

Issues Series #4

The Israel Visit and Jewish Identification

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	v
Foreword	vii
The Israel Visit and Jewish Identification	1
Tables	11

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While responsibility for this paper lies solely with the author, there are those without whose help it would have been impossible to complete the project.

The data file and excellent documentation of the Council of Jewish Federations' 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) was made available to me by Dr. Barry Kosmin, Dr. Sidney Goldstein, Mr. Joseph Waksberg, Dr. Nava Lerner, Dr. Ariella Keysar, and Mr. Jeffrey Scheckner of the CJF and the Mandell Berman Institute-North American Jewish Data Bank, Center for Jewish Studies of the Graduate School of the City University of New York. In addition, Dr. Kosmin and Dr. Goldstein offered important comments on other drafts of this manuscript. Dr. Sergio DellaPergola and Uzi Rebhohn facilitated the transfer of the SPSSX data file from the Hebrew University.

This analysis was conducted at the Institute for Research of the Kibbutz at Haifa University, and I deeply appreciate the help of my research assistant, Betsy Winnick-Melamed, in analyzing the data and preparing the written report. Robert Ouzen, staff consultant at the Haifa University computer center, set up the SPSSX file that enabled speedy and efficient data processing. At an early stage, I received assistance with data analysis from my colleague at the Institute, Lilach Lev-Ari. Dr. Motti Rimor generously answered my questions about data analysis and the NJPS file and variable definitions. Similarly, Dr. Steven M. Cohen offered important insights that helped clarify the methodological basis of this work.

I am deeply indebted to my colleague and friend Professor Peter Medding, who read a draft of this paper and offered challenging critical comments that eliminated flaws and enhanced its central arguments.

Finally, Dr. Steven Bayme's encouragement, patient counsel, and critical comments have made this a better work than it otherwise might have been.

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FOREWORD

The "Israel experience" has become the watchword for attaining Jewish continuity. As Jewish Federations across America gear up to pursue their local "continuity agendas," Israel visits have become the programmatic centerpiece—seeking to raise the number of young American Jews who visit Israel under organized auspices.

To be sure, our knowledge concerning causality of Jewish identity is minimal. As David Mittelberg suggests in the present study based on the National Jewish Population Survey, different behaviors and Jewish communal involvements seem to be mutually reinforcing. Visits to Israel appear closely correlated with enhanced Jewish identification. Even those with high Jewish education increase their Jewish identification if they have been to Israel. Therefore Jewish leaders hope to advance Jewish continuity by increasing the number of young Jews visiting Israel each year.

A second reason for the focus upon Israel relates to the consensual nature of American Jewish politics. Unlike Jewish day schools, trips to Israel are by no means divisive within the community. Few oppose them, and virtually everyone agrees that making them available to a broader cross section of American Jews would be desirable.

Lastly, emphasizing trips to Israel sidesteps the ever-increasing debate over the utilization of limited philanthropic funds—for Israel's needs or for domestic concerns. Investing in Israel experiences permits continued flow of dollars to the Israeli economy while channeling resources in pursuit of the ever-elusive Jewish continuity.

Clearly, such trips are desirable. The overwhelming majority of American Jews (69 percent) have never visited Israel. The reality of a Jewish state legitimates Jewishness, exposing American visitors to a public Jewish culture. The story of Israel is the success story of modern Jewish history. For American Jews in particular, who express their Jewish identity in highly individualistic terms, Israel transmits a message of Jewish collectivity—a bonding with and responsibility for the Jewish people at large.

Moreover, communal policy here has an opportunity to make a difference. Among those with high incomes, 33 percent stated they intended to visit Israel within the next three years. Among those with low or middle incomes, the percentage intending to visit shrank to 19 percent and 16 percent respectively. Reducing the financial barriers to taking these trips could easily stimulate greater participation in them.

For these reasons, the emphasis upon Israel within the continuity agenda is well directed. The danger lies in our tendency toward naive assumptions that quick fixes or panaceas are available. Ensuring Jewish continuity requires sustained action and commitment within the family and community over many years. No quick fixes—whether trips to Israel, informal education experiences, or Jewish day schools—can do our work for us. The communal desire for immediate action may well result in a policy favoring increased visitations to Israel, but absent a larger communal transformation in which we dedicate energies to collective pursuit of the Jewish enterprise, trips are likely to function more as temporary placebos than as identity-building experiences. Rather, our challenge lies in utilizing the communal will to expand Israel visits to strengthen the Judaic components of these programs, develop follow-up programming with trip alumni, and link organized trips to effective Jewish education in the Diaspora.

We are indebted to Dr. Mittelberg for organizing the data for this policy discussion. By providing a demographic profile of who is going to Israel and who is not, he suggests apparent relationships between visiting Israel and ensuring Jewish continuity. In turn, his policy proposals are directed to maximizing the effectiveness of visits to Israel for larger numbers of American Jews. Our hope is that this paper, the fourth in a series of policy papers undertaken by the Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, will inform discussion among communal planners and policy makers engaged in seeking to shape the Jewish communal future.

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THE ISRAEL VISIT AND JEWISH IDENTIFICATION

This study analyzes the relationship between visiting Israel and indices of Jewish identification and continuity, using data from the Council of Jewish Federations' 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS). It compares the social and demographic profiles of respondents who have never been to Israel, who have visited once, and who visit frequently; suggests the consequences of these differences for Jewish continuity; and makes practical policy suggestions for Jewish communal leadership concerned with enhancing Jewish continuity in North America.

Previous Research

In June 1984, Jewish communal and educational leaders from thirty-one countries meeting at the First World Leadership Conference on Jewish Education affirmed that Jewish identity was in crisis and that Jewish education was the appropriate response. They also resolved that the "Israel experience" was a key means for the enrichment of Diaspora Jewish education.

Subsequently, the Jewish Agency set up a Committee on Jewish Education chaired by Morton L. Mandel, which in turn set up a Subcommittee on the Israel Experience chaired by Robert Loup. In March 1985, the Committee on Jewish Education commissioned Annette Hochstein to undertake a comprehensive study of Israel programs currently offered, examining their current effectiveness and future potential. She submitted her report (Hochstein 1986) in June 1986. This first-ever, comprehensive data-base catalog of Israel programs established that, as of 1985, there were 400 different Israel educational programs in which 41,500 Diaspora Jews participated: 19,000 were involved in informal programs, 15,000 participated in formal educational yeshiva, high school, and university programs, and 7,600 were in work or volunteer programs. Sixty percent of all participants were aged 18-30.

A study conducted by Professor Steven Cohen for the Jewish Education Committee (Cohen 1986) suggested a threefold division of American Jewry: one-third had been to Israel, one-third had never gone but wanted to, and the other third had neither gone nor showed any interest in going. Analysis of the Jewish backgrounds of each of the three groups led Cohen to conclude that "the heavily involved are already being effectively recruited to Israel programs" (p. 11).

There have been previous attempts to assess the relationship between an Israel visit and measures of Jewish identification. One approach, which this study follows, is to analyze cross-sectional data in national and community studies of Jews to assess the correlation between an Israel visit and measures of Jewishness. A second approach is through participant

evaluation of Israel programs. While there are differences and even contradictions between the two methodologies, both find that the Israel visit is associated with intensification of measures of Jewish identity. Scholarly papers written since the late 1980s using one or the other approach, or a combination of the two, are listed in the bibliography.

Methodology

The sampling procedure employed by NJPS has been discussed extensively (Kosmin et al. 1991:30-39; Goldstein and Kosmin 1992; and DellaPergolla 1992). The analysis in this paper is restricted to the so-called "core" Jewish population, individuals who identified themselves as Jewish. The 2,061 people in this category in the NJPS represent around 5.5 million American Jews, 77 percent of whom were born Jewish and report a current Jewish affiliation, 19 percent of whom were born Jewish but identify with no religion, and 4 percent of whom are Jews by choice.

The methodological rationale at the basis of this analysis is that the NJPS data accurately reflect the differences between population subsamples—for example, denomination, age, and Jewish schooling. Therefore the NJPS data can be used to assess the relative impact of an Israel visit on the different sectors of North American Jewry, while controlling for these and other variables.

Three sets of variables will be derived from the data gathered by the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. The first consists of measures of the Israel visit itself, its incidence and frequency. The second, the demographic and socioeconomic background variables of the sample respondents, will enable us to distinguish between those who have been to Israel and those who have not. The third group of variables consists of measures of Jewish religious practice and Jewish community affiliation or activism, which, together with the rate of inmarriage, provide three dependent measures of Jewish identification and continuity.

The analysis is presented on a number of different levels. First we present the demographic, denominational, and socioeconomic profiles of those who have never visited Israel, those who have visited only once, and those who visit often. On the basis of descriptive data we will examine the differences, if any, among the groups on these background dimensions as well as on simple and compound measures of Jewish ritual practice and Jewish community affiliation. This should shed light on the barriers to visiting Israel on a continuum from never to often, as well as on the relationship between the Israel visit and the three measures of Jewish identification, holding constant such factors as age, gender, family, region, income, Jewish schooling, and denomination. Thus the question of an Israel visit will be examined both as an expression of Jewish identification and as an agency of adult resocialization and Jewish consciousness-raising.

Who Visits Israel?

The great majority of core Jews have never been to Israel, although those born Jewish and with religious affiliations are more likely than others to have paid a visit: 69 percent of the born-Jewish respondents with religious affiliation have never gone to Israel, as compared to 89 percent of secular Jews and Jews by choice (table 1).

Although men and women visit Israel to the same degree, of those who have visited Israel only once, 55 percent are women and 46 percent are men. Of those who have visited Israel more than once, 53 percent are men and 47 percent are women (table 2). Thus women are more likely to visit Israel only once, but if a man has visited Israel, he is more likely to visit a second time.

Older respondents are more likely to have visited Israel than younger ones. Of those 45 years old and over, 18 percent have visited once and another 16 percent more than once—noticeably higher percentages than those for younger groups (table 3). Of respondents who are married, 28 percent have visited Israel (15 percent once, 13 percent more than once), while 22 percent of the never-marrieds have been to Israel (13 percent once and 9 percent more than once). Nevertheless, in the 18-34 age group, 24 percent of the singles have visited Israel as against only 11 percent of the marrieds. Trips to Israel, then, tend to occur disproportionately among those under 35 and over 50. This suggests that those wishing to use Israel visits to influence people's life choices should focus on those 34 and under.

The region with the highest percentage of Israel visitors is the South with 31 percent, and the lowest is the West with 23 percent. The Northeast sends 27 percent of visitors and the Midwest 24 percent (table 4). Visitors from the South are older than those from the rest of the country (table 5). At the other end of the spectrum, the Midwest, which sends the fewest visitors to Israel, sends the youngest. The figures on age are, of course, heavily influenced by the large number of elderly Jews living in Florida. The out-migration of the elderly from the Midwest had led to the unusual situation of a declining Jewish population in that region in which the average age is also declining, so that those visiting Israel from the Midwest are disproportionately young.

Further analysis, not reported below, reveals that when comparison between regions is made while controlling for age, the Northeast and Midwest have significantly higher rates of visitors to Israel aged 18-34 (24 and 25 percent) than do the South and the West (18 and 16 percent). Whether this reflects a "tyranny of distance," the Jewishness of the Jewish periphery, the structure of Jewish institutions national and local that encourage Israel visits, or all of the above certainly needs to be examined further.

Income affects the rate of visiting Israel only at the highest levels. Respondents earning low incomes visit Israel once at about the same rate as moderate-income respondents (14 percent). However, respondents in the very high income bracket (\$80,000 or more) visit Israel far more frequently than those in both other income groups, 18 percent once and 13 percent more than once. Overall, 31 percent of those in the highest bracket have visited Israel, compared to 24 percent and 23 percent of those in the other brackets (table 6).

Respondents with a high level of Jewish education have a greater tendency to visit Israel than others—47 percent of them have visited Israel once, compared to 23 percent of those who have a low level of Jewish education, and just 17 percent of those with no Jewish education (table 7).

As for general educational attainment, respondents with post-B.A. educations have a much higher rate of visiting Israel (35 percent) than those with only a B.A. (24 percent), who,

in turn, have only a slightly higher rate of visiting Israel than respondents with only a high school education (23 percent) (table 8).

The relationship between denomination and visiting Israel follows a familiar pattern: 60 percent of the Orthodox, 39 percent of the Conservative, 23 percent of the Reform, and 21 percent of the other respondents have visited Israel (table 9). These differences point up how misleading it is to cite only the overall low percentages of those Americans who visit Israel. At the same time, it indicates how very few of the Jews who are religiously nontraditional sense a bond with Israel. This is a problem that deeply concerns Jewish leaders in both Israel and the United States.

Congruent with this finding is the cross-generational relationship between inmarriage and visiting Israel. Respondents who have two Jewish parents have a much higher rate of visiting Israel (36 percent) than those who have only one parent who is Jewish, either mother (7 percent) or father (5 percent) (table 10). Respondents with one Jewish parent most frequently were raised in ethnic/secular homes.

Israel Visits and Measures of Jewish Identification

Is there any difference in the degree of Jewish religious practice of respondents who have been to Israel and those who have not? In table 11, items of Jewish religious practice are correlated with visits to Israel. It is evident that respondents who have visited Israel are more likely to attend synagogue more than once a year, and fast on Yom Kippur, than those who have never been to Israel. They are also more likely to live in households in which someone celebrates a Passover seder, lights Shabbat candles, lights Hanukkah candles, and attends a Purim celebration. Putting these practices together on an index (table 12) shows that the degree of religious practice is radically higher for those who have visited Israel once (45 percent), and higher still for those who have visited more than once (58 percent), than for others. Of those who had never visited Israel, only 23 percent earned a high score on the index of religious practice.

The relationship between an Israel visit and degree of religious practice applies within each age group (table 13). The same is true for the index of Jewish communal affiliation: on every measure of affiliation, those who have visited Israel once have a higher score than those who have never visited Israel. Contributions to a Jewish charity follow a similar pattern. Of those who have never visited Israel, only 43 percent live in households where any contribution has been made to a Jewish charity. For those who have been to Israel once, this figure rises to 69 percent, while for those who have visited Israel more than once it goes up to 82 percent (table 14).

Jewish communal affiliation clearly increases with age, but it is also strongly associated with a visit to Israel. As can be seen in table 15, when considering only those people who have been to Israel, the older have a higher degree of Jewish affiliation than the younger, as we would expect given the family and household basis of affiliation of American Jewry. Nevertheless, within each age group, those who have been to Israel have a higher degree of affiliation than those who have not. Hence, even in the 18-34 age group, while only 5 percent of those who have never been to Israel are highly affiliated, 30 percent of those who have visited Israel are highly affiliated.

What came first, the Jewish practice and affiliation or the visit to Israel? This critical question highlights the inherent difficulties in inferring cause-and-effect relationships in any study based on cross-sectional data, one that freezes a moment in time and tells us nothing about temporal sequence. We can, however, check the relationship between a visit to Israel and indices of Jewish continuity by controlling for the effect of variables that might constitute the “real” explanation for the data—the kind of home the respondent came from and the Jewish education he or she received. If, after controlling for these effects, we still discover a correlation between Jewishness and visiting Israel, the independent impact of the visit becomes more likely.

Controlling for Denomination and Jewish Education

The best measure we have for the degree of Jewishness in the home of the respondent is denomination. The data show that, although the degree of Jewish religious practice and communal affiliation declines in accordance with the standard denominational hierarchy, on both measures, the religious and the civic, respondents who have been to Israel always score higher than those who have not. This holds for each of the denominations. As the data in table 16 indicate, the visit to Israel tends to enhance the religious practice of members of all denominations. This tendency is even more strikingly the case for Jewish communal affiliation. Table 17 indicates that for Reform Jews one visit to Israel increases the rate of high community affiliation from 8 percent to 25 percent, while the second visit ups the rate to 39 percent. The rate for Conservative Jews moves from 15 percent to 29 percent after one visit, while after a second it jumps to 60 percent. All in all, visiting Israel is strongly associated with an intensification of Jewish religious practice and communal affiliation.

There is a proven relationship between Jewish education and measures of Jewish continuity. Medding et al. (1992) have shown the clear correlation between Jewish education and rates of inmarriage—a vital component of Jewish continuity. The relationship, they write, is “based on duration of Jewish education . . . the association between more than six years of Jewish education and inmarriage is stronger in younger age groups” (p. 12).

By controlling for level of Jewish education it is possible to isolate the relationship of a trip to Israel with measures of Jewish identity. If we assume that respondents with less than six years of Jewish education share similar backgrounds, and that those with more than six years of Jewish education do likewise, we can compare the scores on the Jewish religious practice index of those who have never visited Israel at all and those who have visited only once. In this way we can approximate the effect of the Israel visit—independent of prior Jewish schooling—on the Jewish identity of respondents. Once again, cause-and-effect temporal relationships cannot be conclusively derived from any analysis of NJPS data. Nevertheless, persistent patterns of association between variables, when rigorously analyzed, enable us to infer the possibility of causal relationships. Full proof can be obtained only on the basis of additional data. (See my forthcoming longitudinal study, *The Israel Connection and American Jews*, part of the NJPS monograph series edited by Barry Kosmin and Sidney Goldstein, to be published by SUNY Press.)

Looking at table 18 we see a dramatic increase in Jewish identity scores between respondents with low Jewish education who have never visited Israel (23 percent high) and those who have visited only once (45 percent high). Similarly, among those respondents with

high Jewish education, the difference between nonvisitors and visitors jumps, on the "high" Jewish identity index, from 36 percent to 57 percent. Obviously, even for respondents who have benefited from an extensive Jewish education, an Israel visit serves as a powerful added element in Jewish identity.

In order to ensure that this effect is not really a mediated outcome of respondents' denomination, this analysis was conducted separately for Conservative and Reform respondents (tables 19 and 20). This analysis shows that the same pattern applies separately for both Conservative and Reform Jews, at almost all levels of Jewish education. Thus among Conservative respondents with low Jewish education, the contrast between nonvisitors and visitors on the "high" Jewish religious practice index goes from 37 percent to 59 percent, and among Reform, from 24 percent to 38 percent. In both denominations, although more so in the case of Reform, the pattern is maintained for those respondents with high (more than six years) Jewish education. A visit to Israel, then, continues to be associated with higher religious practice scores even for respondents with higher Jewish education, not just for those with little or no Jewish education.

Inmarriage and Jewish Continuity

The NJPS found that 36 percent of all core Jews are married to non-Jews who did not convert. But there is wide variation by age: 54 percent of those under 34 and 50 percent of those aged 35-44 are currently outmarried. Outmarriage rates of men and women are virtually the same. Is there a difference in the outmarriage rates between those who have visited Israel and those who have not?

Respondents who have visited Israel outmarried at a much lower rate (15 percent) than those who have never visited (44 percent) (table 21). This holds true for every age bracket. In the crucial 18-34 bracket, 62 percent of those who have never been to Israel are outmarried, as opposed to just 19 percent who have been to Israel (table 22). When viewed generationally, the highest frequencies of outmarriage occur in the third and fourth generations where 50 percent and 54 percent of respondents who have never visited Israel are outmarried. In stark contrast, the figures for those who have visited Israel are 22 percent and 36 percent, respectively (table 23). Table 24 indicates that this difference between visitors and nonvisitors holds for both men and women.

Once again, we will retest this data by controlling for the denomination and Jewish education variables. There are significant differences in the levels of outmarriage among the denominations: 36 percent among the Reform, 22 percent among the Conservative, and 8 percent among the Orthodox. Yet within each denomination—which, after all, reflects Jewish education and the Jewishness of the home—the rate of outmarriage is radically lower for those who have been to Israel than for those who have not (table 25).

Controlling for the level of Jewish education, it is clear that a trip to Israel has an independent association with the likelihood of inmarriage. Looking only at respondents with high Jewish education (at least six years), those who have not been to Israel outmarry at a rate of 41 percent, as against just 10 percent for those who have been to Israel. A similar gap between visitors and nonvisitors exists at each level of Jewish education. In fact, respondents

with low or even no Jewish education who have paid one visit to Israel outmarry at a lower rate than those with a high Jewish education who have never been to Israel (table 26).

To be sure, since many of the respondents were married prior to visiting Israel, we cannot assume that the Israel trip had an impact on the choice of a spouse. Nevertheless, the lower the age bracket, the greater the likelihood that marriage occurred after the visit to Israel. This makes the figures for those under 45 extremely significant. For this group, of those with a high level of Jewish education, those who have visited Israel have a 17 percent outmarriage rate, while those who have never been to Israel have a 44 percent rate. For those with a moderate Jewish education, the rates are 42 percent and 58 percent (table 27).

Policy Implications

A visit to Israel, then, appears to be a factor that, together with other agencies of socialization, enhances the Jewishness of American Jews. While it must not be seen as a replacement for the other factors, there is every reason to expect the visit to Israel to increase Jewish identity. It functions in this way for Jews of both genders, all age groups, and across all denominations.

Given these facts, how can more North American Jews be encouraged to visit Israel? The target population should be the group most likely to utilize the opportunity—not those expressing no interest, but rather those who say they plan to visit Israel but have not yet done so. In the NJPS survey, 64 percent of core Jews reported that no one in their household planned to visit in the next three years, 27 percent said that someone in their household did plan to visit during that time, and 9 percent didn't know. Thus more core Jews said they intended to visit Israel than actually reported having done so. Who are these intenders?

We cannot know for sure, since NJPS asked about “anyone in your household” rather than “you,” the respondent. Nevertheless, it is clear that half of all intenders are from households where respondents are core Jews who have already been to Israel, 40 percent are from households where the respondent has been to Israel only once, and the remainder live in households where the respondent has been to Israel more than once.

Although Jews by choice make up only 4 percent of the core Jewish population, 45 percent of respondents who are Jews by choice report that someone in their household plans to visit Israel in the next three years—more than double the rate of respondents who are born-Jews and religiously affiliated (22 percent), and far more than ethnic/secular respondents, of whom a mere 8 percent report that a household member plans to visit Israel. Interestingly, Jews by choice who have already been to Israel unanimously report plans of a household member to visit Israel in the next three years, as compared to 42 percent of Jews by birth. The clear pattern for all the subgroups of one visit to Israel encouraging another seems especially true for Jews by choice (table 28).

Examining the relationship between denomination and intention to visit Israel (table 29), one finds little difference between Conservative and Reform Jews. Among those who have never visited, 26 percent among the Reform and 20 percent among the Conservative say a household member plans to visit in the next three years. Of those who have already visited

Israel, 39 percent of the Reform and 36 percent of the Conservative report that a household member plans to visit. Fully 88 percent of the Orthodox who have already visited Israel report plans by a household member to visit in the next three years. Reform and Conservative households, then, should be targeted, since so many of them have never been to Israel and yet express the intention to go.

Table 30 analyzes the intention to visit Israel by degree of Jewish education. Visitors and those with household members who intend to visit Israel have had more Jewish education than other North American Jews. Of respondents who have never visited, 64 percent have a low level of Jewish education. It would probably be worthwhile to target this population rather than those with no Jewish education at all.

What is the relationship between age and intention to visit? Table 31 indicates that while 18 percent of respondents aged 18-34 who have never visited Israel report that someone in their household intends to do so, only 14 percent of the 35-44 age group report similar plans. This would indicate that a major effort should be invested in the younger group. This 18-34 group should also be the primary target for second visits to Israel, for while this sector comprises only 21 percent of all prior visitors, 51 percent of this age group who have paid one visit report an intention in their household to visit Israel in the next three years, compared to 44 percent of the 35-44 age group.

Table 32 shows that, of the households where respondents have never visited, more men (24 percent) report an intention to visit than women (18 percent). What is especially interesting is that out of the 21 percent of all respondents who report an intention to visit in the next three years, 53 percent are men, even though they make up only 46 percent of the sample. The same is true of those respondents who have already visited Israel: 31 percent of the men and 27 percent of the women report an intention in their household to visit Israel in the next three years. The inference is that programs appealing to young men, whether recreational or career-oriented, may contribute significantly to an increase in visits to Israel.

Young Jews who have not yet married should be the primary focus of efforts to stimulate visits to Israel. Such visits might occur immediately after completion of high school, during the junior year of college, or between undergraduate and graduate studies. All such first-time intenders to visit should have their expenses subsidized. This would virtually guarantee that all Jewish youth would visit Israel before they make critical life choices—marrying and deciding what kind of Jewish education, if any, to give their children. In addition, there should be adequate preparation prior to the visit, and follow-up through the first year after the visit, in order to maximize the possibility of a second visit before marriage. It is vital, as well, to guarantee the quality of the visit.

Aside from age, income is the most significant factor in determining who is most interested in visiting Israel. In the lowest income category, only 16 percent of those who have never visited say a household member has an intention to visit, and for the middle-income group the figure is just 19 percent. But among those earning \$80,000 a year or more, fully 33 percent say a household member intends to visit (table 33). Thus it will be far easier to recruit first-time visitors from the upper income stratum, and their expenses will not have to be subsidized.

Intention and Impact: A Final Look

Comparing the Jewish identity scores of those who had actually been to Israel with those who had not, we discovered a wide gap, and cautiously inferred that the higher ratings of the visitors may be partially attributable to the visit itself. We then examined this relationship in a more stringent fashion by controlling, successively, for a long series of variables that might reasonably be assumed to account for all or most of this difference. Though we could have expected that, in any one of these analyses, the role of Israel would dissolve or become insignificant, this did not occur in a single case. Instead, the pattern persisted throughout.

Cohen (1992) has offered an additional strategy for inferring the impact of an Israel visit on indices of Jewish identity, which we have used here as well in tables 34 and 35. Comparing respondents who have not visited Israel but who report an intention by someone in their household to visit with those who have already visited once, we discover that, on both the religious and communal indices of Jewish identification, there is a relationship between an Israel visit and these measures. Thus 74 percent of one-time visitors who report a household intention to visit have a high score on the religious practice index, compared to 30 percent of those who have never been to Israel but report an intention to do so by a household member in the next three years. Turning to the civic index, we find that 40 percent of one-time visitors have a high score as compared to only 22 percent of the never-visited who report intention.

Conclusion

The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey reveals an association between a visit to Israel and measures of Jewish identification and Jewish continuity within the core Jewish population of North America. These measures include Jewish community affiliation, Jewish religious practice, and rates of inmarriage. The relationship holds even when controlling for all the other variables of Jewish socialization. Thus the respondents who have visited Israel always score higher than those who have not, even when controlling for Jewish education, age, gender, education, and denomination. This indicates that a visit to Israel may well serve as an enhancer of Jewish identity for North American Jews, and that it does so in a most egalitarian mode: by reaching all denominations, ages, and regions, and both genders.

The good news, then, is that even one visit to Israel has a significant impact, even among the crucial target population, single young adults under the age of 34. Needless to say, additional visits are even better, but very few North American Jews avail themselves of the opportunity.

The primary policy recommendation emerging from this analysis is the need to get more of the 18-34 unmarried Jews who have never been to Israel to pay their first visit. This group should be given financial assistance, since most lack the resources. Another market segment deserving attention are those Jews in all age categories who have already been to Israel once. The data show that the households of one-time visitors report a higher intention of visiting Israel than households where no one has ever visited. Also, young Reform singles, especially men, constitute an untapped market reporting a strong intention to visit Israel.

The visit to Israel affects the Jewish identity of all participants, and the more frequently one visits, the stronger the impact will be. Since the transformation of Jewish communal patterns depends primarily on arousing the Jewish enthusiasms of young Jewish singles, the integration of an Israel visit into the first third of the life of every Jewish American could help bring American Jewry safely into the third millennium.

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Table 1: Visit to Israel By Jewish Identification

	Jews by Religion	Secular Jews	Jews by Choice	Core Jewish Population
Never visited Israel	69%	89%	89%	74%
Visited Once Only	17%	8%	10%	15%
More than once	14%	3%	1%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
All	77%	19%	4%	100%

Weighted Sample: N= 4826630

Unweighted Sample: N=2045

Table 2: Visits to Israel By Gender

Visit to Israel:	Men	Women	Total	All
Never	48% (73%)	52% (74%)	100%	74%
Once	46% (14%)	55% (15%)	100%	15%
More than Once	53% (13%)	47% (11%)	100%	11%
Total	(100%)	(100%)		
All	48% (58%)	52% (59%)		100%

Weighted sample: N=4826630

Table 3: Visits to Israel by Age

Visit to Israel:	Never Visited	Visited Once	More than Once	Total	All
18-34	79%	12%	10%	100%	32%
35-44	81%	12%	8%	100%	24%
45+	66%	18%	16%	100%	44%
All	74%	15%	12%		100%

Weighted sample: N=4817750

Table 4: Visits to Israel by Region

	North east	Mid-West	South	West	All
Never Visited	73%	76%	69%	77%	74%
Visited Israel	27%	24%	31%	23%	26%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	
All	43%	11%	23%	23%	100%

Weighted Sample: N=4826630

Table 5: Visits to Israel By Region By Age

	North east		Mid- west		South		West	
	Never Visited	Visited Israel	Never Visited	Visited Israel	Never Visited	Visited Israel	Never Visited	Visited Israel
18-34	33%	29%	34%	37%	40%	20%	34%	22%
35-44	24%	17%	31%	10%	24%	16%	29%	25%
45+	43%	54%	35%	53%	36%	64%	37%	53%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Weighted N=	2089020		500460		1099830		1128440	

Table 6: Visits to Israel By Combined Household Income

	\$39,999 or less	\$40,000- \$79,999	\$80,000+	All
Visits to Israel:				
Never	76%	77%	69%	75%
Once	14%	14%	18%	14%
More than Once	10%	9%	13%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	
All	44%	37%	19%	100%

Weighted sample N= 4162220

Table 7: Visits to Israel By Jewish Education

	No Jewish Education	Low Jewish Education	High Jewish Education	All
Visits to Israel:				
Never	82%	77%	53%	74%
Once	9%	15%	23%	15%
More than Once	8%	8%	24%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	
All	34%	43%	23%	100%

Weighted sample: N=4826630

Table 8: Visits to Israel By Educational Attainment

	High School	B. A.	Post B.A.	All
Visits to Israel:				
Never	77%	77%	65%	74%
Visited				
Once	13%	14%	18%	15%
More Than Once	10%	10%	17%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	
All	21%	42%	22%	100%
Weighted sample: N= 4826630				

Table 9: Visit to Israel By Jewish Denomination

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Other Jewish
Never Visited Israel	41%	61%	77%	79%
Visited Only Once	26%	21%	13%	15%
Visited More Than Once	34%	18%	10%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N (unweighted)	68	391	460	98
N (weighted)	165880	929030	1126860	243740

Table 10: Visit to Israel by Jewish Identification of Parents

	Mother only Jewish	Father only Jewish	Both parents Jewish
Never visited Israel	93	95	64
Visited only once	7	3	21
Visited more than once	0	2	15
	100%	100%	100%
N weighted	4264660		
N unweighted	301		

Table 11: Visits to Israel by Measures of Jewish Religious Practice

	Never Visited Israel	Visited Israel Once	Visited Israel Once +	Wtd. N=
High Score on Items of Jewish Religious Practice Index				
Synagogue Attendance Once or More a Year	64%	86%	85%	4826630
Anyone in Household Attends Passover Sedar	75%	91%	94%	4826630
Anyone in Household Lights Chanukkah Candles	69%	87%	89%	4826630
Anyone in Household Attends Purim Celebration	17%	24%	41%	4826630
Personally Fasts on Yom Kippur	40%	66%	76%	4826630
Anyone in Household Lights Candles on Friday Night	30%	51%	66%	4826630

Table 12: Visits to Israel By Jewish Religious Practice Index

	Low Jewish Practice	Med. Jewish Practice	High Jewish Practice	Total	All
Visits to Israel:					
Never Visited	25%	52%	23%	100%	74%
Visited Once	5%	50%	45%	100%	15%
Visited more Than once	4%	39%	58%	100%	12%
All Weighted Sample: N=4826630	20%	50%	30%		100%

Table 13: Visit to Israel by Degree of Jewish Religious Practice by Age

	Low Jewish Practice	Med. Jewish Practice	High Jewish Practice	Total	All
<u>18-34</u>					
Never Visited	27%	57%	17%	100%	79%
Visited Israel	2%	45%	54%	100%	21%
<u>35-44</u>					
Never Visited	25%	44%	31%	100%	81%
Visited Israel	6%	40%	55%	100%	20%
<u>45+</u>					
Never Visited	24%	54%	23%	100%	66%
Visited Israel	5%	47%	48%	100%	34%
Weighted sample: N= 1552880 (18-34) 1554640 (35-44) 2110240 (45+)					

Table 14: Visits to Israel by Measures of Jewish Communal Affiliation

	Never Visited Israel	Visited Israel Once	Visited Israel Once +	Wtd. N=	Unwtd. N=
Items of Jewish Affiliation Index					
Paid Subscription to Jewish Periodical (Yes)	17%	36%	51%	4826630	2045
Affiliation with at least one Jewish Organization	20%	43%	60%	4826630	2045
Close Friends or Family living in Israel (Yes)	21%	35%	70%	4826630	2045
At Least Some or Most of Closest Friends are Jewish	30%	59%	63%	4826630	2045
Live in Neighborhood with Some or Very Jewish Character	32%	44%	53%	4826630	2045
Any 1989 Household Contribution to Jewish Charity	43%	69%	82%	4826630	2045

Table 15: Visit to Israel by Degree of Jewish Communal Affiliation By Age

	Unaffiliated	Affiliated	Activist	Total	All
Visit to Israel:					
18-34					
Never Visited	41%	54%	5%	100%	78%
Visited Israel	10%	60%	30%	100%	21%
35-44					
Never Visited	30%	60%	10%	100%	81%
Visited Israel	14%	53%	34%	100%	19%
45+					
Never Visited	21%	68%	11%	100%	66%
Visited Israel	6%	52%	42%	100%	34%
Weighted Sample:	N=1552880 (18-34) 1154640 (35-44) 2110240 (45+)				

Table 16: Visit to Israel by High Jewish Religious Practice By Jewish Denomination

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Other Denominations
Never Visited Israel	38%	37%	26%	10%
Visited Israel Once	73%	55%	38%	31%
Visited Israel More than Once	90%	69%	38%	20%
Weighted Sample:	N= 247640	1521000	1787880	414850

Table 17: Visit to Israel by High Jewish Communal Affiliation By Denomination

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reform	Other Denominations
Never Visited Israel	9%	15%	8%	3%
Visited Israel Once	50%	29%	25%	19%
Visited Israel More than Once	70%	60%	39%	20%
Weighted Sample:	247640	1521000	1787880	414850

Table 18: Jewish Religious Practice By Visit to Israel By Jewish Education of All Core Jewish Respondents

Visit to Israel	No Jewish Education		Low Jewish Education		High Jewish Education	
	Never	Once	Never	Once	Never	Once
Jewish Religious Practice						
Low	39%	10%	19%	4%	12%	5%
Medium	45%	77%	58%	49%	52%	38%
High	16%	13%	23%	47%	36%	57%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
All	90%	10%	84%	16%	70%	30%
Weighted	1521350		1905140		838390	

Table 19: Jewish Religious Practice By Visit to Israel By Jewish Education for Conservative Respondents

Visit to Israel	No Jewish Education		Low Jewish Education		High Jewish Education	
	Never	Once	Never	Once	Never	Once
Jewish Religious Practice						
Low	20%	0%	11%	0%	6%	4%
Medium	51%	59%	52%	41%	47%	38%
High	29%	41%	37%	59%	47%	58%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
All	84%	16%	80%	20%	62%	38%
Weighted	339940		5596140		372170	
Unweighted	130		245		182	

Table 20: Jewish Religious Practice By Visit By Jewish Education for Reform Respondents

Jewish Religious Practice	No Jewish Education		Low Jewish Education		High Jewish Education	
	Never	Once	Never	Once	Never	Once
Low	14%	0%	12%	3%	5%	0%
Medium	63%	77%	64%	58%	60%	37%
High	23%	23%	24%	38%	35%	63%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
All	88%	12%	85%	15%	86%	14%
Weighted	4787890		873010		372170	
Unweighted	197		406		133	

Table 21: Jewish Identification of Spouse of Core Jewish Respondent By Visit to Israel

	Never Visited	Visited	All
Jewish by Religion	43%	75%	52%
Ethnic/Secular	8%	4%	7%
Gentile	44%	15%	37%
Jewish by Choice	4%	6%	4%
Total	100%	100%	
All	72%	28%	100%

Weighted sample: N= 2962070

Table 22: Frequency of Outmarriage By Age and By Visit to Israel

Age Group	Percentage of Outmarriage (All) of those who <u>Never</u> Visited Israel	Percentage of Outmarriage (All) of those Who Have Visited Israel
18-34	62% (24%)	19% (14%)
35-44	53% (31%)	39% (22%)
45+	30% (45%)	7% (65%)
All	45% (100%)	15% (100%)

Weighted sample: N=2124800 (never visited) 831990 (visited)

Table 23: Visit to Israel by Jewish Identification of Spouse by Generation of Respondent

	Jewish by Religion	Ethnic/ Secular	Gentile	Jew by Choice	Total	All
First Generation						
Never Visited	71%	6%	23%	0%	100%	4%
Visited	84%	6%	5%	5%	100%	16%
Second Generation						
Never Visited	70%	7%	23%	1%	100%	20%
Visited	91%	3%	5%	2%	100%	36%
Third Generation						
Never Visited	36%	8%	50%	5%	100%	46%
Visited	65%	1%	22%	11%	100%	35%
Fourth Generation						
Never Visited	32%	10%	54%	4%	100%	30%
Visited	49%	12%	36%	4%	100%	13%
All Generations	53%	7%	36%	4%	100%	
Weighted Sample: N=2991480						

Table 24: Visit to Israel by Jewish Identification of Spouse By Respondents Gender

Jewish Identification of Spouse						
	Jewish by religion	Secular Jew	Jew by choice	Gentile	Total	
Gender						
(1) Men						
Never visited	39%	9%	5%	48%	100%	
Visited Once	72%	3%	7%	19%	100%	
More than once	83%	5%	5%	7%	100%	
Unweighted sample	N=589					
Weighted sample	N=1455580					
(2) Women						
Never visited	47%	8%	2%	42%	100%	
Visited Once	68%	7%	4%	21%	100%	
More than once	82%	0%	7%	11%	100%	
Unweighted sample	N=596					
Weighted sample	N=1506480					

Table 25: Frequency of Outmarriage by Visit to Israel by Denomination

	<u>Orthodox</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Reform</u>	<u>Other</u>
Never Visited	20%	31%	40%	68%
Visited Israel	0%	8%	23%	29%
All	8%	22%	36%	60%
Weighted sample: N=	165880	929030	1126860	243740

Table 26: Frequency of Outmarriage of Core Jewish Respondents by Jewish Education by Visit to Israel
Frequency of Outmarriages:

	No Jewish Education	Low Jewish Education	High Jewish Education
Never Visited	48%	43%	41%
Visited Israel	14%	21%	10%
All	42%	38%	27%
Weighted sample: N=	962010	1328140	671920

Table 27: Frequency of Outmarriage of Core Jewish Respondents Aged 45 and Under, by Jewish Education by Visit to Israel

	Never Visited	Visited Israel
No Jewish Education	62%	62%
Low Jewish Education	58%	42%
High Jewish Education	44%	17%
Weighted Sample: N=	1168030	293380

Table 28: Household Intention to Visit Israel by Respondents Past Visit by Jewish Identification

	Jewish by Religion	Ethnic/Secular	Jew by Choice
A. Respondent Never Visited Israel:			
Intend to Visit	22%	8%	45%
No Intention	68%	90%	55%
Don't Know	10%	2%	0%
total	100%	100%	100%
All	68%	25%	7%

Weighted Sample: N=2835110

Unweighted Sample: N=364

	Jewish by Religion	Ethnic/Secular	Jew by Choice
B. Respondent Ever Visited:			
Intend to Visit	42%	0%	100%
No Intention	45%	89%	0%
Don't Know	13%	11%	0%
total	100%	100%	100%
All	68%	25%	7%

Weighted Sample: N=2835110

Unweighted Sample: N=364

Table 29: Household Intention to Visit Israel By Respondents Past Visit by Denomination of Respondent

	<u>Never Visited</u>				All	<u>Ever Visited</u>				
	Orth.	Cons.	Refo.	Oth.		Orth.	Cons.	Refo.	Oth.	All
Intend to Visit:										
Intend to Visit	50%	20%	26%	22%	25%	88%	36%	39%	11%	29%
No Intention	50%	74%	65%	75%	68%	12%	45%	52%	76%	58%
Don't Know	0%	6%	8%	3%	7%	0%	19%	9%	13%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%		100%	100%	100%	100%	
All	4%	29%	55%	12%	100%	11%	51%	32%	6%	100%

Module Weighted Sample: N=2156910 (never visited) 1334770 (visited)

Unweighted Sample: N=364 (never visited) 113 (visited)

Table 30: Household Intention to Visit Israel by Respondents Past Visits By Respondents Jewish Education

Intend to Visit:	<u>Never Visited</u>		<u>Ever Visited</u>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
No Jewish Education	14%	40%	19%	19%
Low Jewish Education	64%	45%	35%	47%
High Jewish Education	22%	15%	46%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
All	21%	72%	28%	59%
Module Weighted sample N= 2835110 (never visited)			808390 (ever visited)	
Unweighted sample N= 364 (never visited)			124 (ever visited)	

Table 31: Intention to Visit Israel by Past Visit by Age

A: Respondent Never Visited

<u>Respondent Intend to Visit:</u>			Don't Know	<u>Total</u>
Age	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Know</u>	
18-34	18%	76%	6%	100%
35-44	14%	82%	4%	100%
45+	27%	62%	11%	100%
All	(21%)	(72%)	(7%)	100%

B: Respondent Ever Visited

<u>Respondent Intend to Visit:</u>			Don't Know	<u>Total</u>
Age	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Know</u>	
18-34	51%	40%	9%	100%
35-44	44%	47%	9%	100%
45+	36%	49%	15%	100%
All	22%	19%	58%	100%

Module Weighted Sample: N=2823650 (never visited) 800400 (ever visited)
 Unweighted Sample: N=362 (never visited) 123 (ever visited)

Table 32: Intention to Visit Israel by Past Visits By Gender

Respondent Never Visited

A. Respondent Intend to Visit:

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	All
Men	24% (53%)	66% (43%)	10% (60%)	100%	46%
Women	18% (47%)	77% (57%)	5% (40%)	100%	54%
Total	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)		
All	(21%)	(72%)	(7%)		(100%)

Respondent Ever Visited

B. Respondent Intend to Visit:

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total	All
Men	31% (46%)	59% (42%)	10% (37%)	100%	42%
Women	27% (54%)	60% (58%)	13% (63%)	100%	58%
Total	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)		
All	28%	59%	13%		100%

Module Weighted Sample: N=2835110 (never visited) 808390 (ever visited)
 Unweighted Sample: N=364 (never visited) 124 (ever visited)

Table 33: Household Intention to Visit Israel by Respondents Past Visits By Household Income

	Never Visited					Ever Visited				
	Yes	Israel		Total	All	Yes	Israel		Total	All
		No	Don't Know				No	Don't Know		
\$39,999 and Less	16%	82%	2%	100%	44%	51%	45%	4%	100%	42%
\$40,000-\$79,999	19%	73%	8%	100%	39%	50%	40%	10%	100%	35%
\$80,000	33%	62%	5%	100%	17%	22%	55%	23%	100%	23%
All	20%	75%	5%		100%	44%	45%	10%		100%

Module Weighted Sample: N=1138150 (visited Israel) Never visited 2401660. Unweighted sample: N=103

Table 34: Intention to Visit Israel by Jewish Religious Practice

Respondent	Anyone in Respondents Household Intends to Visit					No One in Respondents Household Intends to Visit				
	Low	Med	High	Total	All	Low	Med	High	Total	All
Never Visited	9%	61%	30%	100%	(60%)	30%	53%	17%	100%	(76%)
Visited Once	0%	26%	74%	100%	(20%)	9%	52%	39%	100%	(18%)
Visited More than Once	1%	38%	61%	100%	(30%)	0%	57%	43%	100%	(6%)
					(100%)					(100%)
Weighted sample: N=1154360										

Table 35: Intention to Visit Israel by Jewish Communal Affiliation

Respondent	Anyone in Respondents Household Intends to Visit					No One in Respondents Household Intends to Visit				
	Low	Med	High	Total	All	Low	Med	High	Total	All
Never Visited	8%	70%	22%	100%	(50%)	39%	55%	6%	100%	(76%)
Visited Once	10%	50%	40%	100%	(20%)	13%	65%	22%	100%	(18%)
Visited More than Once	1%	30%	69%	100%	(30%)	4%	67%	29%	100%	(6%)
					(100%)					(100%)
Weighted Sample: N=2697130										