

CHAPTER

13

JEWISH CONSCIENCE AND THE SIZE OF ISRAEL



There are many people around the globe who do not like the idea of a larger Israel. Included among them are many Jews.

One of the great hallmarks of Judaism is an ethic that holds that all people, no matter what their faith or point of view are entitled to live in dignity and with respect. This is one reason many Jews in America question Israel's use of force in the territories. Sadly, Jews as a people are all too often willing to go to the back of the bus to ensure that others feel respected. In taking the back seat, there is a lack of self-respect, and a lack of moral clarity.

Some don't accept that in order for Israel to actually survive, terrorists, the agents of those who wish Israel destroyed, must be fought. Fighting terrorists isn't always so clean. Innocent people get hurt. Sometimes the fighting leads to the creation of tomorrow's terrorists.

But this squeamishness in the face of a deadly enemy

is not the only issue. Maybe it is a trait stemming from generations of suffering as second-class “guests” in the land of others, or maybe it is something else, but most Jews do not want Jews to be seen as the international squeaky wheel. Some Jews in the Diaspora aren’t sure Israel really should exist either. They question the legitimacy of the 1947 United Nations partition plan. They do not delve deeply enough into history to appreciate that Jews lived in Israel long before the United Nations General Assembly sanctioned Israel’s existence. It is not right to annul history, yet without historical study many have come to a faulty conclusion.

Arabs and radical Islamists get away with murder, literally. They suffer little international wrath for their crimes against civilians—civilians oftentimes in their midst to lend a helping hand. Israel does not enjoy the same luxury. Most of the free press in the Middle East operates out of Jerusalem. This makes sense since Israel is the only democracy in the region. Only in Israel can the press freely operate. It is easier and much safer for a journalist to question Israel than to challenge any other entity in the region. Israel’s image is hurt among every well-read individual whose primary source of Middle Eastern news is from the traditional media outlets in Jerusalem. It is hurt among Jews in the Diaspora.

As the generations of Diaspora Jews who remember what it was like to live as a Jew before there was an Israel, die out, they are replaced by new generations who take the benefits of Israel’s existence for granted.¹ Perhaps it is only natural for the rift between American Jews—the only significant Diaspora population left—and the Israeli Jews to have widened. Younger American Jews don’t feel the tie to Israel and offer it less support. Many Israeli Jews resent Diaspora Jews for not participating in the pain of living in Israel. Other Israeli Jews don’t understand why Jews living outside of Israel should care about Israel at all. They think