

ARTICLE

“The Edge of the Abyss”: The Origins of the Israel Lobby, 1949–1954

Doug Rossinow

The main components of the Israel lobby in the United States were organized in the spring of 1954, six years after the State of Israel declared independence, in response to a crisis in U.S.–Israel diplomacy that erupted in October 1953. Israeli soldiers had massacred more than sixty Palestinian villagers in Qibya, on the West Bank, eliciting widespread condemnation; American Jews, in reply, mobilized to defend Israel in new ways. The American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs (later renamed AIPAC) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, established at this time, displayed two outstanding features. They were Jewish united front organizations that brought together Zionist with “non-Zionist” groups. They also emerged from transnational contacts with Israeli leaders and realities. A staunch near-consensus in defense of Israel in the most trying circumstances established a lasting framework in American Jewish life.

The Israel lobby in the United States was born not only of the needs and desires of Americans, but also of violence and conflict in a place far from American shores. This lobby was made in many places—not only in Washington, DC, and New York, but also in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and the Jordanian-occupied West Bank of Palestine. In the years soon after the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, the most active U.S. supporters of Israel were Jews, often (though not always) self-identified Zionists. They could not ignore the actions and demands of Israeli leaders, who sometimes reached across borders to intervene forcefully in American Jewish affairs, and whose actions had powerful repercussions for the U.S. government’s foreign relations. At the same time, the internal dynamics of American Jewish life and the complex interactions between American Jewry and Israeli leaders shaped and directed the evolution of the Israel lobby.

The American “lobby for Israel,” as I. L. Kenen called it, has been a matter of high interest at least since the 1980s, yet its true history, and particularly its beginnings in the early 1950s, remain obscure.¹ Kenen for twenty years ran the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which would become the best-known element of the lobby. This organization’s original name had been the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs (AZCPA), and it had begun operations in 1954. Much excellent scholarship on U.S.–Israel relations in the 1950s exists.² However, in this international history, Jewish groups and activists make only cameo

I wish to thank for their help Rebecca Lowen, Melani McAlister, Amy Kaplan, the members of the samtidshistoriefaggruppe at the University of Oslo, and *Modern American History*’s editors and reviewers.

¹I. L. Kenen, *Israel’s Defense Line: Her Friends and Foes in Washington* (Buffalo, NY, 1981), 66.

²Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen, eds., *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences* (New York, 1989); Michael B. Oren, *The Origins of the Second Arab-Israel War: Egypt, Israel and the Great Powers, 1952–56* (London, 1992); Isaac Alteras, *Eisenhower and Israel: U.S.–Israeli Relations, 1953–1960* (Gainesville, FL, 1993); Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, vol. 3: *The United Nations, the Great Powers and Middle East Peacemaking, 1948–1954* (London, 1997); Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, vol. 4: *Operation Alpha and the Failure of Anglo-American Coercive Diplomacy in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1954–1956* (London, 1997); Peter L. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1945–1961* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004); and Salim Yaqub, *Containing*

appearances.³ More surprising, this formative era in the organization of pro-Israel forces in the United States has been neglected in histories of American Jewry.⁴ The same is true even of works on American Zionism, most of which analyze the pre-1948 era.⁵ The basic text on U.S. Zionism after 1948 terms the 1950s “a period of marking time.”⁶ According to such narratives, that “time” was an inward-turning era—one that ended, in a real sense, only with the 1967 “Six-Day War” between Israel and its Arab neighbors, when Jews in the United States supposedly became preoccupied with Middle Eastern affairs for the first time since the 1940s.⁷ There is truth in that version of events, but the story ought to be fuller and more complicated.

A satisfactory history of the Israel lobby must map the interior debates and strategies that engrossed American Jews who led the way in building U.S. support for Israel, while also tracing the transnational connections between the State of Israel and its American champions. Existing works have done neither adequately. A journalistic literature of disclosure has repeatedly “revealed” the lobby’s presence, its structure, and its activities, but serious historical scholarship on this topic remains stunted.⁸ The history of the lobby, most unfortunately, has remained sealed off from pertinent events in Israel and the Middle East. The work of the “new historians” of Israel, which has made the interpretation of the Zionist/Israeli past

Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004). Works giving longer perspective include Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002); Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East* (Boston, 2004); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, updated edition (Berkeley, CA, 2005); and Peter L. Hahn, *Crisis and Crossfire: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Washington, DC, 2005).

³For exceptions to this rule, see Zvi Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship: American Jewish Leadership and Israel, 1948–1957* (Syracuse, NY, 2005) and Ariel L. Feldstein, *Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry: 1948–1963* (London, 2006). Works focused on the 1940s, and specifically on the buildup to the U.S. recognition of Israel in 1948, integrate American Jewish activists into international history. See Zvi Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945–1948* (London, 1979); Menahem Kaufman, *An Ambiguous Partnership: Non-Zionists and Zionists in America, 1939–1948* (Detroit, 1991); and Allon Gal, *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for a Jewish State* (Jerusalem, 1991).

⁴For surveys, see Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654–2000* (Berkeley, CA, 2004); Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT, 2004); and, on the postwar era specifically, Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore, 1992).

⁵Important works include Ben Halpern, *The Idea of a Jewish State* (Cambridge, MA, 1961); Naomi W. Cohen, *American Jews and the Zionist Idea* (New York, 1975); Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City, NY, 1976); Ben Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes: Brandeis, Weizmann, and American Zionism* (New York, 1987); Naomi W. Cohen, *The Year After the Riots: American Responses to the Palestine Crisis, 1929–30* (Detroit, 1988); Michael Brown, *The Israeli-American Connection: Its Roots in the Yishuv, 1914–1945* (Detroit, 1996); Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York, 1998); Baila Round Shargel, “American Jewish Women in Palestine: Bessie Gotsfeld, Henrietta Szold, and Zionist Enterprise,” *American Jewish History* 90, no. 2 (June 2002): 141–60; Naomi W. Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897–1948* (Hanover, NH, 2003); Shulamit Reinharz and Mark A. Raider, eds., *American Jewish Women and the Zionist Enterprise* (Hanover, NH, 2004); Erica B. Simmons, *Hadassah and the Zionist Project* (Lanham, MD, 2006).

⁶Melvin I. Urofsky, *We Are One! American Jewry and Israel* (Garden City, NY, 1978), 317.

⁷For discussion, see Joshua Michael Zeitz, “‘If I am not for myself . . .’: The American Jewish Establishment in the Aftermath of the Six Day War,” *American Jewish History* 88, no. 2 (June 2000): 253–86.

⁸Paul Findley, *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel’s Lobby* (Westport, CT, 1985); Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1987); George W. Ball and Douglas B. Ball, *The Passionate Attachment: America’s Involvement with Israel, 1947 to the Present* (New York, 1992); J. J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment* (Reading, MA, 1996); and John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, 2007). Also see David Howard Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel* (Westport, CT, 1990) and Tony Smith, *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

a site of notable intellectual ferment for thirty years, has been all but untouched by historians of American Zionism.⁹

The story of the Israel lobby's origins, while vividly illustrating the intertwined domestic and international dimensions of this phenomenon, also sheds light on the later course of pro-Israel work. The new lobby was not very powerful when it first formed in the 1950s, and it did not set or alter the direction of U.S. Middle East policy. But early activists established a rhetoric and ambience that the larger numbers who followed them later were obliged to respect, and the lobby's influence (and, in time, its notoriety) would grow. By the 1960s it had helped to secure U.S. weapons sales and generous U.S. government assistance to Israel, and later it would continue to strengthen the political and strategic ties between the two polities.¹⁰ The structures built during the lobby's earliest years would shape the later responses of Jews and other Americans to the Middle East profoundly.

The most basic reality of the "interior" history of the Israel lobby in its early years was that it was very much a Jewish phenomenon—established by leading American Jewish activists and organizations without non-Jewish participation, and shaped by the divisions and negotiations intrinsic to Jewish communal life in the United States after World War II. Organized Christian support for the Zionist cause, which had once been most prominent among liberal Protestants, now lay in the doldrums; not until years later would conservative evangelical Zionists join forces with some Jewish groups.¹¹ During the 1950s, Jewish activists made substantial progress in healing the rift between those known in American Jewish life as Zionists and "non-Zionists," as support for the new state became a unifying theme. The pro-Israel cause became the basis for an American Jewish united front. Groups simply called Jewish, like the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (begun in 1954–1955), were devoted primarily or entirely to defending Israel. Some American Jews surely were critical of the new Middle Eastern state or merely uninterested in it. However, such perspectives went largely unrepresented in Jewish organizations. Earlier in the twentieth century, numerous American Jews had opposed Zionism, primarily because of a firm conviction that Jews were a religious group only and not a nation, or else because of fervent secular beliefs in universalist visions of historical change. However, in the face of catastrophic events during the 1930s and 1940s, the status of anti-Zionism within American Jewish life shifted from mainstream to embattled. By the 1950s, anti-Zionist forces, while occasionally enjoying a platform, were marginalized.¹² Jewish political groups harboring dissent over Israeli actions managed to keep such criticism quiet.

In the process, the very idea of Zionism was transformed in the United States, in ways that rankled some long-time Zionists but that broadened the base of active support for Israel among

⁹The essays collected in "Israeli Historiography Revisited," a special issue of the journal *History and Memory* (7, no. 1 [Spring–Summer 1995]) and in Benny Morris, ed., *Making Israel* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2007) are insightful guides to this complex literature.

¹⁰Abraham Ben-Zvi, *Decade of Transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Origins of the American-Israeli Alliance* (New York, 1998); Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (New York, 2003); Abraham Ben-Zvi, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the Politics of Arms Sales to Israel: In the Shadow of the Hawk* (London, 2004).

¹¹On the liberal Protestants, see Caitlin Carenen, *The Fervent Embrace: Liberal Protestants, Evangelicals, and Israel* (New York, 2012). On the conservative evangelicals, see Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004); Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The Rise of Christian Zionism* (New Haven, CT, 2007); Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (New York, 2008); Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2009); Yaakov Ariel, *An Unusual Relationship: Evangelical Christians and Jews* (New York, 2013).

¹²See David Polish, *Renew Our Days: The Zionist Issue in American Reform* (Jerusalem, 1976); Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia, 1990); and Jack Ross, *Rabbi Outcast: Elmer Berger and American Jewish Anti-Zionism* (Washington, DC, 2011).

American Jews. Classically, Zionists in Europe had rejected the supposedly debased life of Jews outside of *Eretz Yisrael*—the Land of Israel—as *galut*, or exile. They had believed that the Jewish people needed to be transplanted—or, in Zionist terms, returned—to the biblical Promised Land in order to escape antisemitism and to become a “normal” and accepted member of the family of nations. Most American Jews, including a great many Zionists, however, maintained reservations about a sweeping critique of diaspora life and about the closely related imperative for an “ingathering” of Jews to *Eretz Yisrael*, although they honored those few American Jews who chose to make *aliyah*, meaning to move to Zion. By the end of the 1950s, these ideological difficulties had been resolved in terms congenial to most American Jews, as traditional definitions of Zionism faded in favor of a new concept of Zionism as active support for the State of Israel, regardless of where one chose to live.¹³ A newly united and energized backing for Israel from organized American Jewry required this reformulation of Zionism.

Although multiple intersecting forces contributed to the construction and course of a new pro-Israel politics in the United States after 1948, actions by the Israeli state played a dynamic role in moving American activists to form the Israel lobby at a specific historical moment. In October 1953, Israeli army commandos massacred more than sixty Palestinian villagers at Qibya, a West Bank village.¹⁴ The ensuing international and diplomatic outcry stimulated the organization, in the following months, of both of the lobby’s key components, the AZCPA and the Conference of Presidents. The Qibya attack was not the only factor instigating the creation of this new structure, but it was important, and its significance was little remembered years later in the United States. This mass killing was, however, well known to American pro-Israel activists immediately after it happened, and furnished a sharp prod to urgent and sustained action. For all the agency that American supporters of Israel manifested in their actions, they exercised that agency not only in the cause of Israel, but in what seemed, to them, an inescapable response to Israeli actions. The history of the Israel lobby cannot be written plausibly without giving due attention to the new, post-1948 reality of Israeli state power that American Zionists had to negotiate.

During World War II, American Jews, increasingly perceiving the European conflict as a desperate struggle for the very survival of Continental Jewry, had become active in Zionist initiatives in unprecedented numbers. The conviction that Palestine must be available as a haven for Europe’s Jews fueled Zionism’s ascendancy in America. Zionist organizations gathered at the “Biltmore conference” in New York City in 1942 and issued a demand for the creation of an extensive “Jewish commonwealth” in Palestine. The major Zionist groups—primarily the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) and Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America—established an American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC) that formed hundreds of local chapters and pressed politicians to support calls for a relaxation of Great Britain’s restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine and for the creation of a Jewish armed force in Palestine as part of the Allied war effort, measures that might pave the way

¹³See Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology* (Hanover, NH, 1995), for the most complete treatment of Zionist doctrine. The introduction to Arthur Hertzberg, ed., *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York, 1984), 15–100, and Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel*, rev. ed. (New York, 2003) are earlier works still worth consulting. Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class, and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (Oxford, UK, 1987) and Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*, trans. David Maisel (Princeton, NJ, 1998) are arresting revisions. Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, trans. Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago, 1996) details a topic sometimes neglected.

¹⁴Americans at this time often used the spelling “Kibya,” reproduced in quotations here.

for the creation of a state for the Jews.¹⁵ The Biltmore program became the benchmark for measuring true support for Zionism in American Jewish life, and those expressing reservations about that stance were subject to severe criticism, as became clear when the new American Jewish Conference (AJConference) convened in 1943. The AJConference was designed as a comprehensive, democratically based parliament of American Jewry, but its agenda was confined to advancing the Zionist cause. When the Conference delegates voted to eschew caution and embraced the Biltmore program, those representing the American Jewish Committee (AJC) left the meeting, which in turn provoked anger among those who blamed the AJC for disrupting the Jewish united front.¹⁶

The AJC, a prestigious organization of wealthy and influential men who presumed to speak for Jewish interests to U.S. presidents and secretaries of state, epitomized the non-Zionist camp.¹⁷ Non-Zionism was different from anti-Zionism. Vocal anti-Zionists, many of them Reform Jews, generally believed, as noted above, that Jewishness was strictly a religious, not a national, identity, and that “Jewish nationalism,” as they called Zionism, therefore made no sense. They believed ethnic nationalism violated the universalist ethical message of Judaism and that Zionism created improper “dual loyalties” on the part of American Jews.¹⁸ Non-Zionists sympathized in a limited way with these anti-Zionist themes, but they also gave support to the ideas that the Jews were a people who ought to act to safeguard their collective welfare and that Jews facing persecution should find refuge in Palestine if they chose to move there. In practice, the non-Zionists materially supported the Jewish community in Palestine but did not back the creation of a Jewish state. However, given the extremity of the Jewish plight under Nazi rule in the 1940s, anti-Zionist ranks thinned dramatically among American Jews at that time, while non-Zionists deliberated over how closely to align themselves with Zionists.¹⁹ The controversy over the AJConference may have made the AJC eager to find ways to shore up its credibility on the Palestine issue among American Jews in general, whose support for the creation of a state widened as the full enormity of the Shoah emerged into view in 1945. In 1948, after Palestinian Jewish leaders declared the independence of the State of Israel and the U.S. government quickly recognized the new state, the non-Zionists supported Israel too, despite their earlier concerns.

The drama of the State of Israel’s creation played out against the backdrop not only of the Shoah, but also, in the United States, of an alarming increase in anti-Jewish feeling among American gentiles during the World War II years—which was followed by a precipitous drop in antisemitism immediately after the war ended.²⁰ This hairpin turn in American

¹⁵See Samuel Halperin, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit, 1961); Doreen Bierbrier, “The American Zionist Emergency Council: An Analysis of a Pressure Group,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (Sept. 1970): 82–105; and Urofsky, *Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*. Members of the right-wing Revisionist tendency within Zionism also pursued a high-profile agitation for a “Jewish Army.” See Monty Noam Penkower, “Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky, Hillel Kook–Peter Bergson, and the Campaign for a Jewish Army,” *Modern Judaism* 31, no. 3 (Oct. 2011): 332–74, here 345–52, 354–56, 360–62, and the discussion of the scholarship on 373–74n78.

¹⁶Cohen, *Americanization of Zionism*, 174–76; Halperin, *Political World of American Zionism*, 133–34. Delegates representing the Jewish Labor Committee and the National Council of Jewish Women also abstained from the key vote. *Ibid.*, 240–41.

¹⁷See Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906–1966* (Philadelphia, 1972); Marianne R. Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong: The American Jewish Committee, 1945–2006* (Hanover, NH, 2007); and Kaufman, *An Ambiguous Partnership*.

¹⁸See Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*; Ross, *Rabbi Outcast*; and Halperin, *Political World of American Zionism*.

¹⁹See James Loeffler, “The Particularist Pursuit of American Universalism: The American Jewish Committee’s 1944 ‘Declaration on Human Rights,’” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 2 (April 2015): 274–95, here 281–83, on the way the AJC tried to walk this line as the war proceeded.

²⁰On the Shoah, see Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, 2000) and Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York, 2010). See Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York, 1994), 128–60, for the

Christians' attitudes toward Jews colored every major issue of Jewish concern, but, in theory, it had a particularly direct bearing on Zionism. Zionist thinkers, from Theodor Herzl onward, had often argued that a Jewish state was needed precisely because of the ineradicability of anti-semitism. However, early supporters of Israel in the United States did not regularly cite worries about antisemitism in America to bolster their cause. A 1947–1948 study suggested that Jewish supporters of the State of Israel were less anxious over antisemitism than were other American Jews.²¹ The stance of actively pro-Israel Jewish Americans seemed to reflect confidence regarding the palpably rising fortunes of American Jews in the late 1940s and 1950s at least as much as it did painful memories of discrimination and anti-Jewish violence in the recent past.

Despite the unifying impact of the Shoah, the broad and active Jewish movement that had rallied behind the goal of a Jewish state quickly unwound after 1948, with that goal secured. In 1949 the AZEC shut down its operations and was converted into the American Zionist Council (AZC), a small Washington-based group that lobbied for U.S. government aid to Israel—the immediate precursor to the more robust lobby that would form in the 1950s. That same year, the AJConference also ceased to exist. Matters of personal leadership added to the turbulence in organized Zionism at this time. In the 1930s, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, closely tied to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had been the foremost spokesperson for the movement. He died in 1949.²² Yet Wise had already been surpassed as a Zionist leader by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, whose militancy had matched the World War II environment well and who had gathered remarkable power in Jewish communal life in the 1940s. Silver's imperious style was polarizing, however, and in 1949 he was abruptly deposed by a coalition of his American rivals and the new Israeli government elite, particularly Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion; they combined to undermine Silver's control in a tangled power play.²³ Silver exited the movement in humiliation and American Zionism no longer had a top leader.

Several factors led Ben-Gurion to break with Silver, among them the *hafradah* initiative—Hebrew for separation—that Silver and his associates launched in 1949. They wished to de-link the world Zionist movement from the new Israeli government. It was logical to suppose that Zionist organizations outside Israel needed to rethink their purpose and basis at this time, and to puzzle out their relationship to the new state. Yet *hafradah* was a threat to the Israeli leadership, who did not wish to face a rival Zionist authority emanating from the United States. With Silver gone, *hafradah* was dead.²⁴ The demobilization and leadership vacuum that suddenly marked American Zionism prompted harsh assessments by Israelis. As one Israeli emissary reported to his superiors on his return from an American tour, “The condition of American Zionism was a cause for grave concern; within a short time it was likely to disintegrate and degenerate.”²⁵ Ben-Gurion said bluntly, referring primarily to the American scene, “Zionism is not undergoing a crisis. It is going bankrupt.”²⁶ Such estimations were self-serving, since the Israelis had assisted in weakening the American movement by bringing down its major figure and thwarting his effort to establish the movement's independence. Nonetheless, the frailties of organized Zionism in the United States were real.

authoritative account of the rise and fall of hostility toward Jews in these years; for extensive illustrative detail, see Michelle Mart, *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View Israel as an Ally* (Albany, NY, 2006), 1–13, 109–22.

²¹Marshall Sklare and Benjamin B. Ringer, “A Study of Jewish Attitudes toward the State of Israel,” in *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New York, 1958), 445–48.

²²See Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany, NY, 1981).

²³The public issue of contention was control over funds raised from American Jews through the United Jewish Appeal and those funds' disbursement in Israel. See Urofsky, *We Are One*, 284–85; Marc Lee Raphael, *Abba Hillel Silver: A Profile in American Judaism* (New York, 1989), 174–82; and Ofer Shiff, *The Downfall of Abba Hillel Silver and the Foundation of Israel* (Syracuse, NY, 2014).

²⁴Shiff, *Downfall of Abba Hillel Silver*; Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 18–20, 53–59.

²⁵This was Eliezer Livneh. Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 63.

²⁶Feldestein, *Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry*, 30.

American Zionists found their commitment questioned from Israel. The world Zionist movement resolved, at the Twenty-Third Zionist Congress, held in Jerusalem in 1951, that the “task of Zionism” was “the strengthening of the State of Israel, ingathering of exiles in *Eretz Yisrael*, and the fostering of the unity of the Jewish people.” The Americans could support this program, but some diplomacy was required to get them to that point.²⁷ The Americans long had objected to expectations that they should make *aliyah*. They were distinguished within the world movement by their belief that—as Rose Halprin, president of Hadassah, stated in 1950—“there must be a national home in Palestine for *other Jews*” (emphasis added), who suffered persecution and needed a restored Israel, but that American Jews had no need to migrate to the new state, since they already lived in a place excellent for Jews.²⁸ Ben-Gurion chastised the American comrades for not wishing to move to Israel after 1948, and this factor led him to conclude that distinctions between Zionists and non-Zionists “had lost their real meaning,” since both groups supported Israel, but neither wished to live there.²⁹

Israeli leaders advanced a two-part vision of how matters should proceed. They wanted the Zionist movement in America to consolidate its forces into a single organization. This national-unit model was the general structure of the world Zionist movement, but it had never been fully adopted in the United States. The American organizations resisted this idea, each preserving its independence and cooperating through the AZC. Halprin, at the 1951 Zionist Congress, retorted that, by working within the AZC, “we may come eventually and through the evolutionary process towards the Territorial-Union” that the Israelis prescribed. But, she said, “We believe that no purpose will be served by trying to impose it upon us by ukases.”³⁰ In reality, the AZC took up a very restricted role. Its local and regional affiliates failed to command the authority that would have been needed to organize federated action by American Zionists.

Ben-Gurion also wished to mobilize non-Zionist groups in the United States to work on Israel’s behalf. This was the second part of the Israeli strategy. The non-Zionist groups might work in cooperation with Zionists. They also might coordinate their activities directly with Israeli leaders, although this was sure to agitate the Zionists. The Israeli prime minister particularly valued the intercessions made by Jacob Blaustein, president of the AJC, in Israel’s cause with top U.S. government officials. American Zionists had derided the AJC over its non-Zionism and its alleged assimilationism. Yet Ben-Gurion believed, accurately, that Blaustein and others in the AJC had access to U.S. leaders. He no doubt also saw the possibilities of fundraising among the most affluent American Jews if the grandees of the AJC, like

²⁷Quoted in Mira Katzburg-Yungman, *Hadassah: American Women Zionists and the Rebirth of Israel* (Oxford, UK, 2014), 144. The negotiation of this statement was difficult, and the Congress achieved unity (a) by identifying the “task,” not the “aim,” of Zionism and (b) by omitting to embrace the ingathering of “the” exiles, which would have implied all Jews everywhere. *Ibid.*, 135–44. The Zionist Congress was the quadrennial gathering of delegates, apportioned to different countries’ Zionist parties based on their paid memberships, that determined policy for the Zionist Organization (also known as the World Zionist Organization).

²⁸Katzburg-Yungman, *Hadassah*, 135. As Katzburg-Yungman relates, Hadassah stood alone in 1950 in its willingness to reject entirely the concept of *galut* with regard to American Jewry. However, in substance, many other Zionists were ambivalent at best about applying this idea to the American environment. In addition to the works cited above on American Zionism, see Ben Halpern, “The Americanization of Zionism, 1880–1930,” *American Jewish History* 69, no. 1 (Sept. 1979): 15–33; Evyatar Friesel, “The Influence of American Zionism on the American Jewish Community, 1900–1959,” *American Jewish History* 75, no. 2 (Dec. 1985): 130–48; and Allon Gal, “Independence and Universal Mission in Modern Jewish Nationalism: A Comparative Analysis of European and American Zionism (1897–1948),” *Israel: State and Society, 1948–1988: Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 5 (New York, 1989), 242–55.

²⁹Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 73.

³⁰“Zionist Public Relations in the United States” [1957], 10. Folder 15, box G4, American Jewish Committee Records (MS 780), American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH. This was part of a “Study on Israel-Zionist Interrelations” produced by the American Jewish Committee’s Library of Jewish Information, for internal distribution to the AJC.

Henry Morgenthau, Jr., were to continue their leadership of pro-Israel charitable drives. Israeli officials saw the AJC as smooth operators who knew their business, and in contrast, Zionist operatives in America sometimes appeared maladroit. In 1952, Abba Eban, Israel's ambassador in Washington, wrote to Benjamin Browdy, president of the ZOA, chastising him for interfering and freelancing in U.S.–Israel affairs. “You ... openly repudiate traditional concepts of Zionist loyalty, which would require you to consult with Israel before taking steps involving Israel's most vital interests,” Eban upbraided him. Pointing to an example Browdy ought to follow, Eban continued, “The President of the American Jewish Committee ... is especially scrupulous in this regard. He never visits the President in Israel's interests, or throws out any new unapproved program ... without consulting me in detail in advance.”³¹

The AJC's lack of Zionist standing and connections made it appealing to Jerusalem. The AJC, probably grateful for Ben-Gurion's attention, would come to rely on such ties with top Israeli leaders for their stature in pro-Israel work. The AJC could never challenge Israeli government authority within world Zionism, and this made them perfect partners for Israel's rulers. Americans, Zionist and non-Zionist, balked when Israeli leaders stated, in the years after 1948, that U.S. Zionists ought to make *aliyah*. Such calls seemed to confirm traditional non-Zionist anxieties about dual loyalties. Ben-Gurion chose Blaustein to be his American interlocutor when Ben-Gurion agreed to retract his position (or at least to appear to do so), and the two men had a highly publicized meeting in Jerusalem in 1950, which produced an “exchange of views”—an agreement that American Jews were politically loyal only to the United States, that Israel's government did not speak for world Jewry, and that American Jews did not need to make *aliyah* in order to be good supporters of Israel.³² Zionist groups had to watch from the sidelines as Israel's leaders appeared to negotiate with the non-Zionist elite over their movement's future. A triangular relationship had emerged in the transnational U.S.–Israeli Jewish arena, with the Israeli state, the American Zionists, and the American non-Zionists the three sides of the figure.

As the AJC moved onto transnational Zionist turf, in Washington, out of the public eye, the new Israel lobby became a cockpit for Zionist tactics and strategy. I. L. “Si” Kenen, a progressive newspaperman and lawyer from Cleveland, had served as a top staffer for the AJConference during its lifetime. He then worked as the U.S. communications specialist for the Israel Office of Information until 1951, when he shifted to the AZC, becoming its Washington delegate. He proved a skilled, effective operative.

Commuting from his New York home to Washington, where he lobbied for U.S. aid to Israel, Kenen initially encountered difficulties, worst of all an unwelcome reception from the existing major Zionist groups, ZOA and Hadassah, as well as from the Israeli embassy staff. According to Kenen, they viewed him as an “interloper.”³³ In particular Kenen was plagued by Elihu Stone of the ZOA. Stone continually crossed Kenen's wires by independently pestering members of Congress, phoning reporters, and seeking to embarrass the State Department, in ways that Kenen called “utterly reckless and prejudicial to our interests.” Kenen tailored his appeals to U.S. senators based on his intelligence regarding their attitudes toward Israel. He arranged for a

³¹Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*, 168–69. Also see Shiff, *Downfall of Abba Hillel Silver*, 161n12.

³²Ben-Gurion continued to state that American Zionists ought to make *aliyah*. He appeared to hold them to a different standard than he did other American Jews, with whom he sought to establish direct ties, unmediated by the Zionist movement. See Charles S. Liebman, “Diaspora Influence on Israel: The Ben-Gurion–Blaustein ‘Exchange’ and Its Aftermath,” *Jewish Social Studies* 36, nos. 3–4 (July–Oct. 1974): 271–80; Ganin, *An Uneasy Relationship*; Feldestein, *Ben-Gurion, Zionism, and American Jewry*; and Sanua, *Let Us Prove Strong*.

³³I. L. Kenen, *All My Causes: An 80-Year Life Span in Many Lands and for Many Causes, Some We Won and Some We Lost but We Never Gave Up* (Washington, DC, 1985), 53.

Miami businessman, for example, to make the approach to George Smathers and Spessard Holland of Florida (both conservative Democrats), “not as friends of the Jews or friends of Israel or friends of Zionism, but as Americans concerned for America’s welfare and security.” This businessman wanted Kenen to keep his distance for the moment. But Stone, on his own, sent a letter to these senators directly appealing for their support for aid to Israel, and compounded the damage by listing the existing cosponsors of an aid proposal—all of them from the North. “It surely cannot encourage these two senators to go on the bill when they realize that no other senators from the South have taken the initiative,” Kenen lamented to Louis Lipsky, a longtime Zionist functionary who was chairman of the AZC and Kenen’s ally. “Why tell them they would be the first?”³⁴ At another point, Stone blamed the State Department for a delay in the consideration of a pending aid bill, and explained to Rita Grossman, Kenen’s assistant, “that the only way to get anything done with the State Department is to irritate the Department.” Kenen told Stone, “*I must emphasize that this is not the line that we are pursuing*” (emphasis in original). Relations between the two men became venomous.³⁵

Soon Kenen was planning to leave the country.³⁶ He took a leave to travel in Israel in late 1951, and considered quitting the AZC and switching back to working for Israel’s government.³⁷ Kenen soon reported that he had “had a long talk with Aubrey” (meaning Abba Eban), that Eban shared Kenen’s unhappiness with the AZC, and that “we are therefore making arrangements to enable me to operate in Washington next year ... as an ... adviser for the government of Israel.”³⁸ However, the AZC settled this matter in Kenen’s favor. In February 1952, Kenen was back on board, with enhanced authority. Lipsky wrote Kenen, “I am pleased to inform you that the American Zionist Council ... has agreed to retain you as its Washington representative to assume the direction of all its activities in connection with securing governmental aid for the State of Israel during 1952; and to act on its behalf in related matters as they may arise in Washington and be assigned to you.”³⁹ At the same time, Rabbi Jerome Unger, the AZC’s executive director, wrote to Stone, “Mr. Kenen will conduct his work under the direction of the chairman of the Council, employing wherever possible the methods used in 1951. The Washington office of the Council will be under his sole direction.” He added this kiss-off line: “In accordance with Mr. Lipsky’s letter to you of January 30th, the Council will feel free to call upon your services and advice during the period of your retainer.”⁴⁰

Kenen’s struggle with Stone signified more than a dispute over tactics or a tussle for power in a small Washington organization. The ZOA, in the person of Stone, wanted to restore its former heft, and Kenen, with Lipsky’s backing, ended that bid. Kenen was determined to build a broad Jewish coalition in support of U.S. aid for Israel. Indeed, he described his goal to Jesse Calmenson of St. Paul, a prominent Zionist, as “a united effort by Israel’s many friends in this country—Christians and Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists.”⁴¹ But, in practical terms, Kenen’s work for a broad pro-Israel front meant, first and foremost, bringing in the Jewish non-Zionist groups and keeping them in. In a detailed memorandum of September 1952, Kenen recounted the delicacy of his coalition-building with both declared Zionists and

³⁴I. L. Kenen to Louis Lipsky, Mar. 8, 1951, folder 194, box 16, Isaiah Leo Kenen Papers, 1919–1985 (MS P-680), American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History, New York, NY [hereafter ILKP].

³⁵I. L. Kenen to Elihu Stone, Mar. 28, 1951. Grossman earlier had related to Kenen Stone’s personal invective against him. Rita Grossman to I. L. Kenen, Mar. 22, 1951. Both in folder 194, box 16, ILKP.

³⁶I. L. Kenen to Louis Lipsky, Sept. 26, 1951, folder 50, box 4, ILKP.

³⁷In January 1951, Kenen met with an official of the U.S. Justice Department as part of his compliance with the Foreign Agents Registration Act and explained that he planned to set up a public relations firm with the government of Israel as his client. Grant F. Smith, *America’s Defense Line: The Justice Department’s Battle to Register the Israel Lobby as Agents of a Foreign Government* (Washington, DC, 2008), 84.

³⁸I. L. Kenen to Louis Lipsky, Oct. 3, 1951, folder 50, box 4, ILKP.

³⁹Louis Lipsky to I. L. Kenen, Feb. 20, 1952, folder 50, box 4, ILKP.

⁴⁰Rabbi Jerome Unger to Elihu D. Stone, Feb. 21, 1952, folder 194, box 16, ILKP.

⁴¹I. L. Kenen to Jesse Calmenson, Oct. 24, 1951, folder 2, box 1, ILKP.

non-Zionists. “One of our major concerns was not to offend our local Zionists,” who wanted to be central in the effort but lacked the organizational strength around the country to assume that role. “We concentrated in the midwest and the south, where the Zionists, lacking numbers, were weak and where it was necessary to find personal friends of Congressmen.” He used different methods in organizing appeals to members of Congress from other regions. The non-Zionists, meanwhile, “wanted to help unofficially but, concerned about lobbying and tax exemption laws ... could not become involved as such, and ... did not want a formal committee” that would include their groups. So he worked with them extensively but informally.⁴²

Kenen conceded that, at least initially, “a number of our community people must have been puzzled by the fact that the AZC representative in charge of the campaign was confining his calls to non-Zionists.” The local affiliates of the AZC felt cut out of the action. It is not hard to see why Kenen may have preferred not to work through them. Many in those groups considered non-Zionists unworthy and unreliable allies in the cause. They wished to have long-standing Zionists clearly in charge of pro-Israel advocacy. Kenen wanted to forge a pan-Jewish, pro-Israel political force in the United States. As he put it, “We ought to remember that our chief task is winning American public opinion. This means winning Jews as well as Christians. We will not get very far in our campaign if we try to limit our forces to enrolled Zionists.” For good measure he added, “If we cannot win the Jewish community, we shall not win the Christian community.”⁴³

Kenen kept a watch on the U.S. political scene in 1952, as Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower, a presidential nominee with unclear views on Middle East policy, won a convincing victory over Democrat Adlai Stevenson, who, in the tradition of outgoing President Harry Truman, another Democrat, had assured heavily Democratic Jewish voters of his warmth toward Israel.⁴⁴ Truman had cooled somewhat in his dealings with Israel and its American supporters in the years following his 1948 decision to recognize the new state over the objections of diplomatic and military advisors. Nonetheless, lines of communication still existed between the Truman White House and pro-Israel advocates, and such contacts were not guaranteed under Eisenhower. Most worrisome to pro-Israel activists, John Foster Dulles would be the new secretary of state.⁴⁵ Dulles and Eisenhower soon made clear their determination to steer a neutral course between Israel and its Arab antagonists in the Middle East, and to resist the pressure that Dulles and other high U.S. government officials believed Jewish groups brought in favor of a pro-Israel tilt in Washington.⁴⁶ A memorandum prepared for Dulles by the State Department staff in May 1953 expressed the institutional view of the U.S. diplomatic corps when it lamented “the existence of heavy and effective Zionist pressure which has been brought to bear on both the Executive and Legislative branches of the American Government.”⁴⁷

⁴²I. L. Kenen, “Memorandum to the Executive Committee of the American Zionist Council: Relations with Non-Zionists,” Sept. 30, 1952, folder 55, box 5, ILKP.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴I. L. Kenen, “Memorandum: The Outcome of the Elections,” Nov. 10, 1952, folder 55, box 5, ILKP.

⁴⁵See Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston, 1973); Richard H. Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Wilmington, DE, 1999); and Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY, 2015).

⁴⁶Dulles also supposedly asserted, when meeting with Lebanon’s prime minister in 1953, that American Jews had supported neither him in 1949—when Dulles lost a bitterly fought special election for a U.S. Senate seat in New York—nor Eisenhower in 1952 at the polls. Alteras, *Eisenhower and Israel*, 72–73.

⁴⁷Department of State Position Paper [Washington, May 7, 1955]: Arab-Israeli Relations, Doc. 609 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, vol. IX: *The Near and Middle East*, part 1, eds. Paul Claussen, Joan M. Lee, and Carl N. Raether (Washington, DC, 1986), 1216.

Dulles's State Department identified three major issues requiring resolution for the settlement of the overall Israeli–Arab conflict: Arab demands for border modifications; the allocation of water flowing through the Jordan River watershed; and the resettlement or repatriation of Palestinian refugees living outside of Israel. Conflict over each of these issues led to violence. Israel for a time sought to build a waterworks inside a demilitarized zone (DMZ) along the Syrian border, defying a United Nations (UN)-appointed general's ruling that this was prohibited.⁴⁸ Egypt blockaded Israeli vessels at the Straits of Tiran and the mouth of the Gulf of Eilat, and closed the Suez Canal to Israeli commerce.⁴⁹

Yet nothing was more fateful than what Israel termed its war against “infiltrators.” During Israel's war of independence, 700,000 Palestinian Arabs had fled their homes under duress, generally fearful and sometimes forcibly evicted by Israeli soldiers. Many of them now lived close to the armistice lines fixed in 1949 and wished to return.⁵⁰ Israeli authorities were determined to prevent this, seeing such a return as a threat to the survival of Israel as a Jewish state. Ben-Gurion, in April 1949, said simply that the “Government line is that they may not return.”⁵¹ Israeli leaders labeled all refugees who made their way back through the porous land boundaries interlopers and suggested they were all terrorists. A minority among the returnees committed violence against Israelis. Israeli historian Benny Morris concludes that these accounted for perhaps 10 percent of all Palestinian returnees in 1949–1956. Israeli authorities conceded no distinction between this minority and the far larger numbers, “most of them refugees, some, border farmers—who understandably coveted lost houses, lands, crops, and movable goods on the other side of the line.”⁵² When infiltrators did kill Israelis, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in response sometimes visited reprisal raids—collective punishment—against nearby Palestinian populations. These were designed as disproportionate and indiscriminate military actions, rather than efforts to punish, much less to apprehend, culpable individuals.⁵³

One fearsome IDF attack in particular excited sharp protests among diplomats and international observers, and deep anxiety and intense consideration of tactics and strategies among the most active supporters of Israel in the United States. Historians have not fully recognized the

⁴⁸Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington, IN, 1994), 360–64; Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, 170–74.

⁴⁹Tessler, *History*, 330–35; Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, 124–29, 178–80, 196.

⁵⁰Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge, UK, 1988), remains the basic source on this controversial matter. Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Beirut, 1992) and Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford, UK, 2006) make strong claims that these traumatic origins of the Palestinian national exile, events known as *al-nakba*, constituted an expulsion reflecting the implementation of a top-level Zionist blueprint known as “Plan Dalet.” Also see Baruch Kimmelman and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 156; and Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel*, trans. Graham Harman and Gudrun Krämer (Princeton, NJ, 2008), 322, as well as the recent statement by Morris, “Explaining Transfer: Zionist Thinking and the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem,” in *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World*, eds. Richard Bessel and Claudia B. Hanke (London, 2011), 349–57, in which Morris basically concedes that this was an ethnic cleansing operation by Jewish forces, if not one centrally directed and controlled according to a comprehensive plan.

⁵¹Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York, 1986), 30.

⁵²Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford, UK, 1997), 427–28; quotation from 427.

⁵³In addition to Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, see David Tal, “Israel's Road to the 1956 War,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 1 (Feb. 1996): 59–81; Ranan D. Kuperman, “The Impact of Internal Politics on Israel's Reprisal Policy during the 1950s,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 24, no. 1 (Mar. 2001): 1–28; Ze'ev Drory, *Israel's Reprisal Policy, 1953–1956: The Dynamics of Military Retaliation* (London, 2005); Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2009); and Daniel Byman, *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York, 2011), ch 1.

ramifications of this episode. Beginning on the night of October 14, 1953, IDF forces launched an onslaught against the Arab village of Qibya, about one mile inside Jordanian territory on the West Bank. The operation was a reprisal for a raid from inside the West Bank on the night of October 12, on the nearby Jewish Israeli settlement of Yehud or Yehuda, where unknown persons murdered Susan Kanias and her two children in their home with an explosive. The Israeli attack occurred two nights after these killings and lasted until the early morning hours of October 15. The IDF had readied this response in advance, creating a special army outfit, named Unit 101, under the command of a retired major recalled to service, Ariel Sharon. On October 13, Ben-Gurion—even though he had stepped down from his posts as prime minister and defense minister months before—and other top leaders decided that Unit 101 would target Qibya as collective punishment for the Yehuda killings.⁵⁴ The October 26 issue of *Time* magazine carried an unsparing and dramatic account. After two hours of “shell bursts and small-arms fire” from the IDF,

... the Israelis moved into Kibya with rifle and Sten guns. They shot every man, woman and child they could find, then turned their fire on the cattle. After that, they dynamited 42 houses, a school and a mosque The villagers huddled in the grass could see Israeli soldiers slouching in the doorways of their homes, smoking and joking, their young faces illuminated by the flames. By 3 a.m., the Israelis’ work was done, and they leisurely withdrew.

Time reported sixty-six deaths among the villagers (and none among the IDF contingent), the most fatalities anywhere in the Israeli–Arab conflict since the 1948 war.⁵⁵

News of the massacre at Qibya spread quickly after Jordanian forces inspected the scene. The U.S. chargé in Amman, Talcott Seelye, remarked in a cable to Washington on October 15, “While current Israeli attack believed in part revenge for murder two children allegedly caused by Jordan infiltrators at Tirat Yehuda ... there is obviously no comparison in degree between two acts. Furthermore, HKJ’s [Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan] cooperation with Israelis in tracking down murderers ... sharp contrast to Israeli massacre of 45 [sic] Jordanian villagers.”⁵⁶ Israel’s official representatives abroad urged their superiors to appreciate how repulsed other governments were. Eban later reflected that Qibya “brought our international standing to the edge of the abyss This operation was the first since the establishment of our state that world Jewry refused to identify with Even Deir Yassin”—the notorious massacre committed by right-wing Israeli forces during the War of Independence—“did not evoke such nausea”⁵⁷

The news from Qibya threatened the notably positive press that Israel had enjoyed in the United States in its early years. The writer John Hersey, for example, had recently celebrated Israel’s collective farms, the *kibbutzim*, and their “magnificent people,” and had described Israeli children as “regular Californians—sturdy, open-faced, sun-coppered.”⁵⁸ Beyond the

⁵⁴In July 1953, Ben-Gurion took a leave from public life; Moshe Sharett became acting prime minister and Pinchas Lavon, acting defense minister. Ben-Gurion did not officially resign these positions until December 1953 (he would return to them later). Regarding Qibya, Ben-Gurion met secretly with Moshe Dayan, the IDF chief of operations, Lavon, and Mordechai Makleff, chief of the general staff of the IDF, and then presented Sharett with a fait accompli, which Sharett accepted, despite his forebodings. Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars*, 251–57, 258; Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents*, 8th ed. (Boston, 2013), 234–35.

⁵⁵“Israel: Massacre at Kibya,” *Time*, Oct. 26, 1953, 34. Alteras, *Eisenhower and Israel*, 93, follows the *Time* account very closely. Morris states the death count was “some 50–60,” while noting that the Jordanians claimed it was 69–70. Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars*, 261.

⁵⁶The Chargé in Jordan (Seelye) to the Department of State, Amman, October 15, 1953, Doc. 689 in *FRUS*, 1952–1954, vol. IX, part 1, 1359.

⁵⁷Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars*, 268.

⁵⁸Mart, *Eye on Israel*, 54, 56.

general admiration (particularly among political liberals like Hersey) for Israeli society and character, the IDF also were an object of admiration, as they seemed to dominate and intimidate what appeared, to many Americans, to be formidable, hostile Arab forces. The IDF embodied “self-confidence, faith, manliness, and pride,” said *Life* magazine in 1948.⁵⁹ A highly flattering portrait of Israel had emerged in the United States in the half-decade after 1948, and the killings at Qibya had the potential either to corrupt this image or to be overridden by it. Israel’s chief defenders displayed sharp concern over the first of these possibilities.

Dulles and Eisenhower authorized a denunciation of Israel’s attack at the UN. Ben-Gurion appeared blasé. He quickly orchestrated a completely false cover story, claiming that Jewish villagers inside Israel, not IDF soldiers, had attacked Qibya out of understandable anger over Arab violence from across the border. International audiences found this narrative generally unconvincing, although the Israeli public and some American Jews appeared ready to believe it.⁶⁰ Kenen, for one, would repeat Ben-Gurion’s version in his memoir, published in 1981.⁶¹ When the UN’s Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC), charged with monitoring the de facto Israel–Jordan border, produced a detailed report providing evidence that this had been an IDF operation, the *New York Times* published lengthy excerpts from the document, highlighting the critical judgments of U.S. Navy Commander Elmo Hutchison, who led the MAC.⁶² The UN Security Council resolution of November 24, 1953, which the United States helped compose, officially laid on Israel “the strongest censure” over Qibya, and also rebuked Israeli disregard of UN authorities in the matter of the Jordan River water (while also, far less harshly, criticizing Jordan for not doing more to stop attacks from its territory).⁶³

The weeks and months surrounding the Security Council censure became the pivotal interval for the restructuring of pro-Israel advocacy in American power centers. The scattered renditions of this process by participants rarely attribute the intensification of this reorganization to the anger over the Qibya killings, but it is unlikely the timing is a mere coincidence. The subsequent months would feature two organizational innovations clearly inspired by the 1953 events: the clear establishment of a Capitol Hill lobby at least officially separate from the AZC, and the organization of the Presidents’ Conference.

Dulles announced that Washington had, at least temporarily, suspended economic aid to Israel. Eisenhower had resolved to take this step before the Qibya killings, in response to the water controversy, but Dulles confirmed it publicly only after Qibya.⁶⁴ In a report that Kenen later produced on his activities during this crucial period, he suggested that the Israelis had known of the aid freeze as early as late September but that “it was virtually impossible to carry on any effective protest because the United States and Israel had agreed that the suspension of aid should be kept an absolute secret.” On the other hand, he stated that he had set in motion substantial, if quiet, efforts to lobby the administration to undo its action, and that these efforts “probably would have ended the crisis on the suspension of aid without too much delay, but, unfortunately, our efforts reached a climax on the very day of the

⁵⁹Ibid., 68.

⁶⁰See Benny Morris, “The Israeli Press and the Qibya Operation, 1953,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 40–52.

⁶¹Kenen writes, “Angry Israeli villagers raided Kibya.” Kenen, *Israel’s Defense Line*, 101.

⁶²“Text of Palestine Truce Supervisor’s Report to U. N.,” *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1953, 10. Other MACs played referee over conflicts between Israel and other adjoining states. Israel’s government became determined to see Hutchison removed from his post, and its pressure succeeded by September 1954, according to Morris. Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars*, 313–14. Hutchison later wrote a memoir of his experiences: Elmo H. Hutchison, *Violent Truce* (New York, 1956).

⁶³Resolution 101 (1953), Adopted by the United Nations Security Council on Nov. 24, 1953, Doc. 738 in *FRUS*, 1952–1954, vol. IX, part 1, 1436.

⁶⁴After Israel agreed to abide by an October 27 Security Council resolution demanding that it cease work on the canal it had begun digging at Bnat Yaacov, U.S. aid resumed. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East*, 171–72; Alteras, *Eisenhower and Israel*, 98–99.

Kibya incident and for several days, during which we waited for some formal statement from the Government of Israel, the activities of our friends everywhere were literally paralyzed.”⁶⁵ In late November 1953, Kenen wrote, in his most troubled moment, “The Kibya incident has not only undermined the moral position of the Jewish people. It has discredited the premises of our propaganda and has given the color of truth to Arab propaganda efforts to portray Israel as aggressive, unfaithful to the UN, and brutally indifferent to the Arab refugees whom it allegedly expelled.” However, he immediately added, “It serves no purpose to engage in post mortem. It is time that we passed from introspective brooding about the past and resumed the offensive by restoring perspective on the Near East conflict and by fixing responsibility for the continuation of that conflict where it really belongs.” He meant that blame would properly fall on the Arab states bordering Israel.⁶⁶

The immediate aftermath of Qibya in the United States shows Kenen and other activists engaged in a hectic round of communications as they grappled with a politically threatening situation. In these days of crisis, Kenen proved to be the key man, not only in Washington, but also in relaying talking points to pro-Israel activists elsewhere in the country—as his frequent missives to correspondents in one city, among the strongly Zionist Jewish community of Boston, serve to illustrate.⁶⁷ These evolving efforts to overcome the destructive impact of the killings, which soon were followed by the formation of a firmer organizational basis for pro-Israel work in America, leave little doubt that the tumult over Qibya played a central role in prompting the organization of a durable and effective lobby for Israel.

According to Kenen’s later account, by late 1953 word had spread in Washington that the Eisenhower administration suspected the Israeli government was funding the AZC and that the administration might demand the AZC register as the agent of a foreign power. So a new entity henceforth would lobby for Israel. As Kenen put it, “There was no change in leadership or membership”; the new committee, like the AZC, would be led by Lipsky and, like the AZC’s existing Washington office, run by Kenen. However, donors would fund the new Committee for Public Affairs with direct contributions. These donations, unlike those to the AZC, would not be tax-deductible, which meant that fewer restrictions would apply to the new group’s activities in Washington. Until this time Kenen had lived in New York, but he now set up shop in Washington. Yet Kenen revealed the importance of another factor when he wrote, without elaboration, “My decision to establish an office in Washington preceded the threats of an investigation. The retaliation at Kibya portended a long battle.”⁶⁸ Within days of the massacre, Kenen reported soon afterward, “Our people had recovered from the initial shock of Kibya.”⁶⁹ Kenen and his “people” were ready to move.

⁶⁵“Report on Activities, Washington Office, American Zionist Council, Sept.–Oct. 1953,” n.d., folder 57, box 5, ILKP. Despite the limitations Kenen faced prior to Dulles’s confirmation of the aid suspension, Kenen still had written a speech for the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Representative Joseph Martin, Republican of Massachusetts, to use at an Israel Bonds rally on October 10. Ibid.

⁶⁶I. L. Kenen to Louis Lipsky and members of the AZC executive committee, “United States–Israel Relations, Nov. 1953,” Nov. 23, 1953, folder 57, box 5, ILKP.

⁶⁷See Mark R. Raider, “Pioneers and Pacesetters: Boston Jews and American Zionism,” in *The Jews of Boston*, eds. Jonathan D. Sarna, Ellen Smith, and Scott-Martin Kosofsky (New Haven, CT, 2005), 249–84.

⁶⁸Kenen, *Israel’s Defense Line*, 107. Also see “Zionist Public Relations in the United States,” 12, as well as the breathless account in Smith, *America’s Defense Line*, 97–98. Since the Conference of Presidents was formed at the same time as the AZCPA, and the issues of foreign and tax-exempt funding were not present with the Conference of Presidents, I do not see these concerns over compliance with the Foreign Agents Registration Act as decisive in the organization of the Israel lobby.

⁶⁹“Report on Activities, Washington Office, American Zionist Council, Sept.–Oct. 1953.”

Pro-Israel activists, after their balance returned, acted energetically to cope with the crisis, wavering between ignoring Qibya entirely and seeking to marginalize it in the public conversation. In Boston, Robert Segal, the executive director of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Boston (JCCB), along with Lewis H. Weinstein, the Council president, relayed to local Jewish community leaders a dispatch that they (and presumably others elsewhere) had received from Kenen on October 15. The JCCB was neither a Zionist group nor a non-Zionist group as such, but rather an umbrella group of major Jewish organizations in the area, and it could speak both for and to Jewish Boston authoritatively. It became Kenen's regional partner in pro-Israel advocacy. "Because of the gravity of problems affecting Israel and her neighbors, as reported in the press these past few days," Segal and Weinstein told their constituent organizations, "we feel you may want to examine the following communication from I. L. Kenen, Washington representative of the American Zionist Council under date of October 15."⁷⁰

The initial communiqués from Kenen downplayed the subject of Qibya. The very day that dawned with word of the massacre burning up the diplomatic cables saw Kenen summarize the issues besetting U.S.–Israel ties without mentioning Qibya or even the problem of "infiltration" into Israel by displaced Palestinians. Developments of subsequent days made it impossible not to speak of Qibya, however. Perhaps most important, on October 19, Ben-Gurion aired in public his story about vigilante Israelis.⁷¹ On October 22 the JCCB held an "extraordinary meeting" that produced a statement released to the Boston news media. It urged "that our State Department not prejudice the issues which the United Nations Security Council will consider within the next few days." However, the statement continued, "We deplore all acts of violence, not only regrettable attacks upon Arabs, but also border incidents resulting in more than 400 Israeli casualties resulting from Arab raids. Incidents, no matter how tragic and regrettable, cannot be removed from their historical context"⁷² A second message focused on the water issue and emphasized that "[t]he United States decision to withhold economic aid to Israel was made several weeks ago." This supplement also stated, "It should be made clear that American suspension of aid to Israel has nothing to do with incidents which have taken a heavy toll of innocent lives on both sides of the Arab-Israel frontiers since the Armistice agreements. The decision to withhold aid from Israel was made weeks before the Kibya incident."⁷³

But world attention remained on Qibya, and Kenen appeared to think he needed a new approach. On October 23 Kenen issued a revised response to the continuing controversy, and Segal passed it on to the Council's member groups. This document marked a turning point, away from dismissals of Qibya as insignificant and toward a more frontal refutation of the moral opprobrium being heaped on Israel and a more concerted effort to advance an alternative narrative of the violence. The heading for the first section of the quoted material was "THE NIGHT BEFORE KIBYA," and provided an impassioned account of the attack in Israel. "Mrs. Kianas lingered on for some hours in the hospital," Kenen wrote, "finally finding release in death." Kenen never stated here who carried out the retaliatory attack on Qibya. He wrote, referring to Kianas, "Multiply this 'statistic' 150 times over the past three years, almost one 'statistic' a week: the explosive answer was Kibya." Claiming that Israelis were far more heavily victimized than Palestinians, he stated that between 1950 and 1953, during a time

⁷⁰Lewis H. Weinstein and Robert E. Segal to Community Council Representatives, Oct. 19, 1953, folder 1, box 130, Boston Jewish Community Relations Council Records, 1933–2002 (MS I-123), American Jewish Historical Society, New England archives, Boston, MA [hereafter BJCRCR].

⁷¹Morris, *Israel's Border Wars*, 270–71.

⁷²Robert E. Segal to City Editor, *Boston Globe*, Oct. 22, 1953, folder 1, box 130, BJCRCR.

⁷³Robert E. Segal to Community Council Representatives, Oct. 23, 1953; Lewis H. Weinstein and Robert E. Segal to Community Council Representatives, Oct. 23, 1953. Both in folder 1, box 130, BJCRCR. The quotations relating to U.S. aid are Kenen's words, as is almost all of the second memorandum.

when the United States, Great Britain, and France together supposedly “guaranteed” the “borders” between Israel and its neighbors, “Israel has endured the following losses at Jordan hands: 421 men, women, and children killed and wounded; 130 cases of sabotage; 866 armed attacks; 3,263 robberies.” He flayed what he saw as the world’s selective sympathy for Arab losses alone, writing, “Throughout this long ordeal the guarantor powers remained silent. Their ‘horror’ has been reserved for Kibya.”⁷⁴ Kenen’s brief for the defense consisted of three parts: the violence at Qibya was an understandable, if lamentable, reply to a slow-motion massacre of larger scale; the outside world applied a double standard, denouncing Jewish savagery while accepting Arab violence; it was unclear who committed the Qibya killings.

According to Morris, the Israeli civilian death toll between 1950 and 1953 was 153, plus 202 civilians wounded, for a total of 355 civilian casualties due to border violence. In addition to this, he counts 121 Israeli soldiers killed during this period, although those military deaths occurred in battles, often in engagements initiated by the IDF. Kenen did not clearly distinguish civilian from military casualties, and he lumped Israelis killed and wounded together. Thus, Kenen’s unsourced number of 421 Israeli casualties between 1950 and 1953 was not very far off the mark. However, he made no mention of the extensive fatalities among Palestinian boundary-crossers in the same time span: at least ten times as many as Jewish deaths from the violence. Morris estimates that “Israeli security forces and civilian guards, and their mines and booby-traps, killed somewhere between 2,700 and 5,000 Arab infiltrators during 1949–56,” a broader time span in which he cites a total of 284 Israeli civilian deaths. “The evidence suggests that the vast majority of those killed were unarmed; the overwhelming majority had infiltrated for economic or social reasons.”⁷⁵ To be sure, Kenen probably did not have access to such data. But he and allies like the JCCB appeared uninterested in the full context of lives lost in the border violence. They chose the numbers that would make the case for the defense, maximizing the significance of Jewish deaths and not bothering to count Arab ones.

Not all were happy with the prospect of closed-ranks support for this line. The JCCB files contain a brief note, dated October 29, unsigned but seemingly written by Segal. It read:

I received a call from Herbert Ehrmann this morning complaining about the letter he had received ... summoning a meeting on the Israel crisis for October 29. He asked whom are we fighting and for what? He said that the idea that all Jews are 100% Zionist is wrong. He stated that the fight now going on in Israel can be compared with the old one between Indians and the settlers. He said that he didn’t think the Zionists should summon people. He added that he did not think we should engage in issuing joint statements with the Zionists.⁷⁶

Herbert Ehrmann was far from an obscure community member. A prominent Boston lawyer and activist, he would serve as president of the AJC from 1959 to 1961. His outburst was likely

⁷⁴Lewis H. Weinstein and Robert E. Segal to Community Council Representatives, Oct. 27, 1953, folder 1, box 130, BJCR. The document sent out by Kenen was American Zionist Council Emergency Bulletin No. 1, Oct. 23, 1953, folder 57, box 5, ILKP. The “guarantee” that Kenen mentioned referred to the Tripartite Agreement of 1950, in which the United States, Great Britain, and France jointly stated that they would intervene against any Middle Eastern state that engaged in aggression against its neighbors. Kenen appeared to state erroneously that the attack in Yehuda occurred on October 13, not October 12.

⁷⁵The quotations are from Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars* (1993 edition), 415. The specific casualty figures are from the 1997 edition of Morris’s book (and all other references are to this later edition). He cites the following Israeli civilian death tolls: perhaps 20 in 1949, 19 in 1950, 48 in 1951, 42 in 1952, 44 in 1953, 33 in 1954, 24 in 1955, and 54 in 1956. He gives these numbers for wounded civilians: 31 in 1950, 49 in 1951, 56 in 1952, 66 in 1953, 77 in 1954, 69 in 1955, and 129 in 1956. His numbers for Israeli soldiers killed are 70 in 1951, 24 in 1952, 27 in 1953, 24 in 1954, 50 in 1955, and 63 in 1956. Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars*, 99–100; see his detailed discussion of the numbers on 100–01n4.

⁷⁶Folder 1, box 130, BJCR.

known to very few at the time, but many years later it illuminates the private discord within organized American Jewish life over the orchestration of a united front to defend Israel after Qibya. Incidentally, the analogy Ehrmann made to conflict in the American West was used not only by critics of Israeli behavior. The AZC produced an analysis of events on the ground soon after Qibya that stated, “The truth is that within recent months the Arabs have become emboldened, striking terror into the hearts and minds of the Israeli settlers who have been provoked by their own tragic losses into strong reaction . . . history reinforces the view that pioneer Americans did not permit raids on their frontier villages to go unchallenged.”⁷⁷

The Qibya killings also helped spark the founding of the Conference of Presidents.⁷⁸ Nahum Goldmann, the longtime international Zionist activist, is usually credited with the idea of the Presidents’ Conference, following his own account in his memoirs. Goldmann had been the Jewish Agency’s designated representative in the United States since 1943, and he remained in close contact with Israeli leaders.⁷⁹ Others also claimed parentage of this offspring. By some accounts, Eban organized an initial meeting in February 1953.⁸⁰ Philip Klutznick writes that he offered the idea for the Conference of Presidents to Goldmann the day after Klutznick was elected president of B’nai B’rith, the American Jewish lodge brotherhood, in May 1953. Then, according to Klutznick, Goldmann “bought it and ran with the ball.”⁸¹ The AJC staff took the view that the Jewish Agency instructed Goldmann to form the Conference.⁸² In reality,

⁷⁷Folder 224, box 17, ILKP. This unsigned, undated, and untitled document was almost certainly written by Kenen, as it is included in a folder of his “Writings and Speeches, 1953,” with the words “Position paper, fall, 1957—Kibya” handwritten at the top of the first page.

⁷⁸The timing of the founding of the Conference of Presidents is rendered in murky and inaccurate fashion elsewhere. Urofsky, *We Are One*, 300–1, states that the group’s germination lasted from early 1953 to 1966, and that only in the latter year was it officially formed. Alteras gives a date of 1955 for the group’s formation, citing James L. Ray, *The Future of American-Israeli Relations: A Parting of the Ways?* (Lexington, KY, 1985) and an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by Steven F. Windmueller completed in 1973. Alteras, *Eisenhower and Israel*, 288, 360n4.

⁷⁹From 1943 Goldmann operated in Washington representing the Agency to the U.S. government as a de facto ambassador, and in 1945 the Agency tasked him with representing them at the UN. This created a conflict with the AZEC and particularly with Silver, who saw Goldmann as an ally of his moderate foes, Stephen Wise and Chaim Weizmann. Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel*, 84.

⁸⁰By this account the gathering was sparked by concern over antisemitism in the Soviet Union. Eban’s wife, Suzy, recollected that her husband proposed the idea to Goldmann. Asaf Siniver, “Abba Eban and the Development of American-Israeli Relations, 1950–1959,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 26, no. 1 (Jan. 2015): 65–83, here 72. It is unclear which groups were represented in the February meeting, which Eban does not mention in his memoirs. There he refers twice to “the Kibya raid,” virtually without explanation, and soon afterward he states that he collaborated with Goldmann (naming no one else) to begin the Conference of Presidents in 1954, never connecting this effort to an earlier gathering. Abba Eban, *An Autobiography* (London, 1979), 179, 181, 182.

⁸¹Philip M. Klutznick to Israel Miller, July 29, 1975, folder 4, box 209, Philip M. Klutznick Papers, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (hereafter PMKP). In correspondence from the 1980s, Klutznick persistently presses this version of events, claiming that Goldmann had wished to reconstitute the defunct AJConference and that he, Klutznick, replied that this was unrealistic and countered with the idea of a presidents’ club. In his later memoir, Klutznick includes a detailed recollection of his initial telephone conversation with Goldmann about this. Philip M. Klutznick (with Sidney Hyman), *Angles of Vision: A Memoir of My Lives* (Chicago, 1991), 164–65. However, Klutznick’s papers from the 1950s offer no contemporary documentation of these events.

⁸²“Zionist Public Relations in the United States,” 14–15. This AJC report provides no support for its contention. However, it is true that the earliest meeting of the group for which I have documentation, on January 11, 1955, occurred at the offices of the Jewish Agency for Palestine in New York City. Summary of Meeting, Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, at the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Jan. 11, 1955, folder 80, box 8, ILKP. Only in later documents is the Jewish Agency listed as a member organization of the Conference of Presidents.

Emanuel Neumann (no great friend to Goldmann), after claiming that he independently tried, soon after 1948, to bring top American non-Zionists and Zionists together, and that his effort failed, notes, “My basic approach to the problem was . . . adopted by the American Section of the Jewish Agency and led to the establishment of what

some such idea had circulated for a long time. However, it got organized in a meaningful way only in early 1954—“stimulated,” in Klutznick’s words, by “events” that “were exceedingly dramatic.”⁸³ In Goldmann’s version, he was inspired by an encounter with an unnamed State Department official, the head of the Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs desk, who, after the U.S. government had protested “a very violent retaliatory action by Israel,” complained to Goldmann that he had to meet with “six delegations” of agitated Jewish leaders and would prefer to meet with one authoritative group. Other accounts name this official as Henry Byroade, the leading antagonist of Israel and pro-Israel groups within Dulles’s State Department.⁸⁴ Goldmann writes, “I managed to persuade Philip Klutznick ... a farsighted, astute politician, and Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, the dynamic leader of Reform Jewry, to join me in calling a conference of the presidents of all major Jewish organizations with the object of creating at least a loosely structured forum for the discussion of all American-Israeli questions.”⁸⁵ This gathering became institutionalized as the Conference of Presidents.

Kenen, for his part, writes, “Coincidentally, as our Committee was separating from the AZC, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations came into existence. It was convened by Goldmann, after he had visited Washington during our 1953 conflict with Dulles and had been told by Byroade that he had received representatives of Jewish organizations five times in five days during one week.”⁸⁶ Kenen never mentions a massacre, and Goldmann does not name Byroade. But, putting the two accounts together, it is clear that the “action” in question was the Qibya massacre, and that it was a flurry of activism by pro-Israel notables in the autumn of 1953 that inspired the formation of the Conference of Presidents, even if the group did not exist officially until some time later. When the group met in January 1955, it composed a statement that began, “The Presidents of the major American Jewish organizations have been meeting from time to time during the past year,” that is, since the spring of 1954.⁸⁷

The Conference’s formation brought to fruition ideas expressly advocated at the AZC and in Jerusalem about the priority of uniting Zionist and non-Zionist American Jews to support Israel. On October 20, 1953, five days after word spread of the killings at Qibya, the AZC “convened a luncheon of representatives of all the major non-Zionist organizations and asked them to distribute copies of our background memoranda and to associate themselves with the Council’s program.” These communications led, six days later, to a summit meeting between a top-tier Jewish leadership group, headed by U.S. Senator Irving Ives and U.S. Representative Jacob Javits, both Republicans of New York, with Dulles and Byroade.⁸⁸ The group included Klutznick, Halprin, Lipsky, Bernard Trager (chairman of the National Community Relations Advisory Board, a coordinating body for Jewish Community Relations Councils around the country), and others. Only Halprin and Lipsky hailed from Zionist groups.

was eventually called the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.” Emanuel Neumann, *In the Arena: An Autobiographical Memoir* (New York, 1976), 289.

⁸³Philip M. Klutznick to Kenneth J. Bialkin, Feb. 22, 1985. Klutznick does not state here what those events were. However, in another letter he writes, “The organization I know was undertaken at the beginning at least late in 1953.” Philip M. Klutznick to Malcolm I. Hoenlein, Oct. 24, 1988. Both letters in folder 5, box 209, PMKP.

⁸⁴Nahum Goldmann, *The Autobiography of Nahum Goldmann: Sixty Years of Jewish Life*, trans. Helen Sebba (New York, 1969), 325. Kenen, below, names Byroade as the official. Alteras, *Eisenhower and Israel*, 288, also states it was Byroade; in support he cites Kenen as well as an interview Alteras conducted with Yehuda Hellman, an official of the Conference of Presidents.

⁸⁵Goldmann, *Autobiography*, 325.

⁸⁶Kenen, *Israel’s Defense Line*, 111.

⁸⁷“Summary of Meeting, Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations,” at the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Jan. 11, 1955, folder 80, box 8, ILKP. Klutznick, while disputing some particulars of Goldmann’s creation story, repeatedly affirms that the Conference “did begin in 1954.” Philip M. Klutznick to Moshe Fox, July 2, 1984, folder 4, box 209, PMKP. In *Angles of Vision* (179), Klutznick states that the “loosely structured meetings” commenced in May 1954.

⁸⁸“Report on Activities, Washington Office, American Zionist Council, Sept.–Oct., 1953.” According to this account, Javits had suggested such a meeting before Qibya, and he raised the idea again on or around October 20.

According to Kenen, he provided Javits with the names for the gathering (“at Javits’s request”); thus Kenen provided a vital link between the AZC and this new initiative.⁸⁹

The meeting proceeded uneasily. Dulles asserted “that he had been very instrumental in the decisions which led to the establishment of the State of Israel,” and he “inferred,” according to the AZC’s internal report on the meeting, “that he was much disturbed by the fact that the Jewish people have not appreciated what he did for them.” During a testy hour-long exchange, the group spoke of Jordan River water and passage in the Suez Canal. They also raised the issue of Qibya, contending that Washington was treating Israel more stringently than Arab states who were responsible, they said, for attacks inside Israel (a connection that U.S. diplomats treated skeptically).⁹⁰ While the Jewish notables sought to enfold Qibya within a suite of issues at hand, and not as the leading one by any means, it was, in reality, the matter that had made Dulles go public with the suspension of aid to Israel, thus creating the political breach that the delegation sought to heal on its terms. The meeting established a kind of precedent for all future efforts to deny, obscure, or downplay the piercing impact of the massacre. Without Qibya, the meeting itself might not have occurred.⁹¹ This consultation was the true germ of the Conference of Presidents. Another group meeting with Dulles would occur one year later, with personnel that clearly anticipated the member groups of the Conference.⁹²

Three years later, in late October 1956, the Conference of Presidents, coordinating with the AZCPA, would swing into action after Israel joined with France and the United Kingdom to attack Egypt, and Israel occupied the Sinai Peninsula in a bid to secure defense-in-depth against its most potent foe.⁹³ The Conference “was extraordinarily active across the country in apprising the Jewish community of the situation,” in Klutznick’s words, and would urge President Eisenhower, publicly and privately, to take a mediating role between the combatants rather than trying to undo Israel’s action. They had modest success, as Israel did have to withdraw, but on terms that did not exactly restore the status quo ante bellum.⁹⁴ The activities of 1953 and 1956, taken together, show the Jewish united front for Israel up and running.

⁸⁹Kenen, *Israel’s Defense Line*, 102.

⁹⁰“Abstract of Meeting of Jewish Representatives with Secretary of State Dulles, Oct. 26, 1953,” folder 57, box 5, ILKP. Dulles, as a private citizen, had taken a prominent role in international affairs during the 1940s.

⁹¹Morris, *Israel’s Border Wars*, 264–65, suggests strongly that the meeting’s purpose was to deal with Qibya, and he reports that Israeli officials were hearing messages of distress from American Jews over the reports of the massacre.

⁹²In this unofficial first anniversary meeting with Dulles, the groups participating were the American Jewish Congress (effectively if not formally a Zionist group); the American Trade Union Council for Labor Israel, B’nai B’rith, the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Jewish War Veterans of the United States, the National Community Relations Advisory Council, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, and the United Synagogue of America (all non-Zionist organizations or those not historically concerned with Zionism); and the AZCPA, the AZC, Hadassah, the Labor Zionist Organization of America, the Mizrahi Organization of America, and ZOA (the Zionist groups). Summary of Conference with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in his office on Monday, Oct. 25, 1954, folder 91, box 9, ILKP. By the time the Conference of Jewish Organizations (as it was then called) met in Washington in March 1955, it had gained some additional groups representing the Zionist right and left—as well as the Jewish Agency, now a formal member—and it had lost the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. Conference of Jewish Organizations, Mar. 5–6, 1955, Shoreham Hotel, Washington, DC, “Declaration,” folder 80, box 8, ILKP.

⁹³Louis and Owen, *Suez 1956*; Oren, *The Origins of the Second Arab-Israel War*.

⁹⁴Philip M. Klutznick to Malcolm I. Hoenlein, Mar. 28, 1988, folder 5, box 209, PMKP. See Isaac Alteras, “Eisenhower, American Jewry, and Israel,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 37, no. 2 (Nov. 1985): 258–74, here 264–70.

“American Jewry was neither mentally nor organizationally prepared for this crisis. Nevertheless, it rallied within a few days.” This was the verdict of an Israel Foreign Ministry assessment of U.S. Jewish support for Israel following Qibya.⁹⁵ In fact, by late December 1953, participation in the pro-Israel mobilization by America’s Jewish leadership after Qibya had become a source of pride. At that time, leading Jewish activists from around the world convened for a periodic meeting of the Zionist General Council, a top governing body of the Zionist movement. One of the delegates from the United States was Judith Epstein, a former president of Hadassah. Other delegates at the meeting had proposed a resolution praising “the courageous and devoted stand of the Zionist Movement” during the Qibya crisis. Epstein stated that “this has to come out completely.” Epstein was not worried about drawing attention to the pro-Israel action. To the contrary, she was concerned that credit for defending Israel after Qibya was to be dispensed too narrowly. She explained that the delegation that had met with Dulles “went not as people of the Movement at all the majority were not Zionists.” Slighting the prime importance of non-Zionist participation in this consultation, Epstein explained, “minimizes and destroys the effectiveness of the work that you want us to do; that we want to do.”⁹⁶ The Jewish united front was the key to the new energies of the “lobby for Israel.”

Numerous people and organizations—the AJC, the Conference of Presidents, Ben-Gurion in Jerusalem, and Kenen in Washington—all pushed toward the same goal in the Eisenhower years: a convergence of Zionist and non-Zionist forces in a new configuration of American support for Israel. This fusion of Zionism and non-Zionism encouraged the conflation of American Jewishness with pro-Israel politics. In 1959, the AZCPA was renamed AIPAC, “Israel” replacing “Zionist.” The new name acknowledged ostensibly non-Zionist participants in the committee. “By that time,” Kenen writes, “many of our contributors were active community leaders—self-styled ‘non-Zionists’—and they could not understand why they should be unrecognized partners in a Zionist committee.” In his view, “anyone who favored and helped to restore the Jewish state was, in fact, a Zionist.”⁹⁷ With the merger of previously rival tendencies, non-Zionist premises threatened to eclipse Zionist doctrines. American Jews redefined Zionism to mean providing staunch and generally unquestioning support for the State of Israel, so long as the leaders of Jewish Israel maintained respect for the legitimacy and integrity of American Jewry as a Jewish community. As the Harvard University historian Oscar Handlin put it in 1957, “Only by accepting the fact that Israel and the Diaspora exist for their own sake and not to redeem one another” could the Jews of these realms ensure lasting harmony.⁹⁸ This was no *hafradah* or separation of Israel from U.S. Zionism; the ties binding Israeli and American Jewries, and Zionisms, would only proliferate and thicken in subsequent decades. That entanglement could proceed easily because of the entente that Handlin described, which held despite persistent disturbances from the Israeli side. With the ambiguous triumph of non-Zionism in America, that very term became irrelevant and, by 1960, had basically vanished.

It has been common to regard Zionist enthusiasm in the United States during the 1950s as less than pervasive and intense, especially when compared to the terrific outpouring of pro-Israel concern and pride among American Jews beginning in 1967.⁹⁹ While not mistaken,

⁹⁵This was dated February 1954. Feldestein, *Ben-Gurion, Zionism and American Jewry*, 89.

⁹⁶“Zionist Public Relations in the United States,” 18. The Zionist General Council met to decide policy questions for the Zionist Organization during the intervals between the much larger quadrennial Zionist Congresses.

⁹⁷Kenen, *Israel’s Defense Line*, 110.

⁹⁸Oscar Handlin, “Zionist Ideology and World Jewry: Reflections on a Conference,” *Commentary*, Feb. 1, 1958: 109.

⁹⁹For example, see these diverse sources: Diner, *Jews of the United States*; Novick, *Holocaust in American Life*; and Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (New York, 2000).

that view misses the lasting reconstruction of Zionism in American Jewish life in the 1950s and the way that reconstruction paved the way for a later passionate and widespread engagement with Israel. As early as the mid-1950s, organized American Jewry had neared consensus in its unyielding defense of Israel. Dissent from this stand was muted, marginal, and inconsequential. It lacked communal legitimacy and even rationality, absent a serious framework that could anchor such dissent or lend confidence to critical thinkers. The anti-Zionist tradition of Reform Judaism, in theory, provided such an alternative frame. However, generational transition and changes in the social basis of Reform Judaism—its population by Jews of Eastern European descent, generally inclined toward Zionism—rendered the anti-Zionism of earlier Reform increasingly alien to American Jewry.¹⁰⁰

American Jewish organizations did not shrink from the “abyss” that loomed after Qibya, but instead crossed the divide, and then the horizon of justification stretched ahead virtually without limit. They chose to defend Israel with new vigor exactly when Israeli actions disturbed observers, both in the United States and elsewhere, most deeply. This, beyond the impetus it gave to specific organizations, was the massacre’s deeper significance. Violence by the Israeli state against Palestinians, while it may have been forgotten in later years, lies like a hard stone gnarled in the roots of the Israel lobby. For American Jews, Qibya led straight to Sinai. In Nahum Goldmann’s approving words, “they defended the occupation of Sinai, although it was not easy for them to understand why it happened.”¹⁰¹ The emerging message was clear to Jews and others alike: American Jewish leadership would find a way to support Israel no matter the situation. With anti-Zionism in rapid retreat and non-Zionism disappearing as a distinct position, Jewish criticism of specific Israeli actions lacked coherence or analytical clarity and simply became inarticulate discomfort. The missing elements of critique would not return to the American scene until much later, when Israel’s conquest of new territories sowed seeds of discord, among Jews and between Jews and others, and polarizing concepts of settler colonialism and anticolonialism acquired contemporary salience.¹⁰² After the 1950s, to rebuke Israel was tantamount to opposing American Jewry and even Jewishness. The events of the early and middle 1950s foretold the long-term weakness of American Jewish criticism of Israel. With the keenest supporters of Israel in the United States, the greatest stronghold of support for Israel in the world, steeled to support Israel regardless of what events might transpire, later developments would produce new Middle Eastern realities that held the capacity to disrupt the political patterns and cultural negotiations forged in the new state’s early years.

Doug Rossinow is professor of history at the University of Oslo. He is the author of *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (1998), *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (2008), and *The Reagan Era: A History of the 1980s* (2015); and the co-editor of (with Rebecca Lowen) *The United States since 1945: Historical Interpretations* (2007) and (with Andrew Preston) *Outside In: The Transnational Circuitry of US History* (2017). His current book project is *Two Flags: The Worlds of American Zionism, 1948–1995*.

¹⁰⁰See Polish, *Renew Our Days*.

¹⁰¹Goldmann spoke at a Small Zionist General Council that occurred on Dec. 11–12, 1956. “Zionist Public Relations in the United States,” 19.

¹⁰²Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* trans. David Thorstad (New York, 1973), initially published in French, disseminated these ideas in the European and American left. Also see Joe Stork, “The American New Left and Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1972): 64–69. For contrasting views see Derek J. Penslar, “Zionism, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism,” *Journal of Israeli History* 20, nos. 2–3 (2001): 84–98, and Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London, 2016), ch 7.