

## THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN ALIYA<sup>(1)</sup>

Calvin Goldscheider

*Jerusalem*

During the decade of the 1960's a clear trend toward annual increases in *aliya* from the United States was established. Between 1961 and 1971 there was almost a fourfold increase in the number of Americans arriving in Israel as "immigrants", "potential immigrants" or "temporary residents"<sup>(2)</sup>. The contribution of American *olim* to total *aliya* also increased significantly during this period: for every 1,000 *olim* in 1961, 35 were Americans; in 1971, 18 per cent of all *olim* were from the United States. This pattern was reversed in 1972 as the number of Americans immigrating to Israel dropped by a full 25 per cent. In one year the number of declared *olim* from the United States declined from 1,049 to 805 and the number of potential *olim* fell from 6,315 to 4,710. Moreover, American immigrants represented less than 10 per cent of all those immigrating to Israel in 1972 - lower than any proportion recorded since 1965 and breaking a trend line extending back to the 1950's (see Table 1).

What is the significance of this decline in American *aliya*? Has immigration from the United States reached its climax and, hence, the sharp decline 1971-1972 evidences the beginning of the end of large-scale American *aliya*? Perhaps reduction in American *aliya* merely reflects a temporary lull in American Jewish immigration to Israel that is the consequence of the noticeable increase in Russian immigration and the shift in priorities to the encouragement and absorption of these *olim*? To what extent are changing conditions in Israel and in the United States factors in the shifting volume of American *aliya*? Tied to these questions is the central issue: what is the most likely course of *aliya* from the United States in the near future?

While questions about the future cannot be answered with scientific precision, lessons from the past and analysis of the present

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(1) The data reported in this paper were adapted from published and unpublished official statistics in the files of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, and from the Survey on Absorption of Immigrants carried out by the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Absorption. Details on the data, sources and limitations, may be found in Goldscheider, Calvin. "American Aliya: Sociological and Demographic Perspectives". In: Sklare, N. (ed.). *The Sociology of the American Jew*. New York, Behrman House, 1974. p. 335-384.

Characteristics of American *olim* refer to those arriving 1969-1970.

(2) Formal definitions and general descriptions of *olim* and potential *olim* may be found in Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. *Survey on Absorption of Immigrants*. Special Series No. 381. Jerusalem, 1972.

provide working parameters in evaluating the most likely contours of future American *aliya*. A brief review of the changing volume of American immigration to Israel and of the selectivity of American *olim* provide the necessary background to evaluate the quantitative and qualitative potential *aliya* of American Jews.

Table 1. Number of American Olim and Rate per 1,000 Total Olim, 1961-1972

Year	American (a) Olim			
	Immigrants (b)	Temporary Residents (c)	Total	Per 1,000 Total Olim
Total				
1961-72	9,978	42,890	52,868	113
1961	592	1,279	1,871	35
1962	619	1,733	2,352	35
1963	868	1,982	2,850	39
1964	1,006	2,276	3,282	53
1965	924	2,598	3,522	91
1966	754	2,473	3,227	136
1967	665	3,383	4,048	162
1968	932	5,284	6,216	192
1969	671	5,068	5,739	152
1970	1,093	5,789	6,882	187
1971	1,049	6,315	7,364	176
1972	805	4,710	5,515	99

(a) American by place of last residence.

(b) Includes tourists settling.

(c) After 1969 these are defined officially as "potential immigrants".

Sources: Data on American *olim* are from official data in the files of the Central Bureau of Statistics. Data on total *olim* were derived from the *Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1971*. No. 22, tables D/1, E/1 and from unpublished data in the files of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel.

## The Quantitative Question

Despite annual fluctuations and a general tendency toward an increasing volume, American *aliya* has never been a mass migration. The number of annual arrivals from the United States has been small not only in absolute size but has been quantitatively insignificant relative to the size of the American Jewish population and to the volume of total *aliya*. Even by the most generous and inclusive definitions of "American" and "*aliya*" the annual volume of American migrants to Israel has never reached 8,000 - a figure that would include Americans defined by place of last residence (not birth or citizenship) arriving (not necessarily remaining) as "immigrants", "temporary residents", "potential immigrants", and "tourists settling". The total annual number of declared American "immigrants" has never exceeded 1,100 and reached an annual of 1,000 immigrants only three times (1964, 1970, 1971). If we consider rates of return migration to the United States (*yeridah*) - estimated conservatively at 30 per cent of arrivals - the smallness of American *aliya* becomes readily apparent.

Up to 1965, annual American *aliya* represented substantially less than 10 per cent of all *aliya*; during the more recent period (1966-1972), the proportion of all *olim* who were American increased to 16 per cent per year, on the average. Nevertheless, American *olim* have always been a minority segment of *aliya* streams, representing during the 12 year period, 1961-72, between 35 and 192 per 1,000 total *olim*, per year.

Relative to the American Jewish population, American *aliya* must be viewed as minuscule. The number of American *olim* arriving since 1967 represents the movement of far less than 1 per 1,000, per year, of the estimated United States Jewish population.

Taken together the American *aliya* picture in strictly quantitative terms is bleak. Nor are there indications that any major alterations are to be expected in the near future. Nevertheless, several important points should not be obscured by the smallness of the *aliya* from the United States.

First, within the context of the low level of American *aliya* an unmistakable pattern may be discerned. The small continuous stream of American migrants to Israel, beginning in the mid-19th century and gaining momentum after the establishment of the State of Israel, began to change in the early 1960's. Indeed, the period 1961-1966 witnessed several significant developments in the history of American *aliya* that have been ignored or overlooked because of the more conspicuous changes following the Six-Day War of 1967. During the early 1960's, the number of American immigrants increased noticeably, averaging about twice the annual volume 1948-60. To these declared "*olim*" must be added those Americans who arrived as "temporary residents". This ambiguous status was selected by many Americans not eager to risk the possible loss of their American citizenship by declaring formal "immigrant" status. (Before a May 1967 American Supreme Court decision, it was not clear that Americans could hold dual citizenship. Since immigrant status in Israel confirms citizenship automatically, many American *olim* opted

for "temporary resident" status<sup>(3)</sup>.) To be sure, a large number, perhaps a majority, of Americans who were "temporary residents" stayed only for the purpose of temporary work or study. Clearly, however, these Americans were not tourists and a significant, if only a minority, proportion settled. Between 1961 and 1966 over 12,000 Americans were registered as temporary residents, averaging more than 2,000 annually.

As part of the increase in the numbers of American *olim* (including temporary residents), and some slowdown in the *aliya* of other Jews, the relative proportion of American *olim* of the total *aliya* increased noticeably in these six years. In 1961, 35 out of every 1000 *olim* to Israel was an American; by 1966, 13.6 per cent of all *olim* were Americans. In no period prior to 1961 was the rate of American *aliya* as high.

Clearly, the increase in American *aliya*, in absolute volume and in the rate per 1,000 total *olim* had its roots *before* the events of June, 1967; the Six Day War accelerated a phenomenon that had already started. This is not to minimize the importance of the Six Day War, through its impact on American Jewish life and on the shape and character of Israeli society, in stimulating American *aliya*. Indeed, between 1967 and 1972, the number of Americans who formally declared themselves "*olim*" averaged close to 900 per year, totalling over 5,000 for the six-year period; the number of "temporary residents" (referred to after June, 1969 as "potential immigrants") averaged over 5,000 per year and totalled over 30,000. Adding these categories together, a total of over 35,000 Americans immigrated to Israel during the period 1967-1972.

In addition to the increasing trend in *aliya* from the United States, the smallness of numbers should not obscure the truly revolutionary changes in the normative acceptability of *aliya* within the American Jewish community. It is clear that since 1967 *aliya* has become within the American Jewish community one institutionalized response to the dilemmas of Jewish life in American society; undoubtedly, *aliya* has become the master symbol of the intricate web of interdependencies between Israel and the American Jewish community. No longer is *aliya* an idiosyncratic or isolated event. No one could write in the 1970's what had been written in the 1950's - that even American Zionists expressed opposition to the idea of American *aliya*; that the thought of his own *aliya* never was considered seriously while the idea of *aliya* on the part of his children struck him as fundamentally absurd in theory and entirely to be rejected in practice<sup>(4)</sup>.

Although the relative volume of American *aliya* has increased in the last several years beyond all realistic expectations and *aliya* has become a legitimate response of American Jewry, it seems reasonable to

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(3) This is one of the central themes in: Isaacs, Harold. *American Jews in Israel*. New York, The John Day Co., 1966.

(4) See articles written in 1950's cited in: Neufeld, Edward. "Zionism and Aliyah on the American Jewish Scene". *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 5, no. 1. June, 1963.

conclude that, barring unforeseen and unpredictable circumstances, no mass *aliya* of Jewish Americans (mass either in the sense of large absolute numbers or in the sense of significant proportions of American Jews) can be expected to occur within the near future. In large part this is for the same reason that large-scale permanent *aliya* has never occurred from the United States. Alongside the nearly universal American Jewish concern for Israel is the almost unanimous Jewish commitment to America and genuine indifference to *aliya*. Hence, for the overwhelming majority of American Jews, *aliya* will most likely remain in the realm of fantasy.

While it is clear that the events surrounding the Six Day War accelerated the tempo of American *aliya*, it appears that the factors operating to encourage recent *aliya* from the United States were rooted in pre-1967 conditions. Whereas some American *aliya* must have been precipitated by the "crisis of 1967", it seems reasonable to argue that two more lasting factors were at work: (1) the radical political, economic, and psychological changes that followed in the wake of the Six Day War in Israeli society and (2) the changing relationship of Jews, particularly among the young third generation, to America and the American Jewish community that had in fact begun before 1967. These two sets of factors, in combination, were powerful elements in reinforcing the interdependence between American Jews and Israel and in channeling some of this new interdependence into *aliya*. Moreover, as in other migratory streams, *aliya* tends to feed on itself - through chain migration and through the recognition, acceptance and institutionalization of *alya* among American Jews.

The question of the future volume of *aliya*, therefore, revolves around (1) the continuance of social changes within Israeli society; (2) the degree to which *aliya* from the United States has reached its climax, having already drawn those American Jews who have not found American society conducive to their Jewish identity; and (3) the continuance of selected disenchantment among Jewish youth of America and American Jewish society. It is obviously too soon to gauge whether the decline in American *aliya* 1971-1972 is the beginning of a trend or rather a simple fluctuation around a fairly steady but small migration stream. Based on past patterns and trends, my guess is that *aliya* from the United States will continue to fluctuate around "several thousand per year" - around 1,000 *olim* and 4,000 - 5,000 potential *olim* - varying in conjunction with relative conditions in Israel and the United States.

### The Qualitative Question

Americans immigrating to Israel are clearly not a representative cross-section of the American Jewish population; as might be expected, they differ as well from other *olim* and from the Jewish population of Israel. Of no less importance is the heterogeneity of *aliya* from the United States. Whether the objective is to understand the determinants of American *aliya* or the integration of American *olim*, or American

*yeridah*, or the future of American *aliya*, American *olim* cannot be treated as a uniform, homogeneous sub-group reflecting American Jewish community structure and values. The degree to which American *olim* differ from their brethren who remain in the United States is complemented by the variety of types of American Jews who end up as *olim*. The heterogeneity of American *aliya* in the post-1967 period makes generalities about American *olim* stereotypical and imprecise and reduces uniform plans for the socio-economic-cultural integration of American *olim* to theoretical exercises that are empirical failures.

For illustrative purposes, some of the more conspicuous differences between American *olim* and the American Jewish population and some of the major axes along which may be located the heterogeneity of American *olim* will be outlined below<sup>(5)</sup>.

(1) American *aliya* in the 1970's is selective of the young and of the native-born of native-born parents. About half of American *olim* are below age 25 and are about 10 years younger, on the average, than the estimated Jewish population of the United States. In large part, the concentration among the young is not at the expense of the oldest age category; about 10 per cent of American *olim* and of the American Jewish population is over the age of 65. Rather, the age distortion is most conspicuous in the middle years: about 4 out of 10 American *olim* are 20-34 years of age and only 2 out of 10 are aged 35-64; the reverse proportions characterize the American Jewish population - 40 per cent are 35-64 years of age and 20 per cent are 20-34 years of age.

(2) Partly reflecting this age distortion is the fact that about twice as many American *olim* are single when compared to U.S. Jewry and the contrast is stronger for women. For example, about 70 per cent of Jewish males and 90 per cent of Jewish females in the United States, aged 25-34 are married; among American *olim* only about half of both sexes are married in this age group.

(3) In the younger ages, American *aliya* is overselective of females: approximately 60 per cent of American *olim* between the ages 20-29 are females. At the older end of the age scale the sex ratio favors more males than females.

(4) American *olim* represent an educated elite not only by the standards of other *olim* and the Jewish population of Israel but relative to the high standards achieved by the American Jewish population as well. Over 40 per cent of American *olim* had 4 or more years of college compared to 6 per cent of the Jewish population of Israel (1970), 18 per cent of all *olim* (1969-70) and 17 per cent of the U.S. Jewish population (1957).

(5) Occupational selectivity of American *olim* is most pronounced. Over 60 per cent of American male *olim* arrived in Israel with previous occupation listed as professional and only 4 per cent were managers;

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(5) For details on sources and a full reporting of these data, see Goldscheider. "American Aliya: Sociological and Demographic Perspectives". In: *The Sociology of the American Jew. Op. cit.*

among the American Jewish population over a third of the males are managers and 20 per cent are professionals. Within the professional category over half of the American *olim* listed themselves as teachers or engineers.

These features of the selectivity of American *aliya* suggest that two sets of facilitating factors in the immigration of Americans to Israel relate to the extent of life-cycle attachments and economic-occupational ties. Young and single are two life cycle characteristics providing for the greatest freedom of movement; widowhood, for men, appears to operate in similar ways. Moreover, the unusually high proportion of young American women *olim* who are unmarried suggests that at least for some, Israel is perceived as a potentially attractive marriage market. (It may also be expected that the highest rates of *yeridah* among American *olim* will characterize precisely those groups who have the greatest freedom to move, i.e., the young and unmarried.)

The selectivity by education and in particular by occupation reflects in part the greater mobility among the educated and the greater ease in transferring professional skills from one labor market to another. In contrast, managerial positions are much more localized and difficult to transfer between cultures. This is particularly true for those types of managerial positions that are dependent on personal contact and/or represent proprietorship and equipment investments - positions that are prevalent among a significant segment of the American Jewish population.

A final point relates to the types of professionals immigrating from the United States to Israel. These, we noted earlier, are very much concentrated in two categories - teachers and engineers. Although it would require more intensive analysis with more detailed data than now available, it seems reasonable to postulate that some Jewish teachers have responded to the personal, social and professional problems of urban-racial conflict in the school systems by deciding on *aliya*. Similarly, it is not unlikely that the over-concentration of engineers among American *olim* reflects the tight, over-supplied market for engineers in the United States. Hence, "push" factors may be playing an important role in the selective movement of American teachers and engineers to Israel. If this speculation is correct, it follows that the occupational composition of future American *aliya* will reflect variations in occupational opportunities for Jews in the United States as well as in Israel. Perhaps, changes in the volume of American *aliya* beginning in 1972 are first indications of changes in the economic situation in the United States and in particular changing demands for certain skills that affect the attractiveness of some types of Jewish migrants to Israel.

The fact that a significant proportion of American *olim* have come to Israel searching for youthful adventure, quiet retirement, a job or a mate does not necessarily reduce the significance of the "ideological" component of American *aliya*. For every *oleh* who is a frustrated teacher, an unemployed engineer, an unmarried woman, or a retired widower, hundreds, more likely thousands, of American Jews in similar positions

have sought alternative solutions to these situations *within* the American context. Hence, the ideological components of *aliya* must be analyzed for all *olim* from the United States not only for those American *olim* who have given up excellent jobs, homes, and incomes to settle as a family in Israel or for those who explicitly immigrate to Israel for ideological reasons.

An analysis of the evidence available points unmistakably to the conclusion that ideology, at least those components that are more conspicuous and measurable, plays an important, if not critical, role in shaping the amount and type of American *aliya*. Summary data presented in Table 2 on selected religio-ideological characteristics of American *olim* point to the following:

(1) Formal membership in Zionist organizations is not a necessary prerequisite for *aliya*: only about half of the American *olim* were members of any Zionist organization before *aliya*. Although comparative

Table 2. Selected Religio-Ideological Characteristics of American Olim, 1969-1970, by Generation Status

Characteristics	Generation Status <sup>(a)</sup>			
	First	Second	Third	Total
Proportion members of Zionist organizations	61	54	39	50
Proportion with Hebrew Day School education	33	38	31	33
Proportion with 6 or more years of Jewish education	63	66	64	63
Proportion "Orthodox"	42	41	28	37
Proportion "religious" or "very religious"	49	51	43	46
Proportion attending synagogue once a week or more	44	46	32	38
Proportion observing dietary regulations	64	60	39	53

(a) Generation status refers to place of birth and relates to length of residence in the United States.

Source: Special tabulations of sample survey data on immigrant absorption in the files of the Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel.



data are not available, it seems reasonable to argue that American *olim* are perhaps more likely to be affiliated with Zionist organizations than are non-*olim* but that such affiliation is a consequence rather than a causal factor in the chain of *aliya* determinants.

(2) American *olim* are characterized by a fairly intensive background of Jewish education relative to the American Jewish population. Fully one-third were exposed to a Hebrew Day school education and almost two-thirds has six or more years of Jewish education. The relative stability of these levels by generation status among American *olim* is clearly exceptional given the general trends among American Jews.

(3) Patterns of religious identification, levels of synagogue attendance and observances of religious dietary regulations are clearly overweighted, relative to patterns among the American Jewish population, in the direction of the more religious. Over a third of American *olim* define themselves as "Orthodox" (close to 30 per cent of the third generation are so identified), 46 rate themselves as "religious" or "very religious", 38 per cent attend synagogue services once a week or more, and over half observe religious dietary regulations. While there are some expected patterns of variation between generations, unquestionably the remarkable feature of the data by generation are the very high levels of religious identification and observance among the young, third generation American Jews.

Given a basic ideological thrust behind all *aliya*, several overlapping types of *olim* may be identified: (1) young men and women searching for adventure, education, religious and ethnic identity, or marriage; (2) older men and women settling in Israel after retirement; (3) educated and technically trained Jews who are in greater demand within Israel than in America; (4) Jews in search of Jewishness and Judaism who see Israeli society as a rich, natural environment for the expression of their own Jewish identity and that of their children.

While these types of American *olim* undoubtedly appeared in the past, one critical change in recent *aliya* lies in the broad area of religious identity. In the past, *aliya* was viewed by a select handful as a religious duty in the narrowest sense; contemporary *aliya* appears to be more a reflection of Jewish consciousness in the broadest sense.

The preliminary evidence available suggests quite clearly that it is unacceptable analytically to treat American *olim* as a homogeneous group with respect to background social characteristics, reasons for *aliya*, or requirements for social integration and absorption. A more intensive examination of the degrees of integration and the levels of return migration among American *olim* must await the collection of additional empirical materials. We may conclude, however, that *aliya* from the United States in the post-1967 era does not imply the severance of ties to America. American *aliya* must be viewed as an extension of the unique American Jewish dilemma. The slow but steady trickle of American immigrants to Israel will remain the firmest bond in the complex web of interrelationships between Israel and American Jewry.