Epilogue:

Where are the Jewish Republicans?
Two setbacks for the Jewish Republicans in 2009:

In April, 2009, Senator Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania switched over the side from the GOP to join the Democratic Party. Just two and a (bit means what?) bit years ago Pennsylvania had two Republican senators. Today it has none.

Another blow came in July, 2009 when Norm Coleman, Senator from Minnesota lost the Senate election to Al Franken. His win gave the Democrats their biggest majority in the Senate in a generation, ensuring their party holds a 60-40 majority – enough to quash GOP filibusters if they stay united. Senator Coleman not only was active in Jewish causes but also aided the GOP in its recruitment of Jews to the Republican Party. In contrast Specter was Republican just for the name.

For the first time in 57 years, there will be no Jewish Republican in the Senate. The only Jewish representative now left in the House is Eric Cantor. He represents Virginia 7th congressional district and the young face of the Republican Party. His other distinction is that, since 2003, he is the only Jewish Republican in the 435-member body. That's down from eight Jewish GOP members who served in the House during the 1990s (more details in Chapter Two). There is lot of concerns among the Jewish Republicans about the recent blows which happened in two months. In 2007, Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York and member of the Republican Party left the Party affiliation.

Is this a big loss for the Jewish Republicans because until 2003 their status looked very rosy? The poll released by The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, entitled, “Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2009” reveals:

- Only 23 percent of voters now identify themselves as Republican. Since the Watergate scandal in 1975, this is the lowest point for the GOP.
- The research also shows that there is emergence of independents as a political force.

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• The Independent voters now comprise 36 percent of the electorate, the highest level in seventy years.

This thesis concentrated on the growing attachment of the Jewish community to the Republican Party. The year 1980 was a golden one for the Jewish Republicans. Jews went all along to the Republican Party with new ideas such as a strong defense policy aimed to curb the influence of the communist USSR. The new ideologues also introduced the ideas of modern capitalism. The United States economy changed from the Keynesian to Friedman's free market in the Reagan administration.

There had been constant Jewish Republican representation in the Senate since 1957, when Jacob Javitz entered the Congress as a Republican senator from the State of New York. During the Nixon years in the mid-1980s, Jewish Republicans boasted three Senate seats, and later had eight. Now while the GOP boasts of just one House Jewish Republican, in contrast, there are 13 Jewish Democrats in the Senate and 29 Jewish Democrats in the House.

The Republican loss in 2008 by the hands of the Democratic Party is a wholesome loss to them. Three crises to the GOP have occurred in the last 50 years. But there have been positives to the GOP after every big defeat.

1. 44 years ago, the Republicans faced the same dilemma when Barry Goldwater was defeated handsomely by Democrat Lyndon Johnson. During the 1960s, the conservative face in the Republican Party was on the verge of being wiped out from the scene. But the emerging neoconservatives who left liberal ideology gave a new momentum to the conservative movement. The young neoconservatives were discarded by the Democrats. They revived the GOP, which led to the victory of Richard Nixon in 1968. Thus, the neoconservatives entered the Republican administration.

2. In 1976, Jimmy Carter's win gave a new hope to the Democratic Party who was out of the White House for two terms from 1968 to 1976. But his victory was
short-lived. In the 1980, Republican candidate Ronald Reagan defeated him. The bond between the neoconservatives and Republican Party strengthened in 1980s during the Reagan administration. And it also resulted in the formation of the RJC in 1985. Many of the Jews associated with the Republican Party earlier were instrumental in the formation of the RJC.

3. There was another crisis in 1992, the ‘Clinton Revolution’ in the country. Bill Clinton’s win put a setback to the GOP. But in two years they regrouped which resulted in their capturing the US Congress in 1994 through ‘Contract with America’ theme. Newton Gingrich and others fashioned the GOP victory in the US Congress.

Obama’s victory in 2008 has again put a question mark on the future of the GOP and whether the Party will have another revival. GOP strategist Mike Murphy described this in Time magazine as a coming Republican ice age. Republicans will need a major shift to begin to reverse these trends. The demography and density has helped the Democrats at winning the Presidential and Congressional elections in 2008. Democrats now dominate not just the cities but also the urbanized suburbs that contain the largest share of the suburban population in America. Some states have been more affected by foreign migration than others. For example, the percentage of Hispanics or Latinos residing in the electorally important states of California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Texas exceeds the percentage of Hispanics or Latinos at the national level (12.5%). In some instances, the difference is dramatic – over 30% of the population in both California and Texas is Hispanic or Latino.

Republicans can’t reverse the demographic trends; their only solution is to increase their share of the minority vote. The Republican Party is also changing from its old theme because the influx of immigrants into the United States in recent years has altered the ethnic and racial makeup of every state in the union. In addition, the election, two years ago, of Bobby Jindal as the Republican governor of Louisiana and then the victory of Joseph Cao as a Republican representative from the same state, further undermined that bad-rap stereotype of the Republicans as the Party of the WASP. Jindal, of course, is
Indian-American, and Cao is Vietnamese-American. Many consider Jindal as prospective presidential candidate for 2012 from the GOP.

Quickly after the defeat at the hand of Barack Obama, the GOP elected a new chairman who is black – former Maryland Lt. Governor Michael Steele. In electing Steele as the new Chairman of the Republican National Committee, the GOP has demonstrated a capacity for renewal and revival. In selecting Steele, Republicans have chosen a man who will go toe to toe with the Democrats on all issues, personal and political. Also Eric Cantor – the sole Jewish Republican in the House was elected to serve as the Republican Whip in December 2008. Since taking over in the new position, Cantor has taken a lead in Republican attacks on expanding the role of the federal government. The Republicans are pushing for the 'big tent' philosophy.

In the age of Obama, the Republican 'big tent' is far smaller than it used to be. The GOP has a long way to go before they will be seen as welcoming to the Jewish community. Bipartisan support for the U.S.-Israel relationship is the cornerstone of the pro-Israel community. The fact that there is so little room in the Republican Party for Jews is an indication of both how far out of the mainstream their ideology is and how small the GOP tent has become. The RJC has taken it a challenge to reclaim the lost touch of Reagan and Jews for the GOP. The Republican Jewish Coalition has now spread its chapters to many different states. The RJC has opened 46 chapters. It is now in the social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. Across a range of foreign and domestic issues, and over time, the national Jewish political conversation has, indeed, broadened. Between 2000 and 2004, for instance, Republican Jewish Coalition board member Lewis Eisenberg personally contributed over $307,000 to various Republican Party campaign committees or candidates and, additionally, raised millions of dollars in campaign funds for the Republican National Committee.

In 2005 RJC was at the forefront of efforts within the Jewish community to work closely with a GOP White House and U.S. Congress, through its legislative affairs committee, and its continuing grassroots, media and public affairs outreach efforts. The RJC (and its
sister non-profit educational organization, the Jewish Policy Center) have now worked to communicate the GOP message to the Jewish community, with a special focus on Israel, national security, and economic growth issues. The RJC has been very critical of the Obama administration's policies. The RJC has challenged Obama on some issues like the health care bill and the issue of a nuclear Iran.

The joke that has persisted at Republican Jewish Coalition gatherings for a decade or so: Back in the 1980s, when they started, the members could meet in a phone booth. Now they are packing a ballroom. This only shows that despite the loss in 2008 and 2009, there is no hope lost for the increased Jewish activism in the Republican Party.

The Republicans have announced the formation of a new effort to help the Party take its message on the road and come up with new ideas for the future. Under the banner of the National Council for a New America, the Republicans plan to discuss the issues confronting them in their community and rally around the principles to the individual and free market. The first event in the series labeled the National Council for a New America was held in northern Virginia in May, 2009. The place is significant because it went to Obama in the presidential election - helping him become the first Democratic presidential candidate since 1964 to win the state. Further helping to send a message across Americans is Eric Cantor, Jewish Republican in the House who said the National Council for a New America is "not meant to be exclusive." The Republicans termed it as 'Conversation with America.'