

Highlights from JPPI report:

- Page 5: “Assertions that Israel should be ‘only Jewish’ of ‘only democratic’ are outside the consensus view of Diaspora Jews.”
- Page 6: “The dominant view was unmistakable: the desire to see an Israel that is both Jewish and democratic, and the assumption that such a combination is certainly possible, despite the tensions involved.”
- Page 6: “The ambiguity inherent in the precise definition of ‘Jewish and democratic’ is perceived by many as an advantage as it makes it possible to maintain partnership and avoid factionalism and division.”
- Page 6: “For many Diaspora Jews, democratic values are considered ‘Jewish’ values... if Israel is not a liberal democracy, its attractiveness to many Diaspora Jews will erode.”
- Page 6: “The regional reality also does not grant Israel immunity from criticism.”
- Page 7: “Diaspora Jews have a variety of expectations of Israel: -That Israel be pluralistic... -That Israel put an end to the Orthodox monopoly over Jewish life and give equal standing to all Jewish streams... -That Israel avoid imposing religious norms on its mostly secular civil society...”
- Page 12: **“Indeed, the issue of Israel’s Jewish nature is one of the world Jewish community’s strongest messages in this report: If Israel wants to be ‘Jewish and democratic’ in a way that speaks to non-Israeli Jews, it needs to first modify its understanding of what beings ‘Jewish’ means to many millions of Jews today – and find a way to more inclusive of them.”**
- Page 13: **“To Diaspora Jews – not being inclusive and tolerant of other types of Judaism makes Israel less ‘democratic.’”**
- Page 13: “For many Jews, some of the appeal of the formulation Jewish and democratic is in its vagueness.”
- Page 14: “One message, however, was conveyed throughout the process with no ambiguity: Jews around the world would like to be consulted by Israel on matters of importance to them, and many of them believe that these consultations should have more impact on Israel’s policies.”
- Page 17: “Israel formally adopted the Jewish and democratic formulation fairly recently, with passage in the early 1990s of two Basic Laws containing that phrase.”
- Page 17: **“The need for legislative compromise stemmed from what some legislators perceived as an inherent tension (some say: contradiction) between Jewish and democratic values and interests. The more democracy represents values of equality and neutrality, the less compatible it will be with an emphasis on ‘particularistic foundations on the state level.’ And the more Jewish frames the contours for policymaking, the less compatible resulting policy will be with neutral democratic values.”**
- Page 18: “A balancing act is needed... Israeli scholars have... demonstrated that the interlacing of Jewish and democratic values without one compromising the other is possible, and by most accounts also desirable.”
- Page 18: **“We identified two main fields in which the occasional tension between Jewish and democratic arises. There is an internal debate on state-religion issues... and a Jewish-Arab tension integral to majority-minority relations...”**
- Page 19: “Prof. Gavison and JPPI were convinced that an investigation of the perspectives of non-Israeli Jews on the matter at hand was necessary:

- Jewish communities around the world contributed significantly to the building of the State of Israel and are asked to keep contributing...
- Israel was established to answer to the “natural right of the Jewish People” ...
- Israel’s self-definition may influence the way Jews are perceived by non-Jews...
- Definitions Israel employs to determine the question of “who is a Jew” may also effect Jews who are not currently Israeli citizens
- Changes to Israel’s character have the potential to impact the way Israel relates to Jews around the world...
- ... non-Israeli Jews have a unique vantage point on this matter...
- Page 21: Clearly, few Jews in the world would instinctively list the Jewish-democratic tension as one of Israel’s most pressing problems. Still, in JPPI seminars, as the matter was raised and discussed, participants seemed to quickly grasp how integral questions regarding Israel’s desired character are to almost every Israel-related issue they contemplate.
- Page 22: The “Jewish and democratic” formula is embraced by virtually all parties to the debate... there are relatively few instances in which the formulation itself is challenged as unfit for use.
- Page 22: Jews who live in different countries have...
 - An understandably special sensitivity to minority rights...
 - A special interest in keeping ethnic-religious identity away from politics...
 - A harder time with the national aspect of Judaism...
- Page 23: As one participant in Canada said: “Core Jewish values are democratic ones and there is no conflict between Jewish and democratic.
- Page 24: They... strongly want it to retain its definition as Jewish, while understanding that this definition can complicate various aspects of democracy as they understand it.
- Page 24: Many of them were quick to surrender to the fact that Israel is not “religiously” but rather “nationally” Jewish... yet... religion should continue to play a role in Israel’s public life... “Jewish is a religious definition,” claimed a participant in a San Francisco seminar.
- Page 25: Even though Israel’s demand for recognition as a Jewish state is somewhat controversial, and even though about half of US Jews have little trust in Israel’s government’s sincerity in peacemaking, an overwhelming majority of US Jews supports the demand.
- Page 26: The recent Pew study of American Jews found that about 70% of Jews feel a strong or some emotional attachment to Israel. Another recent study found that 70% of American Jews strongly or somewhat agree with the statement: “Caring about Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew.”
- Page 27: There is no urgency for Israel or the Diaspora, to set in stone what is meant by a Jewish and democratic state.
- Page 28: Rabbi Eric Yoffie: “If you fail to affirm your commitment to Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, you are also outside the camp.”
- Page 29: Not all interpretations of the term “Jewish and democratic” are identical.
- Page 32: One phenomenon that is associated with the younger generation of Jews is their growing impatience with any boundaries that preclude hearing the range of views acceptable to the Jewish community.
- Page 33: One area in which a clear majority of Jews express dissatisfaction with Israel’s standards... is the relationship of religion and state.

- Page 33: Rabbi Rick Jacobs... said, “[Israel is the only democracy in the world that legally discriminates against the streams of Judaism representing the majority of Jews in the world and the overwhelming number of Jews in the US.]”
- Page 34: Criticism of Israel has become more acceptable in recent years, and much more common in Jewish circles.
- Page 35: Paradoxically, it seems that one of the reasons [for which identified Jews feel freer to criticize Israel than in the past] is precisely because Israel’s fundamental security and stability seem assured.
- Page 35: The criticisms expressed can be divided into five main themes:
 - A disenfranchised Palestinian society
 - Inequality between Jews and Arabs within Israel
 - Enforcement of Orthodox behavioral norms
 - The dominant force of Orthodox Judaism, which ignores Jewish variety
 - Israelis’ ignorance of Jewish traditions, values and history
- Page 37: We found a cross-denominational dissatisfaction with Israel’s rabbinate... [also] sharp criticism of Israel’s marriage and conversion laws.
- Page 37: Most Jews want few if any laws regulating Shabbat, beyond the law designating Shabbat as the official day of rest. Most seem reluctant to accept laws regulating dietary restrictions.
- Page 39: In some cases the desire to free Shabbat of government involvement was also based on the assumption that such involvement erodes rather than strengthens the power of Shabbat. “If Orthodox Judaism was not rammed down people’s throats, there would be a greater appreciation of the religious Jewish dimension of identity.”
- Page 40: Two diametrically opposed opinions were voiced. One was that “any institutionalization of Shabbat rules constitutes a violation of democracy... but... some participants also expressed the opposite opinion: losing “the Shabbat atmosphere... would turn Israel into just any other country and its specialness would be lost.” A third opinion... like an attempt to bridge the two... “There should be local decisions concerning how to handle Shabbat...”
- Page 41: The state could support institutions and programs that aim to assist Israelis with practicing their Jewishness in certain ways, but that if it does give such support then it should make it available to all streams of Judaism and also to “civic alternatives” that are religiously and culturally neutral.
- Page 41: Most participants agreed that Israel should be more inclusive and pluralistic about its Judaism. This issue was front and center in all discussions about the Jewish character of Israel.
- Page 41: Jews in communities all around the world seem to agree that Israel’s Orthodox monopoly is not compatible with it being Jewish and democratic... It makes Israel less Jewish, in the eyes of these Jews, as it limits the full participation of all Jews in the life of the Jewish state...
- Page 42: The Western Wall controversy... is still a sore wound that has greatly affected the way non-Orthodox Jews view Israel.
- Page 43: The assertion... that an Orthodox monopoly on Israel’s Judaism is undemocratic was very common... this was raised in regards to... the issue of marriage laws in Israel.
- Page 43: Israel’s current system... may or may not assist in preserving Jewish lineage, but it definitely has negative implications on preserving a value-based unity of the Jewish people.

- Page 57: Most Israeli Jews believe that Israel's future largely depends on the Diaspora; Diaspora Jews feel more confident in their right to have a voice in Israel's Jewish matters, but less so when it comes to foreign and defense policy.
- Page 58: Many diaspora Jews have chosen to no longer support Israel broadly and generally, but rather to support Israel-related causes compatible with their own political beliefs.
- Page 58: The Jewish world is more willing to engage Israel on a personal and active level. A sign – in the case applied to the US community – that “more American Jews care sufficiently about Israel to seek to influence her.”
- Page 59: For Israel, the connection to world-Jewry is part of its core mission. This was acknowledged quite tellingly in the recent High Court decisions rejecting a plea to recognize “Israeli” as a nationality.
- Page 59: Many Israelis understand the essential importance of relations with Diaspora Jewry, and are also beginning to understand that a change in the nature of these relations is underway. A broad Israeli acceptance of Diaspora criticism of Israel – at least in theory – is evident...
- Page 63: A majority of Israelis: ... World Jewry makes a better case for attempting to influence Israel on matters related to Judaism than on matters directly related to foreign affairs and security.
- Page 63: 70% of Israelis agreed that the Knesset should “consider the Diaspora when deliberating on legislation like ‘who is a Jew.’”
- Page 64: Israelis... share their unfavorable view of how state-religion affairs are handled in Israel. A recent poll found that 76% of Israelis are unsatisfied with the government's handling of religious affairs in Israel.