

IN THE END IS IT IDEOLOGY?: RELIGIO-CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS IN AMERICAN ALIYA

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This article reviews the major studies of American Jewish immigrants to Israel. It shows that the immigrants are increasingly comprised of Orthodox Jews, and argues that the increasing concentration of Orthodox among those immigrants is not solely the result of religio-ideological sources but, perhaps even more importantly, of sophisticated structural ones.

The significance of Zion in traditional Jewish thought and culture serves as the basis for the religio-cultural value of *aliya* (Waxman 1989: 27-38). With the creation of the State of Israel, a structural mechanism was established to recruit and settle Jewish immigrants from around the world. The overwhelming majority of immigrants to Israel, *olim*, were fleeing persecution and thus came because of "push" reasons. American *olim*, on the other hand, were and are voluntary immigrants, many of whom, it may be presumed, came and come because of "pull" reasons, that is, because of attractions presented by Israel.

Since its establishment, more than 85,000 American Jews immigrated there (see Table 1). This article reviews studies of American Jewish immigrants to Israel, most of which were concerned with their social characteristics rather than with why they immigrated. The changing patterns, in terms of regional origins, generational status, age, marriage and family, political behavior, Zionist organization membership, Jewish education and denomination patterns, will be indicated. The focus will then turn to the changes in the denomination patterns and the factors involved in contemporary *aliya* patterns. As will be indicated, although the Orthodox are a decreasing proportion of the American Jewish population, they are now the overwhelming majority of American *olim*. This growing concentration of Orthodox among the *olim* will be explored. It seems reasonable to assume that the reasons given by those who have already immigrated, gone on "*aliya*," cannot be accepted at face value. They, after all, have a vested interest in putting their *aliya* in the most noble light. Nor can it be assumed that there is a single impetus for *aliya*. It will be argued that American *aliya*

is composed of religio-ideological, social-psychological, and structural elements, some of which are rooted in the significance of Israel and others in American society and culture. At the center of the changing patterns of *aliya*, however, lie important structural factors, the major ones being economics and a recently developed structural system which helps realize—make a reality out of—the previously held, even if somewhat remote, religio-cultural values.

Table 1: Olim from the United States, 1949–1993

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1949	584	1964	1,006	1979	2,950
1950	761	1965	924	1980	2,312
1951	568	1966	749	1981	2,384
1952	202	1967	665	1982	2,693
1953	202	1968	932	1983	3,469
1954	294	1969	5,759	1984	2,581
1955	321	1970	6,424	1985	1,915
1956	187	1971	7,364	1986	1,968
1957	277	1972	5,515	1987	1,818
1958	378	1973	4,393	1988	1,551
1959	330	1974	3,089	1989	1,383
1960	413	1975	2,803	1990	1,370
1961	313	1976	2,700	1991	1,538
1962	619	1977	2,571	1992	1,845
1963	868	1978	2,921	1993	2,057

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics 1994: 28–29, and earlier issues of that publication.

Regional Origins: American immigrants to Israel tend to be representative of the American Jewish population as a whole in terms of the regions from which they come (Table 2). Although Antonovsky and Katz (1979: 26), in their study of pre-1967 American *olim*, reported that they came disproportionately from the New York City area, Goldscheider (1974: 358–359) compared the regional origins of 1969–70 *olim* with the regional distribution of the U.S. Jewish population at that time and found them to be “remarkably” similar, about 65 percent of the *olim* coming from the northeast, about 13 percent from the north central region, 10 percent from the south, and 12 percent from the west.¹ In 1976, Gerald Berman (1977: 19)

conducted a study of North Americans (about 8 percent of whom were Canadians) who had arrived in Israel between 1970 and 1974, and found a significant increase, about 20 percent, in American *olim* from the west and decreases in the percentages of those from other regions of the United States. When his findings are compared with the regional distribution of Jews in the United States in 1981, it is seen that the percentages of American *olim* from the northeast and midwest regions are almost exactly the same as the percentages of the Jewish population living in those regions. On the other hand, the west is over-represented and the south is under-represented. The reasons for this are unknown. Perhaps because the west is a newer region for American Jews, those who live there are less tied to it and more likely to contemplate moving. Similarly, because the south is generally regarded as more conservative than the west, southern Jews may be less likely to venture on *aliya*. The different rates of *aliya* may also reflect regional differences in what Antonovsky and Katz termed Zionist and Jewish variables. All of this, of course, is speculation. In any case, the regional patterns of America's Jews shifted somewhat by 1990, with a significant decrease in the northeast and an even greater increase in the south. The percentages of 1970-74 American *olim* in Berman's study who are from the midwest and west are almost identical with those of U.S. Jewry in 1990.

Table 2: Regional Percentage Distribution of U.S. Jews and Origins of U.S. Olim

	1990 NJPS ^a	1981 AJYB ^b	1969-70 US olim ^c	1970-74 US olim ^d
Northeast ^e	46	57	66	60
Mid-West	11	12	13	11
South ^f	22	16	10	7
West	1	15	11	22

^a Source: National Jewish Population Survey, Jews-by-Religion only. ^b Himmelfarb and Singer (1981: 169). ^c Goldscheider (1974: 359).

^d Berman (1977: 19) adjusted to exclude Canadians in the sample.

Generational Status: Data from a number of surveys suggest that the vast majority of American *olim* are American-born, and that the size of that majority is increasing. Thus Goldscheider (1974: 361) found 30

percent of the American immigrants in his 1969–70 study to have been "first generation," that is, not native-born Americans. Jubas (1974: 98) conducted a study of *olim* in 1967–71 using a much larger, though not necessarily more representative, sample than Goldscheider's. He found that 25 percent were not native-born American men and women. Avruch (1981: 40–41), surveying American *olim* in Jerusalem in 1968–76, found that 14 percent were not native-born. Berman's study of 1970–74 *olim* (1977: 19) found that 9 percent were not native-born. According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 86,332 immigrants and potential immigrants between 1948 and 1993 whose last country of residence was the United States. Of those, 67,779, or about 79 percent, were born in the United States (Central Bureau of Statistics 1994: 33). Of the North American immigrants and potential immigrants who arrived in 1986, 85 percent were born in North America (Central Bureau of Statistics 1987: 9, 15). The high percentage of American-born among these *olim* is understandable, given their relatively young ages, as will be indicated shortly. Also, the increasing size of the native-born group probably reflects the growing percentage of the American Jewish population that is native born.

Age: As Goldscheider points out, immigrants to Israel, in general, tend to be young, and there is hardly any difference between the average ages of the American and other immigrants. Thus the American *olim* are usually under 35. The median age of the 1969–70 American *olim* was 25.9, compared to the median age of the Jewish population in the United States in 1957, which was 36.7 (Goldscheider 1974: 362–363). In 1993, the median age for immigrants to Israel from North America was 28.6 (Central Bureau of Statistics 1994: 45), whereas the median age of the American Jewish population in 1990 was 39.³

Marriage and Family: As might be expected from the relative youthfulness of American *olim*, there is a greater proportion of singles among them than there is in the Jewish population of the United States. Even with the increasing rate of singles in the American Jewish population, they are still a relatively small minority.³ Among American *olim*, however, according to the 1986 data of the Central Bureau of Statistics, more than half of North American immigrants and potential immigrants 20 and older that year were single (1987: 17, 22). The high proportion of young and singles among American *olim*, according to Goldscheider, reflects the fact that the young and single have the greatest freedom of movement. He also suggests that greater freedom

of movement explains why there is a larger proportion of widowers than of widows among American *olim* (Goldscheider 1974: 365–366), although it is not quite clear why widowhood presents greater freedom of movement for men than for women.

In view of the fact that the current birthrate of American Jews is low compared to what it was in the past and to the overall U.S. birthrate (Waxman 1994a: 108–109), it is interesting that the average family size of American *olim* is larger than the average for all *olim*. While the average family size for all *olim* is 3.0, for North American *olim* it is 3.6. (Central Bureau of Statistics 1987: 22).

Political Behavior: There are no current studies of the political behavior of American *olim* either prior to their *aliya* or after it. Earlier studies indicated that the majority of them had been Democrats, and this is not surprising, given the political patterns of the Jewish population in the United States (Waxman 1983: 147–151; Fisher 1990: 131–149). For example, in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), according to my own analysis, among respondents who were Jewish-by-Religion, ages 18–50, 13 percent defined themselves as “Very Liberal,” 34 percent as “Liberal,” and 35 percent as “Middle of the Road.” In other words, 82 percent defined themselves as center to left on the political spectrum. Nevertheless, the extremely small size of the Republican minority is surprising. In his 1972 and 1975 studies of American *olim*, Gitelman found that 57 percent had been Democrats; about 41 percent had been independents, the majority tending toward the Democrats; and only 2 percent had been Republicans. Almost 40 percent stated that they had participated in peace or antiwar demonstrations (Gitelman 1982: 209).

Although America’s Jews have had a tradition of liberal-to-left political behavior, there was an over-representation of such politics among American *olim*. Gitelman’s (1982) are the only studies available of the political beliefs and behavior of American *olim*, and it is difficult to determine whether the patterns he found were typical. One reason they might not be typical is that these *olim* probably made their *aliya* decisions during the 1960s, when there was widespread criticism, especially among the young, of American society, and when identification with the Republican party among young, urban, highly educated American Jews was very low.

However, that does not seem to fully explain the very low rate of affiliation with the Republican party, since most of the American *olim* in Gitelman’s surveys were not radicals. On the contrary, they tended

to have somewhat conservative political views. For example, the vast majority agreed that "blacks in America have gone too far in their demands," and most of the 1972 respondents agreed that everything considered, life in the U.S. was better ten years ago (209).

Also, there is some evidence that the patterns Gitelman found were not unique to those years. In a study of Americans who immigrated to Israel up to early 1984 and who settled in Judea, Samaria, or the Gaza Strip, not one stated that he or she had been a Republican; virtually all had been Democrats, liberals, independents, or unaffiliated (Waxman 1989: 150-168). It appears that, at least until recently, American Jews affiliated with the Republican party were much less likely than Democrats to go on *aliya*. Why this is so, if in fact it is so, remains to be explained.

As mentioned above, there are no current studies of the political behavior of American Israelis, i.e., their political behavior after *aliya* in Israel. However, indicators from several sources suggest that they are actively involved in the political arena in a number of spheres, most of which are influenced by their American backgrounds. For example, Avruch found that "Ninety-four percent of [his] Jerusalem sample [of American *olim*] were in favor of some sort of electoral reform" (1981: 176). Dashefsky, DiAmicis, Lazerwitz, and Tabory (1992), in their survey of pre-migrants to Israel, found most to be fairly liberal on Israeli political and social issues. For example, most wanted the government to do more to encourage Jewish religious pluralism in Israel (74%) and to allow for civil marriage (54%); almost half (49%) wanted the government to do more to narrow the social and economic gap; and 45 percent wanted the government to have direct elections to the Israeli parliament, the Knesset (1992: 31). Likewise, Kay (forthcoming) found them to be active in organizations of the right and of the left, such as Gush Emunim and Peace Now, Women in Green and Women in Black, and in a number of Human Rights organizations, some of which are predominantly secular and others which are predominantly religious. Clearly, the stereotype of the American immigrant (*oleh*) as being a religio-nationalistic extremist is severely distorted. However, American Israelis do not form a political bloc and their influence is diffuse. It seems reasonable to assume that Avruch's suggestion about this still holds true. As he put it (1981: 177),

there is little likelihood of Americans or, indeed, Anglo-Saxons, entering the political arena as, minimally, an organized pressure group (or voting bloc), or, maximally, another political party... Americans as a group are divided politically, principally by their

religious orientation. Generally speaking, *dati* ("observant") implies right-of-center, and *lo-dati* ("nonobservant") left-of-center on the political spectrum. On the right, the observant American may well support Gush Emunim, a group devoted to ensuring permanent Jewish settlement on the West Bank. Aside from such issues as consumerism or ecology, therefore, it would be difficult for such a person to share a consistent political platform with an American supporter of the Labour party or certainly of the dovish Moked [or the current Meretz] party.

Zionist Organization Membership: Even among pre-1967 American *olim*, there was evidence of a decline, from pre-state to early-state years, in the rate of membership in Zionist organizations while in America. Up to the mid-1960s, the majority of *olim* had been members of Zionist organizations (Waxman 1989: 77-87). For the post-1967 *olim*, there is conflicting evidence, some studies indicating that those who had been members of Zionist organizations were in the minority. Among those in Goldscheider's 1969-70 survey, only about 50 percent stated that they had previously been members of Zionist organizations, 11 percent of them nonactive. The rate of Zionist-organization membership decreased generationally to a point where, among third-generation American *olim*, 60 percent had been nonmembers (Goldscheider 1974: 377). For the 1967-71 *olim* studied by Jubas, the decline was even sharper, with approximately 60 percent indicating that they had not previously been members of Zionist organizations (1974: 102). By the 1970s, in surveys by Berman of 1970-74 and 1976 North American *olim*, only about a third had been members of Zionist organizations (1979: 135-144).

On the other hand, Avruch, in his study of American *olim* from the years 1968-76 who were residents of Jerusalem, found 61 percent to have been either active or not-so-active members of Zionist organizations and only 39 percent to have been non-members (1981: 50-51). However, it is fair to assume that Americans residing in Jerusalem are not representative of all American *olim* in Israel. If nothing else, the Jerusalemites tend to be older, and one would expect a higher rate of Zionist-organization affiliation among them.

The declining rate of Zionist-organization affiliation among American *olim* is not surprising since there has been an overall steady decline of Zionist organizations as well as in overall Jewish organizational affiliation along generational lines in the United States. My analysis of 1990 National Jewish Population Survey data indicates that

among those who are ages 18–50 and identify themselves as Jewish by religion, 73 percent belong to no Jewish organizations, and another 16 percent belong to just one. Only about 11 percent belong to more than one Jewish organization. There is significant variation along denominational lines, with 84 percent of the denominationally unaffiliated belonging to no Jewish organizations and another 13 percent belonging to just one, whereas among those who identify as Orthodox, 46 percent belong to none and 16 percent belong to one. In addition, the rates of organization affiliation decline with age. Thus, even if it were to be assumed that a significant number of those who belong to an organization belong to a Zionist one (a very highly improbable assumption) it would still be reasonable to assume that there would be a low rate of Zionist organizational affiliation among American *olim* because they tend to be younger and the rates of organizational affiliation among the younger are significantly lower. In all probability, young American *olim* who did not see their futures within the American Jewish community would see no reason to formally affiliate with a Zionist organization. They certainly did not need the organizational affiliation to operationalize their Zionism; they did that by planning and making *aliya*.

Jewish Education and Denominational Affiliation: A common finding of all studies is that American *olim* arrive in Israel with more extensive Jewish education than is typical of the Jewish population in the United States. About 22 percent of the American Jews-by-Religion, ages 18–50, who responded to the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey said they never received any Jewish education. Of those who did, 13 percent said that day school was their major type of Jewish education. By contrast, more than a third of the American *olim* had at least a day-school education (Goldscheider 1974: 377-379; Jubas 1974: 108).

In analyzing the denominational affiliations of America's Jews as indicated in the 1971 National Jewish Population Survey, Lazerwitz and Harrison (1979: 656–666) found that 11 percent identified with the Orthodox, 42 percent with Conservative, 33 percent with Reform, and that 14 percent had no denominational affiliation. By contrast, both Goldscheider and Jubas found that between 37 and 42 percent of the American *olim* in their surveys identified as Orthodox. The percentage of Orthodox among those American *olim* was also higher than among those in Engel's 1950–66 sample and much higher than among pre-state American *olim*.

In their study of older immigrants in Israeli society, Lache and colleagues found that almost three-fourths of the middle-aged and retired North American *olim* they interviewed classified themselves as "religious." However, these researchers used the prevalent Israeli categories "religious," "traditional," and "nonreligious." This categorization is inappropriate for American Jewry, among whom Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform might identify themselves as "religious." On the other hand, since it is doubtful that an Israeli researcher would classify most Conservative and Reform Jews as "religious," the data of Lache and colleagues would seem to confirm that a disproportionately high percentage of American *olim* are Orthodox (Lache, Teczniczek, Mann and Lahav 1976: 48-51).

Goldscheider (1974: 381-382) found that patterns among the American *olim* "of over-concentration and selectivity among religious and Orthodox Jews relative to the American Jewish population" also manifested themselves in their patterns of synagogue attendance and ritual observance. Specifically, among the *olim* the rate of synagogue attendance and observance of such rituals as fasting on Yom Kippur and dietary regulations was disproportionately high when compared to the rates for the Jewish population of the United States.

Data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics likewise indicated the disproportionate religiosity of American *olim* and the increasing proportion of the religiously observant among them. Of the 1978-80 North American *olim*, a majority, 54 percent, identified themselves as "religious," 21 percent as "traditional," 11 percent as "not very religious," and only 14 percent as "not religious at all." (Central Bureau of Statistics 1986: 14-15; DellaPergola 1987: 126).

Since those studies, the percentage of Orthodox in the American Jewish population has declined, while there are strong indicators of a significant increase in their percentage among American *olim*. For example, it has been reported (Barkai 1987: 408) that "of the [approximately] 1,900 [*olim*] who arrived from the United States [in 1986] more than 1,200 are Orthodox Jews and the remainder defined themselves as somewhat religiously observant, etc." This report is consistent with estimates of Bobby Brown, who, in 1976, was assistant director of the *aliya* Department of the World Zionist Organization-American Section,⁴ and discussions with others connected with that department at that time, that about 60 percent of current American *olim* are Orthodox.⁵

The high proportion of Orthodox among American *olim* raises two questions: 1) why are they over-represented? and 2) why is their

over-representation growing so rapidly? The source of the disproportional number of Orthodox among the *olim* is very probably rooted in the ideological-cultural and social-psychological characteristics of American Orthodoxy. In the ideological-cultural sphere, the American Orthodox rabbinic leadership, more so than in other denominations, defines living in Israel as a religious norm. Thus, shortly after the Six Day War, Liebman (1970: 25-26) queried Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis and synagogue presidents and the presidents of their respective national Jewish organizations as to their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements relating to Israel. Significant in terms of the specific subject of this article is the fact that with the statement, "A Jew who really wants to do what Judaism requires of him should move to Israel," only among the Orthodox rabbis did the majority, 69 percent, agree. The percentage breakdown for the others was: Conservative rabbis, 25%; Reform rabbis, 10%; Orthodox synagogue presidents, 37%, Conservative, 12%, and Reform, 5%.⁶

In his study of American *olim*, Avruch suggests a social-psychological basis for the *aliya* of the American Orthodox. He found that they tend to be people who, "in America, by investing heavily or increasingly in their Jewishness, effected a primordialization of their social identities" (1981: 117). In other words, these are individuals who defined themselves primarily in terms of their Jewishness. Their Jewishness took precedence over other aspects of their identities, and their *aliya* was an attempt to live their lives as Jews within the family of Jews. Orthodox Jews were over-represented among the American *olim*, Avruch suggests, because they are more likely to have been those for whom, in America, Jewishness took precedence over other aspects of their identities.

An analysis of American Orthodox Judaism provided an explanation which is both ideological-cultural and social-psychological. It was suggested that the two major approaches adopted by Orthodoxy in its confrontation with modernity have been those of compartmentalization and expansionism (Waxman 1989: 119-138).⁷ In the former, a sharp boundary is drawn between the world of the sacred and the world of the secular, and those adopting this approach seek to live their lives as much as possible within the world of the sacred. When necessity requires that they leave that world and enter the world of the secular, they are shielded from its impact by their consciousness of that world as secular and, hence, of no real value. In expansionism, on the other hand, there is no clear boundary between the worlds of the sacred and the secular, and the two are not kept totally apart. On the contrary, the

expansionist attempts to bring sanctity to the secular, to make the secular sacred. This approach, which has among its ideological fathers Rabbi A. I. Kook, is that of those who are Modern Orthodox in principle, i.e., those who view integrating sacred learning with secular knowledge, *Torah Umadd'a*, as an inherent value, a "*lekhatilah*," rather than as a necessary evil, a "*bede'avad*" (Lamm 1990). Those who adhere to expansionism seek wholeness in their lives and, thus, perhaps are more likely to go on *aliya* as part of their quest for leading more whole, complete Jewish lives. It was suggested that this might also explain the disproportionate number of Americans among the settlers in Judea and Samaria (Waxman 1989: 167-168).

Orthodox Institutional Structures Promoting Aliya: Structural factors can, of course, slow down or speed up the rate of *aliya* among the Orthodox. Interestingly, economic factors have been suggested as both impediments and as promoters of *aliya* from the American Orthodox. Thus, Isaac Berman (1983-84: 25-30) argues that even though ideology is an important variable influencing *aliya*, so is reality, i.e., economic conditions. All other things being equal, he maintains, the *aliya* rate goes up when the economic conditions in Israel are good, and the rate declines when the conditions decline. When one examines the figures on American *aliya*, in Table 1, it appears that there is much more involved than economic conditions in Israel. The patterns of ups and downs do not seem to be explained solely in terms of the patterns of the Israeli economy. Being a country that has long been in a state of rapid change and great tension, the qualification, "all other things being equal," appears to be a major one, and it is difficult to see when all other things were, in fact, equal.

On the other hand, economic factors might, in part, explain the *aliya* figures during those years if it were assumed that the vast majority of those *olim* were Orthodox. In contrast to Berman who suggests economics in Israel as a major factor in American *aliya*, Chiswick sees a somewhat different economic basis for the *aliya* of the Orthodox. She (Chiswick 1994) attributes at least part of their higher rate of *aliya* to the fact that

the greater the emphasis placed on traditional observance, the greater the conflict between rhythms of Jewish and secular life and hence greater the lifestyle cost of being Jewish. Within the American Jewish community, the more observant the family the greater the lifestyle costs of being Jewish and hence the greater the "savings" achieved by moving to Israel. Thus the rate of

return to *aliya* would be higher among more religiously observant Americans, and immigration to Israel would have been stimulated by a revival of Jewish observance among Jews with high-level secular occupations in the United States.

If it is assumed that the declining economic conditions in the United States, therefore, had even greater consequences for the Orthodox, because their "lifestyle cost of being Jewish" in America resulted in their having even less "disposable cash" than other American Jews, they would have had a greater incentive to go on *aliya* during those years, especially since the Israeli economy, by contrast, was in an upward stage at the time.

Some other major changes with respect to the American Orthodox in recent years have been their higher levels of socio-economic status and the establishment of a structure which feeds from yeshiva high schools in the United States to higher *yeshivot* in Israel. The 1990 NJPS data (according to my analysis) reveal that Chiswick's argument about the greater "lifestyle cost of being Jewish" seems to be well-founded. Even if they did not have higher rates of Jewish participation and proportionately higher Jewish lifestyle costs, which they do, they still have less disposable income because they have lower incomes, on average, than Conservative, Reform and denominationally-unaffiliated Jews. Thus, among Jewish baby boomers, the mean household income in 1989 for the Orthodox was approximately \$10,000 less than for the Conservative for whom, in turn, it was approximately \$10,000 less than for the Reform. This comparison is, as indicated, even without considering the relative cost of being Jewish and the larger families for the Orthodox. On the other hand, relative to American society as a whole, the economic status of the Orthodox is probably higher than it had been in the past. With mean family incomes of approximately \$48,000 in 1989, Orthodox Jewish baby boomers are clearly no longer the working class. They have improved economic status, and high educational status, both of which would appear to foster the opportunities for *aliya*.

Another important structural element which appears to be related to the disproportionate number of Orthodox Jews among American *olim* is the increasing tendency for young Orthodox men and women, upon graduating high school or during their college years, to spend at least one year at a yeshiva in Israel. In many of these institutions, *yeshivot*, *aliya* as a religious obligation, a *mitzva*, is strongly emphasized. In addition to talks by the heads of the *yeshivot* on the subject of *aliya*, in almost every yeshiva where there are Israelis as well as Americans, and

especially the *yeshivot hesder*, those with a strong Religious-Zionist ideology and which combine study with military service, there is very strong peer group pressure from the Israelis for the American to commit himself to *aliya*. Preliminary data from a study of several hundred young males, by Berger (forthcoming), measuring the impact of studying at *yeshivot* in Israel after high school, suggest that a year in Israel has significant impact on *aliya* plans, and a two-year stay has even greater significance. For example, in the pretest, prior to their year's study in Israel, 17 percent said it was "Very Likely" that they "will make *aliya*" and 37 percent said it was "Somewhat Likely." After a year in Israel, 37 percent said that it was "Very Likely" and 44 percent said that it was "Somewhat Likely." After two years, 50 percent said that it was "Very Likely" and 35 said that it was "Somewhat Likely." In other words, after two years, about 85 percent said that it was very or somewhat likely that they would go on *aliya*. Those patterns showed when they were asked how important it to them that a person whom they date intends to make *aliya*. Although no systematic study of the impact of the year or two study in Israeli *yeshivot* has yet been completed, it is evident that this pattern has increased dramatically during the past 25 years. For example, 121 out of 137, or 88 percent, of the 1994 graduating class at the Yeshiva University High School for Boys are spending the year after graduation studying in a *yeshiva* in Israel. Similar percentages have been reported for the girls' high school, as well as for other *yeshiva* high schools, such as Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaways (HAFTR) High School, a large Modern Orthodox *yeshiva* high school in Cedarhurst, Long Island, New York. *Yeshiva* of Flatbush, in Brooklyn, has a lower rate due to the high percentage of students of Syrian background in the school. Syrian parents are much more likely to insist that their children remain nearby after graduating high school. Among the Ashkenazi students there, the percentages are similar to those in the other schools mentioned.⁸

Reports from a number of the *yeshivot hesder* suggest that a high percentage of Americans who studied there for at least one year subsequently come on *aliya*. For example, data from *Yeshivat Sha'alvīm* indicate that 71 of the 395 Americans who studied at the *yeshiva* during the years 1980-89, or 18 percent, have already gone on *aliya* and are living in Israel.⁹ Consequently, support groups, such as *Chevra Aliya Toranit* (CAT) and other *aliya*-oriented groups, or *gar'inim*, are much more highly visible in those institutional locations in which young Orthodox men and women are likely to be present, and

the religious *aliya* volunteer organization, Tehilla, promotes pilot trips and in other ways creates direct contact between potential *olim* in the United States (and elsewhere) and their American counterparts in Israel. These activities enhance the perception discussed by Avruch (1981) of Israel as a "*mishpachah*," as one large family of Jews. Be that as it may, it would appear that *aliya* derives from what have become the normal institutional patterns of socialization within a significant segment of American Orthodoxy. There also seems to be an increasing tendency for those who adhere to what has been designated as "right-wing," or "sectarian," Orthodox to spend a year, two or more as young adults in yeshivas in Israel, and this contributes to an increase in *aliya* among this segment of Orthodox Jews. Their networks are less public and usually their only contact with the official *aliya* structure is with the local *aliya* emissary, *shaliach*. It is, therefore, even more difficult to obtain any precise data for this group. However, discussions with officials in the *aliya* Department of World Zionist Organization suggest that there is probably a much higher rate than one might otherwise assume of *aliya* from within American "sectarian" Orthodoxy.

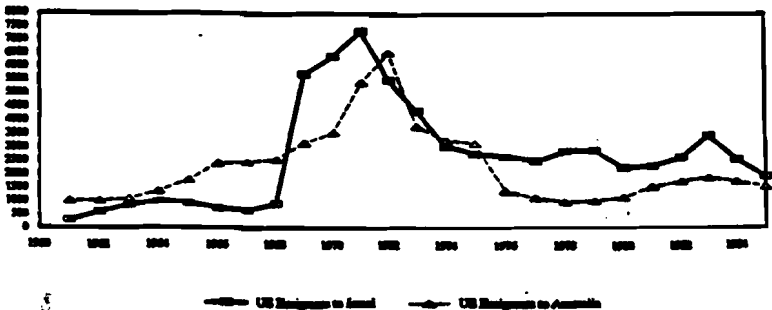


Figure 1. Emigration from the USA to Israel and Australia: 1961-85
Source: Israel: see Table 1; Australia: Dashefsky et al 1992: 26.

None of the above should be taken as sufficient cause for *aliya*. In the majority of cases, religious ideology and structure are important factors contributing to *aliya*, but they do not determine it. Obviously, if they did there would be a much higher rate of *aliya* at least from American Orthodoxy. Also, as Figure 1 indicates, there are distinct similarities in the patterns of emigration between American Jews who

went on *aliya* and Americans who emigrated to Australia during the years 1961–85. Thus, although the various factors discussed unquestionably influenced the patterns of American *aliya*, the very emigration from the United States also appears to be related to the broader condition of American society and culture and not solely that of any segment of American Jews. This, perhaps, adds an additional dimension to the observation by Eisenstadt that "every migratory movement is motivated by the migrants feeling of some kind of insecurity and inadequacy in his original social setting" (1954: 1–2). Even if one is attracted to migrate to another society for religio-cultural reasons, as in the case of American Orthodox *olim*, that implicitly indicates that there was a perceived inadequacy in the "original social setting" from which the *oleh* emigrated. The inadequacies may be social psychological, as per Avruch, and they may be religio-economic, as suggested by Chiswick. In the final analysis, even with the structural as well as motivational elements which probably vary in their significance from case to case, there appears to be little basis for anticipating any significant increase in the rate of American *aliya* for the foreseeable future.

NOTES

¹ Actually, Goldscheider's findings are not that different from those of Antonovsky and Katz. The latter indicated that the *olim* were disproportionately from the New York area and other big cities because they incorrectly assumed the American Jewish geographic dispersion and, especially, de-urbanization to be greater than it actually was at the time.

² The U.S. Jewish figures are from the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey.

³ Among the 1990 NJPS respondents Jews-by-Religion, ages 20–50, 62 percent are married, and among those ages 25–65, 69 percent are.

⁴ Interview with Bobby Brown, Dec. 30, 1986.

⁵ The fact that these reports suggest a rather big jump in the percentage of Orthodox among American *olim* is not altogether surprising when considered along with Cohen's findings of a clear-cut intensification of attachment to Israel during the years 1983–1986 among Orthodox American Jews, and a sharp detensification of attachment to Israel among Reform American Jews, with the level of attachment among Conservative American Jews remaining more or less the same during those years (Cohen 1987: 19–21).

⁶ It should be pointed out that Liebman's sample of Orthodox rabbis was derived from the membership of the Rabbinical Council of America and, thus, the responses may not be representative of all Orthodox rabbis. They clearly do not represent the minority who identify with the Satmar and Neturei Karta ideology, and it is also doubtful whether they

represent most of those who identify with the ideology Agudat Israel. It seems reasonable to suggest that were Liebman to have derived his sample from the membership of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (*Agudat Harabonim*), the percentage of Orthodox rabbis agreeing with the statement would have been somewhat lower (Waxman 1994: xiii-xviii).

⁷ The categories were derived from Liebman (1983: 147-164).

⁸ Interviews with Rabbi George Finkelstein, Principal of Yeshiva University High School for Boys; Mrs. Rookie Billet, Acting Principal of Principal of Yeshiva University High School for Girls; Rabbi Harry Bajnon, Principal of HAFTR High School; and Dr. Joel Wolowelsky, teacher and guidance counselor at Yeshiva of Flatbush High School, February 1995.

⁹ Personal communication from Rabbi Mallen Galinsky, Dean of Overseas Students, Sha'alvim Educational Centers, February 6, 1995.

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