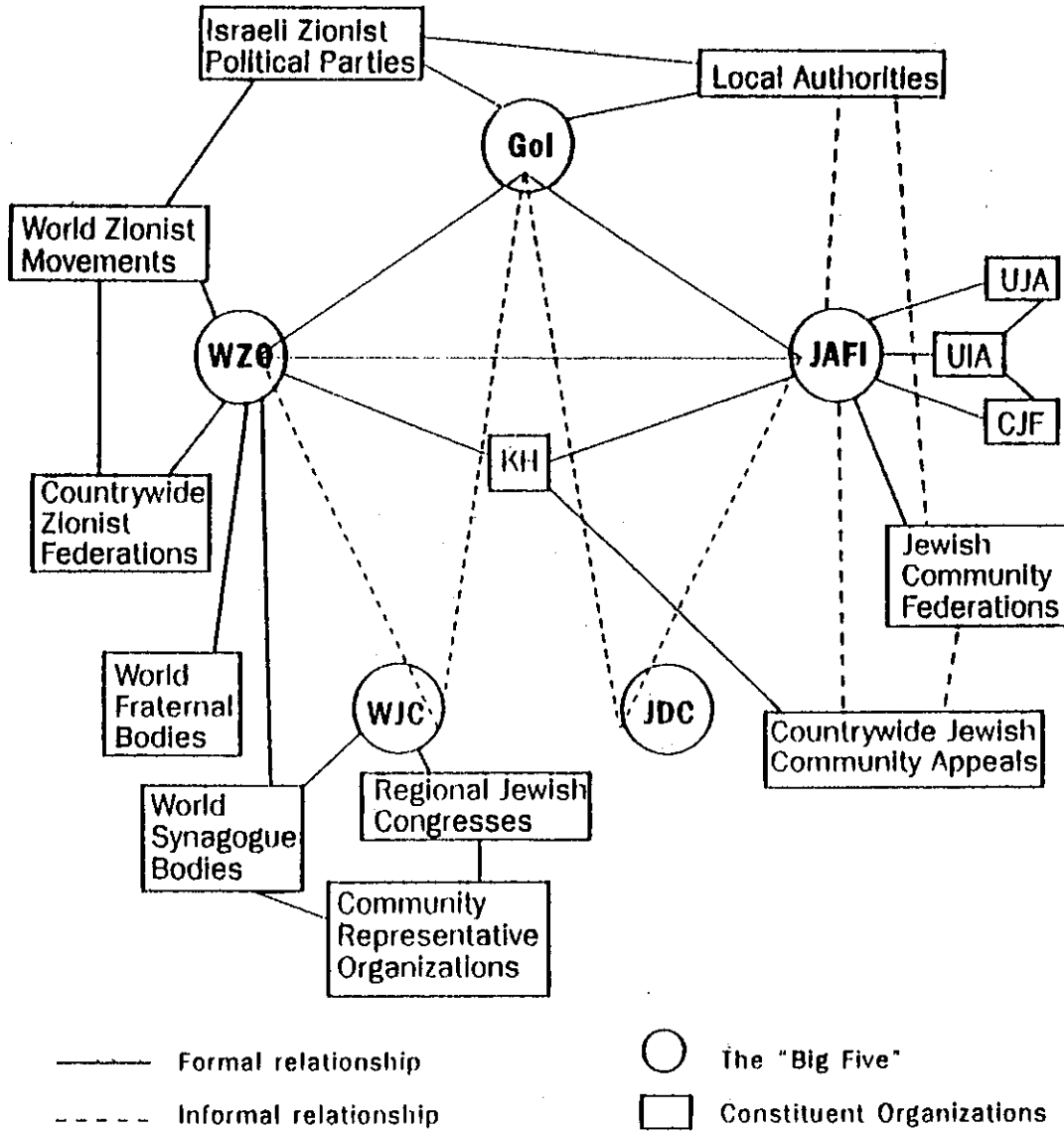
Technological change may well turn out to be the key to the changes that will take place in the world system and with regard to economic development. It should be considered now for its likely impact on the Jewish world, unlike the previous round of technological changes, which were not really factored into such thinking as was done by the Jewish leadership.

Attitudes toward Jews, the Jewish People, and Israel

These issues which in the past could be encompassed for the most part under the rubric of "anti-Semitism," are today far more complex, with individual Jews being accepted and integrated more than ever before into the societies that they have sought out, the Jewish people being accepted as such in some ways, ignored in others, and perhaps rejected in still others, and Israel confronting critical ambivalences in the attitude toward it of the nations of the world. JAFI has always had to respond to the consequences of these attitudes, but the old responses will have to change drastically in light of the attitude changes taking place. So far, the Jewish world has responded to those attitude changes as if it is the same old story, but the matter is more complex than that and needs to be examined as such for its implications for the Agency.

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs has been studying many if not most of these topics since its inception and has called them to the attention of the Jewish world, but on a piecemeal basis. The time has come to look at the entire agenda as a whole to prepare ourselves for confronting it. As is always the case,

THE "BIG FIVE" AND THE OTHER PLAYERS



when the kind of changes that have come upon the Jewish people arrive, they tend to do so in a rush, tumbling down upon those who will have to absorb and respond to them. It is true that some things can only be dealt with once the specific character of the change becomes more apparent, but in order to be ready even to deal with them at that point, we must have prepared at least three-quarters of the groundwork in advance so that only the specifics and the fine tuning remain before us. We have nearly come to the end of the time

remaining to do that and we had better make good use of the time that we have left.

* * *

Daniel J. Elazar is President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. His most recent book is *Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel: Biblical Foundations and Jewish Expressions*, Volume I of the *Covenant Tradition in Politics*.

★ ★ ★ NEW BOOKS FROM THE JERUSALEM CENTER ★ ★ ★

Israel at the Polls, 1992

Edited by Daniel J. Elazar and Shmuel Sandler

Israel at the Polls, 1992 is the fifth book in the "Israel at the Polls" series begun in 1977 with the "upset" in the Israeli elections that brought down the Labor government which had ruled in Israel since the founding of the state. In the 1992 elections Labor returned as the ruling party and this book looks at the question of whether those elections mark the beginning of a new era in Israeli politics. Thirteen essays evaluate the downfall of Likud and the "national" camp, the major and minor parties, and the Israeli Arab and ex-Soviet Jewish vote, as well as the impact of the elections on foreign policy, the Israeli army, the economy, the style of the media campaign, and the role of interest groups. Special chapters focus on Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's personality and style of leadership and review the first year and a half of the Rabin government.

Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield and JCPA, 1995, 359 pp.

* * *

**Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel:
Biblical Foundations and Jewish Expressions**

Volume 1 of The Covenant Tradition in Politics

Daniel J. Elazar

The covenants of the Bible are the founding covenants of Western civilization. They have their beginnings in the need to establish clear and binding relationships between God and humans and among humans. These relationships are primarily political in character in that they were designed to establish lines of authority, distributions of power, and systems of law. This first volume of a trilogy addresses political uses of the idea of covenant, the tradition that has adhered to that idea, and the political arrangements that flow from it. The volume represents an in-depth exploration of biblical sources of the covenant tradition, its development in Scripture, and subsequently in Jewish history and thought. It traces the interconnections between ideas, culture, and behavior as well as between peoples and generations. Among the topics covered are covenant as a political concept, the Bible as a political commentary, the post-biblical tradition, medieval covenant theory, and Jewish political culture.

New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1994, 536pp.; \$49.95

* * *

**Federal Systems of the World:
A Handbook of Federal, Confederal and Autonomy Arrangements**

Second Edition, Revised and Expanded

Written and Edited by Daniel J. Elazar and the JCPA Staff

Of the over 180 politically sovereign states now in existence, 50 are either federations or include within them forms of self-determination and self-government which represent extensions of the federal principle or applications of the idea of political autonomy. The previous edition of this handbook (1991) represented the first major effort to inventory and describe all known examples of federal and autonomous arrangements, compare their basic features, and classify them by form. This fully updated edition documents the extensive changes in the state system in recent years, including the dramatic events in the former USSR, Germany, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the European Community/Union.

Longman Current Affairs (UK), 1994, 380 pages.