Israelis in the United States

by STEVEN J. GOLD AND BRUCE A. PHILLIPS

The subject of Israeli Jews coming to settle in the United States is one that has generated considerable controversy over the years, focusing on two primary issues: the actual number of Israelis who have come here, and their acceptance by the American Jewish community. The first, although it might appear simple, is in fact extremely complicated, in part due to lack of adequate data but equally because of the very difficulty of deciding whom to include in such a count. In the words of Israeli demographer Sergio DellaPergola, "The problem of 'Who is an Israeli?' is no less, and probably quite more, complex than the issue of 'Who is a Jew?' " Depending on the definition used and on the available sources of data, "possibly as many as 15 or 20 different estimates can be reached."[1]

The second issue, how American Jews relate to Israeli immigrants, is also complex. While American Jews have a long and impressive record of assisting newly arrived *landsmen* from overseas, their attitude toward the Israelis who have come to settle in the United States has been characterized by a mixture of suspicion, coolness, and even condemnation. Only recently has that attitude begun to moderate into something more accepting. It is true that every new immigrant wave has posed problems for earlier generations of Jews, with the already established, Americanized Jews typically viewing the newcomers as "wretched refuse," uncivilized, uncultured individuals who are likely to arouse anti-Semitism. The Israeli immigration, however, has presented an entirely novel situation.

For one thing, unlike nearly all Jews entering the United States before or since World War II, the Israelis could in no way be construed as "refugees," people who needed to be "rescued" or who were unable to return to their countries of origin. There were, apparently, no objective reasons why Israelis should come to this country or merit support from American Jews. To the contrary. American Jews had a large financial and emotional invest-

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[1]Personal communication.

ment in the new Jewish state, which assumed almost sacred status as both a refuge for persecuted Jews and the fulfillment of the centuries-old Zionist dream of return to the biblical homeland. While most American Jews chose not to participate personally in the "ingathering of the exiles," they saw themselves playing a vital role by contributing money and insuring political support. The complementary role of Israelis, in this view, was to inhabit and develop the land and defend it. Thus, the very act of leaving the Jewish state was seen as abandonment and betrayal of both the Zionist dream and the unspoken compact between American and Israeli Jews.

Israel, too, has always viewed emigrants negatively. People who leave the country are commonly referred to as "*yordim*" — a stigmatizing Hebrew term meaning those who "descend" from the "higher" place of Israel to the Diaspora, as opposed to immigrants, or "*olim*," who "ascend" from the Diaspora to Israel. During the 1970s, Israeli politicians were especially vitriolic on this issue, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin calling Israeli emigrants "the fallen among the weaklings," others referring to them as "moral lepers" and "the dregs of the earth."[2]

Faced, thus, with a Jewish immigrant population that did not fit into the "refugee" category and about which it had considerable ambivalence, and bolstered by the Israeli government's hostility, the organized American Jewish community's reaction was "part denial and part outrage,"[3] leading to a communal policy that effectively ruled out official contact with Israeli migrants. (Although the Soviet Jewish immigration of recent decades also prompted objections from Israel and its supporters, who believed all Soviet Jews should go to Israel, Soviet Jews were seen as unequivocably meriting a warm welcome and maximum support.)

Most of the literature on Israeli immigrants asserts that members of the group themselves accepted the negative "*yored*" stereotype, choosing to depict themselves as temporary sojourners, students, tourists, "anything but Jewish settlers seeking to build new lives for themselves and their families in the United States."[4] As a result, they remained marginal both to Israel and to the American Jewish community, having little contact with Jewish institutions, and relatively little is known about them. As two researchers

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[2]Paul Ritterband, "Israelis in New York," *Contemporary Jewry* 7, 1986, pp. 113 – 26; Shaul Kimhi, "Perceived Change of Self-Concept, Values, Well-Being and Intention to Return Among Kibbutz People Who Migrated from Israel to America," Ph.D. diss., Pacific Graduate School of Psychology, 1990.

[3]Steven M. Cohen, "Israeli Émigrés and the New York Federation: A Case Study in Ambivalent Policymaking for 'Jewish Communal Deviants,' " *Contemporary Jewry* 7, 1986, pp. 155 – 65.

[4]Sherry Rosen, *The Israeli Corner of the American Jewish Community* (American Jewish Committee, New York, 1993).

put it, "If Jews have been the proverbial marginal people, Israeli emigrants are the marginal Jews."[5]

The official Israeli view of *yordim* began to change in the mid-1980s to a more constructive position of both encouraging "re-*aliyah*" (return to Israel) and simply establishing good relations with American Israelis. In a 1991 interview Yitzhak Rabin recanted his earlier statement: "The Israelis living abroad are an integral part of the Jewish community and there is no point talking about ostracism."[6] The change in Israel's attitude in turn opened the way for federations, Jewish community centers, and other organizations in this country to reach out to Israeli families — albeit still without official approval from national headquarters — "attempting to treat these Israelis and their families as members, or at least 'associate members,' of the American Jewish community with a shared stake in its future."[7]

By the mid-1990s, several demographic trends were in evidence: a continuing stream of Israeli immigrants to this country, a rise in the number of Israelis returning to Israel to live, and the emergence of a new category of "transnationals," i.e., individuals with footholds in both the United States and Israel. In the social/psychological sphere, Israeli émigrés showed evidence of growing self-acceptance along with signs of willingness to identify with American Jewish communal life.

This article presents a profile of Israelis in the United States based on a wide range of demographic and sociological studies, focusing on three related topics. The first is the demographics of the migrant population — its size and composition in terms of age, family structure, occupational and ethnic characteristics, and the like; the second is the motivation of those who choose to leave Israel. The third area concerns the adaptation of Israelis to American life. Are they becoming a viable American-Jewish subgroup, or do they remain marginal men and women who see their presence here only as a temporary sojourn?

Sources of Data

The primary quantitative data used in this article come from our own analyses of three sources: (1) The Council of Jewish Federations 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS); (2) the 1991 New York Jewish

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[5]Drora Kass and Seymour Martin Lipset, "Jewish Immigration to the United States from 1967 to the Present: Israelis and Others," in *Understanding American Jewry*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), p. 289.

[6]Cited in Matti Golan, *With Friends Like You: What Israelis Really Think About American Jews* (New York, 1992).

[7]Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*, p. 3.

Population Study conducted by New York UJA-Federation (N.Y. Study); and (3) special tabulations run from the 1990 U.S. Census, using the 5-percent Public Use Microsample ("PUMS") files for New York and Los Angeles (New York City and Los Angeles County).[8]

Each of these sources has advantages and limitations. The NJPS, a national survey, has a relatively small sample of Israelis; the N.Y. Study a significantly larger one. Both NJPS and the N.Y. Study asked only place of birth, not country of last residence, thus excluding Israelis born outside the State of Israel. (Methods for compensating for this are discussed below.) However, these studies ask several questions regarding Jewish behavior and identification.[9]

The U.S. Census is rich in a variety of information, but is not very well suited to the accurate counting of small, tightly cloistered, recent migrant populations, like Israelis. In the words of demographer David Heer: "When American population statistics are inadequate, they will normally be found to be so in terms of underenumeration and underestimation of minority groups, defined in terms of race or national origin and concentrated in specific neighborhoods."[10] The census also includes the responses of non-Jewish Israelis (e.g., Armenians and Palestinians) along with Israeli Jews. (How this is dealt with is discussed below.) Further, while the census provides data on economic status, it does not ask about religion and thus offers no information about Jewish behavior.

We also rely on the small number of published studies of Israelis that have been carried out, which are useful but suffer from various shortcomings.[11] Surveys with large samples of Israelis are built on problematic sample designs,[12] while surveys that employ reliable probability samples include

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[8]The census files with the best data on Israelis are available only for Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, "SMSAs." We chose New York and Los Angeles because these two cities have the largest populations of Israelis and also can be used to compare Israelis on the West and East coasts.

[9]See Barry Kosmin et al., *Highlights of the CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey* (Council of Jewish Federations, New York, 1991) and Bethamie Horowitz, *The 1991 New York Jewish Population Study* (UJA-Federation, New York, 1993).

[10]Heer, David M., *Readings on Population* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), p. 174.

[11]Zvi Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1986); Moshe Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances: Israeli Immigrants in New York* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988); Dov Elizur, "Israelis in the U.S.," AJYB 1980, vol. 80, pp. 53 – 67; Pini Herman, "Jewish-Israeli Migration to the United States Since 1948," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Israel Studies, New York, June 7, 1988; Ritterband, "Israelis in New York"; David Mittelberg and Zvi Sobel, "Commitment, Ethnicity and Class Factors in Emigration of Kibbutz and Non-Kibbutz Population from Israel," *International Migration Review* 24, no. 4, pp.768 – 82.

[12]Snowball samples, for example, which rely on obtaining additional respondents through referrals from persons already contacted; and convenience samples, which fill a numerical

only a small number of Israelis. For example, the few studies devoted exclusively to the study of Israelis that have applied some form of random sampling techniques identified Israelis through records of persons who had become U.S. citizens.[13] Because migrants from any nation who become U.S. citizens tend to be among the most established members of their group, these studies do not represent the totality of their population in the United States. In addition, because people tend to change residences with some frequency (causing address records to become rapidly outdated), respondents to these surveys were selected from those who had become citizens in the years immediately prior to data collection — thus excluding long-term residents.

A study sample drawn exclusively from the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens in New York — areas of heavy Israeli settlement but with a lower socioeconomic standing than other parts of metropolitan New York (with the exception of the Bronx) — excludes Israelis who live in more affluent neighborhoods.[14] Thus, these sampling frames effectively exclude large fractions of the marginal (noncitizens) and the most successful (long-naturalized Israelis and residents of affluent communities).

Most studies of Israelis in the United States have been conducted in New York City,[15] a few in Los Angeles [16] and Chicago.[17] New York and Los

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quota of the needed type of respondent. Consequently, both of these sampling techniques are likely to include a selection bias.

[13]Pini Herman and David LaFontaine, "In Our Footsteps: Israeli Migration to the U.S. and Los Angeles," MSW thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1983; Mira Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants," Ph.D. diss., Fordham U., 1989.

[14]Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants."

[15] Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances*; Elizur, "Israelis in the U.S."; Nira H. Lipner, "The Subjective Experience of Israeli Immigrant Women: An Interpretive Approach," Ph.D. diss., George Washington U., 1987; Ritterband, "Israelis in New York"; David Mittelberg and Mary C. Waters, "The Process of Ethnogenesis Among Haitian and Israeli Immigrants in the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15, no. 3, 1992, pp. 412 – 35; Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants."

[16]Steven Gold, "Israelis in Los Angeles" (Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, Los Angeles, 1992); idem, "Patterns of Economic Cooperation Among Israeli Immigrants in Los Angeles," *International Migration Review* 28, no. 105, 1994, pp. 114 – 35; idem, "Israeli Immigrants in the U.S.: The Question of Community," *Qualitative Sociology* 17, no. 4, 1994, pp. 325 – 63; Naama Sabar, "The Wayward Children of the Kibbutz — A Sad Awakening," *Proceedings of Qualitative Research in Education* (College of Education, U. of Georgia, Athens, 1989); Herman, "Jewish-Israeli Migration"; Herman and LaFontaine, "In Our Footsteps"; Michal Shachal-Staier, "Israelis in Los Angeles: Interrelations and Relations with the American Jewish Community," MBA thesis, U. of Judaism, Los Angeles, 1993.

[17]Natan Uriely, "Israeli Immigrants in Chicago: Variations of Ethnic Attachment Across Status Groups and Generations," Ph.D. diss., U. of Illinois, Chicago, 1993; idem, "Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners: The Case of Israeli Immigrants in the Chicago Area," *International Sociology* 9, no. 4, 1994, pp. 431 – 45; idem, "Patterns of Identification and

Angeles account for roughly half of Israelis in the United States. The other half are dispersed throughout the United States, living in mid-sized and smaller Jewish communities. It may be that Israelis who gravitate to smaller communities or those furthest from the largest Jewish centers are different, that they have weaker ties to Israel and Jewishness than those in the large cities, and thus that studies including them would yield different findings.

Finally, much existing research on Israelis in the United States was carried out during the 1970s or early 1980s when (and often because) the relationship between both the Israeli government and the American Jewish community and Israeli émigrés was more hostile than currently. Such studies tend to overemphasize the role of conflict between Israelis and American Jews and slight the extent of communal organization and cooperation that has developed over the last decade.

The profile we provide also relies on qualitative data, much of it from work conducted in Los Angeles by Steven Gold emphasizing ethnic solidarity and adaptation strategies. It draws upon 94 in-depth interviews with Israeli immigrants and others knowledgeable about the Israeli community; participant observation data gathered at a variety of Israeli community activities; and a convenience-sample-based survey of Israeli immigrants collected during 1991 – 92.[18] Natan Uriely and Moshe Shokeid have also conducted field studies of Israeli emigrants in the United States; Zvi Sobel studied departing Israelis in Israel.[19]

All told, the present study seeks to cast a wide net, encompassing and analyzing as broad an array of available data as possible.

HOW MANY ISRAELIS?

In 1981, Jewish Agency executive director Shmuel Lahis issued a report citing up to 500,000 Israeli emigrants in the United States, based on his own investigations.[20] A major study of Jewish immigration reported 300,000 Israelis in the United States in 1979, and revised this estimate upward to 350,000 Israelis by 1981.[21] A few years later the Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles's Commission on Israelis put the number of Israelis in that

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Integration with Jewish Americans Among Israeli Immigrants in Chicago: Variations Across Status and Generation," *Contemporary Jewry* 16, 1995, pp. 27 – 49.

[18]N = 96. Gold, "Israelis in Los Angeles."

[19]Uriely, "Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners"; idem, "Patterns of Identification and Integration"; Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances*; Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land*.

[20]Shmuel Lahis, "The Lahis Report" (Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, 1981), reprinted in *Yisrael Shelanu*, Feb. 1, 1981.

[21]Kass and Lipset, "Jewish Immigration," pp. 272 – 94.

city in the range of 80,000 to 100,000.[22] During the 1980s, common wisdom had it that New York had well in excess of 100,000 Israeli residents.

As the current debate about the impact of immigration on the larger American society demonstrates, it is virtually impossible to come up with an accurate and specific enumeration of any foreign-born population.[23] Although paucity of data — including the noted deficiencies of the census — presents problems for the study of all immigrants, especially for the smaller groups, in the case of Israelis there is also a problem of definition. As noted earlier, different definitions of "Who is an Israeli?" — depending on the availability of data sources — will yield quite different estimates. For Jewish purposes, for example, a count of Israelis should distinguish between Jews and non-Jews, since many Israeli Arabs (Christians and Muslims) as well as Armenians have come to this country over the years. But even definitions limited to Jews may be more or less inclusive, for example: Israeli-born Israelis ("sabras," as the native-born are dubbed) who come here as immigrants, Israeli-born Israelis who come here as students or as professionals for unspecified periods of time; children born in Israel who come here at a young age; individuals born in Europe or elsewhere who lived for a year or two in Israel; individuals born in Europe or elsewhere who lived for many years in Israel; American-born individuals who lived in Israel for a year or more; Americans married to Israelis; American-born children of Israelis, and so on. Estimates based on any of these definitions could be considered legitimate, based on the researcher's assumptions and purposes.

The approach of the present authors will be to present several estimates derived from analyses of different data sources. These are the entrance and exit data collected by Israeli border control; entrance and exit data collected by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS); the U.S. Census; and demographic studies of Jewish communities in the United States, in particular the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey and the 1991 New York Jewish Population Study. The estimates presented here provide what can be considered a plausible range for the number of Israelis in the United States.

Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (Border Control Data)

The Israeli Border Police record the exits and entrances of Israeli residents. However, since there is no legal definition of a "*yored*," it is impossi-

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[22]Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, Council on Jewish Life, Report of Commission on Israelis, June 1983, p. 2.

[23]Michael E. Fix and Jeffrey S. Passel, *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight* (Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., 1994).

ble to know who has left permanently and who is traveling as a tourist, a student, or on business. The Israel Central Bureau of Statistics analyzed the border control data and computed a "gross balance" of 581,000 Israelis living abroad during the period 1948 – 1992.[24] In other words, there were 581,000 more exits from Israel than re-entries on the part of Israeli residents (i.e., persons living in Israel whether native-born or born elsewhere). About half of the persons leaving Israel named the United States as their destination. Assuming that they stayed in the United States, and that no other Israelis came to the United States via other countries, the "gross balance" of Israelis residing in the United States would be 290,500.

But not all "Israelis" are Jews. As Israeli sociologist Yinon Cohen has observed, there are significant economic pressures inducing Israeli Arabs to emigrate to the United States.[25] How many of the emigrants to the United States from Israel were Jews and how many were Arabs, Armenians, or other non-Jews? Zvi Eisenbach, working from Israeli data, has calculated that about 74 percent of American Israelis are Jews.[26] Thus, the gross balance of Israeli Jews in the United States over the period 1948 – 1992 is adjusted down to 216,000.

From this number the present authors subtracted 25,000 persons who would have died, leaving 191,000. Since the gross balance subtracts re-entrances to Israel from exits out of Israel, the authors subtracted 18,400 more persons who may be assumed to have returned to Israel in 1993 (the number that re-entered Israel in 1992), for an adjusted gross balance of 172,848 Jewish Israelis living in the United States.

U.S. Immigration

As noted, the Israeli exit/entrance data do not distinguish between travelers abroad and actual emigrants. On the other side of the Atlantic, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) does make this distinction. Israelis arrive in this country by ship or plane, and their arrivals are recorded by one or more official documents. Israelis who arrive on temporary visas are recorded separately from Israelis who apply for some sort of immigrant status. The "Application for Immigration Visa" is handled in Israel by the Consular Service of the State Department. After the arrival of the immigrant in the United States, the INS processes the "Immigrant

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[24]"Indicators of the Number of Israeli Residents Abroad, 1992," *Supplement to the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, no. 6, 1994.

[25]Yinon Cohen, "Self-Selection and Economic Progress of Immigrants: Arab and Jewish Immigrants from Israel and the Territories in the U.S.," *Israel Studies*, forthcoming, 1996.

[26]Zvi Eisenbach, "Jewish Emigrants from Israel in the United States," in *Papers in Jewish Demography 1985*, ed. U.O. Schmelz and S. DellaPergola (Jerusalem, 1989).

Visa and Alien Registration" form. The INS also processes and documents permanent residence through the "Memorandum of Creation of Record of Lawful Permanent Residence" form. These are all applications for some kind of permanent residence status. Israelis can also apply for citizenship using the "Application to File Petition for Naturalization." Some Israelis who arrive as tourists and students overstay their visas and remain as "illegal immigrants." Conversely, some proportion of Israelis who have applied for permanent residency return to Israel.

Researcher Pini Herman, an expert on INS data, has estimated 93,000 Israelis in the United States.[27] He started with a figure of 140,500 Israelis who applied for immigrant status between 1948 and 1990. From this number he subtracted the estimated number of returnees to Israel, which he derived from two longitudinal studies of Israeli immigrants. In one study the return rate was 47 percent, and in the other it was 33 percent (which Herman considers too low). From this he derived a range of between 74,465 and 94,135 Israelis who remained in the United States after applying for immigrant status. Drawing upon other research on illegal immigration to the United States, Herman estimated 23,000 Israeli "illegals" who overstayed their visas for a resulting estimate of between 97,465 and 117,135 Israelis. Herman considers this an upper limit because it does not adjust downward for mortality.

Both the INS data and the Israeli border control data share a common source of uncertainty: how many Israelis returned to Israel after a sojourn in the United States? This uncertainty in the quantitative data is paralleled by a comparable uncertainty in the qualitative research. Many Israelis interviewed were uncertain about whether they wanted to live in the United States permanently, and if not, about how long they would remain before returning to Israel.

U.S. Census

The U.S. Census provides data on place of birth. In 1980 there were 67,000 Israeli-born persons enumerated who had lived in the United States for six months or more.[28] In the 1990 census this number had increased by almost 34 percent to 90,000.[29] The 90,000 figure must first be adjusted down

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[27]Pini Herman, "A Technique for Estimating a Small Immigrant Population in Small Areas: The Case of Jewish Israelis in the United States," in *Studies in Applied Demography*, ed. K. Vaninadha Rao and Jerry W. Wicks (Population and Society Research Center, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1994), pp. 81 – 99. Herman was the first to examine data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service on Israelis.

[28]Eisenbach, "Jewish Emigrants from Israel."

[29]U.S. Census, Special Tabulations, Foreign Born Population By Place of Birth, downloaded by Pini Herman from the U.S. Census "GOPHER" site on the Internet.

to exclude non-Jewish Israelis and then upward again to include an estimate of non-native-born Israelis. The census does have a question on "ancestry," in which non-sabras can identify themselves as Israelis and Arabs can identify as "Palestinians." However, these data were not available nationally,[30] so other sources were used for these estimates.

Using data which differentiate between Jews and Arabs leaving the country, Eisenbach found that the proportion of non-Jews in the Israeli population abroad was highest in the 1950s and 1960s, when Arabs who left Palestine in 1948 made their way to the United States[31] (many settling, for example, in "metro" Detroit). Overall, he estimated that between 69 percent and 73 percent of the Israeli-born population in the 1980 census were Jews. In his analysis of the 1980 U.S. Census data, Eisenbach also calculated the proportion of non-native-born Israeli Jews for each period of immigration up through 1980. The present authors applied his procedures to the 1990 census for each period of immigration through 1990 and arrived at an estimate of 193,000 Jewish Israelis living in the United States as of 1990.

NJPS and N.Y. Study

The CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey included a question on place of birth. Phillips and Herman analyzed this data set to come up with an estimate of close to 90,000 Israeli-born persons — almost identical to the number in the 1990 census.[32] To estimate the number of non-native-born Israelis, they used the question on time spent in Israel. They assumed that all North African-, Middle Eastern-, and European-born Jews who spent a year or more in Israel were émigrés, and came up with an additional 3,500 Israelis. However, the question was asked only of respondents, and thus spouses or other household members who may have lived in Israel were not counted. Assuming that the estimate of non-native Israelis was off by half, the Herman-Phillips estimate for the total number of Israelis would be 96,760.

For the present article Phillips did a similar analysis using the 1991 New York Jewish Population Study, which had a larger overall sample than the NJPS and, because Israelis are concentrated in New York, a larger absolute number of Israeli interviews to work with. The N.Y. Study did not have a question on time spent in Israel, so a different technique had to be employed

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[30]They were used to identify Israelis in the analysis of the New York and Los Angeles "PUMS" files.

[31]Eisenbach, "Jewish Emigrants from Israel."

[32]Pini Herman and Bruce Phillips, "Israeli Jewish Population and Its Percentage of the American Jewish Population in the United States," paper presented to the Population Commission of the International Geographic Union, Los Angeles, Apr. 6, 1990.

to estimate the number of non-native-born Israelis. Each household with an Israeli-born person was examined individually. A foreign-born person married to a sabra who had married that person prior to moving to the United States was counted as an Israeli. This procedure produces an estimated 27,000 Israeli Jews living in the greater New York Jewish community — 22,000 Israeli-born persons, plus 5,000 non-native-born Israelis and children.

An estimate of the total number of Israelis in the United States can be arrived at from the N.Y. figures, as follows: Start with a figure of 30,000 in New York (knowing that the 27,000 figure is a conservative one); add 15,000 for Los Angeles (based on Herman and Phillips estimate that there are twice as many Israelis in New York as in Los Angeles[33]; double that figure, since New York and Los Angeles account for half of the Israelis in the United States, to arrive at a national estimate of 90,000.

Although the estimates cited above use divergent data sources and employ different methods of calculation, they are all based on a common strategy. Each estimate begins with a known number from a *primary data source* that is relevant to, but not a direct or comprehensive count of, the Israelis in the United States. In each case, the source is missing some vital information. For example, estimates based on the "gross balance" of exits and entrances from and to Israel include both Jews and non-Jews and don't distinguish between emigrants and temporary travelers; estimates using the U.S. Census have only the number of native-born Israelis; and so forth. Each procedure then derives an estimate of the total number of Israelis in the United States by filling in the missing information from a separate and unrelated *secondary data source*.

There are two sources of divergence in the estimates. The first is the lack of comparability among the primary data sources (e.g., exits and entrances enumerated in Israel versus persons listing Israel as their place of birth in the U.S. Census). The second is the accuracy of the secondary data sources (e.g., the ratio of native-born Israelis to non-native-born Israelis), all of which have limitations.

The primary and secondary data sources for each estimation procedure are summarized in table 1. Given the number of steps where error is inevitably introduced, it is remarkable that the estimates fall into a relatively compact range of between 100,000 and 200,000 Israelis in the United States. Even the largest estimate is considerably smaller than the figures once widely publicized and accepted.

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[33]P. Herman and B. Phillips, paper presented to meeting of the Population Commission of the International Geographical Union, Los Angeles, Aug. 6, 1992.

TABLE 1. ESTIMATES OF NUMBER OF ISRAELIS IN U.S.

Author	Estimated No. of Israelis	Primary Data Source	Adjustments Made on the Basis of Secondary Data Source
Gold & Phillips	90,000	NY Study	(1) Distribution of Israelis nationally
Phillips & Herman	96,760	NJPS, 1990	(1) % Sabra
Herman	97,465 – 117,135	INS	(1) % Jewish (2) % who returned to Israel (3) Estimated number of illegal immigrants
Gold & Phillips	172,848	Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (Border Police Data)	(1) Proportion in United States (2) Proportion Jewish (3) Adjustment for mortality (4) % who will return to Israel
Gold & Phillips	193,000	US Census 1990	(1) % Jewish (2) % Sabra

CHILDREN OF ISRAELIS

Analyzing data from the NJPS, Phillips and Herman were able to break down the Israeli-American population by generation status in Israel and to identify American-born children of Israeli parents. They estimate that there are 12,000 Israeli-born children in the United States as compared with over 31,000 American-born children of at least one Israeli parent. The former are presumably included in the figures cited above. Should the latter be counted as Israelis? One argument for counting them is that they are being raised in an Israel-derived household, are exposed to Israeli influences, have Israeli relatives, and are often thought of by their parents as "Israeli." The data analyzed by Phillips and Herman suggest that this is not entirely the

case, however, since two out of three American-born children of Israelis have one American-born parent.

Patterns of Migration

The major data sources all show a steady acceleration of Israeli immigration, particularly after 1970. According to census data from New York and Los Angeles, one-third of Israelis came since 1985, and roughly two-thirds since 1975. Of the two communities, Los Angeles Israelis are more recent arrivals. (See table 2.) The growth of Israeli immigration is also evident in the INS data on arrivals from Israel and applications for citizenship. A review of 26 years of the flow of legal migration from Israel to the United States found that number slowly increasing from about 1,000 per year in 1948 to almost 6,000 a year by 1979.[34]

It is much harder to measure the rate of return of Israelis to Israel, because there is considerable movement back and forth between the two countries and a growing class of "transnationals," sometimes referred to as "birds of passage," individuals who are citizens or legal residents of both countries and whose business or work has them living in both countries for longer and shorter periods of time.

Israeli government sources report that the number of Israelis returning home has increased substantially since 1992 — the year that marked the election of the peace-oriented Labor Party in Israel and a major economic recession in the United States — aided undoubtedly by an intensified official

[34]Herman, "A Technique for Estimating," pp. 90 – 91.

TABLE 2. ISRAELIS IN LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK, BY PERIOD OF ARRIVAL (PERCENTAGES)

Period	Los Angeles	New York
1985 – 90	37	30
1980 – 84	20	17
1975 – 79	17	12
1970 – 74	8	12
1965 – 69	5	8
1960 – 64	4	8
1950 – 59	6	9
Pre-1950	2	4

Source: 1990 Census.

outreach policy toward expatriates. During 1985 – 1991 the annual average number of returnees was 5,500; during 1992 – 1994, 10,500 returnees; and 14,000 returned in 1993 and in 1994.[35] A booming economy in Israel has clearly encouraged this increased return migration.

Motives for Migration

When asked why they came to the United States, most Israelis offer one of three overlapping responses: economic opportunities (including education), family factors, and a need for broader horizons.[36] A fairly large number, generally women and children, came to accompany their husbands and fathers who sought economic betterment and educational opportunity. Another family-based reason for migration was for unification with relatives already living in the States. Several respondents had links to America prior to their emigration, which initially made them consider moving and, once they did, facilitated the adjustment process. Among these were Israelis married to Americans.

Israelis who were self-employed prior to migration and retain their entrepreneurial pursuits here assert that the United States is a better location for capitalistic endeavors than Israel, because there are fewer regulations and controls and lower taxes.[37]

While most Israelis enter the United States with specific goals of education, economic and career advancement, or family unification, some arrive as part of a "secular pilgrimage" of world travel that is a common rite of passage among Israelis following their military service.[38] This pattern has been less commonly observed in Midwestern locations like Detroit and Chicago than in coastal cities like New York and Los Angeles, because the former are unlikely stopping points for international travelers. Instead, migrants come to these "backwaters" for specific reasons: to take a job, attend school, or join friends or relatives.[39]

Israelis interviewed in Los Angeles and New York described how they had come to the United States as part of their travels, picked up a job to earn some cash and then had "gotten stuck" — because of economic oppor-

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[35]"Going Home," supplement to *Yisrael Shelanu*, 1995 (Hebrew). Produced in cooperation with the Office of Returning Residents, Israel Ministry of Absorption.

[36]Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*; Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land*; Herman, "Jewish-Israeli Migration to the United States Since 1948."

[37] Uriely, "Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners"; Steven Gold, "Patterns of Economic Cooperation Among Israeli Immigrants in Los Angeles," *International Migration Review* 28, no. 105, 1994, pp. 114 – 35.

[38]Ilan Ben-Ami, "Schlepers and Car Washers: Young Israelis in the New York Labor Market," *Migration World* 20, no. 1, 1992, p. 22.

[39]Uriely, "Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners."

tunities, relationships, or other factors — for a period longer than they had initially planned.[40] Isaac described this:

> Israel is a country that is not easy to live in. Everybody finishes the army after three or four years. After the army, you understand life differently. So you are ready to try something else. I came to Los Angeles, and then I met my wife and that's how I started. I got into the clothing business and I stayed. We had kids. Since then, I'm in clothing. I haven't done anything but clothing.[41]

In Los Angeles, a number of Israelis commented that their travels to Latin America prior to arrival in the United States had allowed them to become competent enough in Spanish to communicate easily with Latino workers.[42] This was a definite asset and an inducement to stay on, since many found work in labor-intensive industries such as garments or construction, which have a predominantly Spanish-speaking labor force.[43]

Finally, like various groups in both previous and current migrant flows, Israelis are involved in chain migration. The presence of established co-ethnics in the host society is an attraction as well as a valuable resource for later migrants.[44] Israelis also ease their resettlement in the United States by residing in the Jewish neighborhoods of Queens and Brooklyn in New York City, and Beverly-Fairfax, West Hollywood, Pico-Robertson, and the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles; North Miami Beach, Florida; Troy and Farmington Hills, Michigan, and Devon and Skokie in the Chicago area.[45]

DISILLUSIONMENT AND LIMITATIONS

An additional explanation for Israeli emigration is the desire to get away from the confines of the Jewish state. Because direct criticism of the Jewish state is regarded by those living beyond its borders as disloyal, it is voiced relatively infrequently by émigrés. However, in explaining why they left Israel, certain migrants describe feelings of disillusionment or a general attitude of not being able fit into the social order. According to an Israeli government estimate, about 5 percent of all permanent emigrants do so for ideological reasons.[46]

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[40]Ben-Ami, "Schlepers and Car Washers"; Gold, "Israelis In Los Angeles."

[41]Quoted extracts are from interviews conducted by Steve Gold.

[42]One building contractor placed ads in the Spanish-language press to hire helpers.

[43]Gold, "Patterns of Economic Cooperation."

[44]Michael J. Piore, *Birds of Passage* (New York, 1979); George J. Borjas, *Friends or Strangers* (New York, 1990); Ivan Light and Edna Bonacich, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs* (Berkeley, 1988); Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand, and Humberto Gonzalez, *Return to Aztlan* (Berkeley, 1987).

[45]Mehdi Bozorgmehr, Claudia Der-Martirosian, and Georges Sabagh, "Middle Easterners: A New Kind of Immigrant" (Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, UCLA, 1995), mimeo; Herman and LaFontaine, "In Our Footsteps"; Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*.

[46]"Going Home."

Several respondents asserted that they left Israel in order to avoid the constant threat of war and violence. This motive was mentioned in terms of both the Yom Kippur War and the invasion of Lebanon, as well as by the descendants of Holocaust survivors. A Los Angeles-based Israeli psychotherapist describes many of her co-national patients as war refugees:

> Those who come to my office now are the result of the first Lebanon war. This is a wounded group. For them, the idealism, the Zionist goals are gone. Now they are saying "I want to make money. I need time out, [away from] the pressure cooker [atmosphere]. How many more times am I going to go to war? I am sick and tired of going to the army, the reserves and everything."

Another reason for leaving is perceived ethnic discrimination. As a nation of immigrants, Israel is ethnically diverse. A significant distinction exists between the higher-status Ashkenazic (European-origin) group and the lower-status Oriental and Sephardic Jews, whose origins are North Africa and the Middle East.[47] Most Israelis assert that ethnic discrimination against Sephardic and Oriental Jews has been reduced significantly since the 1950s; however, "[t]he ethnic factor does play a role of some importance in some departees' decision to move."[48] A Yemeni-origin Israeli woman with a degree in education explains her decision to exit:

> I remember one time my brother came to my mom and he asked her, "What is Ashkenazy?" And "What is Temany?" Another time we went to visit my aunt in Tel Aviv. And there the kids were telling us, "Black, black, you guys are black. Go from here, go from here."
>
> I was trapped between the two worlds and I really had a rough time. Socially it was terrible for me. I did not find myself. I think that in a way I was afraid to face [Israeli] society. I was afraid not to fit in. Even though I had the knowledge and the education, I was afraid of not being accepted. . . . I didn't have the support system around me to fit me in. . . . discrimination was part of it. I just did not see myself teaching in Israel. I just thought that America would be better. I did not know too much about it. I just decided to come.

And an Oriental Jew in Chicago describes his motivation for leaving:

> I am of Kurdish origin, and in Israel, the Polish elite treated us as trash. They acted as if they were better than us. Being Sephardic was associated with being primitive or being Chah-Chah [riff-raff]. When I came to Chicago, I left all of this behind. Nobody treated me as an inferior Sephardic. Here I see Polish people who are lower than me. I see a different reality, and it makes me angry about what I went through in Israel.[49]

Finally, some émigrés maintain that they simply felt uncomfortable within the Israeli environment, that the nation is too small, conformist,

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[47]Uriely, "Patterns of Identification"; Sammy Smooha, *Israel: Pluralism and Conflict* (Berkeley, 1978); U. O. Schmelz, Sergio DellaPergola, and Uri Avner, "Ethnic Differences Among Israeli Jews," AJYB 1990, vol. 90, pp. 80 – 111.

[48]Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land*, p. 217.

[49]Uriely, "Patterns of Identification," p. 35.

competitive, and socially demanding for their liking. In his book on Israeli emigration, Zvi Sobel asserts: "Repeatedly I was struck by the extent and depth of frustration expressed by a wide range of individuals with respect to this factor of limited opportunity that is tied to a natural and unassailable limitation of smallness — physical and demographic."[50]

Israeli Emigration in World Perspective

On the level of the individual, a decision to leave Israel can be explained in terms of personal situations and choices. On the societal level, emigration can be understood not merely as the sum of individual decisions but as part of a larger "world system" perspective that connects the experience of Israelis with the broad flows of contemporary international migration. In this view, isolated individuals moving from one place to another are part of a large-scale interconnected process wherein shifting social, economic, and demographic realities yield fundamental changes in social and economic relationships both between and within nations. Especially in recent years, the expansion of international links in capital, technology, transportation, and communication has accelerated the cross-national movement of information, finance, goods — and migrants.[51]

For a number of macrosociological reasons, Israelis can be considered likely candidates for international migration. First, because they are relatively recent arrivals to the Jewish state, their numbers probably contain many individuals with a propensity to move on.[52] Second, as Jews, many Israelis have access to a long tradition as middlemen, entrepreneurs, and the like — skills that can be plied in various national settings. Third, many have direct connections to the United States — through relatives, education, the military, and work. These provide both information about opportunities and assistance in resettlement. Finally, the State of Israel has many social, economic, cultural, and political links with the United States which contribute to a sense of familiarity and and make integration relatively easier.

Israeli demographer Sergio DellaPergola has shown that the post-World War II migration of Jews has generally followed a pattern of movement from less developed areas of the world (the periphery) to more economically central, advanced regions, demonstrating that economic improvement

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[50]Sobel, p. 77.

[51]Douglas S. Massey, Joaquín Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, and J. Edward Taylor, "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal," *Population and Development Review* 19, no. 3, pp. 431 – 66.

[52]Herman and Phillips, analyzing data from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, found that the majority of the Israeli-born Jewish population (69 percent) were themselves the children of immigrants to Israel.

ranks with nationalism as a major force behind Jewish migration. Since, in this analysis, the United States and other Western nations are more developed economically than Israel, emigration of Jews from Israel to the United States is consistent with the general trend in Jewish migration.[53] DellaPergola further suggests that the pattern of Israeli emigration does not appear "to reflect any major crisis that might have occurred" but is characterized "by frequent and short-term ups and downs, broadly comparable to those of the typical business cycle."[54]

Given the incentives for migration, the proportion of immigrants who subsequently re-migrate from Israel is not as high as one might expect. It is comparatively lower than for countries like the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, and New Zealand, which also experienced large-scale immigration. While the absolute number of Jewish emigrants from Israel has tended to increase over the years, the rate of emigration has been relatively low and stable, between 3 and 4 per 1,000 inhabitants per year.[55]

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF AMERICAN ISRAELIS

Age, Sex, and Marital Status

Israelis are a young population. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, 79 percent of Israelis in New York and 81 percent of Israelis in Los Angeles are under age 45. The 1991 New York Jewish Population Study shows an almost identical age profile (table 3). Israelis in the New York survey are the youngest Jewish nationality group as well: 89.6 percent of Israelis in New York are under 50, compared with 75.2 percent of native-born Jews and 50.5 percent of the rest of the Jewish foreign-born population. On both coasts, there are more males than females. New York's community is 55 percent male, while Los Angeles's is 54 percent male.

FAMILY COMPOSITION

Based on 1990 data (N.Y. Study), Israeli households[56] in New York are more likely to consist of married couples than are foreign-born or native-

[53]Sergio DellaPergola, "Israel and World Jewish Population: A Core-Periphery Perspective," in *Population and Social Change in Israel*, ed. Calvin Goldscheider (Boulder, Colo., 1992), pp. 39 – 63.

[54]Sergio DellaPergola, "World Jewish Migration System in Historical Perspective," paper delivered at the International Conference on "Human Migration in a Global Framework," U. of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, June 1994.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Defined as household headed by an Israeli or with an Israeli spouse.

TABLE 3. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ISRAELIS, LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK (PERCENTAGES)

Age Group	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study
0 - 15	17	13	11
16 - 19	4	5	6
20 - 24	11	8	6
25 - 34	24	26	27
35 - 44	25	27	32
45 - 54	13	12	8
55 - 64	4	4	6
65+	3	4	4
Total	100	100	100

Sources: 1990 Census, PUMS; 1991 N.Y. Jewish Population Study.
Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

born Jewish households (67 percent for Israelis as compared with 62 percent of non-Israeli foreign-born households and 52 percent of native-born Jewish households). Conversely, only 13 percent of Israeli households are single-person households as compared with 28 percent of other foreign-born as well as native-born households. The differences are even more dramatic when children are considered. Israeli households are more than twice as likely as other foreign-born households or native-born Jewish households to consist of a married couple with children under 18 (55 percent versus 23 percent for both foreign- and native-born).

Marriages between Israelis and Americans are fairly common. In 1986, over a third of all Israelis with immigrant status in the United States were married to an American citizen. "One out of four Israelis married the U.S. citizen outside the U.S., probably in Israel, and the rest married in the U.S."[57] A survey of naturalized Israelis in Los Angeles found that of the 80 percent who were married, 35 percent were married to American Jews; 49 percent were married to other Israelis; 8 percent to European or South American Jews; and 8 percent to non-Jews.[58]

[57]Herman, "A Technique for Estimating," p. 92.
[58]Herman, "Jewish-Israeli Migration," p. 20.

Ethnic and National Origins

Different studies have found different proportions of Ashkenazim and Sephardim among Israelis in this country. The 1980 New York Jewish Population Study reported that 7 percent of Israeli-born immigrants were Sephardic/Oriental Jews, while the 1980 census data showed 16 percent.[59] In another New York study, 45 percent of respondents reported themselves as Ashkenazic, 42 percent as Sephardic/Oriental, and 13 percent as a mixture of both.[60] In one Los Angeles study, 58 percent of naturalized Israelis were of Ashkenazic origin, while 37 percent were Sephardic/Oriental, and 2 percent were mixed.[61]

While Israelis of diverse ethnic origins associate with each other in the United States, several studies suggest that patterns of social interaction, religious participation, economic cooperation, and adjustment to the States often take place within ethnic boundaries.[62] (See "Subgroup Relations," below.)

Education and Mobility

Israelis in the United States are a relatively well-educated group. According to the 1990 census, 56 percent of men and 52 percent of women in New York and 56 percent of men and 62 percent of women in Los Angeles have at least some college, while fewer than 20 percent in either city are not high-school graduates. Moreover, Israeli women are as educated as Israeli men. The Israelis in the N.Y. Study have a higher educational attainment profile than those in the New York census file: 71 percent of Israeli men in the N.Y. Study had one or more years of college vs. 56 percent in the census data. Among Israeli women, the disparity between the survey and the census data is smaller, but in the same direction: 65 percent of the Israeli women in the N.Y. Study had completed one or more years of college as compared with 52 percent of Israeli women in the census file. The differences in educational attainment between the N.Y. Study and census data may reflect the studies' different sampling frames. The study includes only Jews and only Israeli-born Israelis, groups that are likely to have higher levels of education than the census sample, which includes Israelis born outside of the Jewish state as well as non-Jews. (See table 4.)

Israeli immigrants frequently report that they came to the United States in order to increase their education. This seems to be borne out by the data.

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[59]Ritterband, "Israelis in New York."

[60]Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants."

[61]Herman, "A Technique for Estimating," p. 95.

[62]Uriely, "Israeli Immigrants in Chicago"; Gold, "Patterns of Economic Cooperation"; Ben-Ami, "Schlepers and Car Washers," pp. 18 – 20.

TABLE 4. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, ISRAELIS AGED 24 – 65, LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK (PERCENTAGES)

Schooling	Men			Women		
	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study
8th grade or less	5	6	(HS grad.	5	6	(HS grad.
Some high school	13	11	or less:	8	14	or less:
Finished high school	26	28	30)	25	29	32)
Some college	23	23	10	35	23	19
College grad or more	33	33	61	27	29	46
(One or more years college)	(56)	(56)	(71)	(62)	(52)	(65)

Sources: 1990 Census, PUMS; 1991 N.Y. Jewish Population Study.

In one study of Israelis in New York, while 28 percent of those responding had a bachelor's degree or greater before leaving Israel, the proportion increased to 39 percent in the United States. Similarly, of respondents' spouses, the fraction with a college-level education increased from 28 percent in Israel to 45 percent in the United States.[63]

Occupational and Economic Status

In both New York and Los Angeles, almost half of Israeli men are employed as managers, administrators, professionals, or technical specialists. Another quarter in either city are employed in sales. Other important occupational categories are gender-based: craft work (frequently in construction) for men and clerical occupations for women. On both coasts, the most common occupational category for Israeli women is professional/technical. In both New York and Los Angeles, female Israelis are professionally employed at nearly double the figure of their male counterparts: 41 percent of Israeli women are professionally employed in New York, 33 percent in Los Angeles. This reflects the large fraction of Israeli women who find employment in Jewish communal occupations, such as teaching in day schools and synagogues. (See table 5.) Recent studies have shown that 7 percent of all Hebrew school teachers in Atlanta, Baltimore, and Milwaukee and 25 percent in Los Angeles were born in Israel.[64]

While the image of the Israeli taxi driver in New York was a popular stereotype in the 1980s, census data reveal that this is no longer a major calling among the community (if in fact it ever was). According to the 1990 census, only 4 percent of Israeli men in New York and 2 percent in Los Angeles are employed in the field of transport. By the mid-1990s, taxi companies, for example, that were owned by Israelis, tended to employ an ethnically diverse labor force.

The occupational profile of Israelis in New York differs somewhat in the census data and the N.Y. Study. The latter shows many more Israeli males concentrated in the professional/technical categories than the former (44 percent vs. 21 percent) and many fewer in sales (8 percent vs. 29 percent). The N.Y. Study also shows more women in professional and technical occupations than does the census (63 percent vs. 41 percent) and fewer in sales (8 percent vs. 16 percent) and clerical (8 percent vs. 23 percent). The rest of the distributions are nearly identical. (See table 5.) The differences

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[63]Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants," p. 67.

[64]Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, "Policy Brief: Background and Professional Training of Teachers in Jewish Schools," n.d., Box 1; Bruce Phillips and Isa Aron, "Teachers in Jewish Schools in Los Angeles," unpublished report, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, n.d.

TABLE 5. OCCUPATIONS OF EMPLOYED ISRAELIS AGED 24 – 65, LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK (PERCENTAGES)

	Men			Women		
Occupation	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study
Manager/administrator	23	23	24	23	13	19
Prof./tech.	17	21	44	33	41	63
Sales	22	29	8	11	16	8
Clerical	3	4	5	20	23	8
Craft	25	11	10	1	0	3
Operative	4	2	0	1	2	0
Transport	2	4	2	1	0	0
Laborer	2	1	6	0	0	0
Service	2	3	0	11	4	0
Farm	1	0	0	0	1	0

Sources: 1990 Census, PUMS; 1991 N.Y. Jewish Population Study.

in occupational distribution between the N.Y. Study and census data may reflect the studies' different sampling frames, as discussed above, with the less educated more likely to be employed in clerical and sales occupations. Further, since teaching Hebrew is a common professional occupation for Israeli women in the United States, we might surmise that non-native speakers of Hebrew (and non-Jews) are less likely to be working in this field.

The occupational profile of Israeli males in New York is very similar to that of other foreign-born Jewish males as well as of American-born Jewish men with two minor exceptions: Israelis are less likely than native-born males to be employed in sales and more likely to be employed in skilled occupations.

Research suggests that Israeli immigrants are extremely entrepreneurial. The 1990 census found that around a third of Israeli men in both New York (31 percent) and Los Angeles (36 percent) were self-employed. Nationally, Israelis have the second-highest rate for self-employment of all the nationality groups in the 1990 census. Only that of Koreans was higher. The rates of Israeli self-employment in the N.Y. Study are consistent with those tabulated in the 1990 census for New York City: 36 percent for males and 20 percent for females in the former; 31 percent and 14 percent in the latter. (See table 6.) Further, Israeli males and females are more likely to be self-employed than other foreign-born and native-born Jewish New Yorkers.

Other surveys have estimated the Israeli rate of self-employment to be even higher. A researcher in Los Angeles found that 77 percent of Israeli men and 37 percent of Israeli women in Los Angeles were self-employed; a New York study found that 63 percent of Israeli men and 23 percent of Israeli women in New York were self-employed; and an analysis of 1980 census data for California showed Israelis with the highest rate of entrepreneurship of any nationality in the United States.[65] Given that immigrants generally have higher rates of self-employment than the native-born, and that Jews — foreign-born and native-born alike — are also characterized by high rates of self-employment, this is not surprising.[66]

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[65]Michal Shachal-Staier, "Israelis in Los Angeles: Interrelations and Relations with the American Jewish Community," MBA thesis, U. of Judaism, Los Angeles, 1993; Josef Korazim, "Israeli Families in New York City: Utilization of Social Services, Unmet Needs, and Policy Implications," Ph.D. diss., Columbia U., 1983; Eran Razin, "Social Networks, Local Opportunities and Entrepreneurship Among Immigrants: The Israeli Experience in an International Perspective" (Hebrew U. of Jerusalem, Dept. of Geography, 1991), mimeo.

[66]John Sibley Butler and Cedric Herring, "Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship in America: Toward an Explanation of Racial and Ethnic Group Variations in Self-Employment," *Sociological Perspectives* 34, no. 1, 1991, pp. 79 – 94; Frank A. Fratoe, "Abstracts of the Sociological Literature on Minority Business Ownership (with additional references)" (Research Division, Office of Advocacy, Research and Information, Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1984); Ivan Light, "Disadvantaged Minorities in Self-Employment," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 20, nos. 1 – 2, 1979, pp. 31 – 45.

TABLE 6. ECONOMIC SECTOR, EMPLOYED ISRAELIS AGED 24 – 65, LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK (PERCENTAGES)

	Men			Women		
Sector	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study
Private	58	64	57	71	76	54
Public	6	5	7	13	10	26
Self-employed	36	31	36	16	14	20

Sources: 1990 Census, PUMS; 1991 N.Y. Jewish Population Study.

High rates of self-employment are maintained by extensive economic cooperation involving co-ethnic hiring, subcontracting, and ethnic economic specialization. In Los Angeles, Israelis are especially active in construction, jewelry and diamonds, retail sales, security, garments, engineering, and media.[67] One illustration of Israelis' entrepreneurial orientation can be found in the "Jewish/Israeli Yellow Pages of Los Angeles." Originally started as an offshoot of the Hebrew weekly *Hadshot LA*, the bilingual (Hebrew and English) directory grew to over 300 pages, advertising some 1,500 Israeli-owned businesses. The publisher estimated that there were closer to 3,500 Israeli-owned businesses in Los Angeles in 1995.[68]

LABOR-FORCE PARTICIPATION

Israelis in New York and Los Angeles have generally high rates of employment and low rates of welfare use. Men have very high rates of labor-force participation, but a large fraction of Israeli women are not in the labor force.[69] (See table 7.) One survey of naturalized Israelis in New York found that "only 4 percent of the women indicated 'housewife' as their occupation in Israel, while 36 percent did so in the United States."[70] Another study found that while 30 percent of Israeli migrant women had not been in the labor force in Israel, 56 percent were not in the labor force in New York.[71]

Further, many Israeli women who work do so only part time. Israelis are different in this regard from many other immigrant women, who maintain high labor-force participation rates.[72] While this trend may be an indicator of the migrants' improved economic status, it also undoubtedly reflects the decision of Israeli women to stay out of the labor market in order to compensate on the domestic and communal fronts for the support networks and services they enjoyed in Israel but find lacking in the United States. (See below, "Gender and Family Adaptation.")

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[67]Bozorgmehr et al., "Middle Easterners: A New Kind of Immigrant"; Gold, "Patterns of Economic Cooperation."

[68]Personal communication, Jan. 1996. This figure accords with 1990 census data, which show some 14,000 Israelis living in Los Angeles, about 29 percent (4,000) of them self-employed.

[69]This despite the fact that — as of 1984 — the United States had a higher female labor-force participation rate (44 percent) than Israel's (38 percent).

[70]Mira Rosenthal and Charles Auerbach, "Cultural and Social Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants in the United States," *International Migration Review* 99, no. 26, 1992, p. 985.

[71]Korazim, "Israeli Families in New York City," p. 79.

[72]Silvia Pedraza, "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender," *Annual Review of Sociology* 17, 1991, pp. 303 – 25; Andrea Tyree and Katherine Donato, "A Demographic Overview of the International Migration of Women," in *International Migration: The Female Experience*, ed. Rita James Simon and Caroline B. Brettell (Totowa, N.J., 1986), pp. 21 – 41.

TABLE 7. LABOR-FORCE PARTICIPATION, ISRAELIS AGED 24 – 65, LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK (PERCENTAGES)

	Men			Women		
Status	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study	LA PUMS	NY PUMS	NY Study
In labor force	88	88	—	59	50	—
(Employed)	(83)	(85)	(86)	(55)	(47)	(58)
(Unemployed)	(5)	(3)	—	(4)	(3)	—
Not in labor force	12	12	—	41	50	—

Sources: 1990 Census, PUMS; 1991 N.Y. Jewish Population Study.

INCOME

The earnings of Israelis in New York and Los Angeles are considerable, exceeding the average for the foreign-born and approaching those of native whites. Employed Israeli men residing in New York City were making approximately $35,000 annually in 1990, while their counterparts in Los Angeles were making almost $49,000. For purposes of comparison, the average income for all employed foreign-born men was about $26,000 in New York and $24,000 in Los Angeles in 1990, while employed, native-born white men in New York and Los Angeles earned approximately $46,000.

Employed Israeli women made about $25,000 in New York and approximately $22,200 in Los Angeles. For purposes of comparison, the average income for employed, foreign-born women in New York in 1990 was $19,000 and $16,400 in Los Angeles; employed, native-born white women earned about $31,000 in New York and $26,000 in Los Angeles.[73]

While the average income of former Israelis suggests a generally successful merger into the American middle class, it should be noted that the economic circumstances of this population cover a wide range, from poverty to significant wealth. In 1990, according to the census, between 1 and 2 percent of Israelis in New York and Los Angeles were on welfare. Also, when length of residence is taken into account, incomes tend to rise. In Los Angeles, Israeli men who had been in the country for ten years averaged almost $72,000 a year. (Figures are for persons aged 24 – 65.)

Residential Distribution in New York

Israelis tend to live in older, established Jewish neighborhoods. In the New York area, Israelis are concentrated in Brooklyn and Queens.[74]

Different kinds of Israeli households live in different parts of New York. Israeli singles, even more than native-born Jewish singles, are attracted to Manhattan (50 percent versus 40 percent). Married couples in which one or both partners are Israeli gravitate toward Brooklyn (39 percent) and Queens (20 percent), as do married couples in which one or both partners is foreign-born (but not Israeli) (39 percent to Brooklyn, 18 percent to Queens). Jewish couples in which both partners are American-born, by contrast, are most likely to live in the suburbs (40 percent), particularly Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties.

Israelis in Brooklyn and Queens tend to have the lowest socioeconomic status, and in this regard they are like other Jews in these boroughs. Israeli

[73]PUMS for New York City and Los Angeles County, 1990 Census.
[74]The 1991 New York Jewish Population Study.

males in Brooklyn and Queens, like other foreign-born as well as native-born Jewish males, are the least likely to be employed in management, administrative, professional, or technical occupations, compared to Jews living in all areas of New York City. The more affluent areas of Manhattan and Riverdale (in the Bronx) are the most likely to have Jews in higher-status occupations. This is also true of the suburbs, though Israelis in affluent areas may be self-employed rather than professionals.

A similar pattern is observed for females. Employed Jewish females in Brooklyn and Queens are the least likely to work in high-status occupations, regardless of their place of birth. Israeli women in the suburbs, however, have a decidedly higher occupational profile than suburban Israeli men. This is probably due to the fact that Israeli women often find jobs as teachers or other kinds of Jewish communal professionals.

Another difference between suburban and urban Israelis in New York has to do with religious observance. Israeli families in Brooklyn and Queens are the most likely to have moved there to be near a Jewish day school or yeshivah or a synagogue that appeals to them. Israelis in Brooklyn and Queens are more likely than suburban Israelis to engage in Jewish rituals, including attending synagogue one or more times per week, using separate dishes for milk and meat, fasting on Yom Kippur, refraining from using money on Shabbat, and observing the Fast of Esther. Suburban Israelis, on the other hand, are more likely to have attended a Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Israel Independence Day) celebration.

Language

Israelis make exceptionally good progress at learning English. One analysis of 1990 census data for Los Angeles found that only 5 percent of Israelis do not feel confident in their English ability. In interviews with over 100 Los Angeles Israelis representing all walks of life, Steve Gold encountered only one — a recently arrived Persian-born Israeli who worked in the heavily Iranian garment district — who could not speak fluent English. About 80 percent of Israelis in Los Angeles report speaking Hebrew at home, a figure that reduces to 60 percent for the generation of Israelis who came to the United States as young children and spent many years here.[75]

In general, Israelis speak Hebrew at home, but the percentage who report speaking Hebrew at home declines with length of time in the United States. Israelis in New York are far more likely than Israelis in Los Angeles to report Yiddish as one of the languages spoken at home. (See table 8.)

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[75]Bozorgmehr et al., "Middle Easterners," pp. 31 – 32.

TABLE 8. LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME, ISRAELIS IN LOS ANGELES AND NEW YORK (PERCENTAGES)

Language	Los Angeles	New York
Hebrew	75.0	67.0
English	11.0	15.0
Yiddish	0.7	13.0
Armenian	4.3	—
Arabic	2.3	—
Persian	1.2	—
French	1.1	1.3
Spanish	—	1.2

Sources: 1990 Census, PUMS.

PATTERNS OF ADAPTATION

Social Adaptation

Much of the literature on Israeli immigrants cited in this study asserts that, despite their economic well-being, many members of the group accept the negative *yored* stereotype, suffering from feelings of shame, guilt, and alienation, making frequent mention of their plans to return home, and refusing to call themselves Americans. The ambivalence experienced by many Israelis is reflected in interview comments such as these by a man living in a mostly Israeli apartment complex in the San Fernando Valley:

> An Israeli is torn apart the minute he is leaving Israel [to come to the U.S. for an extended period]. It's not like people from other countries who come here and settle down, hoping for better life. An Israeli is torn apart the minute he leaves Israel and that's when he begins to wonder where is it better — here or there.

> We Israelis come here and organize our lives as if we are going to stay for a short period and our life here is a make-believe. The reality is that we live here and at the same time we don't live here. That leaves the question for which I don't have an answer — what will happen and where are we?

According to one view, the kind of ambivalence just expressed blocks the formation of a viable Israeli ethnic community, making Israelis in this regard "out of tune with the mainstream of ethnic behavior in America." They remain marginal both to Israel and the American Jewish community because of their "problem concerning the legitimacy of their emigration, their self-definition and self-esteem."[76]

[76]Moshe Shokeid, "One Night Stand Ethnicity: The Malaise of Israeli-Americans," *Israel Social Science Journal* 8, no. 2, 1993, pp. 23 – 50; idem, *Children of Circumstances*.

Without denying that many Israelis feel ambivalent about being in the United States, our research suggests that feelings of nostalgia and homesickness can function as an incentive for co-ethnic cooperation rather than only as a source of shame that discourages the maintenance of ethnic ties.

In New York, Los Angeles, and other locales the desire of Israelis to interact with each other and to maintain their ties to Israel is expressed in various ways: Israelis socialize with each other, live near co-nationals, consume Hebrew-language media (originating in both the United States and Israel), patronize Israeli restaurants and nightclubs, attend formal social events and celebrations, observe Israel Independence Day together; they work in jobs with other Israelis, consume goods and services provided by Israeli professionals and entrepreneurs, keep funds in Israeli banks, send children to Israeli-oriented religious, language, recreational, and cultural/national activities; they raise money for Israeli causes (e.g., the Macabees/L.A. Kings fund-raising basketball game), call Israel on the phone, host Israeli visitors, and make frequent trips to Israel.

They patronize Israeli-style day-care centers. In Los Angeles there are two types — one run as a social service by formally organized groups, such as the Gan-Chabad Israeli Center; the other, home-based day-care businesses organized by Israeli women. The 1992 – 1993 Los Angeles Israeli Yellow Pages lists ten such centers, among them Ariella's Day Care, Dorit's Day Care, Hila Day Care, and Kids' Gym.

And they belong to a variety of associations. In addition to synagogues, these include clubs of various sorts and Hebrew-speaking chapters of American or international organizations such as ORT, B'nai B'rith, and WIZO (the latter reportedly brought to Los Angeles by Israelis).[77] The 1993 – 1994 Jewish Yellow Pages of Los Angeles devotes six pages to 30 such organizations. While some of these groups, such as ADL or the Simon Wiesenthal Center, are clearly not limited to the immigrant community, a number are exclusively oriented toward immigrants.

Among these are the Israeli Flying Clubs (there are two), the Israeli Musicians' Organization, the Israeli Organization in Los Angeles (ILA), the Israeli-Yemenite *minyan* at Temple B'nai David Judea, the Summit political club, YELI (an organization of Israeli mental health professionals who assist co-nationals), several sports organizations, and Israeli folk-dance groups. These, as well as various informal networks of business people, were created by immigrants themselves. Youth activities like Hetz Vakeshet (summer in Israel program) and Tzofim (Israeli scouts) are sponsored by the Israeli government. Still other activities — the Jewish Community Center's Israeli program, the AMI (Israeli Hebrew) school, the B'nai B'rith Shalom Lodge, the Jewish Federation's Israeli Division, the Chabad Israeli

[77]Shachal-Staier, "Israelis in Los Angeles: Interrelations and Relations"; Gold, "Israelis In Los Angeles."

Program, and WIZO Shaked — are linked with American or international Jewish organizations. Regardless of their affiliations, these groups reflect Israelis' desire to interact with each other and enjoy being in a setting where they can exchange information, share social and economic support, and develop common perspectives on life in the United States.

A case can be made that the sizeable Israeli population in Los Angeles, along with the many institutions that serve it, constitutes what Canadian sociologist Raymond Breton calls an "institutionally complete" community.[78] Within this collectivity, an Israeli immigrant or visitor can satisfy nearly all of his/her needs in Hebrew.

While Los Angeles may well have the most organizationally active Israeli community in the United States, other communities reveal a similar if less intensive communal pattern.[79] Chicago, Miami, San Francisco, and New York all have Tzofim and Tzabar programs (the latter involves "education in Jewish tradition without an emphasis on religion") and a variety of Israeli associations and clubs. With the exception of Miami, each city also has an Israeli-oriented Hebrew school program. Further, these cities, along with Detroit, have all made efforts to include Israelis within the local Jewish Federation and other communal activities.[80]

Israelis clearly possess a desire to associate with and help one another. They become each other's families — celebrating holidays together, for example — and helping each other get established. But the examples cited above demonstrate a stronger communal orientation than was believed to exist, contrasting with the image of the conflicted *yored* who is too ashamed to make contact with his or her co-nationals.

SUBGROUP RELATIONS

While Israelis in the United States cooperate among themselves and with other Jewish groups, various subgroups of the Israeli immigrant population (based upon common background, outlook, and the like) have developed more extensive forms of cooperation than exist in the Israeli community as a whole.[81] For example, in Los Angeles, groups based on ethnicity — such as Persians and Yemenis — organize many of their own social events and religious activities and occupy economic niches that they share with others of a common background. This is how one Israeli of Persian (Iranian) origin

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[78]Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," *American Journal of Sociology* 84, 1964, pp. 293 – 318.

[79]Mittelberg and Waters, "The Process of Ethnogenesis Among Haitian and Israeli Immigrants."

[80]Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*, p. 14.

[81]Uriely, "Rhetorical Ethnicity of Permanent Sojourners"; Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances*; Gold, "Patterns of Economic Cooperation."

describes the high level of economic cooperation that exists among members of his group:

> For us it is very easy to find out a job only on the downtown. Before I went downtown, I tried to look at the ads in the American newspapers, like the *Times*. My son was looking with me. But I couldn't get into the business. But the minute I went to downtown L.A., there are a lot of Israelis and Persian guys, we contract between each other and start business.

While Yemeni- or Persian-origin Israelis tend to know their co-ethnics, their social networks and community knowledge do not extend to prominent Ashkenazi Israelis. Another strong network is made up of former kibbutz members who cooperate in economic and social activities.[82] For example, Avi, a former kibbutz member who now runs a large construction company, describes his motives for hiring other Israelis:

> I think that it hurts me and it takes away from my power to see another Israeli without work and without any way to make his living and that's why we are helping them. My company now has at least 35 to 40 "children" and "grandchildren" in various aspects of the business. I had many foremen who decided to go on their own and they even got a job from me as a subcontractor.

Long-established Israelis have their own social circle, which revolves around a Hebrew-speaking lodge of B'nai B'rith; and the more recently arrived are involved with WIZO and a federation-affiliated business association.[83]

Finally, the boundaries between subgroups also reflect some of the ethnic prejudices carried over from life in Israel. For example, a Hungarian-born graduate student confides that he did not want to attend a Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Israel Independence Day) celebration because "too many Chach Chachim" (a Hebrew slang term for a flashy, working-class person, often of Oriental ethnicity) would be there. While he explains that "there are white Chach Chachim," most are Oriental or Sephardic. For their part, Moroccan, Yemeni, and Persian-origin Israelis in Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago, who made a relatively easy transition to Orthodox and Hassidic synagogue life in the United States, often criticize the antireligious outlook of secular Ashkenazi Israelis.[84] A Chicago study found that Sephardic Israelis had higher rates of synagogue membership, attendance at High Holy Day services, and keeping a kosher home than did Ashkenazim.[85]

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[82]Gold, "Patterns of Economic Cooperation"; Naama Sabar, "The Wayward Children of the Kibbutz — A Sad Awakening," *Proceedings of Qualitative Research in Education* (College of Education, U. of Georgia, 1989); Ben-Ami, "Schlepers and Car Washers."

[83]Steven Gold, "Israeli Immigrants in the U.S.: The Question of Community," *Qualitative Sociology* 17, no. 4, 1994, pp. 325 – 63.

[84]Uriely, "Patterns of Identification"; Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances*; Gold, "Israelis in Los Angeles."

[85]Uriely, "Patterns of Identification," p. 37.

Similarly, Middle Eastern-origin Israelis are active participants in Chabad activities in New York.[86] In fact, judging by the number of photographs of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe displayed in Israeli businesses and other immigrant settings, Chabad has made strong connections with Israelis in Los Angeles as well.

Gender and Family Adaptation

In nearly every study of Israelis in the United States, including our own field interviews, one finds that while migration was a "family decision," and the family as a whole enjoys economic benefits as a result of migration, the decision to migrate was made by the men seeking the expanded educational and occupational opportunities available in the United States.[87] In the words of Rachel:

> For most of the people that came here, the men came and the women came after them. Like when I came, my husband came for a job. I had to leave my job and I had to find a new job and it was very painful. I think more and more now there are women coming on their own, but if you look at most cases, it is the men coming after jobs and it means that the women are the ones that have to take care of finding apartment, finding schools for kids and they get depressed, very badly depressed.

A study of Israeli immigrant women in suburban New York found that all 22 of "the women who left Israel with their Israeli spouses, except one, put the onus of the decision on 'his' education, 'his' career or business plans. As a group of immigrant women they can in fact be seen as adjuncts to their spouses' immigration."[88]

Once in this country, men often enjoy the benefits of their expanded opportunities and accordingly feel more comfortable with the new environment. One study of former kibbutzniks found that women, especially those with children and established careers, have more negative views of the new society, are less satisfied with America, and retain a stronger sense of Israeli and Jewish identity than men, who increasingly see themselves as American. Even when these Israeli women work in the United States, they have less of a professional identity than men and would prefer to return home.[89]

These findings appear to apply to a large segment of the Israeli population. Once in the United States, through their immersion in education and work, men develop a social network and a positive sense of self. Women,

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[86]Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances*.

[87]Kimhi, "Perceived Change of Self-Concept"; Lipner, "The Subjective Experience"; Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants"; Rosenthal and Auerbach, "Cultural and Social Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants."

[88]Lipner, "The Subjective Experience of Israeli Immigrant Women," p. 142.

[89]Kimhi, "Perceived Change of Self-Concept," p. 95.

however, because they are responsible for child rearing and many of the family's domestic and social activities, are the family members who most directly confront alien American social norms and cultural practices — but without the knowledge or the family, friendship, and neighborhood resources to which they had access at home. Thus, Israeli immigrant women find their domestic and communal tasks — such as building social networks, finding appropriate schools and recreational activities, dealing with teachers and doctors, obtaining day care, and the like — to be quite difficult.

According to one researcher, an Israeli woman's family status and prior work involvement have much to do with her feelings about being in the United States. Younger women who had few social attachments prior to migration (i.e., no children or established careers) looked forward to migrating and enjoyed being in America. However, women who had children and who were forced to give up good positions in Israel to come to the United States had a much harder time, experiencing their exit as "devastating."[90]

The presence of young or school-age children in Israeli immigrant families often heightens their ambivalence about being in the United States. The New York women in Lipner's study experience the environment in which their children are growing up as entirely antithetical to the Israeli one in which they were socialized. Essentially, they see the dominant values of the adult world, competition and individualism, replicated in the children's reality, and they are critical of it.[91]

In reflecting on their experience, many Israelis contrast this country's positive economic and occupational environment to its communal and cultural liabilities: immigrants almost universally regard Israel as a better place for children. It is safer, they maintain, has fewer social problems, and does not impose the generational conflicts Israelis confront when raising children in the United States. Further, in Israel, Jews are the culturally and religiously dominant group. The institutions of the larger society teach children Hebrew and Jewish history and help them to shape their basic national, ethnic, and religious identity. (More on this below.)

Role reversals sometimes occur between parents and children, with the younger generation gaining in power at the expense of the older. This is because children generally become Americanized and learn English much faster than their parents. One woman reported that her teen-age son would react to her advice by saying, "What do you know about it? You're from Israel."

Another source of conflict occurs when family members disagree over their country of residence. These problems are most dramatic when one

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[90]Lipner, "The Subjective Experience of Israeli Immigrant Women," pp. 144 – 145.
[91]Ibid., p. 232.

spouse is American-born or has many American relatives, while the other's family resides in Israel. Similarly, children who have spent much of their lives in the United States often prefer to remain, while their parents may wish to return to Israel. Conversely, parents may wish to remain in the United States for career opportunities, while children may wish to return to Israel. Such is the case for Dan, an active member of the San Fernando Valley Tzofim chapter:

> On Yom Kippur, we went to the synagogue and it was so different because we prayed and then we went home and people were driving by on the street and people were eating in restaurants and it was very hard. It was very different. I felt that I am not in the right place; I shouldn't be here. I told my parents and they said "You are in the United States, you are not in Israel. You should expect that."

Israeli vs. American Jewish Identity

For many Israelis — particularly those with children — the issue of their basic identity as Israelis and as Jews is a highly charged one. The identity of many Israelis is ethnic, secular, and nationalistic. While they appreciate Jewish holidays and speak Hebrew, they connect these behaviors to "Israeliness" rather than Jewishness. They are not accustomed to participating in organized religious activities and depend on the larger society and public institutions to socialize their children. But the very fact of living in a non-Jewish society presents new challenges, as the following anecdote illustrates. It was told to research assistant Debra Hansen by Gili, who was stationed in Los Angeles by an Israeli company.

Gili's oldest daughter, who attended a Jewish day school, was asked by her teacher if she would marry a non-Jew. She replied "yes," because her parents had taught her not to judge people by their background but only by their character. When informed of this reply by their child's teacher, Gili and his wife were shocked. They had imparted their principle in the context of Israel, so that she would not judge people according to their Ashkenazi or Oriental/Sephardic origins, but they never intended her to apply it in a non-Jewish environment.

While Israeli parents may seek to impart a Jewish/Israeli identity to children whom they see assimilating quickly to the non-Jewish folkways of American life, they find no easy way to do so. The "synagogue-based, ethno-religious identity of Diaspora U.S. Jews"[92] is foreign to them (particularly those identified with the Ashkenazi elite), and they are unfamiliar with the uniquely American forms of Judaism, specifically, the Reform and

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[92]Mittelberg and Waters, "The Process of Ethnogenesis Among Haitian and Israeli Immigrants," p. 416.

Conservative movements, with which the great majority of American Jews affiliate, because those movements have only a small presence in Israel.[93]

The dilemma of many Israeli parents is described by Batia, a psychologist and mother of two teenagers:

> Israelis are born secular citizens. Most of us are raised secular, non-religious. And that's the point. Because if we're not religious, we are not identifying ourselves with the Jewish community here. Therefore, we are not Jews, we're Israelis.
>
> So, Israelis send their kids to public school and they have this little American running around at home that is not Jewish. And remember, the Israelis also are not Jewish, so where do we meet in the family? On what value system do we meet? There is no value system that Israelis can give to their children as Americans because they don't know it. The children bring home the American culture, their parents don't know it. None of them meet on the Jewish arena, which is the healthiest, because it gives you a value system and lifestyle and it does not exist in Israeli family and that's why the breakdown occurs.

Many Israeli parents feel forced to choose between having their children socialized in either (or perhaps both) of two unfamiliar cultural traditions — those of non-Jewish Americans and those of Diaspora Jews. Those Israeli parents who try to remedy the situation by enrolling children in parochial day schools and other American Jewish institutions are confronted with a foreign culture and identity, one that is religious rather than nationalistic. Some are troubled by what they describe as the excessive religiosity of day schools. They object to the children's school-inculcated demands for a kosher kitchen, family synagogue attendance, and strict Sabbath adherence. Committed to secularism, such parents comment on their own dislike of the growing power of religious parties in Israel and do not want to raise their children to become supporters of Orthodoxy. But they are torn between their rejection of too much religion in Israel and the threat posed in America by too little.

Thus, despite complaints about excessive religiosity, and about the high cost of Jewish day schools and synagogue membership, some secular Israelis decide that the only reasonable means of resolving the gap in generation and culture is to raise their children as religious American Jews. As a result, some Israelis who present themselves as having been radically secular prior to migration claim that they are more religiously observant in the United States than they ever had been in Israel.

It is important to point out that the desire of Israeli parents to expose their children to Israeli or Jewish culture is only partly because they value these traditions. Many also want their offspring to understand "where they are coming from," so that there can be some shared experience that permits Americanized children to relate to their parents and relatives. Added to

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[93]Ritterband, "Israelis in New York."

this, parents' fears about public schools and the perceived negative elements of American youth culture (drugs, individualism, excessive sexuality, low achievement motivation) also make Jewish schools look like desirable alternatives.

The solution for many Israeli immigrant families who wish to escape the polarities of assimilation and Orthodoxy,[94] but want to give their children some form of Jewish and/or Israeli training, is to establish connections with Israeli and/or Jewish life through special family activities of their own creation or involvement in specially designed Israeli-American programs.

Many Israeli youngsters attend after-school Hebrew programs and various Israeli clubs that seek to provide Israeli-American children with some notion of an Israeli identity. Starting in 1983, New York's Board of Jewish Education, with UJA-Federation funding, developed "a secular experimental educational program" that eventually resulted in a number of after-school programs throughout the city as well as an array of cultural activities for all ages: folk-dance groups, parent workshops, summer camps, even bar/bat mitzvah training. Chana Silberstein, director of the program, estimates that some 2,500 Israeli families have been involved in Jewish educational programs. She stresses the need of Israelis living outside of Israel "to redefine their Jewish identity, making the necessary transition from being part of a Jewish majority to part of a Jewish minority."[95]

An Israeli staff member in a Los Angeles Hebrew school program explained her goals this way:

> When I put the program together, I was trying to think what does an Israeli . . . a child that was born to an Israeli family that lives in the United States . . . when he graduates this school, what does he need in order to feel comfortable in his community? So, one of them, of course, is Hebrew . . . to feel comfortable at home. They must know about the culture in which . . . we grew. Like the poems and the riddles and the rhymes and the stories that these parents recite at home.
>
> They should be able go to a synagogue and feel comfortable with the Jewish community so we have lessons for the Holy Days and Shabbat. Of course, they have to know about the geography of Israel to know what's going on political wise. They have to know the history and they should know about the different Jewish heroes from the Biblical time to modern history. Who was Trompeldor, Hanna Senesh, all the way . . . back to Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Hillel. And we celebrate the Holy Days the way we would in Israel.

Tzabar, the American branch of Tzofim (Israeli Scouts) has groups for youngsters aged 10 – 19 in eight states and a membership of some 1,500. Each summer, 200 Israeli-American youth spend a summer in Israel as part

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[94]While they exist between the polarities of assimilation and Orthodoxy, "middle ground" approaches to Judaism such as Reform and Conservative are very American and, accordingly, may have little more appeal to recently arrived Israelis than the extremes.

[95]Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*, pp. 18 – 19.

of Hetz Vakeshet, a program that combines "elements of summer camp, Outward Bound, and army training all in one."[96]

Jewish Involvement

Although the issue of identity is clearly central for many Israelis, it remains to be seen how and to what extent they will become involved in the American Jewish community. One school of thought suggests a growing trend toward assimilation to non-Jewish cultural patterns. Largely secular and unaccustomed to American Jewish life, Israeli émigrés' very departure from the Holy Land signifies a move away from the Jewish ideal. Even their participation in ethnic activities is limited and oriented toward secular pursuits with little religious content — meals, parties, dancing, and sports. Moreover, their poor relations with, and social and cultural distance from, American Jews suggests little potential for integration into the larger community.[97]

Another school of thought sees Israelis increasingly participating in American Jewish life and becoming involved in a variety of Jewish institutions. While survey data on the Jewish involvement and behavior of Israelis are limited and overrepresent the well-established, existing studies indicate that Israeli émigrés engage in many Jewish behaviors at higher rates than those of American-born Jews.

When comparing Israeli immigrants' observance of Jewish customs — lighting candles on Shabbat and Hanukkah, attending synagogue on the High Holy Days and Shabbat, and fasting on Yom Kippur — with their patterns of practice in Israel, several studies of naturalized Israelis in New York and Los Angeles found that these practices increased in this country. A study of Israelis in Los Angeles that did not draw from a sample of those with U.S. citizenship noted a slight reduction in these religious practices. Overall, based on the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), it appears that Israelis are more likely than American Jews to observe the above-mentioned Jewish practices, both in Israel and in the United States. (See table 9.)

In Los Angeles, 80 percent of Israeli parents provide their children with some form of Jewish education; 50 percent of Israeli youth in Los Angeles attend day schools.[98] In one New York study, over 30 percent of Israeli children in Brooklyn and Queens attend day schools. This latter rate is quite high, considering that Israeli residents of Brooklyn and Queens are among

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[96]Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*, p. 10.
[97]Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances*.
[98]Ibid.

TABLE 9. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE OF ISRAELIS PRIOR TO LEAVING ISRAEL AND IN U.S. AND COMPARISON WITH AMERICAN JEWS, BASED ON VARIOUS STUDIES (PERCENTAGES)

	In Israel			In U.S.			
Observance*	LA-Herman	NY-Rosenthal	LA-Shachal-S.	LA-Herman	NY-Rosenthal	LA-Shachal-S.	American Jews NJPS
Light Shabbat candles	73	68	67	85	87	61	43
Light Hanukkah candles	95	85	—	100	91	—	83
Attend synagogue on High Holy Days	81	78	69	83	87	58	59
Attend synagogue on Shabbat	44	53	55	45	70	55	—
Fast on Yom Kippur	71	66	78	84	79	73	58

*Always, usually, or sometimes

Sources:

Herman: Data collected from 40 randomly selected Israelis naturalized between 1976 and 1982 in Los Angeles County. (Herman and LaFontaine; see text note 13.)

Rosenthal: Data collected from 205 Israelis in Brooklyn and Queens, 1984 – 86, consisting of sub-samples of 155 randomly selected naturalized Israelis and 50 snowball-sampled non-naturalized Israelis. From the 205 questionnaires, data on 870 individuals were collected. (Rosenthal; see text note 13.)

Shachal-S.: Data collected from 100 Israeli immigrants in Los Angeles in 1991 – 92. (Shachal-Staier; see text note 16.)

NJPS: CJF 1990 National Jewish Population Survey.

the least affluent Jewish New Yorkers, and that many come from secular backgrounds.[99]

Communal Response

Until the 1980s, much of the organized American Jewish community and the Israeli government either ignored or actively condemned the Israeli population in the United States. One top Israeli government official referred to the émigrés as *zevel* (garbage) and urged consulates worldwide to have "little if anything to do with them." In order to discourage further emigration and to foster re-immigration, from the early 1970s until the mid-1980s, the Israeli consulate in New York "repeatedly urged the federation to provide no special services to Israelis."[100]

In the late 1980s, however, this relationship began to change. Subtly and without grandstanding, the Israeli government encouraged its consular officials to initiate the development of relations between Israeli immigrants and American Jewish institutions. Yossi Kucik of the Jewish Agency reported that he attended a 1985 meeting wherein "it was agreed that the State could no longer afford to ignore these citizens abroad." A consular official asserted, "It is preferable to see these Israelis participating in American Jewish life rather than for them to be isolated Jewishly." Early in 1990, Los Angeles consul-general Ron Ronen approached the Jewish Federation (which had been offering some outreach activities since 1984) to develop a new and more inclusive policy toward Israeli émigrés.[101]

In 1992 the Israeli government announced that "because of the importance it attaches to the re-emigration of Israelis to Israel," it was taking responsibility for "re-*aliyah*" from the Jewish Agency and establishing an Office for Returning Israelis in the Ministry of Absorption. It offered émigrés a package of benefits including cash assistance, low-cost air fair, suspension of import duties, education, assistance in finding jobs and housing, financial aid for schooling, and reduction in military duty for Israelis and their families who return.[102]

Following Israel's lead, American Jewry took steps to acknowledge both the existence of an Israeli immigrant community and the importance of

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[99]Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants." On the other hand, given the poor reputation of urban public schools and the many Jewish day schools located in these neighborhoods, Israelis living in Brooklyn and Queens may have both the motive and the opportunity to provide their children with a religious education.

[100]Steven M. Cohen, "Israeli Émigrés and the New York Federation: A Case Study in Ambivalent Policymaking for 'Jewish Communal Deviants,'" *Contemporary Jewry* 7, 1986, p. 159.

[101]Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*, p. 3.

[102]"Going Home."

outreach. Since that time, major American Jewish communities — New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, and the San Francisco Bay Area — have supported a series of programs to aid and incorporate Israelis. These include social activities, secular Israeli-style education, and Israeli divisions of federations.[103] However, because of the ongoing controversy surrounding the presence of Israelis in the United States, these services are sometimes provided with little official acknowledgment, even though federation dollars support them.[104]

RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN JEWS

Significant differences between Jewish Israelis and Jewish Americans are normally obscured because of the limited and selective nature of contact between these two groups. Despite their common religion and often shared ancestral origins in Eastern Europe, Israelis and American Jews speak different languages, maintain different cultural norms and practices, eat different kinds of food, have contrasting political outlooks, and like different kinds of sports, music, and entertainment. Further, although both support Israel, they have differing national allegiances. Finally, the two groups often express their common religious identification in disparate ways.[105]

Existing literature and our own research indicate that as individuals, Israelis and American Jews often get along well in social, workplace, and organizational settings, but on the group level some friction exists. For example, Israelis and American Jews create good friendships and happy marriages, hire each other, and work together. Major Jewish organizations have Israeli employees and members, and Israeli students attend institutions of Jewish learning.

American Jews admire Israelis' chutzpah, idealism, and military prowess. However, they often consider them to be boorish, arrogant, and overly aggressive. In Rosenthal's study of naturalized Israelis in Brooklyn and Queens, 47 percent had been invited to American Jews' homes fewer than three times, and, while 18 percent of Israeli-Americans reported their two closest friends to be American Jews, 78 percent said their best friends were fellow Israelis. Given that these Israelis had become U.S. citizens, and therefore had lived in the United States at least three to five years and knew English, this would appear to be a low rate of interaction.[106]

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[103]Shokeid, *Children of Circumstances*; Gold, "Israelis In Los Angeles"; Uriely, "Rhetorical Ethnicity."

[104]Rosen, *The Israeli Corner*.

[105]Avi Kay, *Making Themselves Heard: The Impact of North American Olim on Israeli Protest Politics* (American Jewish Committee, New York, 1995).

[106]Rosenthal, "Assimilation of Israeli Immigrants," pp. 113 – 14.

Just as American Jews have mixed feelings about Israelis, Israelis are ambivalent about their American cousins, whom they sometimes portray as affluent but soft Diaspora Jews who exist as a minority in a bland and potentially hostile Christian country.[107] In Israeli eyes, "Diaspora Jews are plagued by a 'galut' (exilic) mentality that precludes them from freely expressing themselves as proud, self-confident and self-respecting Jews."[108]

An Israeli perspective on American life is summarized in the following quote from Yoram, an engineer employed in Detroit's auto industry. Yoram and his family speak fluent English, have an impressive suburban home, belong to a temple, and are active in the federation. Further, his children are popular campus leaders in the high school and university they attend. Nevertheless, Yoram expresses distance from his adopted country.

> I would say that I feel more like an outsider. I've never been discriminated against, at least that I have felt it. I was sometimes treated like an oddity, you know, "You come from the Middle East where they are still riding camels." But basically, we lack the understanding and the feeling of being an American. An apple pie is just a cake; Halloween is an American version of Purim and Thanksgiving is a little bit like Succot. Thank God there is Hanukkah.
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> I don't have a problem with feeling like a minority because I have my roots. I think American Jews have it in a much more difficult way. They might feel as a minority — to cry for more opportunities or to say that they have been discriminated against. But I always have the option. I mean, I can always get up and go and whenever I go, I go home.
>
> And I'm not the only one. I think what you'll find very interesting is that Israelis, the majority of them always maintain their house in Israel. They never sell their house in Israel.

American Jews' view of Israeli immigrants is often conflicted. On the one hand, at least until recently, many American Jews felt that Israelis should return home to support the cause of Zionism.[109] At the same time, when confronted with Israelis' ambivalence about being in the United States — expressed in refusal to call themselves Americans, praise their new country, accept American social codes, and participate in American-style Jewish communal life — American Jews resent the newcomers' lack of patriotism and reluctance to assimilate. One federation leader in a Midwestern city complained:

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[107]Lipner, "The Subjective Experience of Israeli Immigrant Women"; Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land*.

[108]Steven M. Cohen, "Israel in the Jewish Identity of American Jews: A Study in Dualities and Contrasts," in *Jewish Identity in America*, ed. David M. Gordis and Yoav Ben-Horin (Wilstein Institute of Jewish Policy Studies, Los Angeles), p. 122.

[109]Cohen, "Israeli Émigrés and the New York Federation"; Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land*.

> We have several thousand Israelis and there's minimal involvement. It's very, very frustrating. They get involved in those things that the community does for them that are Israel focused — like Israel Independence Day or if we bring an Israeli singer. But we've really outreached and we haven't been very successful.

Israelis are often sensitive to the negative views held by the American Jewish community. Some feel rejected, even bitter, complaining that they are viewed as stereotypes, not as individuals. On the level of personal interaction, some Israelis describe being initially impressed by American Jews' politeness. However, they also feel that Americans are fundamentally less friendly and sincere than Israelis.[110] Israelis see themselves as being open to spontaneous sociability. To them, Americans appear distant and reserved, people who socialize only formally and infrequently. However, as Israelis live in the United States longer, they often find themselves taking on similar social patterns, at least partly because of demanding work schedules. Nevertheless, the open sociability of Israelis seems to be a deeply rooted norm.

Interestingly, Israelis see both Americans and themselves as materialistic, but in different ways. Young Israelis may view affluent American Jews as snobbish and more concerned with possessions than with human relationships. This is the opinion of a second-generation Israeli-American in Chicago:

> There is something that I don't like in American Jews. They are so . . . "JAP" [Jewish American Princess]. They have money and that is very important for them. They are spoiled kids who think about themselves most of the time.[111]

Poorer American Jews, while considered by Israelis as more "down to earth," are seen as being "not very Jewish," perhaps because their lack of income deprived them of a Jewish education. At the same time, Israelis see their own peers as nouveaux riches — constantly trying to impress each other with shows of extravagant consumerism. Taking a psychoanalytic tack, some respondents in our studies attribute this behavior to Israelis' need to compensate for the status loss and insecurity associated with life in the "Golah" (outside of Israel).

As these examples suggest, Israelis feel significant social distance from American Jews in language, values, sociability, and life-shaping experiences. One of the most revealing differences between Americans and Israelis involves the observance of Yom Hazikaron, the Israeli Memorial Day, which occurs the day before Israel Independence Day. Although religiously identified American Jews typically know all about Jewish holidays and have visited Israel, they have little awareness of or feeling about Yom Hazikaron,

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[110]Lipner, "The Subjective Experience of Israeli Immigrant Women."
[111]Uriely, "Patterns of Identification," p. 41.

which to Israelis is one of the most solemn and moving occasions of the year, when they remember the Israelis whose lives were sacrificed in combat — many of them friends and relatives — during their nation's short history. Accordingly, it is at the time of Yom Hazikaron that many Israelis feel most distanced from American Jews and closest to each other.

Recognizing these differences with American Jews, nearly all Israelis hope nevertheless for improved relations. In the words of David, an Israeli community activist:

> The Israelis here have to come into the Jewish community. I don't like the fact that some of them want to be independent. I'm not against them organizing, but we should become a part of the mainstream of Jewish-American life because we are not separate.
>
> Take for example my own family. I don't see that somebody's grandmother left the same village in Poland that my grandmother lived in 80 years ago and came to New York, and my relatives came to Israel, that I'm that different from that person. So, since we are the same people, we should not have a separate Israeli Federation. For two reasons. The main reason to me is that most Israelis will not admit that most of them will stay here forever. Most of them will end up living here, and 90 percent of their children will end up living here.
>
> I mean, all Israelis somewhere harbor the hope that they will go back to Israel. But the truth is that all of them are here temporarily, and then they die. And that's the reality. I've been here 18 years, I would like to go back, I don't know if I will. You have your businesses, people have families, you know, they cannot just pick up and leave. And they have gotten used to the way of life here and that's their reality.
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> So these two communities need each other. And I'm not saying the Israelis should assimilate into the Jewish community and become Americans because they won't. Their children probably will, but they won't. And they can keep their uniqueness, but in total cooperation. I think that instead of having their divisive or divided Jewish community, we need to have one strong united community, because here, you're bringing new Israeli, precious Israeli blood into the Jewish Federation. The Federation will get stronger and I'm going to tell you that some of the nicest people I know work in the Federation and it will do a hell of a lot of good for Israelis to meet these people and become one community. Not show the resentment of Americans to Israelis and Israelis see themselves as outsiders. I mean it will take time. This is not a process that will happen overnight, but it will happen.

Reconsidering Israeli Immigrants' "Unique Status"

While various studies have made much of Israelis' mixed feelings about being in the United States, even a cursory review of the literature demonstrates that the ambivalence of immigrants is far from unusual. The "sojourner" (temporary) perspective of Israeli migrants resembles that of many American immigrants, ranging from 19th-century Italians and Chinese to

today's Caribbeans and Latin Americans.[112] Indeed, the image of the patriotic "new American," Stars and Stripes in hand, is far from the norm, even if it is a dominant cultural myth.

A perceptive scholar noted recently that the popular notion that immigrants came to the United States ready to assimilate "is a myth. The specter of 'Americanization' troubled more immigrants than historians have been willing to admit."[113] Accordingly, if Israelis maintain a desire to return home, this outlook is neither unusual nor — judging from the experience of other migrant groups — does it preclude the possibility of their creating viable ethnic communities in the United States.

TRANSNATIONAL ISRAELIS

Transnationalism, a new approach in the field of migration studies, enables us to understand better international migrant communities, which, like Israeli-Americans, maintain social, cultural, and economic links to other countries on a more or less permanent basis.[114] From the perspective of transnationalism, migration is a multilevel process rather than a discrete event consisting of a permanent move from one nation to another. This theory suggests that by retaining social, cultural, and economic links with multiple settings, people can avoid the impediments traditionally associated with long distances and international borders and remain intensely involved in the life of their country of origin, even though they no longer reside there.

A number of factors make the movement of Israelis from the Jewish state to the United States relatively easy and suggest that Israelis might be considered a transnational people. They are well educated, often possessing occupational and cultural skills that are useful in both countries. They generally have access to networks in both countries that can provide a broad variety of services ranging from pretravel information to job opportunities, child care, housing, and social life. While some Israelis in the United States lack legal-resident status, as a group they are likely to become naturalized and are among a select few allowed to have dual citizenship.[115] Even prior to migration, Israelis are apt to be familiar with American society from their

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[112]Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, *Natives and Strangers: Blacks, Indians and Immigrants in America*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1990); Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley, 1990).

[113]Dinnerstein et al., p. 139.

[114]Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration," in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered*, ed. Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (New York, 1992), pp. 1 – 24.

[115]Guillermina Jasso and Mark R. Rosenzweig, *The New Chosen People: Immigrants in the United States* (Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1990).

exposure to popular culture, American visitors, and intergovernmental relations. As Sobel put it, "America, it might be posited, has become the alter ego of Israel in political, economic, and cultural terms."[116]

A large proportion of the Israeli population has resided in the Jewish state for fewer than two or at most three generations. Accordingly, their family lore and cultural background are rich in stories of life in other settings as well as techniques for coping with the challenges that displacement presents. Many émigrés we interviewed had lived in other countries — as wide-ranging as Japan and Hong Kong, Switzerland, England, Italy, South Africa, and Latin America — prior to their settlement in the United States. This group included not only professionals and high-level entrepreneurs but also less skilled and educated migrants such as carpenters and restaurant workers. Hence, many Israelis possess a cultural orientation and life experience compatible with an existence beyond the borders of the Jewish state.

Finally, while the literature asserts that transnational groups are often lacking a vocabulary to describe their experience — "Individuals, communities, or states rarely identify themselves as transnational" — Jews are in fact accustomed to seeing themselves in this way.[117] "Extranational" identity is expressed when non-Israelis proclaim themselves to be Zionists, when Jews say "next year in Jerusalem" during the Passover Seder, when they refer to "world Jewry," or when Jewish families who had lived in Poland for generations refuse to identify themselves as Polish.

Further facilitating Israeli-American transnationalism are the good political relations and extensive links between the United States and Israel. The U.S. government and American Jewish agencies have developed an active presence in the Jewish state. American firms have branches there, and American companies sometimes hire professional and skilled workers directly from Israel. At the same time, Israeli government agencies, banks, and industrial enterprises have offices in New York, Los Angeles, and other American settings. These not only inject an Israeli flavor into the American environment but also provide employment for migrants.[118] At the same time, we noted a variety of Israeli-oriented activities that allow migrants to maintain a semblance of Israeli life in the United States.

Travel between the two countries is easily arranged. Israeli immigrants often report making frequent trips from the United States to Israel, and it is not uncommon for children to return to Israel to spend summer vacations with relatives. A Los Angeles obstetrician describes the great value he places on his trips back to Israel:

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[116]Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land*.

[117]Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism," p. 8.

[118]Sobel, *Migrants from the Promised Land*, p. 196.

> I was talking to my accountant two days ago — he is also an Israeli — he says "What is going on?" And I said "What can I tell you, we are in a concentration camp." Okay — this is the way you describe it, and it is so true. We are in a concentration camp and we get a relief once a year when we go to Israel for a vacation. This is the bottom line.

Sociologist Zvi Sobel, in his 1981 – 1982 pretravel survey of 117 Israeli emigrants (most of whom planned to enter the United States), found evidence of a transnational outlook. About half denied "that leaving Israel and moving to the U.S. was an act of emigration." Instead, they defined the travel as "temporary" or "commuting." Moreover, "almost all interviewees denied that their leaving meant a cessation of contributing to the development of Israel. . . Almost all saw their departure as . . . to Israel's good."[119]

In all of the ways cited, the context, history, and culture of Israel have prepared its citizens for transnationalism. For some individuals, at least, the distinction between being an Israeli or being an American may not be nearly as clear-cut as the literature on international migration generally suggests. Instead, such factors as flexible notions of ethnic and national identity, access to and participation in social and occupational networks, and the ability of people to sustain cultural competence and legal status in more than a single society allow these individuals to maintain meaningful forms of involvement in multiple national settings at one time.

While transnationalism is a reality for many Israelis, this does not mean that it is an easy way of life. Even as these migrants build communities and networks that help them cope with the social and cultural dimensions of ties to two places, and enjoy the economic benefits of migration, most are not quite comfortable with this status. In the words of a Los Angeles accountant: "Israel is my mother and America is my wife, so you can imagine the way I must feel."

CONCLUSION

The presence of Israeli immigrants in the United States provides the world Jewish community with unique challenges. While American Jews have achieved a long and enviable record in aiding their co-ethnics, Israelis have been largely excluded from this tradition. This is linked to American Jews' support for Israel as the national home of the Jewish people — a country that fellow Jews should go to but never think of leaving. The émigrés themselves, who seldom conceive of themselves as permanent immigrants, have also discouraged being incorporated into the American Jewish community. During the late 1970s, hostile statements and inflated

[119]Ibid., p. 209.

population estimates reflected the low esteem with which Israelis in the United States were regarded by both the Israeli authorities and the American Jewish establishment.

Differences in religious, national, and cultural identity, language, and other factors also separate American Jews and Israelis. However, following the recent change in Israeli government policy toward its expatriates, the American Jewish community has become more open to these migrants. As a result, several informal and formal programs to both support and include these migrants have been established.

This new perspective has also permitted the American Jewish community to notice that, in contrast to statements depicting Israeli émigrés as a marginal and alienated noncommunity, Israelis have already become involved in American Jewish life — living in Jewish neighborhoods, working in traditionally Jewish occupations, supporting communal institutions, and serving as teachers and communal functionaries.

An important contribution made by Israelis, along with other Jewish immigrants, is the role they play in retaining the Jewish character of older Jewish neighborhoods. Recent arrivals occupy real estate, patronize shops, purchase existing neighborhood businesses, and create new ones. They attend neighborhood synagogues and public and day schools and congregate in local parks. For example, in Los Angeles, directly across Robertson Boulevard from the Workmen's Circle building (Workmen's Circle is a fraternal secular/socialist organization created by European Jewish immigrants early in this century) is located the relatively new Orthodox Gan Chabad Israeli program, staffed by a Yemeni rabbi. In like manner, Hebrew and Farsi conversations echo Yiddish ones of decades past in the garment center and jewelry districts. One can see Israelis and other Jewish migrants talking over news of American Jewish life, just as East Europeans did early in this century. In this way, they are maintaining but also transforming the institutions of Jewish life, changing the nature of the American Jewish community.

Despite the sometimes stigmatized status of Israelis and their own reluctance to consider themselves immigrants, Israelis as a group have done relatively well in their social and economic adjustment to the United States. Their community has many accomplishments to show in entrepreneurship, the arts, the professions, and the academy. Further, they have created a number of community organizations, some of which benefit not only Israelis but the larger American Jewish community as well. For example, the Israeli film festivals in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and elsewhere are important events for Israelis, American Jews, and film buffs of all stripes. This is but one example of Israelis providing a vital communal service to the entirety of a Jewish community. As Jewish fund-raisers discover that

Israelis are both affluent and strongly Jewish, the notion of an Israeli division of the local Jewish federation no longer appears to be an oxymoron, as it did only a decade ago.

Despite their presence in the United States, Israeli émigrés tend to maintain a strongly positive view of their country of origin. They keep abreast of Israeli issues, maintain contact with Israeli friends and relatives, and visit frequently. When they become U.S. citizens, eligible to vote in U.S. elections, their central political concern is supporting Israel.

Given the accomplishments of Israeli immigrants in the United States and the newly benign attitude with which they are regarded by both Israel and American Jewry, it is not unreasonable to predict a positive future for them, one yielding many benefits for the relations between Israel and American Jews — in contrast to the negative feelings surrounding their presence in the recent past.

Finally, as we evaluate the place of Israeli immigrants in American society, it might be worthwhile to look for parallels in the long history of Jewish migration to the United States. Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, the European Jewish elite — including both its rabbinical and intellectual wings — condemned America as a place unsuited for Jews. Their reason? American Jews were not concerned with religious traditions but only with personal gain. Writing from San Francisco for a journal published in Russia in the 1880s, Hebrew scholar Zvi Falk Widawer asserted, "Jews came here only to achieve the purpose which occupied their entire attention in the land of their birth. That purpose was money." A few years later, a similar report appeared in an Orthodox journal from Galicia, railing that "[t]he younger generation has inherited nothing from their parents except what they need to make their way in this world; every spiritual teaching is foreign to them."[120]

As these quotations indicate, two of the major accusations leveled at Israeli emigrants in the 1970s and 1980s — that they were obsessed with material gain and that their children would lose their Jewish identity — were leveled at European Jews in the United States by the elites in their home countries a full century before. During the same period, voices were also raised in both Europe and the United States against Jewish migration to what would eventually become Israel. In the 1920s and '30s, Elazar Shapira, a European Hassidic leader, preached that both America's materialism and Jerusalem's secular Zionism were "gates to hell."[121]

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[120]Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History* (New York, 1989), pp. 156 – 57.

[121]Ibid., p. 158.

These historical observations highlight the fact that international migration has always presented a major challenge to the Jewish status quo, and that while it seldom occurs without acrimonious debate, it also opens new horizons of growth and potential.