

# Jewish Migration in Postwar America: The Case of Miami and Los Angeles

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The Second World War and its aftermath ushered in a period of enormous changes for American Jews. The destruction of European Jewry shattered the familiar contours of the Jewish world and transformed American Jews into the largest, wealthiest, most stable and secure Jewish community in the diaspora. American Jews' extensive participation in the war effort at home and abroad lifted them out of their urban neighborhoods into the mainstream of American life.<sup>1</sup> In the postwar decades, internal migration carried Jews to new and distant parts of the United States. Occurring within the radically new parameters of the postwar world—the extermination of European Jewry, the establishment of the state of Israel and the United States' achievement of unrivaled prominence on the world political scene—Jewish migration nonetheless represented a response to domestic pressures. These migrations gradually changed American Jews, influencing the character of their culture, the structure of their organizations, their pattern of kinship relations, the style and substance of their politics.

This essay offers a historical perspective on the migration process that created new American Jewish communities. It indicates some of the dimensions of internal Jewish migration, its sources, motivations and consequences. By focusing on the extraordinary growth of two Jewish urban populations, the essay suggests some categories for analyzing the communal dynamic of postwar American Jewry. It also explores a number of parallels between immigration and the establishment of indigenous American Jewish communities. Given the historic dependence of the United States upon immigration for its social formation and the critical role of immigration in the growth of the American Jewish community, study of internal migration provides a useful framework to assess certain postwar changes.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, *it encourages an emphasis upon the creation rather than the transformation of communities.*<sup>3</sup> Observing the postwar migrations, Oscar Handlin, the eminent historian of immigration, noted that immigrants differed only in degree from native-born Americans who migrated within the United States. Where the newcomer came from was less important than that the migrant had turned his back upon home and family, abandoned the way he had earned a living, and deserted his community.<sup>4</sup>

Handlin's trenchant reflections not only linked immigration with internal migration, seeing them as a continuum, but made the problem of community central to both.

The mobilization of the war years drew young Jewish men out of the insular urban neighborhoods of their childhood and sent them to distant bases scattered throughout the South and West. Most of the Jewish servicemen, like their gentile peers, had not strayed far from their home towns during the difficult years of the Great Depression.<sup>5</sup> Now, en route to the Pacific war theater, they discovered the West. Thousands of them passed through Los Angeles and were amazed by the apparently prosperous and easy way of life that they saw. Others who joined the Army Air Corps often found themselves stationed in one of the Miami Beach hotels requisitioned for the war. When their wives came down to visit, they, too, took in the beauty of the resort city.<sup>6</sup> Smaller numbers went to bases near such Texas towns as Houston and Dallas. Even a small city such as Tucson, Arizona, attracted Jews who discovered it because of its base for training bombardiers and pilots.<sup>7</sup> Often the opportunities these cities offered excited them. "You betcha, I loved it!" Leon Rabin recalled. "I wrote to my friends in Philadelphia and said there's no way for me to tell you what's going on down here and anything I'd tell you wouldn't make you come down here. But now that I'm here there's no way that I'll ever come back."<sup>8</sup> Rabin was true to his word. He married a native Dallas Jew and spent the rest of his life building a Jewish community that reflected some of the values he had learned growing up in Philadelphia. He also understood how limited was the vision of most East Coast Jews and how reluctant they were to venture beyond the suburbs of their cities until propelled by the war. Once word spread of the opportunities available, however, especially in a large city such as Los Angeles, which had a substantial Jewish population even in 1940, the numbers of Jews who migrated quickly reached substantial proportions.

Jewish migration to these southern and western cities—ones that would subsequently be counted as part of an emerging Sunbelt—reflected a response shared by millions of other Americans to federal initiatives and policies. Not only did the war years lead the government to funnel enormous sums for economic development into southern and western states—California alone received 10 percent of all federal war monies—but these funds often went to provide the capitalization for defense-related industries.<sup>9</sup> From airplane construction in Los Angeles to aluminum manufacturing in Miami to medical and communications research in Houston, entire industrial and postindustrial infrastructures were established. The subsequent eruption of the Cold War sustained the economic growth of these cities.<sup>10</sup> The postwar socioeconomic changes produced regional convergence, with the outlying regions of the South and West growing more rapidly than the developed sections of the country. This rapid social change brought the South and West's economies, social patterns and cultural styles closer to national norms.<sup>11</sup> Federal postwar policies, especially the GI bill, with its low-cost mortgage provisions and college loans, also encouraged a generation to seek its fortunes far from home and family. These portable benefits loosened the ties that bound individuals to networks of kin and friends. No longer needing to rely upon relatives and neighbors to find work, to finance an education or even to buy a house, Jews and other Americans were free to pursue their dreams of the good

life. For many Jews particularly, the attractions of the apparently affluent and relaxed style of living of the Sunbelt cities proved irresistible.<sup>12</sup>

The term *Sunbelt* is designed to link fundamentally different parts of the United States that share the characteristics of rapid social change and regional convergence. Nicholas Lemann, executive editor of *Texas Monthly*, argues persuasively that journalists invented the Sunbelt concept in order to speak about new political and economic trends. When the word first acquired popular usage in the mid-1970s, "millions of people were living in the Sunbelt without one of them realizing it," wrote Lemann. "They thought of themselves as Southerners or Texans or Los Angelenos."<sup>13</sup> Of course, the particularisms Lemann mentions, the sense of identity derived from being rooted in a city, state or region, had salience largely for old-timers, not for migrants. They just as often thought of themselves as ex-New Yorkers or former Philadelphians. "I am a refugee from Chicago of several years standing," announced Leonard Sperry, a wealthy migrant to Los Angeles.<sup>14</sup> Sperry's self-definition after close to a decade of living in the City of Angels suggests the extent to which a migrant's identity derived from the home of his childhood. Similarly, the death notices of longtime Miami residents that announced burial in Detroit, or Chicago, or Rochester, appear symptomatic of the unwillingness of Jews to identify Miami as "home."<sup>15</sup> By linking a wide variety of locales, the notion of a Sunbelt helped to smooth away these differences in self-identification between the newcomers and the old-timers.

As the United States became a "nation of strangers," in the words of a popular journalist's account of one out of five Americans' propensity to move every year,<sup>16</sup> Jews developed an ethnic variation on the American theme of internal migration. Federal policies drew Jews out of their old homes, but ethnic networks guided them to new ones. Not only did Jews come disproportionately from large cities where they previously had concentrated, most also settled in only a handful of southern and western cities. Ninety-six percent of Jews lived in urban places in 1957, compared with 64 percent of the total U.S. population—and 87 percent of American Jews lived in cities of 250,000 or more inhabitants. In other words, Jews not only lived in cities, they lived in big cities. Although Jews constituted only 3.5 percent of the American population, they made up 8 percent of the nation's urban residents. The high concentration in the New York City area, which held approximately 40 percent of American Jewry, contributed to the distinctive Jewish demographic profile.<sup>17</sup> Aggregate data reveal the shift away from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West, yet Jewish patterns of migration remained highly distinctive.<sup>18</sup> Despite significant postwar migration, 75 percent of America's Jews lived in only five states in 1960, as they had prior to the Second World War. When these data are disaggregated, the particularities of Jewish migration appear. Enticed by the vision of easy living under perpetually sunny skies, Jews favored certain Sunbelt cities over others. In these cities the rate of Jewish population growth often exceeded that of the general white population.<sup>19</sup> Above all, Jews went to two coastal cities: Miami in the East and Los Angeles in the West. These cities account for 80 percent and 70 percent, respectively, of the total postwar Jewish migration to the South and West.<sup>20</sup> Thus they provide the best case study of the impact of the postwar Sunbelt migrations on American Jewish ethnic culture.

## Miami and Los Angeles: Magnet Cities

The postwar Jewish migration put Los Angeles and Miami on the Jewish map of the United States. Miami and Los Angeles received new settlers in record numbers after the war. Both cities had grown during the war, but neither anticipated the postwar influx. In 1946, observers estimated that each month 16,000 newcomers were arriving in Los Angeles. Of these, slightly more than 2,000 were Jews.<sup>21</sup> The new arrivals more than doubled the substantial Jewish population estimated at 100,000 before the war. By 1950, there were almost 300,000 Jews in the City of Angels. Seventh largest in Jewish population in 1940, Los Angeles displaced Chicago a decade later to rank second behind New York City. The number of Jews in Los Angeles continued to grow throughout the 1950s at an impressive rate of just under 50 percent. The rate of growth of the Jewish population exceeded that of the general population, such that the percentage of Jews in Los Angeles rose steadily. By the end of the decade, there were close to 400,000 Jews living in the City of Angels, roughly 18 percent of the total population. So many newcomers had arrived within such a short time period that only 8 percent of adult Jews living in the city in 1950 were native Angelenos and only 16 percent could be considered old-timers who had settled there before the Second World War. Continued migration in the 1960s and 1970s increased the city's Jewish population to more than half a million Jews, a Jewish city of enormous proportions.<sup>22</sup>

Nowhere near Los Angeles initially in the size of its general or Jewish population, Miami grew at an even more rapid rate. Although the number of Jews doubled from 1940 to 1945, from a mere 8,000 to 16,000, the population increased more than threefold to 55,000 by 1950. This astonishing rate of increase far outstripped the 57 percent growth in the general Miami population. Five years later, the Jewish population doubled yet again to reach 100,000. Thus, within a decade after the war, Miami had zoomed from a small and insignificant concentration of 16,000 Jews to a major urban Jewish center of 100,000 Jews. Thereafter, the rate of growth slowed, but Jewish migration to Miami continued to outstrip general migration until the Jewish proportion of the population had increased to 15 percent. By 1970, Miami contained approximately the same number of Jews as Chicago's greater metropolitan area, roughly 250,000. Miami now ranked among the top five American cities in terms of its Jewish population. Even more than Los Angeles, it was a city of newcomers. A mere 4 percent of the Jewish population had been born in the city; virtually everyone had come from someplace else.<sup>23</sup>

Those who chose to move to these cities charted a different path from the majority who made the more modest and popular move to the suburbs. "They came for several reasons," Bernard Goldstein explained,

but all of them add up to economics. You had young people who were stationed in the army camps here. And they realized the opportunities—this was an open economic frontier. And as soon as the war was over, if they were single they just stayed here and if they had families they went back to New York or Chicago or wherever, packed their bags and came right back.<sup>24</sup>

A move to the suburbs rarely involved the pursuit of economic opportunity, although it often reflected increased affluence and the pursuit of status. For Jews, moving to the suburbs meant choosing a residence within the city's expanding boundaries. For some, however, the suburbs were a "dress rehearsal" for the big move.<sup>25</sup> "When you grow up in New York City—all the world is Jewish," explained Nathan Perlmutter. "When all the world is Jewish, nobody is Jewish, really." Perlmutter moved to Miami from New York City in 1956 to head the office of the Anti-Defamation League. "You've got to leave major metropolitan areas to fully understand what I mean about a sense of a Jewish community—of a 'we' and a 'they'—in New York, it's all 'we'."<sup>26</sup> Miami and Los Angeles represented alternatives to suburbanization.

The growth of Jewish suburban areas stemmed from a different but related set of federal postwar policies that had promoted internal migration within the United States. The scarcity of adequate housing in the cities, the rapid building of modestly priced single-family houses, the extensive program of highway construction and the easy availability of mortgages all encouraged young families to seek homes on the expanding peripheries of the nation's cities.<sup>27</sup> Although energized by these policies, suburbanization represented a postwar continuation and extension of the movement out of older and poorer city neighborhoods into new and more affluent ones that had started as early as the First World War.<sup>28</sup> Jews who moved to the suburbs did not lose touch with the city, its institutions and culture.<sup>29</sup> Many returned daily to work and more visited on occasion. Nor did suburbanization disrupt the family network; it simply extended the reach of the intergenerational family. Similarly, although suburban Jews organized Jewish life anew, they also imported Jewish institutions.<sup>30</sup> Synagogues frequently followed their more wealthy congregants to the suburbs.<sup>31</sup> Such decisions provided suburban Jews with a significant measure of continuity and reaffirmed deference to established leaders. No changing of the guard took place, in contrast with internal migration, which shattered patterns of deference and disrupted structures of collective continuity.

Alongside the mass internal migration to Sunbelt cities of Jews seeking economic opportunity, one should also note a smaller but steady stream of migrants who moved specifically for occupational reasons.<sup>32</sup> This pattern did not radically change the distribution of the Jewish population, although it did contribute a significant number of newcomers to many established Jewish communities. For example, in Toledo, Ohio, the expansion of the university and the centering of several large national retail chains in the city drew many aspiring Jewish academics and managers there. Toledo, however, experienced no overall growth in Jewish population because 45 to 60 percent of the young Jews raised there abandoned the city after college, seeking opportunity elsewhere.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Kansas City's relatively static Jewish population since the 1950s disguised both a substantial in-migration of Jewish professionals and managers—approximately 37 percent of Jewish household heads in 1976—and a sizable out-migration of adult children of Kansas City Jewish household heads. In the 1970s, fully half of those sons and daughters who grew up in Kansas City no longer lived there.<sup>34</sup> The data on Omaha, Nebraska, reveal a similar pattern.<sup>35</sup> Sidney Goldstein argues that migration of these young, ambitious Jewish professionals and managers indicates the strength of economic motives over the salience of kinship ties. It points to the predominance of the nuclear family

among American Jews. It suggests that the residential clustering so characteristic of eastern and midwestern cities no longer appeals to these Jewish migrants, who have discarded an earlier preference for areas of high Jewish concentration. It reveals the extent to which Jews have come to resemble other Americans in social and cultural behavior, even as their distinctive occupational concentration propels them across the continent in search of jobs.<sup>36</sup>

Given the urban choices, especially the rapid growth of such southwestern cities as Houston and such southern cities as Atlanta, it is worthwhile asking why so many more Jews migrated to Miami and Los Angeles.<sup>37</sup> A different dynamic appears to be at work in the rapid emergence of these two cities in comparison with other patterns of migration, either to the suburbs or for occupational mobility. These two cities attracted Jewish newcomers not only through their climate and leisure style of life and their promise of economic abundance, but also through the substantial and visible Jewish presence in a major city industry. Although it would be unfair to compare the Los Angeles-based motion picture industry's enormous assets and glamour with the much smaller Miami Beach tourist trade, Jewish hoteliers in the latter city compensated in part by catering to Jews, advertising for their patronage and encouraging them not only to visit but to settle in Miami.<sup>38</sup> Such encouragement required Jewish efforts to change southern mores—specifically, to eliminate visible signs of antisemitic bias in Miami.

In 1945, as part of an effort by the Anti-Defamation League to remove discriminatory signs on the beach, seventeen ex-servicemen “paid quiet calls on managers of hotels and apartment houses displaying or advertising ‘gentiles only’ policies,” according to the historian Gladys Rosen. “The tactics and its timing proved effective,” she concluded, because more than half of the signs disappeared.<sup>39</sup> Jewish residents of Miami Beach, eager to attract Jewish visitors, then urged the local city council to outlaw antisemitic advertising. Although the Florida courts invalidated the council's 1947 law on the grounds that the municipality lacked jurisdiction, by 1949 the state legislature had enacted enabling legislation that granted the city council the power to prohibit discriminatory advertising. The Miami Beach council then forbade “any advertisement, notice or sign which is discriminatory against persons of any religion, sect, creed, race or denomination in the enjoyment of privileges and facilities of places of public accommodation, amusement or resort.”<sup>40</sup> Given the widespread acceptance of legal segregation in Florida—as in the rest of the South—the modest action of the Miami Beach City Council reverberated as a loud rejection of discrimination. By passing the law, the council hung out a welcome sign for Jews, at least on Miami Beach. The law did not eliminate antisemitic discrimination and did not affect resorts outside of the council's jurisdiction, but it made Miami Beach's public milieu more accommodating to Jews and set an important precedent.<sup>41</sup>

Despite their comparable attractions for Jewish migrants, Miami and Los Angeles appealed to slightly different Jews. Once they decided to move, Jewish migrants often allowed ethnic networks to influence their choices. These networks channeled postwar internal migration and sorted Jews.<sup>42</sup> Miami drew a more geographically representative sample, including a sizable number of southern Jews, than did Los Angeles. In 1959, approximately 43 percent of Miami Jews came from New York

City, a proportion that slightly exceeded the percentage of American Jews living in New York after the war.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, only 24 percent of the migrants to Los Angeles in 1950 had left New York City. Los Angeles attracted a disproportionate number of Jews from the cities of the Midwest, especially Chicago. An estimated 17 percent of the newcomers hailed from Chicago (45 percent of all midwestern migrants to Los Angeles came from Chicago), although its Jewish population constituted less than 10 percent of American Jewry. Far more Jewish northeasterners moved to Los Angeles, however, than was true among the general white migrant population, which consisted largely of people arriving from states west of the Mississippi.<sup>44</sup>

If Los Angeles attracted Jews disproportionately from the cities of the Midwest, it drew a representative selection of migrants in terms of age. Most Jewish newcomers were young people seeking work, although some came to the city for health reasons or to retire. Miami initially appealed to a similar age spectrum, but by the mid-1950s an ever-growing percentage of elderly retirees had settled in the city.<sup>45</sup> The mass migration of elderly Jews to Miami Beach, which accelerated in the 1960s, received an impetus from the steady decay of the inner cities, accompanied by the rising rate of crime, the high cost of housing and the arrival of new, poor immigrants. The portability of federal social security benefits and union pensions encouraged mobility among retirees in the way that the GI bill had aided a migration of young men after the Second World War. By 1959, the median age of Jews in Miami had risen to 46 from 33 years, while in Los Angeles it had dropped from 37 to 33 years.

The large number of elderly Jews migrating to Miami contributed to a third difference between the two cities. Most Jews moving to Los Angeles settled down and confined any subsequent moves to different sections of the city. Jews migrating to Miami, however, included in their ranks a sizable contingent of "snowbirds." These restless settlers resided in the city anywhere from one to eight months in the course of a year, spending the rest of their time back "home." Many eventually stayed year-round in Miami. Often the difference between an eight-month "snowbird" and a new resident was more a state of mind than a reflection of behavior.

Jewish migrants to Los Angeles and Miami also adopted different residential strategies. The large contingent of New Yorkers in Miami replicated the familiar pattern of dispersed concentration. The newcomers settled initially in two sections: in the South Beach section of Miami Beach and in the Shenandoah and Westchester areas of the city of Miami. By 1955, these two districts held 75 percent of the Jewish population. As more migrants continued to arrive, they drifted northward to North Miami and North Miami Beach.<sup>46</sup> These patterns of concentration reflected in part a response to the restrictive housing covenants in several of the incorporated cities of Dade County that were part of metropolitan Miami. Jewish entrepreneurs in real estate and the hotel and building industry also influenced Miami Jewish residential patterns. The number of apartment houses constructed soared during the 1950s and on into the 1960s. Miami boosters noted that a new house or apartment was completed in Miami "every seven minutes of the working day for an annual average of more than 16,000 units."<sup>47</sup> The migrants' decision to concentrate in certain sections of the city pointed as well to their immigrant and second-generation ori-

gins. The move to Miami represented less a decision to leave the familiar urban world of their past than an attempt to radically extend its boundaries. Jews dubbed Miami "the southern borscht belt" and joked that it had become a suburb of New York City.<sup>48</sup> Their humor underscored the sense of connectedness that the newcomers felt with their old homes, which denied the radical character of their relocation.

In contrast, Jews moving to Los Angeles knew that they had left the old neighborhood behind; few sought to replicate the residential strategies of Chicago or New York. When the newcomers arrived in Los Angeles they settled in newly developing sections of the city, especially on the west side and in the San Fernando Valley. Although significant concentrations of Jews appeared in the Wilshire-Fairfax, Beverly-Fairfax, Beverly Hills and Westwood districts, these sections, with the possible exception of Fairfax, did not resemble eastern and midwestern urban neighborhoods.<sup>49</sup> The intensity of public urban life characteristic of eastern and midwestern cities faded under the California sunshine. Yet an awareness of ethnicity persisted. Growing up in Beverly Hills, one knew that it wasn't 100 percent Jewish, "but it felt like it was," a resident recalled. The big ethnic distinctions were culinary. "All of my Jewish friends ate rye bread with mustard and there was one non-Jewish boy in the group that I went around with and he . . . used mayonnaise on white bread, and we used to call him 'mayo.'" <sup>50</sup> The urban character of Los Angeles also muted distinctions between city and suburb, though residents recognized a difference in cultural style between city Jews and valley Jews.<sup>51</sup> One resident who grew up in Los Angeles during the 1950s never understood what a suburb was until she traveled east to settle in Minneapolis.<sup>52</sup> The migrants reversed the perception, thinking that all of Los Angeles was one big suburb.

### A Community of Strangers

Despite their differences in age, motivation for leaving the familiar and their diverse residential strategies, the migrants turned to peer group organization to forge the rudimentary bonds of community. Like the immigrants, they broke intergenerational family ties to reconstitute a voluntary community of peers. The new migrants similarly relied upon shared memories of the past or common values to unite them. Unlike the immigrants, the newcomers to Los Angeles and Miami did not convert their impulse to peer group solidarity into social welfare and mutual aid. The new *landsmanshaftn* remained essentially centers of secular ethnic sociability, anchoring their members in unfamiliar urban territory through nostalgic evocations of the well-known world that had been abandoned. By 1950, several dozen of these social clubs organized around city of origin flourished in Los Angeles, as did a smaller number in Miami.<sup>53</sup> They held monthly meetings and hosted annual picnics. A few engaged in charitable endeavors. In 1947, the five hundred members of the Omaha Friendship Club of Los Angeles decided to raise money for a memorial to Henry Monsky, the recently deceased head of B'nai B'rith, who had lived in Omaha.<sup>54</sup> But the clubs' main purpose was social. Most of the Los Angeles clubs limited membership to adults aged twenty-one to thirty-five. Those who didn't join could use the services

of the many introduction clubs that sprang up, but often it was preferable to touch base with fellow *landslayt* whose identity with “home” was linked to the neighborhood of their youth. New York City Jews, for example, founded high school alumni associations in Miami and Los Angeles that encouraged contact between former classmates of the Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln high schools in Brooklyn, or of the DeWitt Clinton or Morris high schools in the Bronx.

The migrants also swelled the ranks of the handful of established American Jewish organizations. By the early 1950s, the one B’nai B’rith group of 1945 in Miami had multiplied into twenty other lodges with a membership exceeding twenty-five hundred.<sup>55</sup> Labor Zionists, General Zionists, Hadassah and the American Jewish Congress rapidly founded local chapters. Often, “even before a new apartment building is fully occupied,” observed a Jewish communal worker, “there is already formed (with officers) a Men’s Club, B’nai B’rith Lodge, Hadassah Chapter, etc.”<sup>56</sup> The newcomers’ visible presence encouraged national organizations to refocus their activities. In 1952, the American Jewish Committee established a chapter in Miami and moved its southern headquarters from Atlanta to the new branch.<sup>57</sup> Miami was rapidly becoming the Jews’ new headquarters of the South.<sup>58</sup> In Los Angeles, a similar process of recruitment added thousands to the membership rolls of national organizations already established in the city.

The burst of communal activity also affected religious life. In Miami, migrants joined the half-dozen established congregations—which offered special monthly or even weekly memberships to accommodate the “snowbirds”<sup>59</sup>—while those who found the synagogues inconvenient, undesirable or inaccessible initiated new congregations. By 1947, there were twenty-four congregations in Miami, nineteen of them with rabbis. Given the still modest size of the Jewish population, these figures represent significant communal ferment.<sup>60</sup> Los Angeles, with ten times the Jewish population, supported only seventy-three synagogues, or three times the number in Miami.<sup>61</sup> The newcomers found few precedents impeding their efforts to introduce a wide array of communal activities and organizations. Rabbis could, and did, build congregations that became personal fiefdoms unconstrained by an entrenched laity.<sup>62</sup> These communities, a true frontier, were open to individual and collective entrepreneurship; both also contained significant numbers of exceptionally wealthy Jews.

The “snowbird” phenomenon, however, had a significant influence on Miami’s communal development. Although it soon overshadowed Atlanta as the major Jewish city of the South, Miami attracted far fewer colonizers from New York than did Los Angeles. When local leaders tried to interest New York institutions in setting up branches in Miami, they more often encountered resistance. Irving Lehrman, rabbi of the Miami Beach Jewish Center (later Temple Emanu-El), grasped the high visibility potential of his synagogue for visitors and made arrangements to establish a branch of the Jewish Museum in the Center as early as 1950. “It will not only bring prestige to, and raise the cultural level of the community, but will afford an opportunity to the thousands of residents, as well as visitors, to see the vast storehouse of Jewish artifacts and learn more about our cultural heritage,” he explained.<sup>63</sup> But Lehrman’s vision was rarely shared by eastern leaders. Instead, Miami Beach became the campaign capital for national Jewish fund-raising.<sup>64</sup>

Despite its size and diversity, the Los Angeles Jewish community lacked entrenched interests and thus held enormous potential, especially for an elite of ideologically committed easterners. They came to the Southland after the war to establish branches of their institutions and solicit support among Hollywood's moguls. In a brief five-year period after the war, these committed individuals transplanted an institutional range of ideological diversity that had developed in the East. When the American Jewish Committee sent its field-worker for the West to Los Angeles to start a branch in 1945, he emphasized the unique Committee ideology to overcome the reluctance of older residents to join the organization.<sup>65</sup> Four years later, a young communal worker arrived in Los Angeles and dreamed "the vision of establishing a '92nd Street Y of the West' " in the new Westside Jewish Community Center.<sup>66</sup> In 1946, Moshe Davis, a young professor of American Jewish history at the Jewish Theological Seminary, arrived in Los Angeles to recruit supporters for a new branch of the Seminary, the University of Judaism.<sup>67</sup> As Simon Greenberg, the university's first president, recalled, "We had to overcome the feeling on the West Coast that here was a new community. Why did it have to import the divisions (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) of the East Coast? Why can't we have one school for the Jews of the West Coast?"<sup>68</sup> Eastern leaders' ability to colonize Los Angeles Jews successfully obviated the need to answer such questions. Of course, not all efforts to transplant ideological institutions succeeded.<sup>69</sup> Los Angeles provided a receptive environment largely to a middle range of organizations in the immediate post-war decade. Their success established the foundation for subsequent colonizing efforts.<sup>70</sup>

In the new urban milieu, Jewish self-perceptions gradually changed. "Jews are now free to be Jewish in a new way as an act of personal choice rather than imposition," writes the sociologist Neil Sandberg.<sup>71</sup> The self-selection that lay behind migration reinforced the principle of personal choice of identity. As the Los Angeles lawyer and communal leader Howard Friedman explained, Jews felt able to innovate, experiment, indulge, in short, "to cultivate ourselves . . . in a context of complete freedom."<sup>72</sup> However, according to Moses Rischin, a historian of Jewish immigrants in New York City, the Jewish way of life in Los Angeles was problematic. "Post-Judaic" and "post-secular," he wrote, the life-style was "remote even from an earlier sub-culture of Jewishness" and sustained neither by traditional religious patterns nor by a vigorous secular ethnicity.<sup>73</sup> Others rejoiced in the absence of traditions. According to Charles Brown, the head of the Jewish Community Council in 1952, "here [in Los Angeles] there are no vested interests, here there are no sacred cows, here there is no cold hand of the past. There is an opportunity to develop new forms of Jewish communal living geared in a realistic fashion to the actual needs of the Jewish community."<sup>74</sup> These new forms included such eclectic institutions as the Brandeis Camp Institute, pioneered by Shlomo Bardin. Constrained neither by traditions nor by vested interests, Bardin orchestrated moments of Jewish solidarity designed especially to appeal to a community of strangers, recruiting both old-timers and newcomers for weekend celebrations/explorations of the Sabbath that often inspired the participants to incorporate elements of Jewish study and observance in their lives. The heart of Bardin's

program, however, was a month-long innovative leadership training program that raised the Jewish consciousness of the college youth who attended.<sup>75</sup>

Outsiders to the dominant Protestant communities of Los Angeles and Miami, Jewish newcomers introduced additional ethnic diversity to their new homes. Rabbi Edgar Magnin, a fixture of the Los Angeles Jewish scene for decades as the leader of the Wilshire Boulevard Temple, the most prestigious Reform congregation in the city, deplored the new ethnicity introduced by the newcomers in an interview conducted in 1978. "This is a different ballgame today—you've got another Brooklyn here. When I came here, it was Los Angeles. Now it's a Brooklyn."<sup>76</sup> Magnin exaggerated, of course, but other native-born Californian Jews also expressed unease at the changes introduced (mainly in the 1950s) by the newcomers.<sup>77</sup> Often identifying themselves as white ethnics, despite the absence of other such comparable groups as Italians, some migrants used religious symbols to define their collective identity. Foremost among these symbols was Israel: Zion, homeland, state. The migrants' support for the establishment of the state and their subsequent identification with Israel as the vehicle of Jewish idealism helped to make sentimental Zionism the collective glue uniting American Jews.<sup>78</sup> Their numbers overwhelmed the pockets of anti-Zionist commitment among the old-timers, while the attacks on Communists inspired by McCarthy undermined the organizational viability of the internationalist radicals.

Jewish migrants selected themselves to move to Sunbelt cities—to take advantage of the economic opportunities, to bask in the balmy weather and to escape from the constraining intergenerational intimacies of parents and kinfolk. In the process they elevated the principle of self-selection that initially had guided them as migrants into the grounds for collective action. Thus they influenced the character of American Jewish life by creating new patterns of Jewish communal life that upheld the centrality of the consenting individual. Long before converts to Judaism adopted the label "Jews by choice," newcomers to the Sunbelt cities had transformed Jewishness into a matter of one's choosing. The migrants posited a Jewishness rooted in the future, in peer group sociability, in common values and in personal choice, all linked to powerful but distant surrogates—the old home that had disappeared and the Jewish state of Israel that rose like a phoenix on the ashes of the Holocaust. The newcomers created a loosely knit community that supported these possibilities, that allowed for eclectic Jewish styles and symbols of ethnicity, that provided fertile ground for individual entrepreneurship.

"In the past, Jewishness was absorbed by young people as they grew up in Jewish community and family environments," argues Sandberg. "No parental decision was involved in the creation of a sense of Jewish identification in the young person's growing identity and self-image. They were immersed in a culture where Jewish language, behavior, and symbolism developed as automatic responses. . . . Today," he concludes, referring specifically to Los Angeles, "most Jews have grown up without the support of such a community."<sup>79</sup> Under the bright sunshine of Miami and Los Angeles, Jewishness gradually lost its ineluctability. If Jewishness was "not a matter of natural inheritance," then an individual Jew had to develop a number of interlocking networks to sustain a Jewish identity that meant more than self-definition. In Los Angeles, such networks emerged primarily within occupa-

tions and politics. In the postwar period, a majority of Los Angeles Jews shared their workplace largely with other Jews. Political lobbying for Israel also served to define the ethnic identity of Miami and Los Angeles Jews. Ironically, work and politics—the two public arenas that originally generated most intra-Jewish conflict—now provided a sense of shared Jewishness for the migrants. For decades Jewish workers had fought Jewish bosses over the conditions of the workplace, and the scars of the past's bitter political battles among Jews had only begun to heal. Yet in the new golden land, work and politics became sources of ethnic continuity helping to define the collective parameters of Jewishness.

In many ways, the Jewish worlds of Los Angeles and Miami and other Sunbelt cities can be seen as the offspring of the large urban Jewish settlements of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston, and of the more modest communities of such cities as Omaha, Milwaukee, Cleveland and Detroit. As Jewish New York, Chicago and Philadelphia represent continuity with a European past because they were created by immigrants from the cities and towns of Eastern Europe, so Jewish Miami and Los Angeles are creations of the midwestern and northeastern cities, representing continuity with an American past. American Jews produced in the postwar era a second generation of cities, offspring of the first generation. It was, perhaps, a very American thing to send off the sons and daughters—and even the grandfathers and grandmothers—to colonize the new golden land, to build cities, to plant congregations, to forge symbolic bonds of ethnic identity. Borrowing from America's Puritan past, one might see these internal migrations as American Jews' own errand into the wilderness.

### Notes

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1. There have been few studies of the impact of wartime participation on American Jews. A pioneering early study is Moses Kligsberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 5 (1950), 256–265.

2. John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: 1985), is a valuable study of the relationship between immigration and social formation in the United States. Lloyd P. Gartner, "The History of North American Jewish Communities: A Field for the Jewish Historian," *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* 9 (June 1965), 22–29, offers a thoughtful analysis of the relationship between Jewish immigration and secondary migration.

3. For a focus on transformation, see Calvin Goldscheider, *Jewish Continuity and Change: Emerging Patterns in America* (Bloomington: 1985), and Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity, Jewish Identity* (New York: 1983).

4. Oscar Handlin, "Immigration in American Life: A Reappraisal," in *Immigration and American History: Essays in Honor of Theodore C. Blegen*, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Minneapolis: 1961), 8–25.

5. For comparative mobility statistics by state, see "Series C 25-73," *The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (Stamford: 1965), 44–47.

6. Interview with Rabbi Murray Alstet, June 1966; interview with Rabbi Joseph Narot, n.d.

7. Leonard Dinnerstein, "From Desert Oasis to the Desert Caucus: The Jews of Tucson," Moses Rischin and John Livingston, eds., *Jews of the American West* (Detroit: 1991).
8. Interview with Leon Rabin by Cindy Sweet, 19 September 1986.
9. Gerald Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: 1985), 14, 35–36.
10. Ann Markusen, *Regions: The Economics and Politics of Territory* (New York: 1987), and *idem*, *The Rise of the Sunbelt* (New York: 1990).
11. Otis L. Graham, Jr., "From Snowbelt to Sunbelt: The Impact of Migration," *Dialogue* 59 (1983), 11–14.
12. Interviews with "the Mavens," Jewish migrants to Los Angeles from New York City, Los Angeles, 14 July 1989.
13. Nicholas Lemann, "Covering the Sunbelt," *Harper's Magazine* (February 1982), rpt. in *Dialogue* 59 (1983), 24.
14. Leonard Sperry, "The Development of Programs in the Los Angeles Chapter." Papers presented at Chapter Leaders Workshop, 16 April 1959, American Jewish Committee MSS (California/Los Angeles Chapter, 52–62), YIVO.
15. Memo from Arthur Rosichan, 2 March 1967, with covering memo probably from Robert Forman, Greater Miami Jewish Federation.
16. Vance Packard, *A Nation of Strangers* (New York: 1972), 7–8.
17. Sidney Goldstein, "American Jewry, 1970: A Demographic Profile," *American Jewish Year Book* 72 (New York: 1971), 37–38.
18. Both the prewar (1937) and postwar (1960) distribution of Jews by state and region produce a consistent rank of 4 on an index of dissimilarity. Figures from *ibid.*
19. Ira M. Sheskin, "The Migration of Jews to Sunbelt Cities" (unpublished paper in author's possession), 9–11, 26–27.
20. The Jewish population in the South rose from 330,000 in 1937 to 486,000 in 1960; Miami's growth accounted for 132,000 of the increase. Similarly, Los Angeles accounted for 300,000 of the increase of Jews in the West, from 219,000 in 1937 to 598,000 in 1960. In the following decade, Los Angeles accounted for 64 percent of the western regional increase, while Miami accounted for only 29 percent of the southern regional increase. Computed from Tables 1, 3 and 5 in Sheskin, "The Migration of Jews to Sunbelt Cities."
21. Max Vorspan and Lloyd Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: 1970), 225. See 225–237 for a good, concise treatment of Jewish migration to Los Angeles—its sources, motivations and impact.
22. Bruce Philips, "Los Angeles Jewry: A Demographic Portrait," *American Jewish Year Book* 86 (New York: 1986), 141, 160; Fred Massarik, "A Report on the Jewish Population of Los Angeles," Jewish Federation-Council of Greater Los Angeles (1959), 18–19.
23. Ira M. Sheskin, *Demographic Study of the Greater Miami Jewish Community: Summary Report* (Miami: 1984), 4–7.
24. Interview with Bernard Goldstein by Cindy Sweet, 20 September 1986.
25. Interview with Michael Wiener, 14 July 1989; comment by Selma Berrol at Columbia University Urban History Seminar, March 1987.
26. Nathan Perlmutter, Oral History Memoir, 15, Oral History of the American Jewish Committee, William E. Wiener Oral History Library.
27. Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: 1987), 174–179; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: 1985), 196–217.
28. Erich Rosenthal, "This Was North Lawndale: The Transplantation of a Jewish Community," *Jewish Social Studies* 22 (April 1960), 67–82.
29. Marshall Sklare, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (New York: 1967). Also see Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1968), who indicate continuities as well as changes.
30. Herbert Gans, "Park Forest: Birth of a Jewish Community," *Commentary* 11 (April

- 1951), 330–339; *idem*, “Progress of a Suburban Jewish Community,” *Commentary* 23 (February 1957), 113–122.
31. Paula Hyman, “From City to Suburb: Temple Mishkan Tefila of Boston,” in *A History of the American Synagogue*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge, Mass.: 1987).
32. Interviews with “the Mavens” (14 July 1989) reveal a fairly consistent pattern of job changes that occurred upon arrival in Los Angeles. Very few moved for occupational reasons; most had to hunt for jobs when they arrived. Many often entered completely different lines of work from their training or previous experience.
33. Goldstein, “American Jewry, 1970,” 50.
34. Avron C. Heligman, “The Demographic Perspective,” in *Mid-America’s Promise: A Profile of Kansas City Jewry*, ed. Joseph P. Schultz (1982), 389–391.
35. Murray Frost, “Analysis of a Jewish Community’s Outmigration,” *Jewish Social Studies* 44 (1982), *passim*.
36. Goldstein, “American Jewry, 1970,” 37, 44, 51.
37. Jews did migrate after the Second World War to both Houston and Atlanta, but not at a rate that exceeded the growth of the general population. On Houston, see Elaine H. Mass, *The Jews of Houston: An Ethnographic Study* (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1973), 66, 79, 82; and Sam Schulman, David Gottlieb and Sheila Sheinberg, *A Social and Demographic Survey of the Jewish Community of Houston, Texas* (Houston: 1976), 7–9, 13. On Atlanta, see *Metropolitan Atlanta Jewish Population Study: Summary of Major Findings* (Atlanta: 1985), 2–4, 16. The Jewish population of Atlanta grew at a more rapid rate than did the general population in the 1980s.
38. In 1939, there were more movie theaters (15,115) than banks (14,952). Box office receipts totaled \$673,045,000. More than fifty million Americans went to the movies each week every year. Movies were the nation’s fourteenth-biggest business in terms of volume (\$406,855,000) and eleventh-biggest in terms of assets (\$529,950,000). Hollywood was bigger than office machines and supermarket chains. See Otto Friedrich, *City of Nets* (New York: 1986), 14. Statistics on Miami Beach’s tourist industry are impressive but do not approach the motion pictures; see Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce, *Statistical Review, 1955*.
39. Gladys Rosen, “Community Relations: 1945–1960 Post-War Period” (unpublished paper in author’s possession), 2.
40. *Jewish Floridian*, 24 June 1949; Polly Redford, *Billion Dollar Sandbar: A Biography of Miami Beach* (New York: 1970), 222.
41. The neighboring town of Surfside passed a similar ordinance in 1951. *Jewish Floridian*, 29 June 1951. Enforcement was another problem. Signs remained on the Beach through the 1950s, as noted in the Survey of Resort Discrimination by the Anti-Defamation League, reported in the *Jewish Floridian*, 29 April 1960. In 1953, 20 percent of the Miami Beach hotels barred Jews; by 1957 this figure had declined to only two percent.
42. Interviews with “the Mavens,” 14 July 1989.
43. Manheim Shapiro, “The Bayville Survey,” American Jewish Committee, Greater Miami Chapter (1961), summary statement, n.p.
44. Fred Massarik, *A Report on the Jewish Population of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: 1953), 22; *idem*, “The Jewish Population of Los Angeles: A Panorama of Change,” *The Reconstructionist* 18 (28 November 1952), 13.
45. Many of the elderly settled in Miami Beach. The median age of Miami Beach rose from 43 years in 1950 to 54 years in 1960, when there were more than 17,000 people aged 65 and over. By 1965, there were more than 28,000 people in this age category, a very rapid increase of 11,000 in only five years. The elderly made up 28 percent of the Beach population in 1960 and 38 percent in 1965. Jews were estimated to constitute close to 80 percent of the Beach population. Memo from Arthur Rosichan, Greater Miami Jewish Federation, 2 March 1967, 2–3.
46. Letter from Arthur Rosichan to Gladys Rosen, Greater Miami Jewish Federation, 23 May 1968.

47. "Key to Growth: Metropolitan Miami" (brochure of Dade County Development Department), 5.
48. A significant number of Catskill hotel owners purchased or built hotels in Miami Beach, starting with the Grossinger family, which purchased the formerly restricted Pancoast in 1945. Grossinger's Pancoast not only changed the hotel guest policy but installed a kosher kitchen.
49. Philips, "Los Angeles Jewry," 133–137.
50. Dena Kaye, American Jewish Committee Annual Meeting (14 May 1977), Oral History Library Panel Session, 6, William E. Wiener Oral History Library.
51. Interview with Judith Kantor, Robin Hudson and David Hudson, 20 July 1989.
52. Remarks of Riv-Ellen Prell, YIVO Annual Conference, 1988.
53. Vorspan and Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, 228; Irving Lehrman and Joseph Rappaport, *The Jewish Community of Miami Beach* (New York: n.d.), 24.
54. *California Jewish Voice*, 19 December 1947.
55. Harry Simonoff, *Under Strange Skies* (New York: 1953), 313.
56. Memo, probably of Robert Forman, 2 March 1967, Greater Miami Jewish Federation.
57. Background material for Miami chapter, American Jewish Committee, n.d., n.p.
58. Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jews* (Philadelphia: 1976), 140.
59. Gladys Rosen, "The Rabbi in Miami: A Case History," in *Turn to the South: Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville: 1979), 35–37.
60. Memo to Morris Klass from M. C. Gettinger, 16 January 1951; Greater Miami Federation; Census of Greater Miami file (1950–1960), 1.
61. Los Angeles Jewish Community Council, *1950 Jewish Community Directory of Greater Los Angeles*, American Jewish Archives, Nearprint Box, Geography, 1–13.
62. For example, consider the careers of Rabbis Irving Lehrman, Leon Kronish and Joseph Narot in Miami, and Edgar Magnin, Aaron Wise, Isaiah Zeldin and Jacob Pressman in Los Angeles.
63. *Jewish Floridian*, 29 December 1950.
64. Elazar, *Community and Polity*, 244.
65. See correspondence between John Slawson and Maurice Karpf, 19 June and 18 July 1945, American Jewish Archives, Maurice J. Karpf MSS 196, Box 1.
66. Letter from Nathan Hurvitz to Charles Mesnick, 1 October 1956, American Jewish Archives, Nathan Hurvitz MSS, Box 100/4, Jewish Centers Association, 1955–1957.
67. Moshe Davis, conversation with Arthur Hoffnung, June 1985, 3–12, Oral History Interview, University of Judaism.
68. Simon Greenberg, "Some Reflections," *Women's League for Conservative Judaism* 58 (Summer 1988), 22.
69. Both the Reconstructionists and YIVO initially failed to establish viable branches of their movement, although Yiddish was subsequently introduced as a regular language at UCLA and the Reconstructionists did build a number of impressive congregations, e.g., Abraham Winokur's in Pacific Palisades. See letter from Sol Liptzin (recipient's identity unknown), 6 July 1947, YIVO, Max Weinreich MSS, Box 263; Samuel Dinin, "Reconstructionism and the Future of Jewish Life in Los Angeles," *The Reconstructionist* 18 (28 November 1952), 15–16.
70. For example, the University of Judaism and the College of Jewish Studies (later the California School of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion) established the precedent followed by Yeshiva University when it started its branch.
71. Neil Sandberg, *Jewish Life in Los Angeles: A Window to Tomorrow* (Lanham, Md.: 1986), 19.
72. Howard I. Friedman, Oral History Memoir, 58–59; Oral History of the American Jewish Committee, William E. Wiener Oral History Library.
73. Moses Rischin, "Foreword," in *The Jews of Los Angeles, 1849–1945: An Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Sara G. Cogan (Berkeley: 1980), viii.

74. Quoted in Vorspan and Gartner, *History of the Jews of Los Angeles*, 267.

75. Bardin regularly solicited testimonies; there were also unsolicited reflections on the effects of Brandeis Camp Institute. See, for example, Walter Hilborn, "Reflections on Legal Practice and Jewish Community Leadership: New York and Los Angeles, 1907–1975," Oral History Interview, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 217–219; and interview with Shlomo Bardin by Jack Diamond, pts. 3–5, Library of Brandeis–Bardin Institute.

76. Quoted in "The Jews of Los Angeles: Pursuing the American Dream," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 Jan. 1978.

77. For example, see interview with Rabbi Paul Dubin, American Jewish Historical Society, Interview Folder, Los Angeles, \*I-75, Box 24.

78. Sandberg, *Jewish Life in Los Angeles*, 64, 86; Gladys Rosen, "The Zionist Movement" (unpublished draft essay in author's possession), 2–8.

79. Sandberg, *Jewish Life in Los Angeles*, 131.