

Anglo – First, Jewish – Next?
An Introspection of Jewish Identity as Mirrored in the
Academic Boycott Initiative

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This study is dedicated to Joseph Christ (1908-1994), a Jewish intellectual.

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Abstract

Between April 2002 and May 2007 several attempts has been made by various British academic organizations to promote an academic boycott against Israeli universities. Despite the vigorous debate over these boycott attempts, it seems that the public and academic discourse has left unnoticed the fascinating involvement of some Anglo-Jewish intellectuals in these radical anti-Israel boycott initiatives. This study examines the motivations behind the Anglo-Jewish intellectual's participation in the academic boycott. By both 'elite interviews' conducted in London in 2007 and key findings from the 1995 JPR survey – the largest carried-out to date – this study shows that what stands behind the involvement of Anglo-Jewish intellectuals in promoting the academic boycott is not a political protest against Israel's conduct towards the Palestinians but an attempt to challenge the mainstream traditional Anglo-Jewish identity. This study will also show that the involvement of Anglo-Jewish intellectuals in promoting the academic boycott initiative is an outward guise of an inner drive to redefine the boundaries of Jewish identity and community.

Introduction

“[...] We cannot divorce our present from our past.

We cannot divorce ourselves from the history of the British nation to which we belong.

We cannot divorce ourselves from the history and the destiny of the Jewish people [...]”.

(Cecil Roth, 1964²)

On April 2005, the British Association of University Teachers (AUT) declared an academic boycott against two Israeli universities; it was lifted a few weeks later. On May 2006, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) tried and failed to implement another boycott of Israel's institutions of higher learning. On May 2007, a third such step against Israeli academe was proposed by the University and College Union (UCU). The only time the international scientific community resorted to this measure against a state was when South Africa's apartheid regime was boycotted.³ Thus, it is a curious fact that some Anglo-Jewish intellectuals were among the instigators of these boycott attempts. Moreover, Robert S. Wistrich argues that Britain holds a pioneering position in promoting academic boycotts of Israel.⁴ This study aspires to contribute to existing literature by probing the motivations behind the Anglo-Jewish intellectual involvement in these boycott initiatives.

This paper is structured along the following lines: The first chapter of this study provides a theoretical and methodological apparatus of this research. The section will focus on the current growing academic interest in the sociopolitical dimensions of Jewish identity and ethnicity especially by researchers from the relatively new field of *Political Jewish Studies*. Furthermore, the section will present in short the two chosen methodologies of this research: The first are two elite interviews conducted in the UK with two experts on the issue of British Jewry: *Marlena Schmool*, former director of the Community Issues Division of the Board of Deputies of British Jews And *Antony Lerman*, executive director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. The second chosen methodology which will be discussed along this section is data analysis based on the 1995 survey taken by the JPR.

² Cecil Roth, "The Anglo-Jewish Community in the Context of World Jewry", in: Julius Gould and Shaul Esh., (eds.), *Jewish life in modern Britain*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 110.

³ Tamara Traubman, "The Intifada Reaches the Ivory Tower", *Ha'aretz*, April 25, 2002.

⁴ Robert S. Wistrich, "Interview with Robert Solomon Wistrich", *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, No.70, 1 July, 2008.

The second chapter will provide an historical overview of the main approaches of the Anglo-Jewish elite towards the Zionist idea and the state of Israel. The first part of the chapter will focus on the approaches of major Anglo-Jewish intellectual figures such as; Hermann Adler, Chaim Weitzman, Isaiah Berlin and Harold Pinter in the period between the late nineteenth century up to the late twentieth century. Along the discussion it will be maintained that during this period the Anglo-Jewish elite was constantly torn between its emotional attachment to Zionism – and later to the state of Israel – and its civic loyalty to Britain. Thus, the concept of *dual loyalty* will serve as a key theoretical concept in the first part of this discussion. The second section will discuss in length the contemporary public debate about the Jewish connection to the academic boycott initiative.

The third chapter focuses on the motivations behind the Anglo-Jewish intellectual involvement in the boycott. The discussion will demonstrate, both by ‘elite interviews’ conducted in London in 2007 and key findings from the 1995 JPR survey, that what stands behind the involvement of Anglo-Jewish intellectuals in promoting the academic boycott is a highly personal exploration of new forms of Jewish identity. It will be shown that politics accounts for only one aspect of the Anglo-Jewish intellectuals' support of the academic boycott while the intellectuals' active support of the boycott is foremost an attempt to stretch the boundaries of contemporary Anglo-Jewish identity.

Theory and Methodology

Theory and literature

The sociopolitical dimensions of Jewish identity and ethnicity in terms of what Robert Seltzer calls *post-emancipation Judaism* or *post-Zionism*⁵ has intrigued many. One example is the latest joint study undertaken by the Institute for Jewish Studies in the CIS and the Israel Democracy Institute (2007),⁶ which, over the past two years, has researched the Jews in Russia and the Ukraine.⁷ Other examples are the works of Waterman et al. (2007),⁸ Lerman (1989),⁹ Graham (2004),¹⁰ Miller et al. (1996),¹¹ Gitelman et al. (2001,¹² 2003),¹³ Schmool (1968,¹⁴ 1994),¹⁵ Weinbaum (1995,¹⁶ 2004),¹⁷ Kosmin et al. (1997),¹⁸ and Schnapper (1983).¹⁹ In accordance with these studies, this work acknowledges the importance of the *broader conceptual climate* which often accounts for the clash between the Jewish collective and individual consciousness. It is my belief that this approach would be helpful in the understanding why certain parts of European Diaspora are uncomfortable with their Jewishness.

⁵ Robert M. Seltzer, "Jewish History after the Age of Ideology", *At the Cutting Edge*. Available at: <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/jewish/30yrs/seltzer/index.html>.

⁶ For more information, see: <http://www.idi.org.il/english/article.asp?id=18122007115331>.

⁷ Their research began with four focus groups in Kiev and Moscow and continued with a survey of 806 Ukrainian and Russian Jews. The purpose of this endeavor, similar to the present study, was to better understand the identity of Jews and to assess their opinions on topics of interest to Jews and Judaism and the various motives for participating in communal frameworks.

⁸ Stanley Waterman, David Graham and Marlena Schmool, *Jews in Britain: A Snapshot from the 2001 Census*, no. 1, (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2007).

⁹ Antony Lerman (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of the World: A Contemporary Guide* (London: Macmillan Press in association with the Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1989).

¹⁰ David Graham, *European Jewish Identity at the Dawn of the 21st Century: A Working Paper*, (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2004).

¹¹ Stephen Miller, Malena Schmool and Antony Lerman, *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 1996). Also available online at the JPR website: http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/PJC_Reports/no_1_1996/index.htm.

¹² Zvi Y. Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

¹³ Zvi Y. Gitelman, Barry Kosmin and András Kovács (eds.), *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*, (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ Marlena Schmool and S. J. Prais, "The Size and Structure of the Anglo-Jewish Population, 1960-1965", *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 10, 1968.

¹⁵ Marlena Schmool, *Women in the Jewish Community: Survey Report* (London: Adler House, 1994).

¹⁶ Laurence Weinbaum and Avi Beker, *Post-Zionism, Post-Judaism?: Israel's Crisis of Continuity*, (Jerusalem: Institute of the World Jewish Congress, 1995).

¹⁷ Laurence Weinbaum, *Where Memory Is a Curse and Amnesia a Blessing*, (Jerusalem: Institute of the World Jewish Congress, 2004).

¹⁸ Barry Kosmin, Antony Lerman and Jacqueline Goldberg, *The Attachment of British Jews to Israel*, (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 1997).

¹⁹ Dominique Schnapper, *Jewish Identities in France: An Analysis of Contemporary French Jewry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

This study has been undertaken in the field of Political Jewish Studies which was initiated in the late 1960s.²⁰ Embracing the subjects of Jewish political thought, Jewish political culture, Jewish political organization, Israel and more, this relatively new field aimed at studying the Jewish people as a political phenomenon in the broader theoretical sense. Gabriel Sheffer explains why this field needs a broader tapestry: "[...] *the increasing awareness that in many respects the Jewish Diaspora is similar to other ethno-national diasporas [...] such as the Armenian, Greek, Irish, Korean and Palestinian [...]*".²¹ This study is unique however because it homes in on a specific Jewish community in order to examine its sociopolitical origins against a wider conceptual view. My work focuses on the duality of a community torn between its eagerness for full assimilation and hope to revert to its territorial origins.

The unique circumstances of the Jews' exile from their Holy Land in the 1st century BCE and their dispersal throughout the globe produced the term "Diaspora" as a Jewish phenomenon.²² In time, however, the term underwent a conceptual metamorphosis. Its original connotation for Jews was deracination, legal disadvantage, oppression and often painful adjustment to a hostile environment.²³ Today, when Israel turns sixty, Diaspora not infrequently represents a chance for a better life in terms of security, morality and economy, especially in Western Europe and North America.

Eric Hobsbawm pointed out in 2005 that from 1945, the Jewish Diaspora was a paradox in the sense that the greatest calamity in Jewish history generated two utterly different consequences. On the one hand, it produced the ingathering of a substantial minority of Jews in one nation-state, Israel, thereby dramatically diminishing the Diaspora. On the other hand, after the Holocaust, Jews found more acceptance in the societies of most countries.²⁴ This paradox may explain the fluidity in the way secular Jews perceive Diaspora versus Israel as the favored place for preserving their secular Jewish identity.

Two socio-political theoretical concepts are dealt in this study, in relation to the Jewish Diaspora; *Community* and *Nationalism*. Community is a concept which dominates the study of Diaspora when applied to Jews living outside Israel. It is often taken for granted that when a number of Jews live in any one place, they automatically form a

²⁰ Daniel J. Elazar, "Jewish Political Studies", *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Feb. 1991, pp. 67.

²¹ Gabriel Sheffer, "Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora's Current Situation", *Israel Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Spring 2005, pp. 2-3.

²² William Safran, "The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective", *Israel Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, Spring 2005, p. 36.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, "Benefits of Diaspora", *London Review of Books*, 20 Oct. 2005. Also available online at: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v27/n20/hobs01_.html.

‘community.’ This presumption - whether or not applicable - heavily influences the angle from which Jewish populations are seen politically. The common use of *Gemeinschaft*²⁵ in relation to the Jewish Diaspora may derive from the fact that, although there is no single Jewish identity common to all European or American Jews, all Jews have something in common, namely, the propensity for a Jewish person to self-identify as such.²⁶ This propensity no doubt hardens the boundaries of what is regarded as a ‘Jewish community’ – that is, a unit in which all its members define themselves subjectively as such by a more or less common code of identity - and not just by religion. The presumption that the Jewish Diaspora is part of a worldwide “Jewish community” may also draw the shared historical Jewish aspiration through the ages to return to the Promised Land. This is an abiding innate vision - at least rhetorically - whether or not it is realized in practice.

The study of the Jewish people as a community has been challenged of late by Benedict Anderson's scheme of *Imagined communities*.²⁷ His scheme addresses the nature of nationalism in a political context, but because it applies equally to other national communities, it has also infused the study of Diaspora. Pnina Werbner suggests that “[...] *Diasporas need to be grasped as deterritorialised imagined communities which conceive of themselves, despite their dispersal, as sharing a collective past and common destiny [...]*”.²⁸ In the Jewish context, this proposition means that the two thousand year old idea of Jewish unity is in some way imagined, not to say fictitious.

Hence, this study also examines the nature of the various criticisms towards the traditional Zionist categories, served to justify the Jewish national project. Anthony D. Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*²⁹ challenges the modern assumption that nations are entirely modern and claims that modern nations are based on a longer development than many scholars are willing to admit.³⁰ Hedva Ben-Israel claims that when examining Zionism under a comparative approach, although there is no one model for nationalism by which Zionism can be tested,³¹ Smith's theme seems to be valid. According to Ben-Israel,

²⁵ See Stefan Breuer, “Community in German Sociology” (in German: “Gemeinschaft in der ‘deutschen Soziologie’”), *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Vol. 31, No. 5, Oct. 2002, pp. 354-372.

²⁶ Graham, 2004, p. 9.

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991).

²⁸ Pnina Werbner, “The Place which is Diaspora: citizenship, religion and gender in the making of chaotic transnationalism”, *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, Jan 2002, Vol. 28 Issue 1, p. 121.

²⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998, 1986).

³⁰ <http://www.nationalismproject.org/contrib.htm>

³¹ Hedva Ben-Israel, “Zionism and European Nationalisms; Comparative Aspects”, *Israel Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 91.

"[...] there has never been one concept of Zionism accepted by all in the course of its history. For some it was primarily political, for others cultural, social, or religious [...]."³²

Some researchers argue that the Zionist claim is based on common territory, language and descent. There is a myth, they say, of common descent from the ancient Hebrews, there is a homeland, Palestine, and there is a common language, Hebrew, the language of the bible, which has been preserved as the language of religion and prayer.³³ According to Ben-Israel, against the above claims, "[...] some find it easy to emphasize the fact of the dispersion of Jews all over the world, the variety of languages and cultures in which Jews live and function, and the visible ethnic differences between the various dispersions [...]."³⁴ As debate on whether Zionism fits the pattern has not yet resolved I believe that any analysis of current approaches towards the Zionist idea and implementations, contributes vastly to this debate.

In its greater part, this study deals with the way in which Anglo-Jewish intellectuals grasp the act of criticizing the Jewish national project as an intellectual duty. Julien Benda, a Jewish-French philosopher and novelist, wrote to the 'European nation' in 1932: "[...] Intellectuals of all countries, you must be the ones to tell your nations that they are always in the wrong by the single fact that they are nations [...] Plotinus blushed at having a body. You should blush at having a nation [...]."³⁵ Bernard Harrison fascinatingly argues that while plenty of intellectuals, like others, have blushed at the crimes or inadequacies of their respective nations, very few French, English, German, Russian or Irish intellectuals, or even American ones have proved ready to blush merely at having a nation. In practice, he says, the one people whose very national identity has been widely held to constitute, in its objectionable 'particularism', a standing offence against the ideal of Universal Man, is the Jews.³⁶

On the same note, recent publications confirm that many Jewish intellectuals blissfully adopt the concept of *imagined community* as a method of criticism towards the Jewish nationhood. In *The Question of Zion*,³⁷ Jacqueline Rose practically puts the Jewish people on the psychiatrist's couch to study what she regards as the Jewish collective sense of victimhood as a complex which needs to be healed; Stephen Miller writes about *mental ethnicity*, suggesting that for young people today Jewish ethnicity is *mental* in the sense

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 91-92.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁵ Bernard Harrison, "Blushing Intellectuals", *Israel Affairs*, 14:1, January 2008, p. 135.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion*, (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2005).

that the old rituals have been abandoned and young Jews identify themselves as such through *feelings*.³⁸ Consequently, one of the major aims of this study is to analyze the impact of this intellectual climate as a catalyst for the urge of some Anglo-Jewish intellectuals to re-design contemporary Jewish identity.

Methodology

Methodologically speaking, this research uses two methods common in Political Jewish Studies: quantitative analysis and personal interviews. Political Jewish Studies methodologies have special advantages for exploring the personal dimensions of contemporary Jewish political attitudes, and for illuminating the internal, direct and subjective aspects of the individual's political orientation. Equally important is the firsthand input to this research from fieldwork already begun. This study, therefore, does not depend solely on theoretical work but also on personal interviews with key figures who are involved in the public discourse in Britain around the academic boycott initiative as analysts or observers of this phenomenon.

The Diaspora data analysis is based on three reports: *Jews in Britain: A Snapshot from the 2001 Census* by Graham, Schmool and Waterman (2007),³⁹ *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews* by Miller, Schmool and Lerman (1996)⁴⁰ and *European Jewish Identity at the Dawn of the 21st Century* by Graham (2004).⁴¹ In addition to the quantitative data, this research is based on two initial interviews conducted in the UK with two experts on the issue of British Jewry: *Marlena Schmool*, former director of the Community Issues Division of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and a researcher at the abovementioned Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR); *Antony Lerman*, executive director of the JPR.

The technique of 'elite interviews'⁴² is applied in these interviews. This involves selecting activists at different levels to explore how political institutions work and discern the intellectual trends at the root of this political activity.⁴³ According to Lisa Harrison, although the information gathered from such interviews may tend to be subjective, it meets the primary objective of plumbing the most intimate perceptions which mold the individual's political opinions. Such interviews are also important because these individuals often represent the beliefs of a wider group in which the researcher is

³⁸ Graham, 2004, p. 23.

³⁹ Graham et al., *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Miller et al., *ibid.*, (http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/PJC_Reports/no_1_1996/index.htm).

⁴¹ Graham, *ibid.*

⁴² Lisa Harrison, *Political Research: An Introduction* (2001). In Hebrew: Tamar Herman (ed.), *Mechkar Polity: Mavo*, (Ra'anana: The Open University, 2005), p. 132.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

interested.⁴⁴ This method has the great advantage of tapping vocal thinkers with the skills for interpreting and synthesizing abstruse data – or even explaining the rationale of likeminded people.⁴⁵ An unusual aspect of this research is that it uses the information gathered in elite interviews as preliminary groundwork for future research.⁴⁶

Interviews in general, and specifically those which deal with sensitive issues such as self-identity or politics, must be guided by an ethno-methodological approach which takes some measure of cultural relativism into account.⁴⁷ This methodology excavates the subliminal foundations which shape the opinions of some Jewish intellectuals and which eventually lead them to adopt political views consonant with their self-identities.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Jews in Britain, or British Jews?

The Zionist idea and the state of Israel were always at the core of Anglo-Jewish intellectuals' self-hood. In general, it may be said that ever since the second half of the nineteenth century, Anglo-Jewish intellectuals' approach to the idea of Jewish statehood was somewhat hesitant and ambivalent. As will be shown in the first section of this chapter, members of the Anglo-Jewish elite were always torn between their emotional attachment to the Zionist ideal – and later on to the state of Israel – and their civic loyalty to Britain. Thus, the concept of *dual loyalty*, commonly used in the research literature, will serve as a key theoretical concept in the first part of this discussion. The second part of the chapter will focus mainly on the public discourse around the academic boycott initiative (2005-2007).

Anglo – First; Jewish – Next, or Vice Versa?

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Moses Montefiore represented British Jewry as well as the British people when he persuaded James Finn – the British consul in Jerusalem – to help establish Jewish farming in Palestine.⁴⁸ Montefiore aspired to promote Jewish settlement in the country as well as the interests of the British Empire in the region. Later on, distinguished British Jews such as Francis Montefiore, Israel Zangwill and Colonel Albert E. W Goldsmid, joined the Zionist movement. Their high standing in English society imparted an aura of high prestige to the Zionist movement.⁴⁹

However, the Zionist idea sparked an unexpected reaction among Anglo-Jewish academics. It is a little-known fact that in April 1909, about a century before the contemporary academic boycott, twenty-five Jewish university graduates signed a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* criticizing the growth of Zionist societies at the ancient and civic universities of Britain; Such societies, they argued, "[...] *compromises the status of Jewish university students [...]*."⁵⁰

Later that month, Hermann Adler, the chief Rabbi of the British Empire, expressed his unconditional support of the petition when he said the following: "[...] *Since the destruction of the Temple and our dispersion, we no longer constitute a nation; We are a religious communion. We are bound together [...] by the ties of a common faith. But in*

⁴⁸ Cecil Roth, *ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-102.

⁵⁰ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 232.

regard to all other matters we consider ourselves Englishmen and we hold that in virtue of being Jews it our duty and privilege to work as zealously as possible for the welfare of England [...]".⁵¹ Adler's words, only eight years before the Balfour Declaration, illustrate that the dual loyalty dilemma grew stronger as the Zionist movement gained ground. The reverse side of the Anglo-Jewish dichotomy on Jewish nationhood showed itself just six years later. In 1915, fifty thousand members of the Anglo-Jewish community signed a petition calling for the establishment of a "*[...] publicly recognized, legally secured home for the Jewish people in Palestine [...]*".⁵²

Even the well-known Anglo-Jewish figure, Chaim Weitzman (1874-1952) was at times denounced for his purported dual loyalty. Weitzman was famous for inventing the *Clostridium Acetobutylicum Weizmann* which contributed immensely to the British war effort of the First World War. At the same time, Weitzman used his influence and ties with the British government to bring forth the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the Weitzman-Feisal Treaty (1919). In 1930, he resigned as President of the World Zionist Organization after the publication of Passfields' White Paper; in 1931 he failed to be elected as president of the Zionist Congress, because he was accused of a pro-British agenda.

The issue of Dual loyalty as described above, is most interesting in the context of the British atmosphere in relation to the Jews and later on to the 'blacks', that existed in the first half of the twentieth century. Tony Kushner says that in this period, racial minorities in Britain and especially the Jews, had been connected by contemporaries with Britain's decline.⁵³ Britain, in that sense, was not an exception; Nineteenth-century anti-Semites had blamed the Jews for all the ills of modern society.⁵⁴

Patrick Wright argues that at the time, this was an England in which to be English was to be against necessary outsiders.⁵⁵ Hence, "*[...] the culture of pre-war anti-Semitism has gone on to serve as a resource for the racisms which in the post-war years have accompanied immigration from the fragments of disintegrating empire [...]*".⁵⁶ However, Deborah Cohen mentions that the case of British Jews indicates that racial categories could arise as a response to the apparent similarities, as well as the perceived differences,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵³ Tony Kushner (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, (London : Frank Cass, 1992), p. 2.

⁵⁴ Marsha L. Rozenblit, "The Holocaust", in: Jack Wertheimer (ed.), *The Modern Jewish Experience: A Reader's Guide*, (NY: NYU Press, 1993), p. 140.

⁵⁵ Kushner, *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

between Jews and other Britons.⁵⁷ Bryan Cheyette stresses that from the end of the nineteenth century to 1945, race-thinking about the Jew, was, in fact, a key ingredient in the emerging cultural identity in modern Britain.⁵⁸ Hence, the paradox of the Jewish assimilation in Britain had never been fully solved; notions of race emerged partially as a consequence of assimilation and vice versa.⁵⁹

One of the most fascinating aspects of the assimilation process of Jews in the British society, is dealt by Kushner who describes "[...] *the attempt of the Jews to shape their own heritage and history in relation to the rest of society [...]*".⁶⁰ David Cesarani argues that the construction of an Anglo-Jewish in the 1890s' was part of the struggle against exclusionary tendencies in English culture and politics,⁶¹ and that Anglo-Jewish history was part of the weaponry deployed by English Jews against these tendencies.⁶² After 1945, Anglo-Jewry took some interesting socio-political turns, as will be viewed shortly.

The Holocaust posed a quite different challenge to the Anglo-Jewish elite. Even today, it faces tough questions about its conduct in that period, such as: What did they know about the Nazis' machine of genocide? Did influential British Jews intervene? What could they have done?⁶³ Richard Bolchover tried to answer questions about the Anglo-Jewish response to the Holocaust by surveying the information available about events behind Nazi lines, including memoirs, autobiographies, archives and newspapers.⁶⁴ He concluded that, aside from exceptional individuals and groups in the community, British Jewry's normative reactions to the Holocaust in the period 1942-1945 were often inconsistent.⁶⁵

Although he is harshly criticized, Bolchover stands by his facts, claiming that the community, confronted by acute difficulties with rising anti-Semitism, assigned the Holocaust a lower priority on its communal agenda for most of this period.⁶⁶ However,

⁵⁷ Deborah Cohen, "Who was Who? Race and Jews in Turn-of-the-Century Britain", *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4, (Oct., 2002), p. 461.

⁵⁸ Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of "The Jew" in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875 -1945*, (Cambridge University Press, 1993), preface.

⁵⁹ Cohen, *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Kushner, *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶¹ David Cesarani, "Dual Heritage or Duel Heritages? Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry", in: Tony Kushner (ed.), *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, (London : Frank Cass, 1992), p. 29.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶³ See also in: Alderman, *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁶⁴ Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, (Oxford : Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003), p. 1

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, preface.

Shlomo Aronson argues that there were indeed "influential Jews" in Britain, but at that time and even earlier, when Hitler had just begun organizing his 'new' Germany, all these Jews combined had much less influence than the Prime Minister himself.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948 placed Anglo-Jewish identity dilemmas in a new perspective. Todd M. Endelman notes that by the end of the war, ideological opposition to Zionism had disappeared except among the ultra-Orthodox and the far Left, while support for the state of Israel, along with the commemoration of the Holocaust, became the pillars of Anglo-Jewish identity.⁶⁸ However, Natan Aridan explains that between the years 1946 and 1948, as reports arrived on the Jewish underground in Palestine and especially on the King David Hotel bombing by *Etzel*, ambivalence was replaced by the assertion that terrorism was inimical to the ideals of Zionism. This was best manifested by David Kessler, *The Jewish Chronicle's* editor, in his editorial published on Friday of 14, 1948 under the title "May 15", conceded that "[...] *profound mistakes have been committed during the period of thirty years' rule, but the overall picture is one on which time will look back with gratitude [...]*."⁶⁹ With a shred of righteousness and plenty of politically correct Kessler said that "[...] *There can be no doubt that the Jewish State will emerge and in anticipation of that historic event, we salute its advent and wish it well [...]*".⁷⁰

In the Anglo-Jewish community, the struggle between non-Zionists who accepted the Jewish people's fragmentation into various nations and Zionists who wished to create Jewish unity gathered force. Clearly, the state of Israel was the core around which new dimensions of Jewish community in Britain were now starting to take shape.⁷¹ In the late 1940s' the fear of anti-Semitism was inseparable from the question of dual loyalty: to Britain on the one hand, and to the idea of the Jewish state on the other. British Jews were concerned that their identification with the Zionist project might harm their emancipated status and unleash waves of violence.⁷²

⁶⁷ Shlomo Aronson, *Hitler, the Allies and the Jews*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 12.

⁶⁸ Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656-2000*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 229.

⁶⁹ Natan Aridan, "Anglo-Jewry and the State of Israel: Defining the Relationship 1948-1956", *Israel Studies* 10 (1), 2005, p. 127.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ In 1947 and 1948 over six hundred British *Machal* members fought alongside the *Palmach* and the *Haganah* as fighter pilots, flight engineers, logistic and communication specialists, and after Israel's formal establishment received IDF ranks. Over half the officers and crew of the Israeli navy consisted of British *Machal* members, and of the 119 *Machal* members killed in action, twenty-five were British.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 127-128.

Emma Klein points out that this ambiguity – or ambivalence - has long roots in the mysterious “disappearance” of one hundred thousand Jews in Britain in the 1940s.⁷³ Although several thousand British Jews migrated to Israel from 1948 and about the same number to other countries, these figures leave some hundred thousand British Jews unaccounted for in statistical charts.⁷⁴ Klein maintains that this is a striking example of a shrinking population in terms of self-identification.⁷⁵ Jews refraining from defining themselves as Jewish can be seen as an early symptom of the contemporary attempt by Anglo-Jewish intellectuals to challenge traditional Jewish categories and embrace new ones that will be discussed in the following chapter.

At the same time Ben-Gurion’s stance that only a person who chose to live in Israel or intended to do so was a Zionist⁷⁶ helped turning the Anglo-Zionist leaders' attitude vis-à-vis Israel to more political. During 1956 Suez crisis most of Anglo-Jewry supported the Conservative government headed by Anthony Eden despite its general anti-Israeli tendencies.⁷⁷ Later on, as Endelman points out, Harold Pinter's signing on a public letter defending Israel’s right to exist after the 1967 Six Day War exemplifies the process during the 1960's in which Anglo-Jewish intellectuals' approach to Israel became gradually more political.⁷⁸

Isaiah Berlin was an Anglo-Jewish intellectual of a different type. According to Aridan, Jewish intellectuals were always careful not to intervene in Anglo- Israel affairs, in part because most of them were not native born. But Berlin was an exception: “[...] A devoted Zionist and the leading public intellectual of the day, he never professed to speak on behalf of Anglo-Jewry. He believed that the creation of the State of Israel “transformed the situation of the Jews beyond recognition.” [and that] Israel had rendered the “greatest service that any human institution can perform for individuals,” and had restored to Jews not merely their personal dignity and status as human beings, but what is vastly more important, their right to choose as individual show they shall live—the basic freedom of choice, the right to live or perish, go to the good or bad in one’s own way, without which life is a form of slavery, as it has been, indeed for the Jewish community for almost two thousand years [...].”⁷⁹ His biographer notes that “[...] he allowed his pro-Israeli

⁷³ Emma Klein, “Where Have All the Jews Gone?”, in *Lost Jews: The Struggle for Identity Today*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Aridan, p. 137.

⁷⁷ Endelman, p. 235, and also Alderman, p. 336..

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁷⁹ Aridan, p. 150.

convictions to pull him in one direction and his anti-colonialist inclinations to pull in the other [...]".⁸⁰

What can be seen as a general political ambivalence was maintained through most of the 1970's and 1980'. However, during this period the Anglo-Jewish community was becoming less concerned with events happening in Israel, and more preoccupied with socio-economic changes acquiring in Britain. As Barry A. Kosmin points out, the main concern of the Anglo-Jewish community in this period was the secularization and modernization developments in Britain which challenged the Anglo-Jewish political, economical and cultural traditional way of living.⁸¹ As will be seen in the next chapter, this systematic decline of Jewish tradition in the British Diaspora is associated with emerging criticism of Israel in the 1990's. This critique has culminated in the Anglo-Jewish intellectual's involvement in the academic boycott during the 2000's.

Anglo-Jewish Intellectuals and the Academic Boycott Initiatives

The first episode of the running story of the academic boycott began on April 2002, when *The Guardian* published an open letter calling for a European Union moratorium on funding for grants and research contracts for Israeli universities. One hundred and twenty British academics, some Jewish, signed the following petition:

*"[...] Despite widespread international condemnation for its policy of violent repression against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories, the Israeli government appears impervious to moral appeals from world leaders. The major potential source of effective criticism, the United States, seems reluctant to act. However there are ways of exerting pressure from within Europe. Odd though it may appear, many national and European cultural and research institutions, including especially those funded from the EU and the European Science Foundation, regard Israel as a European state for the purposes of awarding grants and contracts. (No other Middle Eastern state is so regarded). Would it not therefore be timely if at both national and European level a moratorium was called upon any further such support unless and until Israel abide by UN resolutions and open serious peace negotiations with the Palestinians, along the lines proposed in many peace plans including most recently that sponsored by the Saudis and the Arab League [...]"*⁸²

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150-151.

⁸¹ Barry A. Kosmin, (in Hebrew), "Paradox Ve-Kituv: Ta'lichei Hilun U-Modernizatzia Be-Yahadut Britania Meaz 1945", in : Yirmiyahu Yovel (ed.), *New Jewish Time*, (Jerusalem: Keter, 2007), p. 138.

⁸² "More Pressure for Mid East Peace", *Guardian*, Saturday April 6, 2002.

Since then, British academics have pursued a course of boycotts against Israeli universities and academics.⁸³ On April 2005, the British Association of University Teachers (AUT) declared an academic boycott against two Israeli universities; it was lifted a few weeks later. On May 2006, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) tried and failed to implement another boycott of Israel's institutions of higher learning. On May 2007, a third such step against Israeli academe was proposed by the University and College Union (UCU). It is important to emphasize the severity of academic boycotts as a political penalty when the only time the international scientific community resorted to this measure against a state was when South Africa's apartheid regime was boycotted.⁸⁴

Hence, the diverse reactions to this extraordinary initiative; each one singling out what it considered to be the most critical aspect. These reactions may be divided under two main headings: the public debate, which hinged by and large on a narrow political base - i.e. for or against Israel's treatment of towards the Palestinians; and the ethical academic debate - i.e. the theoretical merits and demerits of employing the academic boycott as a tool of political protest. The reverberations in both cases were politically-slanted, an inescapable consequence of the rationale offered by the initiators.

Ronnie Fraser, founder and chair of the *Academic Friends of Israel*, dealt with the *scale* of Anglo-Jewish resistance to the boycott. He said that "[...] *For all of 2002 and the first few months of 2003 UK Jewry's response was weak and poorly coordinated. The main reactions came from individual academics in the UK and Israel, though neither country took the boycott threat seriously until 2005 [...]*".⁸⁵

On a different note, Manfred Gerstenfeld commented on the *fundamental nature* of the academic boycott. He foresaw it becoming the indicator of a long-lasting Western reassessment of such issues as free speech, academic freedom, uncontrolled campus extremism, university autonomy, the politicization of science, and the discrepancy between the norms practiced by academia and society.⁸⁶ But what bothered Gerstenfeld most of all

⁸³ Ronnie Fraser, "The Academic Boycott of Israel: Why Britain?", *Post Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, No. 36 1 September, 2005, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-36.htm>), and also: Ronnie Fraser, "The Academic Boycott of Israel: A Review of the Five-Year UK Campaign to Defeat It", *Post Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, No. 66, 2 March 2008, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs).

⁸⁴ Tanya Reinhart, "Why Academic Boycott - A reply to an Israeli comrade". See at: http://www.tau.ac.il/~reinhart/political/17_05_02_Academic_Boycott.html

⁸⁵ Fraser, 2005.

⁸⁶ Manfred Gerstenfeld, "The Academic Boycott against Israel", *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 15, Nos. 3-4, Fall 2003. See at: <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-gersten-f03.htm>

was the rising of a new alliance between different anti-Israeli interests, as manifested in the academic boycott initiative: "[...] *the boycott which was originally seen as a spontaneous reaction to events in Israel and the territories, was part of a well-planned campaign to link enemies of Israel from the political Left, with self-hating Jews, as well as the Palestinians. This coalition appears to have waited for an opportunity to launch the boycott at a time when the world was condemning Israel [...]*".⁸⁷

Steven Rose, the chief supporter of the academic boycott, explained his point of view, which is a blend of his focused political agenda and ethical considerations: "[...] *The boycott, we are told, damages academic freedom, picks on Israel, and encourages anti-Semitism on British campuses [...]* Academic freedom, it appears, applies to Israelis but not Palestinians, whose universities have been arbitrarily closed [...]. *If academic freedom means anything, it must be indivisible [...]*".⁸⁸ "[...] *Why pick on Israel? [...]*" Rose asks rhetorically. Yet he answers: "[...] *boycott is merely a specific tactic, a non-violent weapon available to individual members of civil society. It is only one form of protest [...]*".⁸⁹

In his *Boycotter, boycott thyself* (2007), Alexander Yakobson attacks the way some intellectuals draw a distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism. To him, saying that Israel is an American imperialist agent is as illegitimate as saying that America is a puppet of Israel and international Zionism. He criticizes the intellectuals who find the first criticism legitimate and the second one anti-Semitic. Yakobson says that "[...] *whatever mixture of ideas, emotions and calculations drives these people, one thing is clear: the anti-Israel boycott cannot be justified by reference to universal principles [...]* It is an entirely particularistic attack on the Jewish state [...]"⁹⁰

Clearly, by stating that "[...] *The Israeli academy has contributed, either directly or indirectly, to maintaining, defending or otherwise justifying the military occupation and colonisation of the West Bank and Gaza [...]*",⁹¹ the boycotters implied that their action is motivated purely by the quest for intellectual and political justice, thereby canalizing the debate over the boycott into hard-core political channels.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Steven Rose, " Why pick on Israel? Because its actions are wrong", *The Independent*, Monday, 4 June 2007. See at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/steven-rose-why-pick-on-israel-because-its-actions-are-wrong-451648.html>

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Alexander Yakobson, *Boycotter, boycott thyself*, Edition 26 Volume 5 - July 05, 2007 See at: <http://www.bitterlemons-international.org/previous.php?opt=1&id=187#763>

⁹¹ Fraser, 2005.

Despite the vigorous public and academic debate in Britain, as well as in Israel, over the academic boycott, one of the most significant aspects of the boycott initiative has been left frequently unnoticed. It seems that the public and academic debated have almost completely overlooked the abnormal fact that some of the instigators and vocal supporters of the anti-Israel boycott were Anglo-Jewish intellectuals, namely, Steven Rose, Jacqueline Rose and Haim Bresheeth.⁹²

Very few people, notably Anthony Julius and Alan Dershowitz, explored the *nature* of the Anglo-Jewish intellectuals' involvement in the academic boycott initiative. They said: "[...] *First, they maintain that as Jews they are under a moral duty to campaign for a boycott. Their Jewish conscience requires them, they believe, to side with Israel's enemies. Second, they give cover to non-Jewish boycotters accused of anti-Semitism. An anti-Semitic position, they believe, ceases to be anti-Semitic when adopted by a Jew [...]*."⁹³ Julius and Dershowitz thus emphasized the political dimension of Anglo-Jewish involvement, implying that some English Jews have volunteered to serve as the fig leaf of intellectual anti-Semitism.

Jacqueline Rose, albeit a prominent supporter of the academic boycott, was willing to risk touching on the more profound aspect of English Jewish intellectuals' advocacy of the boycott measure: "[...] *True, there is a risk of boycott hardening the identity you are trying to open up. But at certain moments you must recognize that you are involved in different kinds of political calculation [...]*."⁹⁴ The words of Rose, as well as those of Julius and Dershowitz, raise tough questions such as; is it possible that the involvement of Anglo-Jewish intellectuals in the boycott is not an anomaly at all but a radicalization of the dual loyalty phenomenon discussed earlier? If so, could it be that Anglo-Jewish involvement in the academic boycott was less a political protest of Israel's conduct towards the Palestinian, and more an urge to challenge mainstream traditional Anglo-Jewish identity? These questions, as well as others, are at the heart of the following chapter.

⁹² <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1208870533173&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

⁹³ Anthony Julius and Alan Dershowitz, "The contemporary fight against anti-Semitism", *Times online*, June 13, 2007. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article1928865.ece

⁹⁴ Rosemary Belcher & Jacqueline Rose, "Nation as Trauma, Zionism as Question: Jacqueline Rose interviewed", 18 August, 2005. http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/zionism_2766.jsp

The Challenge of Redefining Traditional Zionist Categories

Discussion

This chapter focuses on the motivation behind the Anglo-Jewish intellectual involvement in the boycott. This will be done by both 'elite interviews' conducted in London in 2007 and key findings from the 1995 JPR survey – the largest carried out to date. The discussion here will show that Anglo-Jewish intellectuals are not motivated solely by political protest of Israel's conduct towards the Palestinians but by an internal drive for a new definition for Anglo-Jewish identity today. This drive, which is prevalent among secular British Jews, further aggravates the confusion in which English Jews find themselves when reaching out for a clear identity. It will be shown that some Anglo-Jewish intellectuals may be using the academic boycott initiative partly as the outward guise for an inner drive to redefine the boundaries of Jewish identity and community.

As seen previously in the words of Fraser and Gerstenfeld, Anglo-Jewish intellectuals' support for the academic boycott is treated often as a political form of Jewish anti-Zionism. However, Anthony Julius maintains that: "*[...] The contemporary Jewish Question: What are Diaspora Jewry's obligations to Israel? And by reference to what (Jewish?) principles were these obligations to be defined? This is on top of questions that already existed as part of the Jewish Question in Europe: Are Jews to be defined as a nation or a religion – and then, what version of Judaism, what kind of Jewish nation? How should Jewish history be understood, and what aspects of it speak to contemporary concerns? Where, how, and with whom should Jews live, "here" in the Diaspora, "there" in Palestine – and with what minority / majority rights and status? In what language or languages should they express themselves as Jews? With what broader political movements, if any, should they ally? From what broader ideologies should they take direction [...]*"⁹⁵

The passage above illustrates that the 'Israel question' inherently bears on the inner 'Anglo-Jewish question'. Whether or not to support Israel's treatment of the Palestinians is a decision that touches on the most delicate issues of Anglo-Jewish self-identity. It will be seen later that politics accounts for only *one* aspect of the Anglo-Jewish intellectuals'

⁹⁵Anthony Julius, "Jewish Anti-Zionism Unraveled: The Morality of Vanity (Part 1)", March 2008.
<http://www.z-word.com/z-word-essays/jewish-anti-zionism-unravelled%253A--the-morality-of-vanity-%2528part-1%2529.html>

support of the academic boycott, and this support is a loud and defiant declaration of who they are.

On the same note, Hobsbawm claims: "[...] *there are Jews [...] who do not agree with the apparent consensus within the Jewish community that the only good Jew is one who supports Israel [...]*."⁹⁶ According to Brian Klug, this refusal to "support" Israel leads to the formulation: "*Israel is one thing, Jewry another*".⁹⁷ So far from Zionism being inextricably implicated in Jewish identity, fidelity to Judaism demands that Israel be criticized and one's distance from Zionism be affirmed.⁹⁸ Hence, Israel as a state is caught in the middle of an internal debate on the nature of Anglo-Jewish identity. Must a Jew criticize Israel and be the cosmopolitan Jew, loyal to international Jewry but to nothing else⁹⁹ in order to prove himself a moral Jew? Or must he be a Zionist?

By the same token, the words of Jacqueline Rose are self-evident: "[...] *When people ask why my book contains no critique of Arab or Palestinian nationalism, I cite Edward's [Said] late use of humanism and (crucially) music to propose a different form of national identity: modulated, subtle, supple, open and aware of its own provisionally [...]*".¹⁰⁰ This assertion indicates that Rose's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rooted in her wish to redefine Anglo-Jewish identity. Consequently, it is safe to assume that the exploration of new forms of national identity may lead her to actively support the academic boycott.

Steven Rose goes to the heart of the Anglo-Jewish debate over the boycott: "[...] *Lurking behind the thinking of even well-meaning opponents of the boycott is that it is in some way anti-Semitic. This ignores the fact that the boycott is of Israeli institutions, not individuals (so it would affect the tiny number of Palestinian academics in Israeli institutions, but not a Jewish Israeli working in the UK or US). Second, it ignores the fact that the British Jewish community is itself intensely divided over Israel, between those who will defend Israel at all costs, and the increasingly vocal critics who insist 'not in our name' [...]*".¹⁰¹ Rose helps us understand the highly personal rationale behind the political decision over supporting the boycott.

Rose takes this a step further. This support goes beyond the redefinition of the boundaries of Anglo-Jewish identity and throws down the gauntlet against mainstream

⁹⁶ Martin Hodgson, "British Jews break away from 'pro-Israeli' Board of Deputies," *Independent*, 5 February 2007.

⁹⁷ Brian Klug, "The Myth of the New Antisemitism," *Nation*, 2 February 2004.

⁹⁸ Julius, 2008, *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Alderman, p. 281.

¹⁰⁰ Belcher & Rose, *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Steven Rose, *ibid.*

Anglo-Jewish communal identity per se. Antony Lerman, executive director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) in London suggests that recent findings regarding contemporary Jewry in Britain: "[...] enforce a rethink of the nature and boundaries of what is called the 'Jewish community' [...]." ¹⁰² Lerman maintains that "[...] recent controversies have shown that there is still a very strong tendency to draw sharp distinctions between who is and who is not part of the 'community' [...]". ¹⁰³ As shown by various quotations brought here, Anglo-Jewish intellectuals are striving through the academic boycott vehicle to redraw the core distinctions between who should and who should not be a part of the Jewish community.

Emanuel Ottolenghi's book review on Jacqueline Rose's *The Question of Zion* touches on this point: "[...] Rather than accepting that her unease with Israel and Zionism is a symptom of the fact that she does not feel she 'belongs,' Rose builds a highly inaccurate, historically flawed depiction of what Zionism is—with not a few factual mistakes—in order to show that it is actually those Jews who either embraced Zionism or at least support Israel from the Diaspora who do not 'belong' [...]." ¹⁰⁴ Ottolenghi thus confirms that Rose's reconstruction of Israel's history first and foremost challenges traditional Jewish identity.

Lerman also makes an effort to explain the rationale which guides her and her fellow thinkers: "[...] The idea that they can only be considered part of the community if they pass some 'test' of having certain political sympathies, being members of Jewish organizations, having years of track record of being Jewishly involved, looks completely out of touch. 'Community' is wherever Jews are and whatever Jews do. Boundaries are porous and that's a fact of life [...]." ¹⁰⁵ Thus, the intellectuals' active support of the boycott is meant to stretch the boundaries of contemporary Anglo-Jewish identity.

This purpose is most clearly understood as a contributing factor from a close look at the confusion characterizes Anglo-Jewish self-identity today. According to Lerman, no single definition covers the contemporary British Jewish community as a whole when individuals are canvassed. Lerman therefore wonders: Are they "[...] Jews in Britain, or British Jews [...]" ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Antony Lerman, "Revealing Jewish Diversity", 17 May 2007, *JPR*, See at: <http://www.jpr.org.uk/discuss/blog.php?id=10>

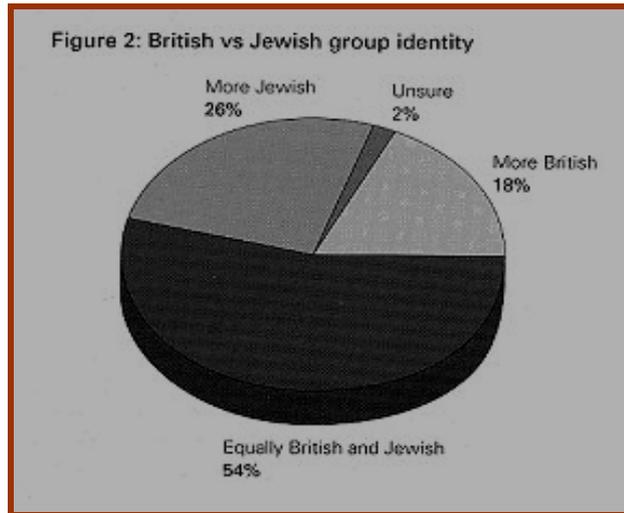
¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Emanuel Ottolenghi, "Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion: A Book Review*", *Israel Studies*, 11 (1), 2006, p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ Lerman, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Figure 1



Source: Kosmin, Lerman and Goldberg, *The Attachment of British Jews to Israel*, JPR, No. 5, 1997.

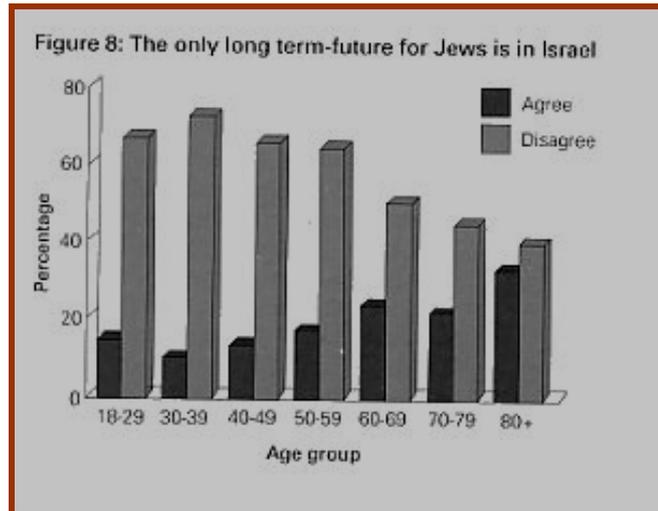
Figure 1 entitled *The Attachment of British Jews to Israel*, shows British Jewry to be divided approximately in two: 54% feel equally British and Jewish and 44% feel either more Jewish or more British, with only 2% unsure. The fact that most British Jews feel equally British and Jewish may embody the updated variant of the dual-loyalty dilemma of most British Jews as they agonize over the dominant aspect of their personal identity. This sense of split identity leaves Anglo-Jewish intellectuals groping for clear self-identification which they attempt to anchor by criticizing Israel and attaching themselves to measures like the academic boycott.

The data in Figure 2 illustrate the declining Anglo-Jewish commitment to the traditional Jewish categories which was mentioned in the previous chapter. Kosmin et al. note that: "[...] an essential feature of classic Zionist ideology is the belief that only in a sovereign Jewish state is there a secure long-term future for Jews [...]"¹⁰⁷ However, Hobsbawm refers to periodical fluctuations in the ways Jews perceive the Diaspora versus life in the Jewish state, which affect the sustainability of secular Jewish identity in principle.¹⁰⁸ Figure 2 shows that 61% of the total sample disagree with the statement: "the only long-term future for Jews is in Israel." This reflects an effective rejection of classic Zionism.

¹⁰⁷ Kosmin et al., *The Attachment of British Jews to Israel*, (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 1997).

¹⁰⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, "Benefits of Diaspora", *London Review of Books*, 20 Oct. 2005. Also available online at: http://www.lrb.co.uk/v27/n20/hobs01_.html.

Figure 2



Source: Kosmin, Lerman and Goldberg: *The Attachment of British Jews to Israel*, JPR, No. 5, 1997.

In every age group, the majority disputes the contention that “*the only long-term future for Jews is in Israel*”, although the age groups’ responses vary: 18-to-39-year-olds strongly reject the premise.¹⁰⁹ The older age groups, particularly the 80-plus group, were less inclined to disagree. Accordingly, Figure 2 illustrates that the commitment to traditional Zionism which is highest among the older group declines sharply in the next generations. More importantly, the age group of 18-39, which most strongly rejects the classical Zionist premise, also surprisingly holds strongly to its Jewish identity above its British-ness - as illustrated in Figure 1.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, young British Jews’ disassociation from the traditional affinity for Israel does not signify denial of their Jewish identity, but rather a need to explore new horizons to redefine Jewish identity for the present and the future.

As traditional values of Jewish identity become indistinct and new ones come into being, a void develops in which anti-Zionist viewpoints as manifested in the academic boycott flourish. Julius states that: “[...] *This new Jewish anti-Zionism inaugurates a return for many Jews to some kind of Jewish identity. They no longer seek, as with previous generations, to relieve themselves of the burden of their Jewish origins; rather, they reassume the burden, in order further to burden their fellow Jews [...]*”.¹¹¹

On the same note, JPR researcher Marlana Schmool associates the current criticism of Israel with the systematic decline of Jewish tradition in the British Diaspora.

¹⁰⁹ Kosmin et. Al, *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Julius, *ibid.*

Surrounding trends, political and familial, greatly affect the individual Jew's perception of his position within the community. Schmool emphasizes in her research that this drift away from traditional roles is most pronounced among young secular Jews, who attribute greater importance to "feeling Jewish"¹¹² than to any formal definitions or ritual.¹¹³ Thus, the intellectual Anglo-Jewish support of the academic boycott initiative could be understood in the context of a 'rebellion' against Anglo-Jewry's traditional identity and a search for new values.

The discussion here suggested that British Jewish intellectuals' participation in the academic boycott initiative comes from their aspiration to challenge and redesign the boundaries of Jewish community and make them compatible with a secular Anglo-Jewish identity. A dominant dimension of this challenge is their *politically deviant* posture as anti-Zionists to distinguish themselves from the majority Jewish *bon ton*. This is but a symptom of the pain they undergo in giving birth to a new brand of secular Jewish-ness. This posture can also be interpreted as the outward guise of an inner drive to redefine the boundaries of Jewish identity and community. Anti-Zionism may appeal to some as an easy escape from addressing their uncertainties about identity and community by attacking the seemingly parallel uncertainties of Israel's boundaries and existence.

In conclusion, the discussion here sheds new light on Jewish intellectuals' active participation in promoting an academic boycott against Israeli academe. It demonstrates that their engagement in the academic boycott and criticism of Israel and its policies is subsidiary to their overriding quandary over identity. It would appear that their adherence to the anti-Israel academic boycott is not meant as political betrayal but rather a mutiny against the Anglo-Jewish identity which they inherited.

¹¹² See in: Miller et al., *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews*, (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, No. 1, 1996); Gitelman et al. (eds.), *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2003).

¹¹³ Graham, 2004, p. 24.

Summary and Conclusion

Ironically, by the time this study was handed out for print, it was published that one hundred Anglo-Jewish intellectuals announced in *The Guardian* that they "[...] cannot celebrate the birthday of a state founded on terrorism, massacres and the dispossession of another people from their land [...]".¹¹⁴ According to *The Jerusalem Post*, Signatories include playwright Harold Pinter, award-winning actress Miriam Margolyes, British Radio 4 broadcaster Mike Rosen, Daniel Machover, the lawyer who filed charges of 'war crimes' against IDF reservist Doron Almog and Haim Bresheeth, the academic who issued the call for an academic boycott of Israel.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the authors call the celebrations of the state's founding "understandable" in the light of the Holocaust.¹¹⁶

True, 100 Jewish intellectuals signed this petition. Many others did not. This study dealt with this minority as it recognizes, in Yaacov Talmon's vital words, that in front of the consolidation of integral nationalism on one pole, stand the sinking Zionist belief on the other pole.¹¹⁷ These two edges, he said, are maybe numerically small minorities, but these flowery characters of an active temperament who face an embarrassed public are extremely meaningful as symptoms and as the future's heralds.¹¹⁸ This is to say that the current criticism against Israel's conducting toward the Palestinians, as manifested in the academic boycott initiative, is in fact a symptom of a deeper crisis among Anglo-Jewry.

This study illustrated why today it is crucial than ever before, to explore the place of Israel in the lives and thoughts of British Jews especially in light of the Jewish support given to the academic boycott initiative, and the changing attitudes toward the Jewish state's long-term existence. This may also be seen as a symptom of the muddle between the uncertain boundaries of community and the undefined boundaries of the Jewish state. I have also found that political antipathy can often be interpreted as the outward guise of an inner drive to redefine the boundaries of Jewish identity and community. Perhaps these apparently anti-Israel, anti-Zionist expressions are coded symptoms of far more profound changes in contemporary perceptions of Jewish identity and history. Thus, contemporary

¹¹⁴ <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1208870533173&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Yaacov Talmon, *Hidat Ha'hove Ve-Ormat Ha'historia*, (Jerusalem: The Bialik Publications, 2002), p. 101.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

critique of Zionism derives from the weakening of British Jewry's group identity as a result of a quest to define more broadly the so-called Jewish community.¹¹⁹

Moreover, this study offers an alternative interpretation of the Jewish involvement in promoting the academic boycott, suggesting that it is basically an attempt to challenge the mainstream Anglo-Jewish traditional sympathies since 1945. Hence, this is more than a political debate over Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and whether or not an academic boycott is a legitimate tool of political protest. This can be the Harold of the 21 Century's debate over secular Jewish identity. Jacqueline Rose said: "[...] *My worry about identity politics is that it fossilizes something, whereas we should be working for greater mobility about who we can be [...].*"¹²⁰ The question remains whether contemporary European Jewish identity, that has been uniquely influenced by three historio-political developments - the rise and fall of communism, the Holocaust and the increasing secularization of European society at large -¹²¹ can practically fulfill Rose's wish.

On the other hand, Zionism for many, remains "[...] *an entangled web of divergent schools that draw different conclusions from the dogmas of Jewish religion and the realities of Jewish history [...] one of which stresses the overwhelming primacy of the existence of Judaism over the existence or well being of the Jews, and the other looking forward to the normalization of the life of the Jewish people as a nation like other nations [...].*"¹²² Further research is needed to explore the manners by which Zionism is about to embrace contemporary predicaments, as such profound ideological chasms do not appear to have ever existed in any of the European national movements.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Lerman, *ibid.*

¹²⁰ http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-debate_97/zionism_2766.jsp

¹²¹ David Graham, *European Jewish Identity at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2004).

¹²² Ben-Israel, *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

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