

# AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS HOLDING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER POST-OCTOBER 7

THE PEOPLEHOOD PULSE SURVEY

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# INTRODUCTION

Organized Jewish life has always been shaped by the tension between ideological diversity and communal cohesion. Jewish religious tradition celebrates the multiplicity of interpretations and perspectives but also warns against divisions that weaken community and a shared commitment to the good of the Jewish People.

In the contemporary United States, Jewish communal leaders face a distinctive challenge: maintaining strong, cohesive communities while engaging with increasingly diverse perspectives on Israel and Jewish life. The Hamas invasion of Israel on October 7, 2023 intensified this challenge. The Peoplehood Pulse Surveys, an initiative of [ENTER: The Jewish Peoplehood Alliance](#), examined how senior leaders across American Jewish communal organizations approach this challenge. Our findings reveal a leadership cadre actively working to build bridges across ideological divides in order to ensure their communities remain vibrant and resilient.

# METHODOLOGY

The Peoplehood Pulse surveys are conducted bi-annually with Jewish leaders, with the goal of enhancing discussions about Jewish Peoplehood and areivut haddadit (mutual responsibility). This report documents the findings of the inaugural survey in the series.

In July and August 2024, 210 individuals identified by ENTER as high-profile professional and lay leaders of national level organizations in the American Jewish community received an Internet survey. 75 responded (36% response rate), representing senior leaders from 67 organizations including from major American Jewish foundations, federations, educational organizations, academic and campus organizations, and advocacy organizations covering diverse areas of Jewish life and public policy. The research team, led by Dr. Ezra Kopelowitz of the Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education wrote up the findings with two following discussions, including a formal presentation and discussion with the [Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education’s Circle of Fellows](#) held on [September 2024](#); and, feedback from Peoplehood Pulse Project steering committee.

Respondents’ Organizations			
Anti-Defamation League	Greater Miami Federation	Moishe House	AIPAC
Hebrew Union College	Momentum	American Jewish Committee	iCenter
Natan Fund	AJWS	International Rabbinic Fellowship (IRF)	National Council of Jewish Woman
Alan B. Slifka Foundation	Israel Policy Forum	The Washington Institute for Near East Policy	Americans for Peace Now
Jewish Agency Board	Oshman Family JCC	Baltimore Federation	Jewish Atlanta
OpenDor Media	Birthright Israel	JDC	Palm Beach Federation
Brandeis University	Jewish Community Centers Association of North America	Park Avenue Synagogue	Brandeis: Steinhardt Social Research Institute
Jewish Museum	Pittsburgh Federation	Hillel International	Jewish Funders Network
Portland Federation	CASJE	Jewish Federations of North America	Rabbinical Assembly USCJ
Chasbro Foundation	Jim Joseph Foundation	Ronald Lauder Foundation	Cleveland Federation
JNF-USA	San Diego/La Jolla Jacobs Family JCC	Council of American Jewish Museums	John Pritzker Family Fund
Susie and Michael Gelman Foundation	Washington DC Federation	Jewish Women International	The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
Washington DC JCC	Koret Foundation	The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life	ejewish Philanthropy
Maimonides Fund	Foundation For Jewish Camp	Marcus Foundation	Weitzman Museum
JCRC Boston	Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture	William Davidson Foundation	Greater Metrowest Federation, NJ

Thinking about Jewish religious denominations, do you consider yourself to be:

Respondents to the survey include:

- **Gender:** 62% identify as male, 32% as female, 1% preferred not to say.
- **Age:** 53% are between 40 and 59 years of age. 9% are younger than 40, 38% are older than 60.
- **Ethnicity:** 85% identify as Ashkenazi
- **Religion:** See table side right.

	%
Haredi	0%
Chabad	0%
Orthodox (other than Haredi or Chabad)	16%
Conservative	33%
Reform	14%
Reconstructionist	0%
Renewal	0%
Just Jewish	17%
Something else	7%
No particular denomination	12%
Not Jewish	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The Challenge:** The Israel-Hamas war that began on October 7, 2023 intensified existing ideological divisions within American Jewish communities, placing immense pressure on Jewish communal leaders. A comprehensive survey of 75 senior leaders from 67 major American Jewish organizations reveals how they are working to maintain community cohesion while engaging with diverse perspectives on Israel and Jewish life.

**Leaders as Bridge Builders:** These leaders play a pivotal role as mediators between American Jewry and Israel. Their deep emotional and professional connections to Israel set them apart—92% identify as "very attached" to Israel compared to 25% of American Jews generally. Yet, their political perspectives on the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the war post-October 7 are more aligned with broader American Jewish attitudes than with the Israeli political spectrum. This dual positioning enables them to serve as effective bridge builders, fostering dialogue across ideological divides while working to preserve essential communal bonds.

**Two Strategic Approaches to Navigating Ideological Diversity:** The research identifies two predominant strategies Jewish leaders use to maintain communal cohesion in a polarized environment:

1. **Setting Communal Boundaries:** Some leaders define ideological guardrails to ensure cohesion, carefully delineating the limits of acceptable discourse within their communities.
2. **Fostering Inclusive Spaces:** Others prioritize engagement across a broad ideological spectrum, emphasizing shared values and mutual respect as a foundation for communal unity.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive but reflect different emphasis in how leaders balance inclusion and collective responsibility. The study finds that **57% of leaders lean toward some form of exclusion of ideological extremes, while 48% favor broader engagement.**

**Strategies in Action: Campus Protest Case Study:** Jewish students' participation in campus protests against Israel's military response post October 7<sup>th</sup> serves as a case study of these leadership strategies in practice. While 88% of leaders view the broader campus demonstrations as antisemitic, they differ in how they perceive and respond to Jewish students involved.

- Leaders who emphasize **boundary-setting** tend to view these protesters as beyond acceptable communal limits.
- Those favoring **inclusivity** are more likely to advocate for continued engagement, seeing these students as still meaningfully connected to Jewish life.

This case study highlights the real-world implications of leadership decisions in navigating ideological conflict.

**Implications for Jewish Communal Leadership:** These findings underscore a critical tension for Jewish leaders: How to sustain communal bonds while accommodating political diversity?

- **Pluralism and Communal Integrity:** The research reveals that all surveyed leaders are committed to ideological diversity to some extent. However, they vary in their willingness to engage those on the far-left or far-right.
- **Israel's Centrality and Political Diversity:** For the respondents, Israel and a commitment to the Zionist vision of a Jewish-Democratic state is central for their leadership and their communities. Yet their views on Israel's policies towards the Palestinians vary widely, illustrating the challenge of balancing personal commitment to Israel with leadership engagement involving political divisions.

### Pathways Forward

These leaders' commitment to vibrant, cohesive communities with Israel integral to Jewish life shows that meaningful dialogue across political divides is possible without losing core communal values. Their approaches offer valuable models for Jewish leaders and community members alike, who want to strengthen Jewish Peoplehood in an era of polarization.

# LEADING THROUGH JEWISH POLARIZATION

The surveyed leaders find themselves at the center of an increasingly polarized Jewish world, striving to bridge ideological divides while maintaining politically diverse communal spaces. Jewish diversity—of customs, thought, and community—is a source of Jewish pride. The Jewish religious tradition is rooted in debate and divergent understandings of core values and ethics. Yet, rabbinic tradition raises a red flag, pointing to the Second Temple’s destruction resulting from *sinat hinam* (baseless hatred) from ideological extremism.

Today, navigating polarization is especially fraught. Conversations across political divides are difficult,<sup>1</sup> and on Israel especially.<sup>2</sup> October 7th exacerbated existing divisions. Israel’s response to the attack led to significant destruction in Gaza, sparking strong criticism, particularly among the political left. American campuses erupted with pro-Palestinian protests, sometimes involving threats to Jewish students, fueling diverse and conflicting reactions among American Jews. Surveys indicate increased Jewish attachment to Israel post-October 7th, but opinions vary. Some actively support Israel, while others, over time, became more critical. A small number even joined protests. Many feel conflicted, unsure where they stand.<sup>3</sup>

Jewish leaders today must navigate competing priorities—defending or criticizing Israel, mobilizing advocates while respecting critics, and balancing advocacy, education, and holding their communities together. Their decisions are shaped by community views, personal convictions, organizational missions, and leadership roles. The leaders responding to report that they are actively working to bridge ideological divides while ensuring that communal spaces engage politically diverse constituents without fracturing their communities.

## DEEP CONNECTION TO ISRAEL AMID POLITICAL DIVERSITY

### A Strong Foundation of Shared Connection

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The leaders express strong personal and professional ties to Israel.

#### **Personal Engagement**

On a personal level they are far more connected than the average American to Israel. For example, 92% identify as "very attached" to Israel, in contrast to 25% of American Jews.<sup>4</sup> Other indicators of intense Israel attachment include tangible actions like visiting and financial support. Nearly every leader has visited Israel multiple times, and a majority have taken the significant step of living there at some point. This deep engagement extends beyond physical presence to include strong ideological alignment, with over 90% identifying as pro-Israel and Zionist.

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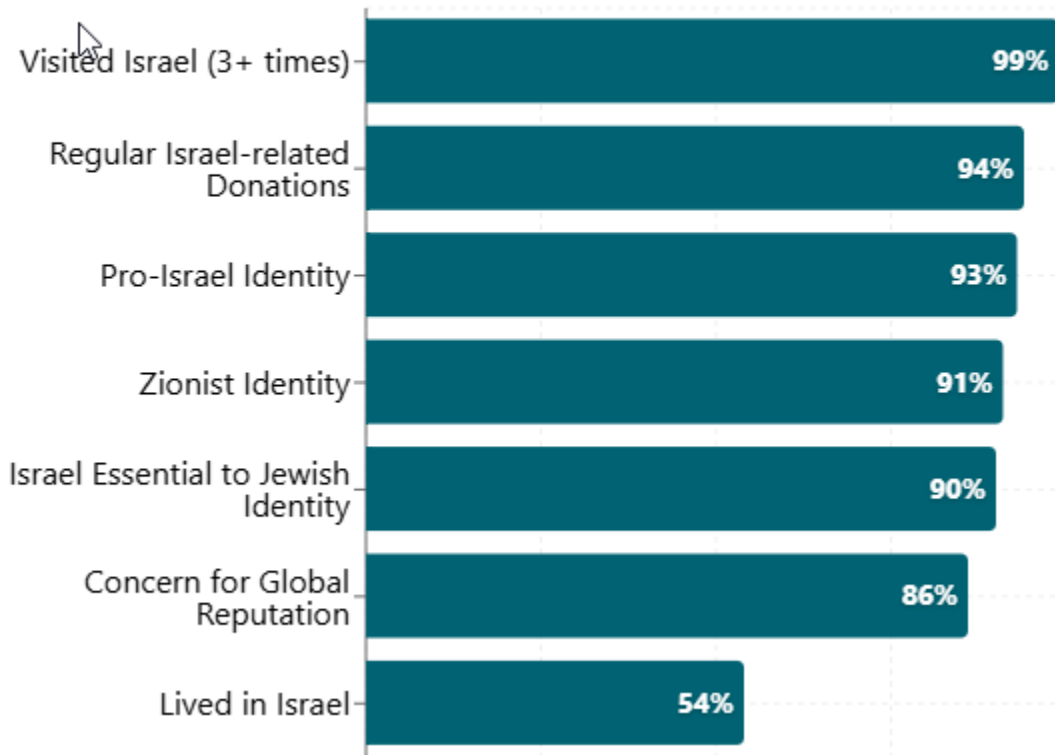
<sup>1</sup> Daniel A. Cox, Ryan Streeter, Samuel J. Abrams, Jacqueline Clemence. 2020. "Socially Distant: How Our Divided Social Networks Explain Our Politics." Survey Center on American Life. [Link](#) Pew Research Center. 2014. "Political Polarization in the American Public." [Link](#)

<sup>2</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Rabbi Jason Gitlin. 2013. "Reluctant or Repressed? Aversion to Expressing Views on Israel Among American Rabbis." Report commissioned by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. [Link](#)

<sup>3</sup> Wright, G., Saxe, L., Boxer, M., & Brookner, M. A. (2024, August). Antisemitism on Campus: Understanding Hostility to Jews and Israel. Brandeis University. David-Manchester. "2023 JFNA Israel Hamas War Sentiment Survey: Findings from a Poll of Americans – General Public and Jewish." Jewish Federations of North America & the Berman Jewish Data Bank. Pew Research Institute (2024, March) Views of the Israel-Hamas War. [Link](#). Paldi, Y. and Liberman I. (2024, September). Mosaic Teen Israel Survey: Antisemitism and Attitudes. Mosaic United. [Link](#). Hersch, E. (2024, September). A Year of Campus Conflict and Growth: An Over-Time Study of the Impact of the Israel-Hamas War on U.S. College Students. Jim Joseph Foundation. Kopelowitz E., Ravid S., Poslinsky I., Golden J., and Gillis J. (2024, November) Responding to the Fallout from October 7<sup>th</sup>: From Crisis to Opportunity: A Survey of Jewish Educators and Engagement Professionals. Jim Joseph Foundation. [Link](#).

<sup>4</sup> See Pew Research Center. (2021, May 11). U.S. Jews’ connections with and attitudes toward Israel. Pew Research Center. [Link](#). Since October 7th 2023 a majority of Jews are reporting a stronger feeling of connection, but we given these leaders overall intensive personal connection to Israel that a large gap remains.

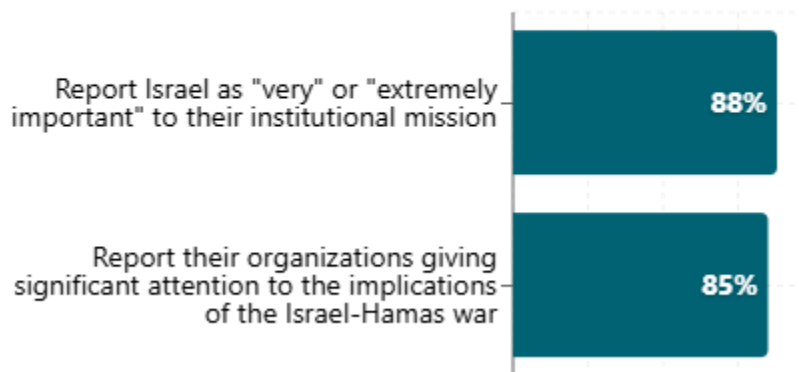
## Israel Engagement of Senior Leaders



### **Professional Engagement**

The leaders report exceptionally high levels of organizational commitment to Israel. Their responses reveal how deeply Israel is woven into the fabric of Jewish organizational life in North America. Nearly 90% of leaders prioritize Israel in their organization's mission and report responding to current events by dedicating significant resources to understanding and addressing the Israel-Hamas war's implications.

## Israel an Organizational Priority

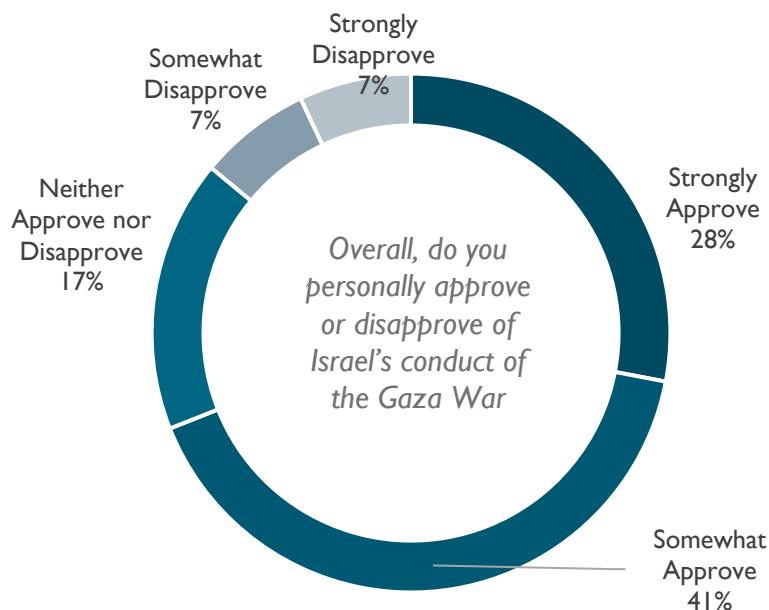


## Political Views in Line with American Jewry

These leaders are politically centrist, with 94% holding center-right to center-left positions in terms of their identification with the Israeli political spectrum. With the exception of one respondent, all regard Israel as a democratic and Jewish state as very or extremely important.<sup>5</sup>

However, when it comes to political policy they are clearly to the left on the current Israeli political spectrum and far more in line with American Jewry.

- On the Israel-Palestinian conflict, 80% support a two-state solution and 74% oppose annexation policies.<sup>6</sup>
- All express empathy for the Palestinians either “to a large extent” (57%) “somewhat” (27%) or “a little” (16%).
- When asked, if they favor or oppose, “managing the conflict, much as Israel has been doing since 1967,” just 20% favor, while 42% oppose. 38% neither for nor oppose or are not sure.
- Opinions on Israel's conduct of the war post-October 7th vary: 28% strongly approve, 41% somewhat approve, and 31% either disapprove or are neutral.



## BRIDGE BUILDERS WORKING ACROSS DIVIDES

These leaders occupy a unique and pivotal position as mediators between American Jewry and Israel.

- They align with the broader American Jewish community, prioritizing Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state while leaning left relative to the current Israeli political spectrum on issues touching on the Israel-Palestinian conflict (see previous section).
- At the same time, their deep emotional and ideological attachment to Israel—reflected in their overwhelming personal and professional engagement—sets them apart. Their organizations also reflect this commitment, with 88% emphasizing Israel as “very” or “extremely important” to their mission.

**This dual positioning—being politically aligned with American Jewry yet intensely connected to Israel—places these leaders in a role of active mediation.** They navigate between the mainstream American Jewish perspective on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, advocating for Israel while also addressing the concerns and values of their constituencies. This balancing act is particularly crucial in moments of crisis, such as the Israel-Hamas war, where 85% report that their organizations are dedicating significant attention to its implications. Their role bridging between their constituents and Israel, makes them central actors in shaping the evolving relationship between American Jewry and the Jewish State.

<sup>5</sup> The one exception only viewed Israel as continuing as a Democracy as very important and was less concerned that Israel remain a specifically Jewish state.

<sup>6</sup> American Jewish Committee. (2024). AJC's 2024 Survey of American Jewish Opinion. [Link](#)



As mediators, these leaders engage in dialogue with Jews from across the political spectrum, though their engagement is less frequent with individuals at the extreme ends. The following table illustrates the extent to which they have substantive conversations with individuals from various political affiliations.

*In the last few months, in your capacity as a leader of a Jewish organization or community, have you had substantive conversations with Jews who hold any of the following political stances about Israel? Select all that apply.*

	%
<b>Hard-right (often identified by their unequivocally support annexation of territories captured in 1967)</b>	47%
<b>Right-wing</b>	76%
<b>Center-right</b>	87%
<b>Centrist</b>	90%
<b>Center-left</b>	90%
<b>Left-wing</b>	80%
<b>Hard-left (often identified as anti-Zionist)</b>	49%
<b>I have not engaged in any substantive conversations</b>	0%
<b>I have engaged in substantive conversations, but don't know the way people identify politically</b>	7%

## LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

Building on their role as bridge builders, these leaders also navigate internal communal tensions, balancing inclusion with maintaining ideological and communal integrity. Their challenge is not only engaging across the American Israeli divide but also fostering dialogue within the American Jewish community itself, where ideological differences can threaten cohesion.

Rather than viewing discourse through a binary ideological lens (legitimate vs. illegitimate opinion), these leaders employ strategic approaches to sustain Jewish communal bonds while managing dissent. **The key question is: How can leaders create space for meaningful discussion while ensuring that core communal values remain intact?** The *Peoplehood Pulse* research highlights two interwoven approaches leaders take in this balancing act:

- **Defining Communal Limits:** Setting boundaries around acceptable discourse to preserve shared values and prevent internal fragmentation.
- **Creating Inclusive Spaces:** Encouraging broad ideological engagement while fostering an environment that supports constructive conversation.

### DEFINING COMMUNAL LIMITS

Some leaders emphasize the importance of ideological guardrails to sustain community cohesion. They recognize that while diversity of thought is valuable, discourse that directly undermines foundational communal commitments can be destabilizing. These leaders see boundary-setting as a means of safeguarding the collective, ensuring that debates remain productive and that extreme voices do not overshadow the majority. A core challenge in this approach is determining where to draw the line between healthy debate and discourse that erodes communal trust.

*"We are an overt Zionist organization, and we build community with people for whom this conflict is not just political but personal. So we have established some hard guidelines for the messaging and leadership we are willing to entertain to keep the tent open, but we will not allow anti-Zionist speakers or anyone who is overtly Islamophobic or xenophobic to present at our organization."*

### CREATING INCLUSIVE SPACES

Other leaders prioritize an approach that embraces ideological diversity while fostering a commitment to shared values. Their goal is to cultivate a culture where individuals with differing perspectives engage constructively, recognizing that relational bonds can transcend political divides. These leaders encourage dialogue as long as it remains rooted in mutual

respect. When disagreements arise, individuals who cannot participate in a spirit of good faith may naturally disengage, preserving the community's core purpose while allowing for broad engagement.

*"We support open conversation and viewpoint diversity as the best way to foster ahavat Yisrael."*

*"We do our best to be a big tent sometimes better than others."*

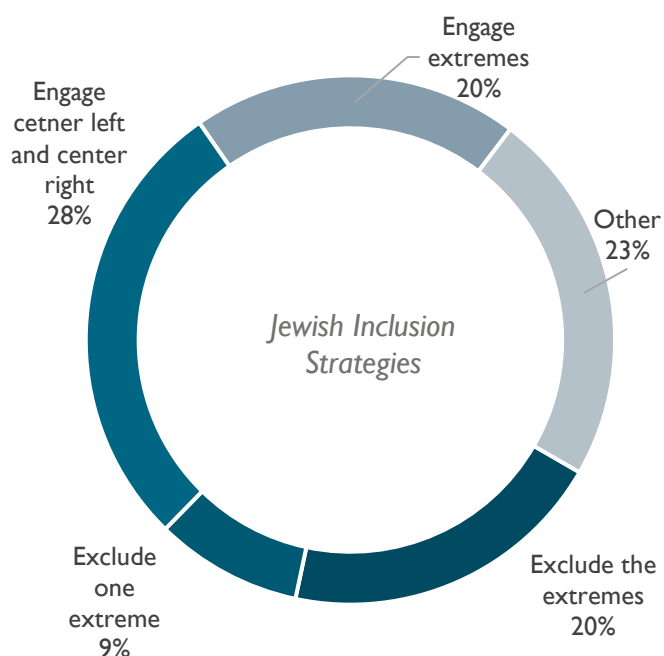
Both approaches highlight the intricate leadership required to sustain Jewish Peoplehood in an era of increasing polarization. Whether by setting communal limits or fostering inclusive spaces, these leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that Jewish communal life remains both cohesive and dynamic.

## DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO HOLDING DIVERSITY

As bridge builders between American Jewry and Israel, these leaders navigate internal communal boundaries, deciding how to engage with ideological diversity while defining communal limits. The survey responses reveal a spectrum of approaches to managing political and ideological tensions within their communities.

When asked about their preferred organizational policies regarding engagement with Jewish individuals across the political spectrum—from hard-right to hard-left—the results reveal distinct patterns in boundary-setting and inclusion. Five distinct strategies appear,<sup>7</sup> demonstrating the varied ways leaders approach inclusion and boundary-setting. The majority (57%) lean toward some form of exclusion of ideological extremes, while a notable minority favor broader engagement.

1. **Exclude Both Extremes (20%)** – These leaders believe maintaining communal cohesion requires distancing both the far-left and far-right. Their goal is to prevent highly divisive voices from fracturing the community.
2. **Exclude One Extreme (9%)** – Some leaders selectively exclude either the far-left or far-right, depending on their community's alignment, prioritizing ideological balance while protecting communal values.
3. **Engage Left and Right (28%)** – This group seeks to engage both right-wing and left-wing perspectives but stops short of engaging with the extremes.
4. **Engage Both Extremes (20%)** – These leaders emphasize the importance of engaging across the full ideological spectrum, including the far-left and far-right, believing that dialogue strengthens the community.
5. **Other (23%)** – Some leaders take a mixed or situational approach, adjusting their strategy based on their specific communal context.



<sup>7</sup> The leaders were asked: "Regarding each of the following categories of Jewish individuals—Hard-right, Right-wing, Center-right, Centrist, Center-left, Left-wing, and Hard-left—what policy would you prefer your organization or community to adopt?" The results when distilled as an index of the leaders' answers.

## Personal vs. Organizational Policy: Alignment and Tension

Leaders were also asked to reflect on how closely their personal views align with their organization's stance on engaging a diversity of Jewish voices. The data reveals a key distinction:

- Those who favor **excluding both extremes** are the most likely to see their personal stance as fully aligned with their organization's policy (67% to a very large extent).
- Among those who **exclude one extreme, engage both sides, or engage both extremes**, the majority report that their personal views align with their organization's position either **to a large extent** or **somewhat** indicating a level of flexibility in navigating communal boundaries.
- Leaders adopting a **situational approach (Other)** demonstrate the greatest variation, with 60% saying their views align only "somewhat" with their organization's stance.

These findings underscore the complexity of leadership for Peoplehood. All accept a centrist range of ideological diversity. While some leaders prioritize firm boundaries to maintain unity, others actively work to include even extreme perspectives, believing that engagement strengthens their Jewish communities. The balancing act between inclusion and boundary-setting remains a defining challenge for leaders committed to sustaining community cohesion and constructive engagement Jewish Peoplehood that recognizes political diversity.

## CASE STUDY: JEWISH PROTESTORS AS A LOOKING GLASS INTO LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

The debate over how to engage Jewish protestors in campus demonstrations against Israel's conduct of the war post-October 7th serves as a case study, offering a practical lens into how Jewish leaders navigate ideological conflict within their communities. This issue encapsulates the broader tension between fostering inclusion and maintaining communal boundaries, illustrating the real-world application of the strategies discussed earlier.

Some leaders perceive Jewish protestors as misguided but still integral members of the Jewish community. They argue that, despite their opposition to Israeli policies, these students remain connected Jews and should be engaged rather than alienated. For these leaders, outreach efforts are critical in maintaining Jewish communal bonds, even with those expressing opinions with which they strongly disagree. Conversely, other leaders see the positions of these Jewish protestors as crossing a communal red line. They believe that endorsing, or even appearing to tolerate, radical critiques of Israel undermine Jewish communal cohesion and the core values of their organizations. These leaders advocate for firmer boundary-setting, ensuring that their communities uphold a clear pro-Israel ideological stance, limited to engaging with Jews who hold more centrist, even if critical on Israel's conduct of the war.

### **The Demonstrators are Antisemitic, but the Jewish Protestors ... Antisemitic or Engaged?**

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An overwhelming 88% of leaders either strongly agree (44%) or somewhat agree (44%) with the statement that "many demonstrators are antisemitic." This consensus indicates a significant concern among leadership regarding the presence of antisemitic sentiments within the protest movements. While almost all leaders regard the campus demonstrations against Israel as antisemitic, their perspectives on the Jewish students involved in these protests vary significantly. The survey responses reveal distinct differences in how leaders judge the demonstrators' intent, level of Jewish engagement, and the responsibility of Jewish organizations to reach out to them:

- **Antisemitic Engagement:** Only 14% of leaders strongly agree that Jewish students in the protests are antisemitic, while 33% somewhat agree. Hence only a minority of 47% view the Jewish protestors as antisemitic.

- **Jewishly Engaged:** Conversely, 46% either strongly agree (6%) or somewhat agree (40%), that many Jewish students in the protests are Jewishly engaged. This indicates that nearly half of the respondents perceive these students as acting from a place of positive Jewish engagement rather than an antisemitic stance.

## Outreach to Jewish Protestors

The question of whether Jewish organizations should engage with Jewish protestors also reveals a divide among leadership:

- **Support for Outreach:** 37% of leaders believe that Jewish organizations should reach out to these students, with 8% strongly agreeing and 29% somewhat agreeing.
- **Ideological Extremes:** Leaders who support engaging both ideological extremes are far more likely to favor outreach, with 53% in favor. In contrast, those who advocate for excluding the extremes show far less inclination towards outreach, with only 13% supporting engagement.

## Jewish Leaders' Views on Demonstrators and Student Protesters

■ Strongly Agree   
 ■ Somewhat Agree   
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 ■ Somewhat Disagree   
 ■ Strongly Disagree

### Uniform Views on General Demonstrators:

Many demonstrators are antisemitic



Many demonstrators are basically right



### Diverse Views on Jewish Student Protesters:

Jewish students in the protests are also, in effect, antisemitic



Many Jewish students in the protests are Jewishly engaged



Jewish organizations should reach out to the Jewish demonstrators



# IMPLICATIONS: LEADING THROUGH POLITICAL DIVERSITY: BALANCING PLURALISM AND ISRAEL'S CENTRALITY

The response of Jewish organizations to campus protesters illuminates a fundamental leadership challenge: balancing community boundaries with inclusivity. Leaders who emphasize boundaries often view Jewish protesters as outside the community, consistent with their broader approach of limiting ideological diversity. In contrast, those who prioritize inclusion tend to see these protesters as part of the Jewish community, worthy of continued engagement and dialogue.

This tension has implications beyond campus politics. **How leaders navigate ideological conflicts shapes both local Jewish community dynamics and the broader relationship between American Jews and Israel. Their decisions influence how Jewish peoplehood evolves, both within their immediate communities and in the global Jewish context.**

These findings suggest that Jewish leaders are actively working to embrace political diversity while affirming Israel's centrality to American Jewish life. Success requires establishing clear principles for engagement that acknowledge both collective responsibility and the reality of ideological diversity. By working towards an integrated approach, leaders can work to strengthen Jewish peoplehood even in times of profound disagreement.

## 1. Degrees of Pluralism

The research shows that Jewish leaders take varied approaches to balancing inclusion with boundaries. While all survey respondents support some degree of political diversity, they differ in how far they extend beyond centrist positions. Some embrace views from across the political spectrum, while others limit engagement to center-left and center-right perspectives. This finding demonstrates that these prominent American Jewish leaders actively grapple with fostering community cohesion while accommodating diverse viewpoints.

This spectrum of approaches reflects a core challenge in Jewish communal leadership: how to maintain shared values while honoring pluralism. Leaders need to develop practical frameworks that encourage respectful dialogue while setting boundaries appropriate to their communities. The goal is to preserve community unity while enabling essential debates about critical issues.

## 2. Israel's Centrality and Political Diversity

The survey findings underscore the deep connection American Jewish leaders feel toward Israel, influencing their responses to conflict and division. Nearly all survey respondents reported strong personal and professional ties to Israel, emphasizing the country's centrality to their personal sense of Jewish belonging and organizational priorities. However, their views on Israel's policies, particularly in times of conflict, vary widely. This divergence points to a critical leadership challenge: reconciling what they view as a vital collective attachment to Israel with the need to navigate ideological diversity. Effective Jewish leaders need to craft approaches that uphold the community's essential bond with Israel while fostering spaces for thoughtful dialogue, ensuring that political disagreements strengthen rather than fragment their communities.

**In conclusion:** This study reveals how Jewish communal leaders navigate an increasingly polarized political landscape, particularly in their approaches to inclusion and boundary-setting around Israel-related discourse. Their varied responses demonstrate both the inherent challenges and emerging opportunities in maintaining communal cohesion. Despite differing strategies, these leaders share a core commitment to preserving Jewish peoplehood while engaging with necessary political dialogue.

The success of Jewish communal leadership in the coming years will depend largely on leaders' capacity to transform ideological differences into opportunities for meaningful exchange. This transformation requires careful attention to both process and outcomes: fostering substantive dialogue across political divides while strengthening, rather than weakening, essential communal bonds. Future research should examine how these leadership approaches adapt to emerging challenges and ultimately shape the vitality and continuity of American Jewish communal life.