

# TO ISRAEL AND BACK

American Aliyah and Return Migration

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## INTRODUCTION

This pilot survey -- a joint undertaking of the American Jewish Committee's Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations and its Jewish Communal Affairs Department -- attempts to examine some of the factors that impelled some American Jews to immigrate to Israel and later to return to the United States, and to determine how that experience has affected their sense of Jewish identity and commitment.

Aliyah, or immigration to Israel, has always been a fundamental tenet and stated goal of Zionism. In addition to the ideological imperative, the physical and intellectual capabilities of the new olim (immigrants) are vital for the productive development of Israel as a Jewish state. American olim bring with them not only these attributes, but also the characteristically American worldview that can contribute to strengthening Israel's democratic tradition.

The American Jewish communal structure has long been ambivalent about the issue of aliyah from this country, because American Jews, by and large, do not perceive America as galut (exile). Its leaders are determined to further Jewish interests in the United States and to strengthen the vibrant Jewish community there. They are also convinced that a strong Jewish community in America is vital to Israel's security. Yet, in response to Israel's expectations of world Jewry, American Jews too must grapple with aliyah from their own midst and find ways of dealing with the contradictions generated by this vital issue.

The small number of American Jews who "make aliyah" (immigrate to Israel) is a matter of ongoing concern to the Jewish State, both demographically and ideologically, as is their high rate of return migration to the United States. Understanding the factors contributing to the decisions of Americans to make aliyah and subsequently to return to America can be helpful to Israel in its efforts to promote increased American Jewish immigration.

At the same time, the American returnees -- as well as the many young Israelis emigrating to the United States -- constitute a sizable subpopulation within the American Jewish community that maintains a

unique relationship with Israel. The effects of this relationship on the Jewish identities and affiliations of these people may have important implications both for Israel and for American Jewry, and their experiences should be of interest to both communities.

### The Sociology of Migration

Social scientists, in their work on international migration, tend to make a central conceptual distinction between "push" and "pull" factors as motives for leaving one country for another. Thus, migration is sometimes prompted by dissatisfaction with one's native country resulting from economic, religious, political or social disadvantages, but at other times it may be inspired by the attraction of another country because of its special characteristics and conditions (Taft and Robbins 1955). At first glance, it would seem that the 60,000 or so American Jews who have immigrated to Israel since the Six Day War of 1967 were not pushed in any way from American society. After all, the United States offers its Jewish citizens unprecedented economic, political and religious freedom. American Jews enjoy very high socio-economic status. Anti-Semitism, though still present, shows signs of decline; and most young Jews have not been personally touched by it. In addition, the country has become more accepting of ethnic and religious diversity than ever before (Waxman 1983).

Yet the issue is considerably more complex than it appears. In reality, push and pull factors are seldom outright contrasts; elements of both influence the decisions of most immigrants. As S.N. Eisenstadt (1954, 1-2) suggests, "every migratory movement is motivated by the migrant's feeling of some kind of insecurity and inadequacy in his original social setting." No matter the reasons, the very fact that a person considers migrating to another society suggests a perceived inadequacy of some kind in one's "original social setting."

In this context, it is possible to speak of push and pull factors if they are understood as the primary motivations perceived by the immigrants themselves. Thus, it would be valid to say that American olim are motivated by pull factors if they perceived their previous experience in the United States as essentially positive, but felt drawn to Israel in order to fulfill a dream, an ideology or a challenge. That the vast majority of American olim have, in fact, been drawn to Israel primarily for such reasons, especially since 1967, has been corroborated by the findings of several recent studies (Goldscheider 1974; Jubas 1974; Antonovsky and Katz 1979; Avruch, 1981; Dashefsky and Lazerwitz 1983; Waxman 1984-85; Goldberg 1985).

While the number of American Jews who make aliyah each year is relatively small (see Table 1), their significance may well be far greater than the actual numbers suggest (in the same way that the kibbutzim, which comprise less than 4 percent of Israel's population, continue to be an important subject of social-scientific interest).

TABLE 1  
American Immigrants to Israel, 1948-1985

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Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1948-64	5365	1974	3089	1981	2384
1965-68	2066	1975	2803	1982	2693
1969	5738	1976	2746	1983	3469
1970	6882	1977	2571	1984	2581
1971	7364	1978	2921	1985	1915
1972	5515	1979	2950		
1973	4393	1980	2312		

Sources: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel and Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, 1974 through January 1986.

American olim number 2 percent of the Israeli population, and occupy a very high socioeconomic role in Israeli society.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of the sociology of migration, American aliyah to Israel is one of the very few contemporary examples (if not the only example) of one of the classes of migration that make up William Petersen's "general typology of migration" (Petersen 1958). His five basic classes are: "primitive," "forced," "impelled," "free" and "mass." Each class can be further subdivided into two types: "innovating" -- involving people who "migrate as a means of achieving something new" -- and "conservative" -- involving those who migrate in response to changed conditions in their homelands "in order to retain what they have had; they move geographically in order to remain where they are in all other respects" (p. 258). American aliyah is obviously not of the primitive, forced or impelled type; nor is it a mass movement. It is closest to the class of free migration.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it is much more an example of free, innovating migration. In terms of the push-pull dichotomy, if "push" has any meaning, it implies being pushed from the society of emigration. If, however, migrants state that they felt comfortable in their home society, and that they migrated primarily in order to realize more fully their subcultural, ethnic or religious values, that migration cannot be defined as a response to push factors, but rather as motivated by pull factors. Such is the picture that best describes the Americans who went to Israel.

### Previous Research

While there have been a number of studies of American immigrants in Israel, there has been little empirical research on those who have

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<sup>1</sup> Estimates vary. According to Dashefsky and Lazerwitz (1983), about 29,000 U.S.-born persons resided in Israel on January 1, 1979. However, the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel (AACI), an Israeli organization, estimates that some 50,000 Americans were permanently living in Israel by the end of 1982.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent example of free migration cited by Petersen was the migration of Swedes to the U.S. during the 19th century (pp. 263-64). He offers no 20th-century examples, nor any that involve migration from the U.S. However, Ada Finifter (1976) documents a dramatic rise of emigration from the U.S. during the decade of the 1960s, motivated largely by political dissatisfaction with American society. American aliyah, especially in recent years, does not appear to be primarily motivated by any explicit dissatisfaction with the American political system or by any changed conditions in American society, but rather by a religious, ethnic or nationalistic pull to Israel. Of course, this does not mean that other factors, such as economic or occupational situation in the United States, or economic conditions in Israel, play no role. For evidence that they do, see Goldberg (1985) and Berman (1983-84).

returned to the United States. The first empirical study was conducted by Gerald Engel (1970a,b,c,d), who analyzed responses to self-administered questionnaires by 443 adult American olim living in Israel and 256 who returned to the United States after having lived in Israel for at least a year before 1967. Engel concluded that those who remained in Israel were sustained by ideological convictions, whereas those who had left did so out of practical considerations. "Job opportunities, housing, and cost of living were practical considerations for leaving. The desire to live in a Jewish state, experience a religious environment, and enjoy a cultural life were ideological motives for staying" (Engel 1970a, 183).

In 1970-1971, Harry L. Jubas studied a random sample of 1178 American olim in Israel who had immigrated between 1967 and 1971. He asked a series of questions designed to measure the relative importance of a variety of factors that might hypothetically cause them to return to the United States (Jubas 1974, 189-245). The factor most frequently cited as important by as many as 70 percent of the sample was "red tape and bureaucracy in Israel" (p. 191). Jubas suggests that there is a basic distinction between the American who came to Israel with a commitment to stay and one who came on a trial basis. Whereas the latter constantly contrasts "the efficiency of America with the seeming incompetence of Israeli bureaucracy" (p. 195), the former "chooses to make light of the annoyances and says, as does the Israeli, 'there is no choice.' He adjusts to this aspect of the new way of life with the optimistic hope of helping to change the system someday" (p. 196).

Jubas's study concentrated on American olim still in Israel; hence it does not provide any information about those who actually returned to the United States. It may well be that most American olim complain about Israeli bureaucracy and believe that it might be a major consideration in deciding to leave Israel. But it does not necessarily mean that bureaucracy is, in fact, a major factor in the decision-making process of those who actually come back to America.

The most comprehensive and systematic study of American returnees from Israel was carried out by Arnold Dashefsky and Bernard Lazerwitz (1983). Using data from the Israel Immigrant Absorption Survey, computed monthly by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, and from the 1971 National Jewish Population Survey, they compared the characteristics of American olim three years after their arrival in Israel with those of Americans who had left the country. Their findings refine the conclusions previously reached by Engel and Jubas.

At first glance, these findings point to the importance of the religious factor in distinguishing between the two groups. As Dashefsky and Lazerwitz put it, "Consistently, those who stayed were more religious and had more Jewish education than those who left" (pp. 268-69). However, after the data were subjected to numerous statistical procedures for measuring causality, the significance of the religious factor was found to be much weaker; only about 20 percent of the dif-

ference between those who stayed and those who returned could be explained by this variable. The only factor that had any significant predictive value was confidence of staying. In line with Jubas's earlier suggestion, Dashefsky and Lazerwitz found that those who were more confident of staying after having been in Israel either two months or one year (depending on which survey was used for the sample) were more likely to still be in Israel after three years (p. 270). Although their data indicate that those with higher education and those with weaker or less active Jewish commitment were more likely to return, no meaningful causal relationship could be established between the characteristics of the returnees and their decision to return. The present survey, tentative and limited as it is, tries to address this gap and find out why American olim return to the United States.

## METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

### The Survey

This paper presents a preliminary analysis of the experience of American Jews who returned to the United States after an extended sojourn in Israel, based on data gathered through telephone interviews.

A "snowball" sample of 18 men and 53 women was generated in the tri-state New York-New Jersey-Connecticut area during the summer of 1983. Respondents were located through personal contacts or through responses to advertisements placed in Jewish communal newspapers. At the conclusion of each interview, respondents were asked to suggest names of others who might be contacted. Of course, subjects selected in this manner do not constitute a random or representative sample of returning olim, nor does such a small population allow for broad generalization of findings. Still, their responses suggest the rough profile of American Jews who stay in Israel for some time and then return to the United States, and allude to some of the critical variables in their decision to return.

All of the respondents had gone to Israel in 1967 or later, had stayed there at least one year, and had seriously considered permanent settlement during their stay. Their ages at the time they went to Israel ranged from 16 to 57 years, with a median age of 24 years. Their median age at the time of their return to the United States was 29 years, with a range of 20 to 64 years. At the time they were interviewed, their ages ranged from 29 to 67 years, and their median age was 35 years.

At the time they went to Israel, 44 respondents were single, 23 were married and four were divorced. By the time they returned, only 23 were single, 41 were married and six had been divorced. And at the time of the interviews, 10 respondents were single, 52 were married and five were divorced.

Fifty respondents had no children when they went to Israel; at the time of return 38 still had none, while eight respondents each had one child. Ten respondents each had two children when they left for Israel

TABLE 2  
Occupational Status Before, During and After  
Stay in Israel  
(Percent)

	Before Aliyah	First Job in Israel	Last Job Before Return	When Interviewed
Professional*	43.6	47.9	62.0	69.0
Student	38.0	14.1	5.6	5.6
Homemaker	9.9	5.6	4.2	12.7
Office worker	7.0	12.7	8.5	7.0
Other	1.4	4.2	2.8	4.2
On kibbutz	---	12.7	9.9	---
Unemployed	---	2.8	7.0	1.4

N = 71

\*including teaching and human services.

TABLE 3  
Reasons for Aliyah  
Rated as "Very or Somewhat Important"  
(Percent)

Potential for fuller Jewish life in Israel	85.9
Zionist convictions	81.7
Desire for change	57.7
Minority status as Jew in U.S.	53.5
Potential for fuller religious life in Israel	42.3
Assimilation in U.S.	32.4

N=71

and 13 respondents each had two children by the time they returned. Three respondents each had three children when they left for Israel, and four respondents had families of three when they returned. However, four respondents who left for Israel with four or more children returned with families of the same size.

A significant proportion of the respondents were oriented toward the professions (Table 2). In fact, before they went to Israel, 43.6 percent of the respondents had held professional jobs. However, by the time the group returned to America, the proportion of professionally employed individuals had risen to 62 percent (and to 69 percent at the time of the interviews). Thirty-eight percent were students at the time of their emigration; that percentage dropped dramatically by the time they returned to the United States. This change is probably related to the life-cycle process, but it also suggests that many students obtained their first professional jobs in Israel, while others completed their educations there.

The structured interviews, which were conducted over the telephone, included questions about the respondents' motives for making aliyah, their reasons for returning to the United States, and the differences between their current Jewish affiliations, practices and attitudes and those they reported for the period preceding their aliyah. Questions also touched on their attitudes toward Israel.

## Findings

### Setting Out

The respondents in the sample said they had initially gone to Israel to study, to work or to settle, and less than half (47.9 percent) had considered themselves olim at the time of their arrival. Of the remainder, 28.2 percent said they had considered aliyah a possibility, while 23.9 percent said they had had no intention of making aliyah.

Asked to rank possible reasons for their aliyah on a scale ranging from "very important" to "not important," respondents indicated that their reasons for leaving the United States -- minority status and assimilation, or push factors -- were less important than their reasons for going to Israel -- the potential of realizing a fuller Jewish life and Zionist convictions, or pull factors (Table 3). Over two-fifths rated the push factors as very or somewhat important in their decision to make aliyah, whereas an average of 70 percent said the pull factors were very or somewhat important. These findings are consonant with those Engel (1970a,b) found in his study of pre-1967 returning Americans, namely, that Jewish and Zionist considerations dominate.

According to their visa status on arrival in Israel, 55 percent of the respondents had come on either a "new immigrant" or "potential immigrant" visa -- both of which indicate an intent to settle perma-

nently -- 36.6 percent on tourist visas, 5.6 percent on student visas, and 2.8 percent on other types of visas.

Since the Israeli Government includes in its return-aliyah statistics only arrivals who entered the country as "new olim" or "potential olim," or those who change their visa status within two months of entering Israel, nearly half of the respondents in this survey would not be included in the return-aliyah figures computed monthly by the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. But despite the respondents' initial intentions and their visa status, the overwhelming majority (84 percent) had obtained visas as new or potential olim by the time they left the country -- either on their own initiative or by automatic transfer after 27 consecutive months in the country. The mean duration of their stay in Israel was 3.9 years; and, while this figure is skewed by several respondents whose stay exceeded 10 years, it is likely that most considered aliyah at some point during their residence in Israel.

### Coming Back

American Israelis enjoy a higher social status than other immigrant groups, but they seem less likely than others to view themselves totally as Israelis, and tend to retain their perception of themselves as Americans even after being in Israel for many years (Ministry of Absorption 1983). The vast majority of American Israelis are very proud of their American backgrounds, and feel that Israeli society and culture would be greatly enhanced by American norms and values (Waxman 1984-85, 50; Gitelman 1982, 65-69). Yet, of the 60,000 or so American Jews who immigrated to Israel since 1967, it is widely estimated that at least one-third -- about 20,000 -- have returned to the United States.<sup>3</sup> Since most retain their American citizenship and passports, they can readily come back if they decide to do so.

In their theoretical guidelines, for the sociology of migration, J.J. Mangalam and Harry K. Schwarzweller (1970, 10) suggested that "if those deprivations that led to migration persist after relocation, and if high value continues to be attached to those desired ends, then adjustment difficulties (manifested by a second migration or a return migration) can be anticipated." Thus, in an effort to ascertain whether the respondents' return migration resulted from the perception that Israel did not fulfill their Jewish expectations, they were presented with two sets of questions focusing on the reasons for their return to

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<sup>3</sup> An analysis of data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics on American olim who immigrated to Israel between the years 1969-72, conducted by Dashefsky and Lazerwitz (1983, 265), indicated that at least 37 percent had returned to America after three years. The Central Bureau of Statistics' most recent findings show a return rate after three years ranging from 26 percent to "an upper limit" of 48 percent, with a further increase by the end of five years (Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, Supplement D, January 1986).

the United States. First, they were asked to cite their own primary and second most important reasons for returning (Table 4). Then, they were asked to evaluate a prepared list of possible reasons on a scale ranging from "very important" to "not important" (Table 5).

Although Jewish considerations were among the most salient in the reasons given for the respondents' initial move to Israel (Table 3), they were not salient in the reasons given for the decision to return. This pattern of responses closely follows those found by other studies. Indeed, when asked to offer their own primary and second most important reasons for returning to America, they failed to mention Jewish considerations altogether (Table 4); and when asked specifically about the quality of Jewish life in Israel, 87.3 percent of the respondents thought this reason was "not important" in determining their return (Table 5). Rather, economic and familial considerations seemed to be the strongest motives cited for returning, along with a lack of professional opportunities, difficulties of daily life, and criticism of or estrangement from certain aspects of Israeli society.

Other researchers who asked their respondents to list hypothetical reasons for returning report very similar findings. Jubas (1974), for example, found that complaints about bureaucracy, lower living standards, lack of occupational opportunities and separation from family were mentioned most frequently. Engel (1970c) found that job opportunities, housing, cost of living and familial problems ranked highest, and pointed out that olim who had returned to the United States were more critical of certain aspects of job satisfaction, income and standard of living than those who remained in Israel. Thus, reasons for returning can reasonably be described as influenced by "daily life concerns swirling around one's family and institutional needs" (Dashefsky and Lazerwitz 1983, 272).

However, a somewhat different picture emerges from a closer look at the motivations for return suggested by the respondents themselves (Table 4). Although still among the more important reasons listed, family reunification ranks considerably lower than other factors. But the most dramatic difference lies in the degree of importance ascribed to Israeli bureaucracy. Bureaucracy was reported as the most distinctive and common problem experienced by American olim in their adjustment to Israel (Antonovsky and Katz 1979; Avruch 1981), as the most important reason for possibly returning to the United States (Jubas 1974), and it ranked quite high in the preset lists of evaluated motivations for return (Dashefsky and Lazerwitz 1983, and Table 5). However, it was very low on the list of primary reasons offered by the respondents in this survey and was not mentioned at all in their list of second most important reasons (Table 4).

The discrepancy in the relative importance ascribed to Israeli bureaucracy in the two tables may result from differences in the way the questions were formulated and the responses were tabulated. Table 4 summarized the responses to open-ended questions, while Table 5 reported

TABLE 4  
Reasons for Returning to U.S. Given by Respondents  
(Percent)

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	Primary Reason	Second Most Important Reason
Professional opportunities	19.4	8.5
Societal criticisms	18.1	16.9
Economics	13.9	8.5
Personal	13.9	4.2
Family reunification	9.7	15.5
Educational opportunities	8.3	4.2
Housing	5.6	---
Commitment/End of immigrant rights	2.8	4.2
Social problems	2.8	2.8
Political criticisms	2.8	---
Bureaucracy	1.4	---
Desire for change	1.4	8.5
Army service	---	2.8
Children's adjustment	---	1.4
No answer	---	22.5

N=71

TABLE 5

Reasons for Returning to the U.S.  
Rated as "Very or Somewhat Important"  
(Percent)

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Familial\*

Separation from family in U.S.	66.2
Spouse's adjustment	44.2
Children's adjustment	16.6
Overall Mean	42.3

Instrumental\*

Income	45.1
Difficulty of daily life	45.1
Israeli bureaucracy	40.8
Living quarters	28.2
Overall Mean	39.8

Expressive\*

A sense of foreignness in Israel	45.1
A sense of belonging in U.S.	31.0
Language difficulties	25.3
Size limitations of Israel	21.1
Difficulties making friends	18.3
Jewish life in Israel	12.7
Overall Mean	20.9

Security\*

General security tensions	18.3
Time commitment to Israel Defense Forces	11.2
Overall Mean	14.8

N=71

\* Categorization follows that of Dashefsky and Lazerwitz (1983, 272).

the respondents' evaluations of a preset list of possible reasons. Thus, the latter tends to highlight the pervasiveness of certain problems, whereas the former tends to indicate which problems were most acute.

Although both Israeli bureaucracy and the desire for familial reunification seemed to be chronic and widespread problems for the respondents (Table 5), these factors turned out to be less important than those that prompted their actual return (Table 4). Similarly, Aaron Antonovsky and Abraham Katz, in their study of pre-1967 American olim, found that bureaucracy was the most common source of complaint, but that it was less significant than standard-of-living and health issues (Antonovsky and Katz 1979, 93-120).

The respondents in the present survey also differentiated between economic difficulties and what they felt were limited professional opportunities in Israel, attributable to the country's size and level of modernization. Slightly more respondents cited economic difficulties than limited professional opportunities. Both Engel and Jubas present similar distinctions among the important hypothetical reasons for return; however, the relative importance of the two factors is not consistent among the studies.

Another discrepancy between Tables 4 and 5 concerns the impact of criticisms of Israeli society on the decision to return. This emerged in Table 4 as a significant reason for returning, ranking high both in the lists of primary and second most important reason for returning. Perhaps "a sense of foreignness in Israel" (Table 5) incorporates those criticisms, ranking high even though it was classified in the "expressive" category among comparatively low-ranking motivations. Moreover, the reasons listed in the "instrumental" category may also have implied more general criticisms of Israel society. The four categories used in Table 5 -- familial, instrumental, expressive, and security -- follow distinctions introduced by Dashefsky and Lazerwitz (1983). They observed that among their small sample of 46 returned olim, stated reasons for return clustered around these four themes. This same pattern, with the same approximate importance attributed to each of the categories, repeated itself in the data presented here.

The shift from the Jewish concerns that seem to have inspired the respondents' initial decision to make aliyah to the familial, economic, professional and societal difficulties that appear to have impelled them to return to America was probably accompanied by a new assessment of their life in Israel. A large plurality of the respondents (40.8 percent) stated that problems in Israel weighed more heavily in their decision to return than attractions of the United States (21.1 percent). It may be understood from the interviews that most of them felt that they were pushed from Israel, rather than pulled to the United States. This is in contrast with motivations of the more typical Israeli emigres, yordim, for whom, "whatever the range of "push" factors...the "pull" of America retains its historical efficacy and strength" (Sobel 1986, 174). However, the finding is consistent with that reported by Dashefsky and Lazerwitz (1983, 272).

The interpretation that push factors have more significance than pull factors in the olim's return to America is reinforced by comparing the preparations they made before moving to Israel with those they made before returning to the United States. Over 60 percent of the respondents indicated that they had made serious arrangements for employment or study in Israel before leaving the United States. By contrast, nearly three-fourths (73.2 percent) reported that they had not made any arrangements in the United States before their departure from Israel. Since their initial migration to Israel had apparently been motivated by pull factors, they had made plans for their future in Israel. On the other hand, as their return to the United States would seem to have been motivated by push factors, there was more urgency in leaving and less thought given to planning what they would do on their return to the United States.

It may well be, however, that the differences between their planning for the move to Israel and their lack of planning for their return are due to the fact that they were Americans who had been socialized in American society and culture. They may have felt that in moving to Israel, a new society and a new culture awaited them, and that they had, therefore, to plan carefully for their successful integration in that environment. In contrast, they may have felt sufficiently familiar with conditions in the United States to be able to postpone planning until after they were back.

#### Jewish Affiliations, Practices and Attitudes

What about the considerations that played such an important role in the initial decision of certain American Jews to make aliyah -- the desire to fulfill their self-identities in a Jewish environment? Few of the returnees expressed dissatisfaction with Israel in this regard. How then have their attitudes toward Judaism and Israel changed? Has there been a basic shift in the way they perceive and manifest their identity? Kevin Avruch (1981) has argued that Americans who come to Israel place a primary emphasis on the Jewish component of their identity, and both he and others suggest that in Israel they become much more conscious of themselves as Americans. Does their return to America indicate, therefore, that their experience in Israel displaced Jewishness as the primary component of their identity? If so, does this process continue after they have returned to the United States? How do these people fit into the American Jewish community?

The survey indicates that the respondents' personal religious and Jewish communal commitments intensified somewhat after their return to the United States. Synagogue affiliation increased slightly among those who had been affiliated with the Conservative movement, although there was some decline among those who had been affiliated with the Reform movement (Table 6). A number of respondents indicated that they had joined a havurah since their return. And more respondents said they attended synagogue services at least once a week after their return from Israel than before making aliyah (Table 7).

TABLE 6  
Synagogue Affiliation  
Before Aliyah and After Return  
(Percent)

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	Before	After
Orthodox	29.6	29.6
Conservative	28.2	32.4
Reform	5.6	1.4
Other	1.4	11.3
No affiliation	35.2	25.4

N=71

TABLE 7  
Frequency of Synagogue Attendance  
Before Aliyah and After Return  
(Percent)

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	Before	After
At least weekly	25.4	36.6
At least monthly	18.3	15.5
5-10 times per year	19.7	14.1
High Holy Days	16.9	21.1
Never	19.7	12.7

N=71

Regarding Jewish education, 60.6 percent stated that they were sending or planning to send their children to Jewish day schools, and 29.6 percent reported that their children were attending or would be enrolled in supplementary Hebrew schools. This finding contrasts sharply with the Jewish educational patterns of American Jews in general; some 60 percent of school-age Jewish children receive no formal Jewish education. Moreover, of those who do, many more (49.2 percent) attend supplementary schools than attend day schools (26.3 percent) (Waxman 1983, 188).

While these patterns of Jewish identification conform with the report of Dashefsky and Lazerwitz (1983, 272), who found that 53 percent of their respondents considered themselves to be more involved in the American Jewish community after their return from Israel, the present survey does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that this is the case, or that, where it is, the change was the direct result of the Israel experience. What respondents report at a later date about their previous values, beliefs and behavior is not a reliable basis for any firm conclusions. And even if it is assumed that the respondents are accurate in their report of their previous Jewish commitments and that, in fact, those commitments have intensified, it does not necessarily mean that they were influenced solely by their Israel experience. These commitments may have intensified as part of the life-cycle process, as is typical for American Jews in their twenties. It is not unreasonable to assume that these same respondents might have had more intensified Jewish commitments even if they had never immigrated to Israel.

Questioned as to their relative comfort as Jews in America since their return, as compared to how they had felt before their aliyah, approximately 45 percent reported no change, while the rest were split between those who said they now felt more comfortable and those who said they now felt less comfortable (Table 8). The factor of Jewish identity discussed earlier played a role both for those who said they now felt more comfortable and those who said they now felt less comfortable as Jews in the United States. Those who reported feeling more comfortable added that their participation in the American Jewish community was enhanced and that their pride in their Jewishness had become firmer. Those who reported being less comfortable indicated that they missed the Israeli environment and experienced more intense pressures in their effort to maintain their ethnic and religious life in America. For both groups, the apparent consequences for their Jewishness were similar: a heightened Jewish self-consciousness after their experience in Israel.

### Attitudes Toward Israel

Despite the respondents' positive attitudes toward their Jewishness, it could have been expected that they had become somewhat disenchanting with Israel, as was the case for many of the yordim interviewed by Sobel (1986). But on the contrary, for a majority (57.7 percent), Israel appeared to have become more central to their lives than before, because they had made personal friends in the country and Israeli



TABLE 8

Feelings and Attitudes Toward Israel  
Before Aliyah and After Return  
(Percent)

---

	More Intense	Same	Less Intense	No Answer
Comfort as Jew in U.S.	28.2	45.1	26.8	---
Attention to Israeli news events	63.4	33.8	1.4	1.4
Positive feeling toward Israel in general	43.7	36.6	18.3	1.4
Centrality of Israel to one's life and activities	57.7	18.3	23.9	---

N=71

TABLE 9

Zionist Self-Identification  
Before Aliyah and After Return  
(Percent)

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	Before	After
Strong Zionist	36.6	33.8
Zionist	38.0	50.7
Non-Zionist	21.1	12.7
No opinion	4.2	2.8

N=71

TABLE 10

Statements Reflecting Attitudes Toward Aliyah  
(Percent)

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	Agree	Disagree	No Answer
Every Jew should at least try living in Israel	40.8	54.9	4.2
The American Jewish community should play a role in promoting aliyah	87.3	9.9	2.8

N=71

culture continued to influence their lives. Only a small minority (18.3 percent) indicated a less positive attitude toward Israel after their return. Respondents were also nearly twice as likely as before to follow Israeli news closely. This may simply be the result of their familiarity with Israel, and not necessarily an affirmation of Israel's greater centrality in their lives. But in the context of all of their other responses and statements, it does seem that their increased attention to Israeli news reports is part of the larger impact Israel has had upon them.

The respondents indicated that their contributions to the United Jewish Appeal and their purchases of Israel Bonds had increased. Whereas only 57.7 percent had given to these organizations before making aliyah, 73.2 percent had become contributors after their return to America. Again, this may be more a function of the life-cycle than a result of their experience in Israel. When queried about the extent of their Zionist identification, a larger percentage than before considered themselves Zionists, though slightly fewer viewed themselves as "strong Zionists" (Table 9). An overwhelming majority (87.3 percent) believed that the American Jewish community should support aliyah (Table 10). And while over half disagreed with the statement, "Every Jew should at least try living in Israel," the 40.8 percent who still held this view reflect a continued commitment to Israel. Asked what the chances were that they would again move to Israel in the future, 52.1 percent replied that there was either no chance or less than a 50-50 chance that they would do so. On the other hand, 43.7 percent stated that they were either certain of attempting aliyah again or that there was more than a 50-50 chance that they would do so. Only a small minority (12.7 percent) stated that they would personally discourage others from making aliyah.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This small survey of 71 American Jews who had gone to Israel and then returned to the United States after an extended stay provides no clear insights concerning their reasons for going and coming. Nevertheless, it offers food for thought for both Israelis and the American Jewish community. Less than half of the respondents in the sample had gone to Israel with an initial commitment to making aliyah. The majority had immigrated with the intention of exploring aliyah as only one of their objectives. Most said they had gone to Israel because they thought the Jewish State would provide them with the opportunity to reinforce their commitment to Judaism and their desire to participate in a Jewish society. The reasons they gave for returning to the United States were primarily economic and familial, exacerbated by what they perceived as a lack of professional opportunities, difficulties of daily life and estrangement from certain aspects of Israeli society. They also felt overwhelmingly that the American Jewish community should promote aliyah.

Clearly, for some American olim who return to the United States, the ideological factors that made Israel attractive to them in the first place are not strong enough to offset those that impelled them to return. Israel makes valiant (and usually successful) attempts to facilitate the absorption and acculturation of less privileged groups that make aliyah from countries other than the United States. If it wants to attract and retain American olim, Israel should be aware of the factors that contribute to the high return rate of Americans and try to mitigate them to make these immigrants' adjustment easier.

This survey also suggests that the commitment of American immigrants to a Jewish way of life, a factor that drew many to Israel, is still important to them after their return. Although the data did not indicate whether their Jewish involvement was directly strengthened by their experience in Israel, by life-cycle patterns or by other contributing factors, many of the returnees indicated that their attitudes and their behavior regarding Jewishness and Israel had become even more positive after their return.

Jewish communal leaders may wish to consider ways of tapping this rich human resource, making use of the returning olim's experience and commitment to strengthen Jewish life in America and reinforce the ties between American Jewry and Israel. These considerations beg for a more extensive exploration and analysis of the various issues suggested in this survey.

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