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OP-EDS

American patriotism and the US-Israel relationship

By **Jacki Karsh**

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In the summer of 1776, with the ink barely dry on the Declaration of Independence, the Continental Congress gave its founders a challenging assignment: design a seal for the nation they had just summoned into being.

Benjamin Franklin imagined Moses standing at the Red Sea, his hand raised as the waters swallowed Pharaoh's army. Thomas Jefferson proposed the children of Israel marching through the wilderness beneath a pillar of fire.

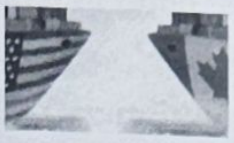
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Asked to capture America in a single image, two of its founders reached instinctively for Jewish stories.

The founders saw America as a promised land, a new Israel raised in this new world. They understood their own liberty through the Jewish people's escape from tyranny to build a self-governed nation. Centuries later, Jews would discover that America understood them in a way few nations ever had.

Across 2,000 years of exile, Jews have lived under countless governments; some welcomed them and others merely tolerated them; others ultimately persecuted or expelled them.

America is and always has been different.

In most countries, Jews arrived after the nation had already defined itself. In America, they helped build the national project itself. For the first time in centuries, Jews did not have to choose between being Jewish and

being American because the nation's moral vocabulary had already made room for both. That made the American-Jewish story unlike nearly every other chapter in Jewish history.

Over the next two and a half centuries, Jews repaid that confidence with institutions, inventions, music, medicine, business, jurisprudence, science, and public service.

Francis Salvador, descended from Portuguese Inquisition refugees, won a seat in South Carolina's Revolutionary Assembly and was the first Jew to die for American independence. Uriah P. Levy fought open antisemitism to help end Navy flogging, then spent his fortune rescuing a crumbling Monticello. Oscar Straus became the first Jew in a president's Cabinet, and Louis Brandeis the first on the Supreme Court. Selman Waksman discovered streptomycin, the first cure for tuberculosis; Gertrude Elion developed medicines that transformed leukemia treatment and made organ transplants possible; Hedy Lamarr co-invented the frequency-hopping technology behind modern wireless. Albert Einstein found refuge in Princeton, New Jersey, and J. Robert Oppenheimer led the effort that built the atomic bomb. Samuel Goldwyn, Louis B. Mayer, and the Warner brothers built Hollywood.

America is not a nation built not on bloodline, tribe, or crown, but on an idea. For Jews who had endured the cruelty of nations defined by ancestry and exclusion, that idea offered something history rarely had: belonging without surrendering identity.

Even as they embraced America, Jews never abandoned the hope of returning to their ancient homeland and governing themselves once again as a free people. After the Holocaust left the surviving remnant of European Jewry with nowhere else to go, that hope became urgent. In 1948, it became the state of Israel.

The establishment of Israel complemented the American Jewish story rather than replacing it. America had shown that Jews could flourish in a democracy; Israel restored

what they had not possessed for nearly 2,000 years: sovereignty. Together, they offered something unprecedented: full participation in a liberal democracy and a homeland.

That shared conviction helps explain why American volunteers quietly defied their own government's embargo to fly combat missions after five Arab armies invaded the day-old Jewish state. Their efforts proved critical in Israel's earliest days and marked the beginning of one of the most consequential alliances of the modern era.

The American-Israeli alliance that has grown up in the post-World War II era is both strategic and moral: America benefits by doing good. In 2024, U.S. goods and services traded with Israel reached an estimated $55 billion. In recent years, we have witnessed trade between the countries that has been unprecedented in scope and scale, including Google's 2025 acquisition of Israeli cloud security giant Wiz for $32 billion and Intel's roughly $15.3 billion acquisition of Israeli autonomous-driving company Mobileye.

The United States and Israel coordinate more closely on defense than perhaps any democratic allies since WWII. Israel gains a lifeline in missile defense and military technology. America gains battle-tested innovation, extraordinary intelligence cooperation, and hard-earned lessons in confronting hostile regimes and terrorist organizations. These are the tangible dividends of the alliance. They help explain its durability. They do not fully explain its origin.

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As America marks its 250th year, it is worth looking beyond strategy to the deeper foundations of this relationship. Celebrating the American-Jewish story is an act of patriotism. It recognizes one of America's defining strengths: its confidence in entrusting people not

according to where they came from, but to what they could help build.

The alliance between the U.S. and Israel reflects that same confidence. It is more than a partnership between democracies. It is the continuation of a relationship that began when America's founders found inspiration in the Jewish story, and later entrusted the Jewish people with helping shape the American one.

Jacki Karsh is a six-time Emmy-nominated multimedia journalist and a board member of the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles.

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Jacki Karsh on American Patriotism and the U.S.–Israel Relationship

In her July 4, 2026 Washington Examiner op-ed, **Jacki Karsh** traces the deep historical and symbolic link between American patriotism and the U.S.–Israel relationship, arguing that the two are inextricably tied through shared narratives of liberty and identity Washington Examiner +1 .

Karsh notes that in the summer of 1776, as the Continental Congress designed the nation's seal, **Benjamin Franklin** and **Thomas Jefferson** both drew inspiration from the story of the Jewish people's exodus from slavery. Franklin imagined Moses standing at the Red Sea, his hand raised as the waters consumed Pharaoh's army, while Jefferson proposed the children of Israel journeying through the wilderness beneath a pillar of fire newsfire.gr . For them, America was a "promised land" — a new Israel in the New World — and their understanding of liberty was filtered through the lens of the Jewish people's escape from tyranny.

This framing was unique: unlike in most countries where Jews arrived after national identity was fixed, in America they could participate in building the nation from its inception without sacrificing their Jewish identity. The U.S. moral framework had already accommodated both citizenship and cultural heritage newsfire.gr .

Over the following two and a half centuries, American Jews contributed profoundly to the nation — in institutions, science, medicine, business, and public service — while maintaining their distinct identity. Figures like **Francis Salvador**, **Uriah P. Levy**, **Oscar Straus**, and **Louis Brandeis** exemplify this dual role newsfire.gr .

Karsh's piece positions this historical bond as a foundation for the modern U.S.–Israel alliance, suggesting that the shared values of freedom, resilience, and self-determination continue to strengthen the relationship. She frames American patriotism not just as a civic ideal, but as a moral and historical commitment that includes the Jewish people as equal participants in the American story Washington Examiner +1 .

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Jacki Karsh is an American media personality and activist. In 2025, she launched the Karsh Journalism Fellowship, a fellowship created with the stated goal of helping Israel win an "information war".

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Jacki Karsh | Multimedia Journalist

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For a majority of American Jews, however, the U.S.-Israel relationship is not merely a foreign-policy platform. It is history, peoplehood, and essential to Jewish survival.

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